#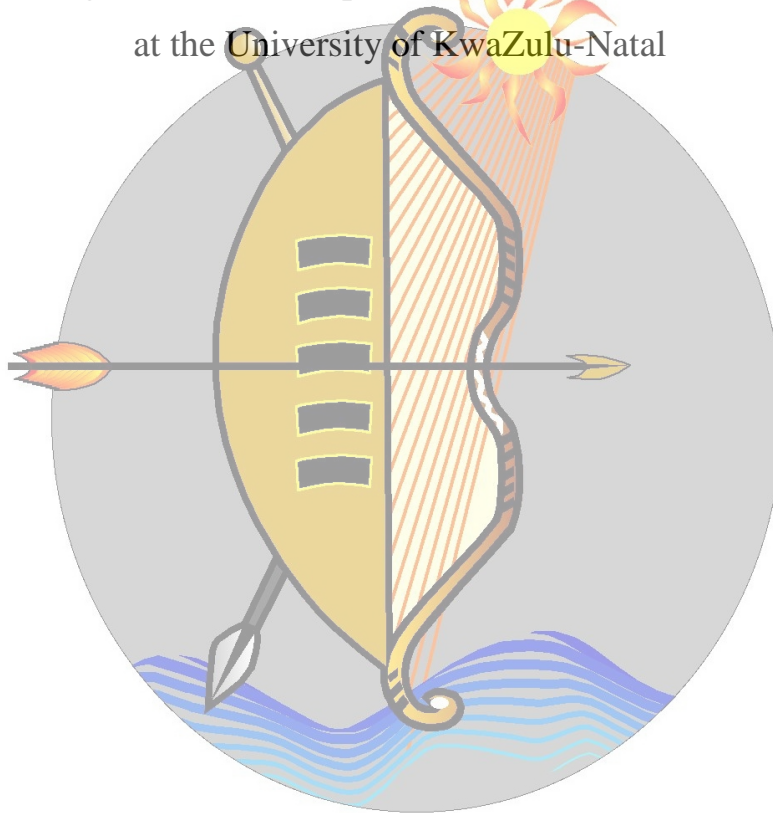 The Multicultural Traveller: Representations of Indian Female Identity in Gurinder Chadha's *Bend It Like Beckham* and *Bride and Prejudice*

by

Avershree Maistry

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Graduate Programme in the department of Drama and Performance Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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Avershree Maistry

As the candidate's supervisor I hereby approve the submission of the dissertation for examination.

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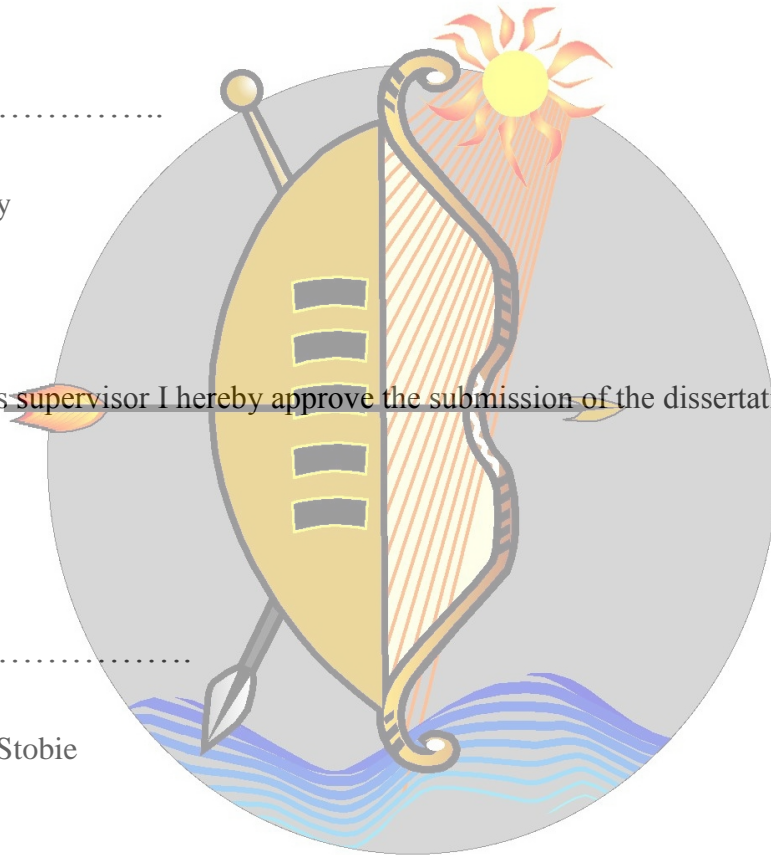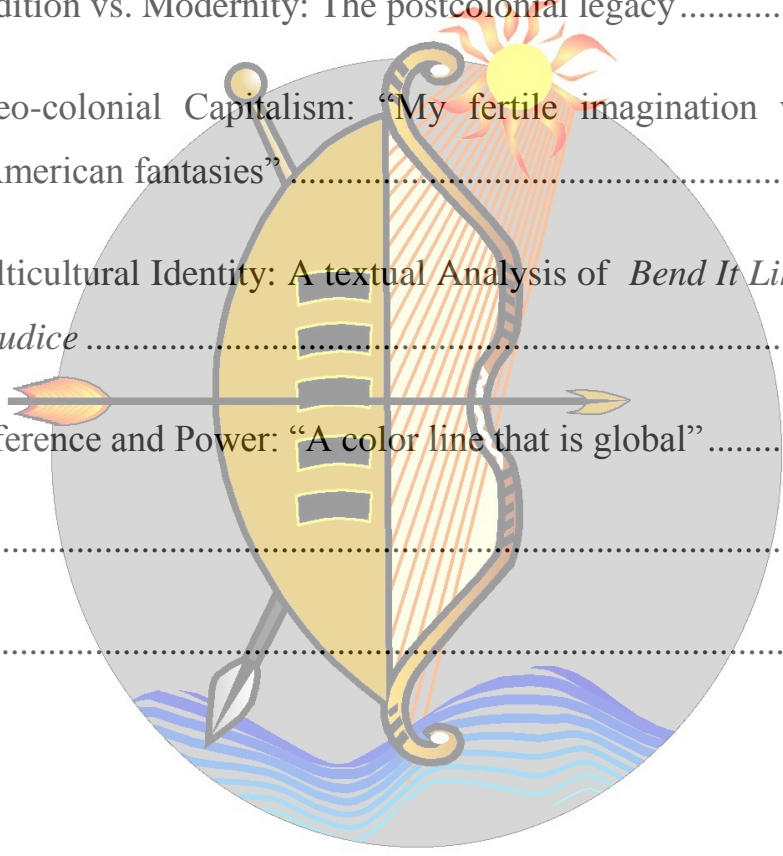
Professor Cheryl Stobie

December

2009

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the following people without whom this dissertation would not have come to fruition.

Professor Hazel Barnes, thank you, for your unwavering kindness and patience in helping me to begin this journey.

Dr Kennedy Chinyowa, thank you for reminding me that as academics we do indeed 'stand on the shoulders of giants'. I now take comfort in knowing that I am not alone in asking: Where to next?

Professor Cheryl Stobie, 'thank you' seems too insignificant to express just how much your support and understanding over the course of this process has meant to me. Thank you, nonetheless.

To Prissy Maistry and Ushn Reddy, thank you, in equal measure for the many unsolicited pep talks, the hugs and copious cups of green tea.

To all of my friends, who were sounding-boards, shoulders to cry on and comrades in arms, I say, thank you.

Finally, I express my gratitude to e.e. cummings for his motivating words which continually inspire my belief in the possibility of a multicultural world.
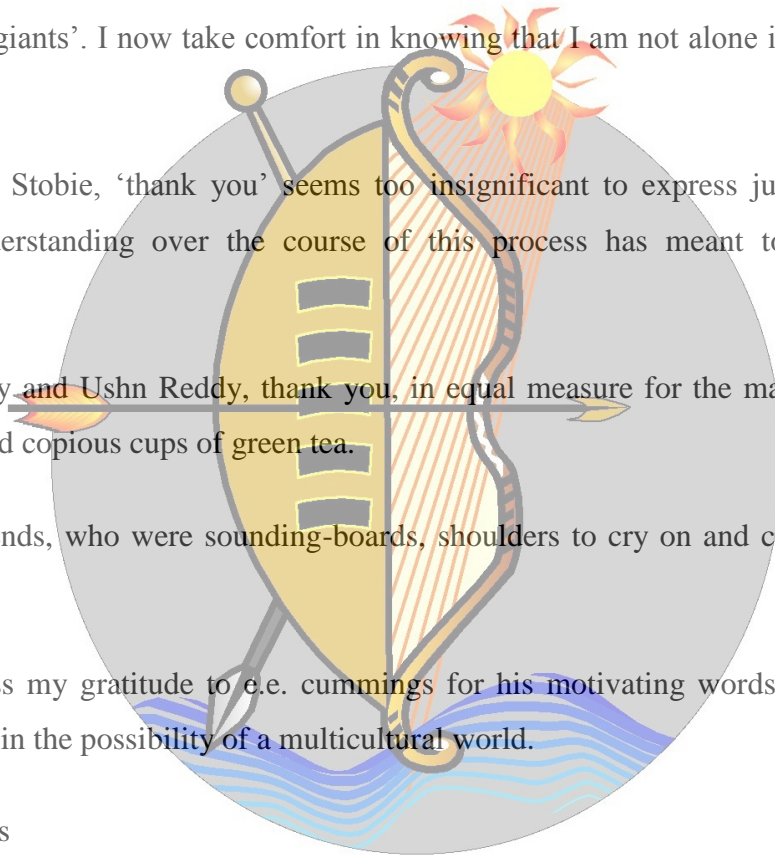
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Abstract

This paper explores the construction of multicultural identities in the postcolonial world in relation to nonresident Indian women depicted in mainstream cinema. The dissertation traces the distorted representation of Indian women from its colonial and diasporic origins to its contemporary neo-colonial evolution. The analysis of two films, directed by Gurinder Chadha, *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002) and *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), speaks back to Indian women's agency and ownership of multicultural identities. These film texts were chosen as they are both contemporary examples of Indian class, gender and culture in relation to the postmodern concept of multicultural societies. The films are products of formerly colonised people commenting on issues of class, gender and power as seen in Indian diasporic communities in England and the USA.

<u>Introduction</u>

This dissertation is an ongoing engagement with Indian female identities. In the words of Ella Shohat and Aamir Mufti, "nation, community, race, class, religion, gender, sexuality – each names a site for the enactment of the great drama of origins, loyalty, belonging, betrayal; in short of identity and identification" (1997, p. 2). I am fascinated by postcolonial Indian females and furthermore, by the differences between real and represented Indian 'women' as created by and viewed through a Western lens. These women, differentiated from resident Indian females, are exemplars of Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity (1994, pp. 160-4, 200). Moreover, they negotiate travelling spaces in order to forge links between Indian and western cultures.

This rationale has led me to a confluence of at least three academic discourses, namely postcolonialism, focusing on the effects of colonialism on diasporic Indians; neo-colonialism, investigating America's contemporary capitalist take on imperialising the world; and feminist film study, which delves into representation in semi-fictional realities; all of which culminate in the contemporary images of Indian women in film. My research into film representation has inexorably led me to the origins of Indian representation in general: colonialism. In following colonial effects and consequences I have traced a path which has led to the current postcolonial, multicultural age.

Postcolonialism resonates with the problems of our contemporary world, with particular reference to the direction it is taking as a discourse. It addresses issues that are rephrased in a manner such that they are in tune with global capitalism, the rise of neo-colonial power, contemporary versions of Eurocentrism, and interpenetrations and reversals between the different 'worlds'. I am interested in the idea that postcolonialism has become, problematically, appealing because it disguises power relations that are shaping our seemingly amorphous world and in doing so is subversive to possibilities of resistance (Dirlik, 1997, p. 523).

One of the disguised consequences of the postcolonial world appears to be that the potential for change has shifted from a debate over racial and gender hierarchy to one of class hierarchy (Mohanty, 2004, p. 192). The increasing of material wealth appears to be the current modus

operandi of capitalist power relations. Furthermore, if money is power it is also the preferred currency for upward class mobility.
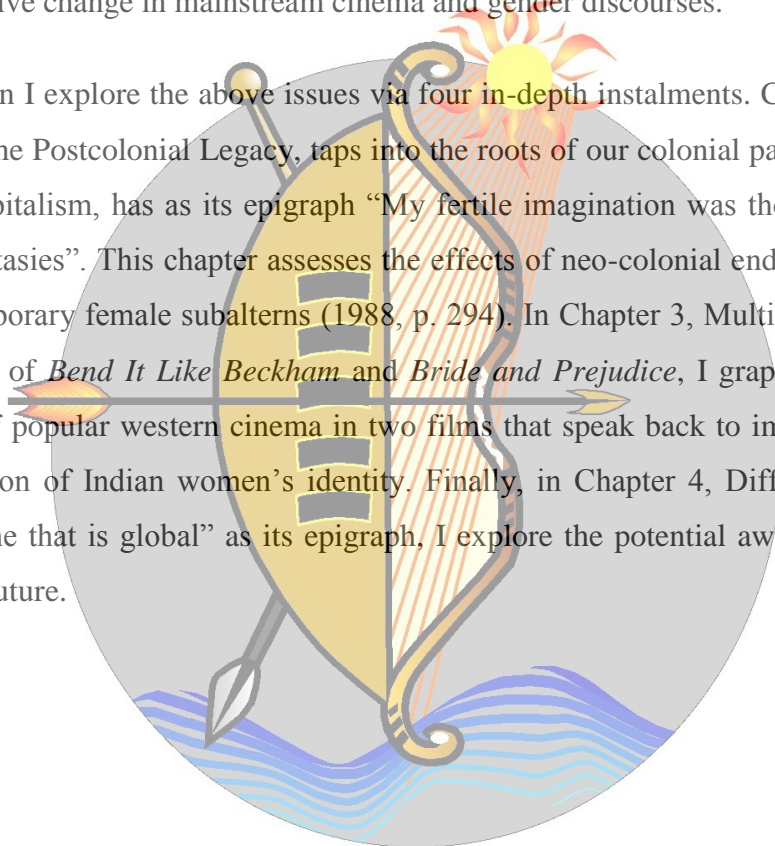
Neo-colonial capitalism, as one of the disguised power relations, is proving a worthy successor to its European predecessor. I posit that the USA, as the current authority on capitalism, is using technology and global mass culture to sell itself, and American ideals, to an unknowingly neo-colonised world. I examine this phenomenon with specific regard to America's contribution to the representation of Indian women in the study of media, specifically film, which arguably reveals reflections of realities in the 21st century. Despite the existence of hyper-real and stylised film genres it is significant that stereotypes of 'women', particularly 'women' of colour, tend to cross borders of real and surreal. Furthermore, these stereotypes seem to translate across borders from film realities into audience realities. A vast collection of feminist film study exists specifically in relation to white and black women. I come from a country which historically racially segregated people, of different races, into more than just black and white. Hence I am always aware that I am Indian, female, South African and western, but with Indian cultural roots. I exhibit pride in those roots, but I am equally proud of my South African heritage and the strides being made after the demise of apartheid. In other words I am patriotic to my country and my Indian heritage. Furthermore, I am not alone in negotiating between my many roles and cultures. Simply put, I am eager to expand the niche of academic understanding vis-à-vis multicultural Indian women.

Therefore, a feminist study of western film and cinema serves as an entry point into exploring the dialogue between real and imagined Indian women. Laura Mulvey, a pioneer of feminist film study, conceptualised the idea of the 'male gaze'. She hypothesised that masculine structures of 'looking' permeate the creation and production of films such that women are represented as erotic objects. This objectification of women is in turn disseminated to diverse audiences, via worldwide film distribution, encouraging gender and racial prejudice (1975, pp. 6-27). Additionally, E. Ann Kaplan approaches film study from a postmodern perspective, thus prompting my investigation of the specific subaltern culture relating to diasporan Indian people (Humm, 1997, p. 28). Kaplan is of particular interest to me as she grapples with film theory issues that revolve around race. In terms of representation she focuses on the experience of

women of colour and furthermore, their self re-presentation in film (1997, pp. 28, 190, 222). Kaplan is pertinent as she picks up on Mulvey's concept of the masculine, imperial 'gaze' and its reversal by women of colour (1997, p. 219).

I go on to explore the concept of multicultural travelling, of a reclaimed Indian female gaze and agency as a means to change stereotypical film representations for film-makers and viewers. Furthermore, I utilise the textual analysis of *Bend It Like Beckham* and *Bride and Prejudice*, two films directed and produced by a diasporic Indian female, to examine the validity of film as a medium for positive change in mainstream cinema and gender discourses.

In this dissertation I explore the above issues via four in-depth instalments. Chapter 1, Tradition vs. Modernity: The Postcolonial Legacy, taps into the roots of our colonial past while Chapter 2, Neo-colonial Capitalism, has as its epigraph "My fertile imagination was thoroughly colonized by American fantasies". This chapter assesses the effects of neo-colonial endeavours on Gayatri Spivak's contemporary female subalterns (1988, p. 294). In Chapter 3, Multicultural Identity: A Textual Analysis of *Bend It Like Beckham* and *Bride and Prejudice*, I grapple with the quasi-fictional space of popular western cinema in two films that speak back to imperial inheritances and the negotiation of Indian women's identity. Finally, in Chapter 4, Difference and Power, with "A color line that is global" as its epigraph, I explore the potential awaiting multicultural travellers in the future.

Chapter 1

Tradition vs. Modernity: The Postcolonial Legacy

In this chapter I map the effects of colonialism as a key contributor to contemporary ideologies of power, race, class/caste, gender, postcolonialism and multiculturalism, and ultimately provide a canvas for the emergence of the Indian female multicultural identity. I propose that the effects of colonialism, and consequently the above-mentioned ideologies, as well as significant ties to Indian tradition, religion and culture, have manifested the crucible in which contemporary Indian multicultural identities are formed. Furthermore, this chapter establishes the theoretical and physical mobility of women, particularly Indian women, across the globe. Their multicultural identities serve as passports for crossing borders.

Initially European colonialism was characterised by a simple-minded focus on the conquest and occupation of territories. There was no agenda beyond the expansion of colonial property through the acquisition of land. This paradigm was the precursor to the more subtle colonialism which Ashis Nandy succinctly describes as "a commitment to the conquest and occupation of minds, selves and cultures" (cited in Gandhi, 1998, p. 15). Thus colonialism can be viewed as the aggressive conquest of land and economy, and in the case of European colonialism, a "re-structuring of non-capitalist economies in order to fuel European capitalism" (Loomba, 2005, p. 23). Edward Said develops this idea by positing that colonisers felt impelled by their impressive ideologies which included the idea that certain territories and people need – in fact, plead – for domination as well as forms of knowledge associated with that domination (1993, p. 8). In effect European colonisers justified and legitimised their domination on the grounds of their having superior knowledge and being the superior race to those they colonised. They believed it was their duty to increase their respective territories and spread the gospel of their god and ideologies (Venn, 2006, p. 68). Thus by invoking a triple occupation of colonised peoples and lands European colonialism did more than just exact tribute in the form of "goods and wealth" from the countries that it conquered – "it restructured economies" (Loomba, 2005, p. 9).

Furthermore, "goods and wealth" were not the only commodities the colonisers traded in. Included in colonial commerce was a flow of "human and natural resources between colonised

and colonial countries" (9). Thanks to the geographical spread of territories across the globe colonisers were able to propagate their economic infrastructure of trade in the form of the market society. Colonisers therefore exercised absolute power over the colonial territories (land), as well as the people and resources (commodities). "Racism facilitated this process, and was the conduit through which the labour of colonised people was appropriated" (107). It is this flow, this physical removal from one's land of origin and the simultaneous mental alteration in the people who were colonised that is pertinent to this dissertation. Moreover, the interaction between the coloniser and colonised, and the structures of control over culture and representation that the coloniser utilised have forever changed the way in which colonised peoples and their descendents perceive themselves. Being positioned in power systems of hierarchies and binaries, where they operated as the negative to the European colonial positive, ensured that peoples were never allowed to forget their otherness, their supposed ignorance and hence their negatively portrayed difference from their colonisers. Furthermore, "Rarely did the onslaught of colonialism entirely obliterate colonised societies [...F]ar from being exclusively oppositional, the encounter with colonial power occurred along a variety of ambivalent registers" (Gandhi, 1998, p. 124). These seemingly ambivalent registers or networks of control infiltrated the colonised psyche through ideologies of power and governance, race, gender and class/caste. These ideologies, with their emphasis on difference as unacceptable, played on existing lines of diversity, obscuring from the oppressed the actual state of their own lives and hence camouflaging the abuse of power perpetrated by the colonisers (Loomba, 2005, p. 27).

Therefore the unknowing subjects internalised western[1] systems of repression and reproduced them by conforming to certain Eurocentric ideas of what is 'normal' and what is 'deviant' (40). These standards of propriety were dictated by colonial criteria and the colonised subject was judged against the benchmark of the coloniser and deliberately found wanting. The colonial mission to civilise and educate was more an exercise in power than it was an attempt to rehabilitate the supposedly ignorant subject in the image of the colonial oppressors, as the goal of

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1 With the exception of direct quotations I have deliberately chosen to use the lower case 'w', with regard to the words 'west' or 'westernisation', as I do not wish to portray the west as a monolithic entity.

the coloniser was in opposition to that of the colonised. The subjects could never attain the goal of their oppression, namely to attain equality with the white, male, European, 'superior', 'educated', 'civilised' coloniser. European colonisers utilised a multiplicity of methods and patterns of domination, all of which fashioned and encouraged the imbalance that was necessary for the growth of European capitalism and industry in the colonised territories and peoples (9). The exercising of power as a means to dominate and reconstitute subjects produced in the colonies "hybrid regimes of power", a grafting of imperial power structures onto colonial governments that the 'docile' subjects themselves entrenched as normal (Venn, 2006, p. 63).

The focus of this chapter, thus far, has remained upon colonial structures and ideologies and their far-reaching consequences upon the people and places colonised. It is appropriate and pertinent at this juncture to draw into relief the specific context of India and the effects colonialism has wrought upon its females and subsequently its female diasporic descendents. As previously expounded, European colonisation did not merely encroach upon physical territory, the geographical landscape of India, but also upon India's people. Their minds were conquered as systematically as the land upon which they lived. India's pre-colonial social structure operated via the oppressive caste system which pre-dated colonial influence by a number of centuries. It is a rigid social system in which a social hierarchy is maintained generation after generation and allows little mobility out of the position into which a person is born. Aryan priests divided the society into the basic caste system, placing their own priestly caste at the head of the hierarchy. Thus created by the priests, the caste system was made a part of Hindu religious law and rendered secure by the claim of divine revelation (Dumont, 1972, pp. 186-200). India's caste system "marked a social, economic and religious hierarchy overlaid with connotations of purity and pollution, similar to those that shape the idea of race" (Loomba, 2005, p. 107).

The caste system pigeonholed people into hierarchies that dictated how they lived their lives. Levels of occupations/trade and social rank were two of the most visible indicators of the caste system at work. In terms of economic, social and religious status the caste system conferred power primarily on Indian men. Colonisers' *knowledge* and hence their dubious familiarity with local cultural practices were the key to unlocking the colonised Indians' culture. In India, the caste system, specifically, facilitated colonial enterprises. Colonisers used the ostensible

"objectivity of observation" (57), and hence their insight into Indian culture, to justify colonial intrusion into Indian people's lives and territory (59). Consequently, colonisers mastered their colonised subjects by learning their existing cultural practices and if, as in the case of the caste system, the practices aided their agenda, they incorporated this knowledge to their advantage. Chandra Talpade Mohanty succinctly elucidates that "all forms of ruling operate by constructing, and consolidating as well as transforming, already existing social inequalities" (Mohanty, 1991, p. 18). Alternatively, if the practices did not support the colonial agenda, colonisers aggressively displaced *other* social systems with their own. It is this aggressive opportunism of colonial powers that drove the colonial nail deeper into the hearts, minds and lands of the colonised subalterns.

With regard to Indian females it was only through an accident of birth and later marriage, within the same caste, that a woman was accorded the same caste standing as her family or husband. Thus, pre-colonial Indian women were trained, by religion and tradition, to be dutiful daughters, wives and mothers who followed the guidelines set out by their caste. Any women foolish enough to "break codes of silence and subservience became the objects of extreme hostility" and were subsequently ostracised by men and women of their caste (O'Hanlan cited in Loomba, 2005, p. 186). This is what generations of Indian women were taught to believe and expected to teach to future female offspring. These patriarchally constructed paragons were further entrenched in their duty through a tacit agreement between religious and social dogma; a tradition which ensured the continued socio-economic dependence of Indian women upon their male providers.

This social structure, coupled with religious conviction, ensured absolute belief in the caste system. Loomba points out that colonial "stereotypes also work in tandem with pre-colonial power relations" (85). As a result those who belonged to the "historically repressed" (86) lower castes, who were "already relegated to the margins of Hindu society" (86), were regarded by colonial authorities as less sophisticated than their upper caste 'betters'. The colonisers used, to their advantage, the socially constructed ethnic/community groupings which, knowingly or unknowingly, served to oppress Indian people (106). Hence, pre-existing notions of caste marginalisation were extrapolated, under colonial encouragement, into racial and gender

marginalisation. This meant that the pre-colonial Indian woman became a colonial subject further oppressed through the tacit alliance between colonial oppression and caste domination.

The colonisation of India signalled a shift in the existing hierarchies of power. The patriarchal Indian male stopped being superior in status (outside the realm of the domestic); he became the inferior of the conqueror, the *other* to the coloniser and in effect the 'docile' male human subject. Colonialism redefined for subaltern males the constitution of their identities. Indian males were represented as ignorant, savage, lustful and barbaric towards their women. Indian females were depicted as "the benighted women of our Queen's vast empire" (Burton, 1994, pp. 8-9). They were described as such by evangelical white males – and females – bent on the civilising mission to reform and save the natives from themselves or from each other. Whether or not male and female Indians were actually filled with lust or benighted, respectively, was an irrelevance. Said points out that the power of the colonisers essentially lay in their ability to speak for and to represent those that they colonised (cited in Heung, 1995, p. 83). Furthermore, their representation, preceded by biased colonial interpretation, was a Machiavellian means of assessing, finding and exploiting existing weakness in the Indians' social structures. The exact amount of truth – or altruism – in the colonial interpretations and hence representations is anyone's guess. By allying themselves with the high level castes colonisers hypocritically reinforced the ideas of traditional oppression, whilst simultaneously using that oppression to further their agenda.

Gayatri Spivak theorises that within the context of colonial production "the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant" (1988, p. 287). This implies that the male subaltern will also remain dominant within his class/caste and culture whilst simultaneously being docile towards his coloniser. This schism in male subaltern power led to colonised males reinforcing what little power they retained in the private, domestic sphere, specifically regarding their interactions with the subaltern females in their lives. Colonialism intensified patriarchal oppression, often because native men, increasingly disenfranchised and excluded from the public sphere, became more tyrannical at home. They seized upon the home and the woman as emblems of their culture and nationality. The outside world could be westernised but all was not lost if the domestic space retained its cultural purity (Loomba, 2005, p. 142).

Tellingly, the subaltern Indian males subverted the seemingly idealised icon of 'woman' as cultural and national repository in order to remain in control of the actual females, culture and nationality, thus maintaining the lack of agency in Indian females' lives. Ironically, this ubiquitous trope of 'woman-as-nation' ensured that colonised Indian females remained locked in the unending cycle of domestic and national as well as colonial subordination (Ray, 2000, p. 3). The efficient functioning of this particular trope depends, for its "representational efficacy", on a particular image of "woman as chaste, dutiful, daughterly or maternal" (3). This begs the question why 'women' are the repositories of culture and tradition even when that tradition is detrimental to their rights as human beings.

According to Anne McClintock, women are "typically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation but are denied any direct link to national agency" (1997, p. 90). Thus represented by two parties, the subaltern males and the colonisers, the subaltern Indian female was seldom afforded the agency to speak for herself or resist colonial influence. Historically, tradition has proven a difficult phenomenon to let go of, specifically one tied up with religious practice and dogma. "Even if [Indian] men had to adapt because they were a part of the ephemeral [colonial] public life, [Indian] women could always be counted on to affirm the continuity of tradition" (Ray, 2000, p. 3). If as a male subaltern he has lost power and cannot speak, his female counterpart, to be precise the female subaltern, is "even more deeply in shadow" (Loomba, 2005, p. 287). The Indian female became a poorer *other* – doubly oppressed by virtue of being non-white and female.

The Indian diaspora – caused largely through the colonial re-shuffling of human resources as cheap indentured labour – gave rise to the migration of a portion of the Indian populace out of the Indian sub-continent. It was a divisive society that the British Raj imposed on India. The indentured labourers who were sent to other British colonies around the world faced more of the same indignity they had experienced in their homeland. Over and above this, these Indians, hypocritically, brought the caste system, in all its alienation, with them (Naidoo cited in Govender, 2008, p. xi).

It is useful to distinguish between the 'native' (resident) and 'diasporic' (nonresident) experience, as the experience of the voluntary and involuntary colonised immigrants is significantly different from that of the people who remained in colonial India (Rajan, 1993, p. 9). Firstly, the interaction that the indentured labourers and their families had with the western world, coupled with its prejudices, altered their perceptions of colonial control. Secondly, their descendents, the nonresidents, while sharing common points of identity with the resident Indian descendents, both male and female, "do not inhabit the same historic space" (9).

The indentured labourers were moved to other colonial territories as a work-force to ensure the continued productivity and economic superiority of Europe as well as enforcing the ideologies of colonial rule, such as capitalism. After slavery was abolished "indentured labour" became the colonial public relations exercise in damage control. Phyllis Naidoo argues that:

> "indentured labour" which replaced slavery was far more profitable to the architects than the latter. Slaves were the "property of their masters" and therefore like all "possessions" they were cared for and protected. Indentured labourers, on the other hand, were just armed with a flimsy agreement [...] 10 shillings, dhal and rice per month. The "Boss" washed his hands of his indentured labourers. No houses, labour from 5am to 9pm – which included mothers and children; and no provision for schools (even education under so-called "civilised" Christian tutelage was denied.) The system was motivated solely by profit – everything else was just a smoke-screen. (Cited in Govender, 2008, p. xi)

Leela Gandhi points out that colonialism was a "necessary sub-plot to the emergence of market society in Europe" and hence "the concomitant globalisation of capital" (1998, p. 24). This control of trade and goods was specifically indoctrinated and maintained through ideologies of marginalisation. Ania Loomba defines ideology as a system which serves the function of obscuring from working and other oppressed classes the 'real' or exploitative state of their own lives (2005, p. 27). As well as being a means of supporting the emergence and establishment of contemporary, dominant capitalist ideology, colonial trading of human resources ensured that the link between colonised peoples and colonial attitudes was maintained through various channels of power. Colonial governing mentality utilised the form of power that Foucault (1979) described as pastoral power. This power targets individuals as well as populations in its attempt

to constitute docile bodies and 'normal' subjects. Furthermore, it is a power that seeks both subjection and subjectification (Venn, 2006, pp. 62-3).

However, during the latter half of the 19th century a growing political consciousness led to the expression of dissatisfaction with the abusive nature of imperial, colonial rule. In India this dissatisfaction was further promulgated by a politically aware group, for the most part male, who comprised journalists, lawyers and teachers from India's English-educated intelligentsia. The collapse of European colonial rule from the late 19th to the mid-20th century physically removed some European colonisers from occupied territories; however, the mental occupation of colonised peoples did not cease. Gandhi suggests that "The perverse longevity of the colonised is nourished, in part, by persisting colonial hierarchies of knowledge and value" (1998, p. 7). The so-called end of colonial rule left clusters of people removed from their mother country, but held in thrall by their colonisers' ideals of governance, status and marginality. By the time an anti-colonial mindset began to resist the ties to colonial power and social structures, it was difficult to effect immediate and practical change in the lives of formerly colonised subjects. The metamorphosed descendents of the indentured labourers were already culturally 'hybridised', and by subscribing to colonial teaching, *other*.

William Safran describes his ideal diaspora by referring to five characteristics, three of which are "minority status in the host community and the experience of exclusion", "the hope of return" and "connections maintained to the homeland that have effects for identity" (cited in Venn, 2006, p. 182). However, the descendents could never go back 'home' because they have never in effect been home, literally or metaphorically. Thus 'home' becomes more than just a tangible geographical point of origin, in this case the trope of mother India, especially as the descendents' identity origins can be contested in light of their contact with the colonial and postcolonial worlds. Furthermore, "the notion of citizenship, of belonging, of 'normality' regarding conduct and identity, of rights, has becomes further determined by the history of colonialism" (182). Postcolonial descendents have had limited contact with information on their pre-colonial heritage, firstly because the colonisers deemed 'native' heritage, customs, education and writings inferior to their own, and secondly because they replaced pre-colonial systems of knowledge with their own and taught the colonised people to believe their systems primitive, uncivilised and

inferior. Thus postcolonial descendents are fighting their own mental, social and historic conditioning. They have in fact become, in Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay's infamous words, "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste", and always cognisant of the perpetual gap between themselves and the 'real thing', thus ensuring their subjection (cited in Loomba, 2005, p. 146).

Couze Venn theorises that "subjectification require that one [the coloniser] must know, or presume to know, the *other* in order to transform or reform 'him'" (2006, p. 68). This presumption of knowing and being able to speak for and hence re-form (in their own image) and represent the colonised is in keeping with imperial colonial thinking (Said cited in Heung, 1995, p. 83). Mention is made of transforming 'him' but there is no reference to any 'her' because the female subaltern was viewed as an extension of the male subaltern, not an entity or threat to colonial authority in her own right. Witness to the colonisers' belief in their own superiority is Macaulay's memorandum of 1835 (see Venn 2006, Gandhi 1998) in which he denigrated an entire cache of Indian history, writings and culture as worthless because it was not of imperial British origin. Macaulay, in his conceit, failed to recognise that those people he deemed inferior had existed as a structured society with developments in science, technology, architecture, literature, art, dance and spirituality. Recent archaeological discoveries have proved that Ancient Indian civilisation has in fact existed prior to 2800 BCE (Arnett, 2006, p. 168).

In response to this wiping out of 'native' history Bhabha suggests that "memory is the necessary and sometimes hazardous bridge between colonialism and the question of cultural identity" (cited in Gandhi, 1998, p. 9). Thus, memory serves as an archive, as well as the key to mapping one's altered identity. However, what occurs when the memories are not particularly flattering? From a western perspective pre-colonial Indian women did not have an enviable existence. Furthermore, to a postcolonial Indian woman, liberated, to a degree, living in western society, the existence of the pre-colonial Indian female is not an enviable one.

Venn describes the process of creation for mutated post-colonial identities as a kind of "creolisation and transculturation" (2006, p. 44). These processes are typically associated with diasporic displacement and consequent turbulence which occurs in the course of the encounter of

cultures (44). Colonialism was the catalyst for the pastiche of contemporary identities and an amalgamation resulting in multicultural identities. Given this, the question may be asked: what constitutes a contemporary multicultural identity?

Historically, Franz Fanon hypothesises that colonial oppression induced the accelerated mutation of colonised societies (cited in Gandhi, 1998, p.130). Colonised societies internalise systems of repression and reproduce them, thus conforming to behavioural ideas of deviance and normality (Loomba, 2005, p. 40). Antonio Gramsci, however, subverts Fanon's theory by proposing that the oppressed subjects possessed dual consciousness: one which was beholden to the rules and therefore complicit with the colonisers' will, and one that was capable of resistance (cited in Loomba, 2005, p. 29). If the oppressed subjects are aware of the duality of their consciousness this implies that they are able to consciously choose between them. Therefore, as a result of postcolonial opposition, there is the possibility of Gramsci's oppressed subject actively resisting the coloniser's will. If that resistance is coupled with the ability to think outside of the oppressor/oppressed dichotomy, a self-aware subaltern has the potential to transcend colonial subjugation. This subaltern ceases to be subaltern and instead embraces a multicultural heritage. This makes multiculturalism, and hence multicultural identities, democratic, as "multiculturalism aspires to decolonize representation" (Stam, 1997, p. 189).

There are, however, several problems facing multicultural identities and multiculturalism as a debate. Neoconservatives consider multiculturalism itself an attack on the west, especially its classical areas of study and its written history (190). Alternatively, multiculturalism is viewed as "therapy for the minorities" (196), whereby its primary function is to "raise the self-esteem of children [descendents] from minority groups" (196). What neoconservatives fail to take into consideration is that history, largely written by white, male, colonial powers, was likely biased and exaggerated in favour of oppressive colonisers. Any inherited guilt or defensiveness, on the part of neoconservatives, does not justify trivialising or excluding non-white perspectives of history, experiences and narratives. Unfortunately, the west remains the privileged medium for all apparently cross-cultured discourses. Moreover, within the metropolis, multicultural celebrations of 'cultural diversity' conveniently disguise rather more serious economic and political disparities (Gandhi, 1998, p. 136).

13

Consequently, multiculturalism risks becoming a convenient public relations exercise between the west and the rest of the world. Issues of continued race and gender discrimination abound as "the intersections of various systemic networks of class, race, [hetero]sexuality and nation still position us as 'women'" (Mohanty, 1991, p. 13). Historically constructed female identities, white and non-white, are manipulated to aid race and gender discrimination. If the multicultural identities do not comply with the expected compositions they are deemed negative by the disapproving arbiters of tradition and contemporary ideology. Patriarchally prescribed roles of the subservient, self-sacrificing, motherly, docile, dependent 'woman' with semi-agency are still a part of the multicultural psyche.

In delving into the constitution of the Indian female diaspora descendant's identity there are two levels of power at play, and usually at variance with each other, namely tradition and modernity. The facets of a multicultural identity are informed by the private, domestic environment – including cultural practices and prejudices – and public sphere experiences, the majority of which are points of contact with the western world and its ideologies. Said describes the multicultural condition by saying:

> The sense of being between cultures has been very, very strong for me. I would say that's the single strongest strand running through my life: the fact that I am always in and out of things, and never really of anything for very long. (Cited in Parry, 1992, p. 19)

Although Said is a male subaltern commentator his experience is familiar to the female subaltern because the feelings about being "in and out of things" and "never really of anything for very long" are similar. Beyond the tradition versus westernisation polarity there is a reconfiguration of subjectivity and hence of representation. It is apparent that the space of belonging in the postcolonial world, particularly the postcolonial western world, is "already pluralized" (Venn, 2006, p. 84). Furthermore, contemporary forms of worlding are rooted in a plurality of histories and experiences inscribed in temporalities and spatialities that now co-habit (77), so that the analysis of the uprootings and regroundings that shape contemporary identities must range from the "micro-politics of embodied inhabitance and migration, to the macro-politics of transnationalism and global capital" (Ahmed, 2003, p. 2).

In dealing with the contemporary multicultural Indian female identity, one has to take into consideration that she, and her postcolonial sisters, are not necessarily 'third world'[2] women (Loomba, 2005, p. 190). With particular regard to the subject of this dissertation the multicultural travellers – the diaspora-descended Indian females – are a product and a part of contemporary western culture. Moreover, levels of class, economic independence, gender equality and even inherited culture and traditions create fractured factions amongst Indian female diaspora descendents. Just as the experience of the 'third world' (190) subaltern women differs from that of the subaltern women living in the west so too do multicultural females' experiences differ from each other.

The initial spread of Indian people across the globe, as indentured labourers, involuntarily and voluntarily, was an act of moving possessions to different territories on the part of colonial powers. Conversely, in later years voluntary immigrants left India without the aegis of the colonial indentured labour contract. Immigration, a voluntary act, implies that the choice, and hence agency, was left in the hands of the Indian immigrants. It follows that the experience of the indentured labourers, who were moved to colonies as cheap labour, with little or no support from the colonisers once at the colony, had a very different cognisance of the west, colonisation, subjectivity, oppression and so forth. They were cogs in the colonial machine. The voluntary immigrants, however, had an altered relationship with colonial and western prejudicial ideology. In moving out of India they were motivated by the dream of a better life.

It is highly probable that the western prejudices experienced by the indentured labourers and the voluntary immigrants were one and the same. What is significant is each group's reasons for leaving India and how they responded or coped with the oppressions cast upon them once in the west. The indentured labourers accepted colonialism, and all it entailed, as their lot in life. After having inherited and lived with British occupation for over 200 years they viewed colonialism, whether in India or elsewhere, as the norm. The voluntary immigrants grasped the west as an

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[2] "'Third World' refers to colonized, neo-colonized, or colonized nations and 'minorities' whose disadvantages have been shaped by the colonial process and by the unequal division of international labor" (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 25).

opportunity for betterment in comparison with their situations in India. It must be remembered that these groups, and the definite shift in paradigm of the latter group towards western/colonial powers, are separated by differing times and contexts and therefore theoretically in their respective reactions to the west.

If one is a female of Indian descendant living in the west, outside of contemporary India, the country/nation and its ideologies are barely recognisable because they operate outside one's locus of knowledge and understanding. By virtue of creolisation cultures cannot but be "heterogeneous" and "polyglot" (180). If one's primary contributors towards the formation of one's identity are country/nationality, gender, race, social status, class and religion – possibly in that order – one's identity is significantly different from that of one's resident Indian female counterpart. India can be viewed by the diasporic female descendant, through a skewed western lens, as archaic in its relations to gender equality, and its caste hierarchies are perceived as an infringement on human rights. The diasporic female descendant is faced with being foreign to India, her country of 'origin'. She is detached from a sense of authentic national belonging, both mentally and geographically, as the Indian nation state is outside of her personal experience. She is more 'removed' from India and a sense of national belonging than the ancestral, migratory indentured labourers who contributed to her heritage. Consequently Safran's "hope of return" (182) coupled with Spivak's caution against romanticising "lost origins" (21) becomes replaced with Bhabha's "desire for the other" where the female subaltern seeks recognition from her coloniser as a means of cementing, as much as it can be, a constantly shifting identity (cited in Venn, 2006, pp. 181-2).

Thus she, the multicultural traveller, views India, past and present, much like her American or European counterparts do; through her west-educated lens. India, the idea and the country, becomes the exotic, romantic, morbidly fascinating third-world; a place where superficial points of 'not-quite' identification occur. This idea was promoted by western ideology in the early days of colonialism and such Eurocentric 'normality' has remained entrenched in 21st century thinking. It can be argued that it is more sympathy than empathy that motivates the identification and a quiet condescension accompanies the pity. The atrocity is that colonial 'civilising' has been bred into colonial descendents to such a subliminal degree that a female Indian diaspora

descendant can look at a woman from India and consider herself 'superior' because she has escaped the overt[3] shackles of Indian patriarchy/caste. As a multicultural traveller this semi-identification – and possibly rejection of India – becomes a case of 'us' and 'them' where 'us' is privileged; a semi-superior group for having had direct, continual contact with the democratic west, feminism and other first world phenomena. Moreover, she can mimic western, white women thereby enhancing her fluid multicultural identity. She is an *other* that the process of creolisation has transformed into more or less the same as a western woman; "white-but-not-quite" as Homi Bhabha describes in his analysis of mimicry (1994, p. 131). She has bought into her own representation so much that her identification with India and Indian tradition/culture is reduced to stereotyped confluence points of recognition in a film.

Hence the Indian woman, born of and living in the west, becomes the "political subject of decolonisation" (Gandhi, 1998, p. 130). She is a new entity, "engendered by the encounter between two conflicting systems of belief" (130). The European worlding of the globe has ensured that going back is not a viable option, especially for women. The removal of such titles as 'caste' and 'colonised' does not automatically wipe away the power structures ingrained over centuries of control. Contemporary socio-economic structures are too deeply and unconsciously embedded to be uprooted. Benita Parry describes the colonised's, and possibly the postcolonised's, predicament as an "inverse longing" and a "compulsion to return a voyeuristic gaze upon Europe" (cited in Gandhi, 1998, p. 11).

Even Spivak's self-aware subaltern experiences these involuntary moments of ingrained longing established in the minds of the colonised centuries before by European colonialism. Although one may be two or three generations removed from the original colonial experience there are foundations of repression built into the subaltern's psyche. Certain ways of being, and thinking of oneself as the *other* are considered 'common sense' and hence normal to everyday life. If one

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3There are many unwritten laws and layers of duty disguised by tradition that continue to pervade Indian communities living outside of India, specifically regarding females and relationships. The hierarchical social codes may not be as easily visible as they are within India but they do exist.
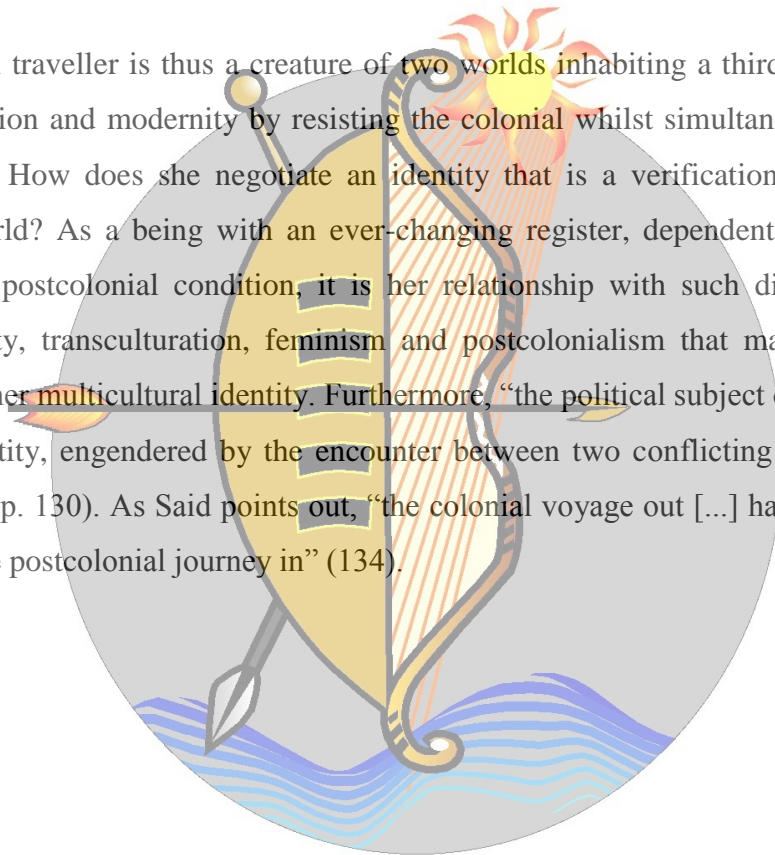
is not conscious of the abnormality of 'common sense' and the 'normal' one remains a part of the reproduction of repression. However, there is still the assertion that emulation of the oppressor might validate the marginalised *other*. With this in mind, how does Spivak's multicultural 'subaltern' relate to her own postcoloniality (Spivak, 1988, p. 294)?

A possible suggestion is the idea that postcolonial theory inevitably entails a complex project of historical and psychological 'recovery' to the multicultural women living in first world countries, born into first world practices. As a represented subject the identity of the contemporary subaltern Indian female is transcultured through her inherited past and ongoing contact with western ideology so that the journey to a reconciled identity, one informed by both tradition and modernity, is marked by a "radical shift in the horizon of experience and the horizon of expectation" (Venn, 2006, p. 84). This opens up discourse about the theories and practicalities of "indigenous belonging versus Westernisation, and the possibility of what Bhabha terms a 'third space'" (84). This third space is described by Mohanty as "the intersections of the various systemic networks of class, race, sexuality, and nation that position us as 'women'" (1991, p. 13).

With regard to the female multicultural traveller it can be said that depending on which group one is descended from – indentured labourers or voluntary immigrants – one's experience differs vastly. In addition, for a multicultural traveller living in the United States of America as a working class, first generation immigrant, the experience of western life is differentiated from that of a traveller living and working in South Africa as a fourth generation descendant of an indentured labourer. The inherited experience is further fragmented by each individual female's own life experience, and further, "questions of [continued] subjectivity are always mediated through the axes of race, class/caste, sexuality and gender" (33). Since the late 20th century the western world, and more specifically western-influenced countries, have deliberately encouraged identities inspired by nationhood (Mufti and Shohat, 1997, pp. 2-4). The national identity was assumed to the extent that communities appeared homogenous under the umbrella term 'nation'. Capitalism, the dominant economic ideology in several countries' infrastructures, has ensured that almost every individual is striving toward the common goal of economic affluence and consequently upward social mobility. However, despite the attractively packaged idea of nation

and its apparent perquisites we are not all the same. Beneath the thin national veneer the democratic dream inspired by utopian ideals is underscored by the differences of race, culture, class, social status and gender. Twenty-first century postcolonial descendents feed into a system that is largely taken for granted, a system that had its beginnings in the colonising of the globe several hundred years ago. However, an organic restructuring is slowly occurring as, "Now more than ever thanks to [...] colonial karma [...] Europe absorbs the reflux of its own former colonised peoples" in the form of multicultural travellers, people with a multicultural heritage and a multicultural identity (Stam, 1997, p. 188).

The multicultural traveller is thus a creature of two worlds inhabiting a third. She is constantly negotiating tradition and modernity by resisting the colonial whilst simultaneously assimilating the postcolonial. How does she negotiate an identity that is a verification of a decolonised, multicultural world? As a being with an ever-changing register, dependent on the fluctuating variables of the postcolonial condition, it is her relationship with such discourses as socio-economic equality, transculturation, feminism and postcolonialism that makes up the highly faceted jewel of her multicultural identity. Furthermore, "the political subject of decolonisation is herself a new entity, engendered by the encounter between two conflicting systems of belief" (Mohanty, 1991, p. 130). As Said points out, "the colonial voyage out [...] has met its unsettling counterpart in the postcolonial journey in" (134).

Chapter 2

Neo-colonial Capitalism:

> My fertile imagination was thoroughly colonized by American fantasies.
>
> Jessica Hagedorn 1994, p. 74

In this chapter I explore the United States of America as a primary proponent of neo-colonialism in the 21st century. Furthermore, this chapter examines the combination of American neo-colonialism and capitalism and by extension the extensive effects on the relationship between neo-colonisers and the 21st century subaltern. Included as integral to the process of neo-colonising is the element of mass media production, that is to say the use of the "techno-informational-cultural" sphere as one arm of the multifarious neo-colonising process (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 17). Within the context of the techno-informational-cultural sphere I draw particular attention to media literacy and the imperial gaze: instigators of the attendant effects in Indian female representation in popular western cinema.

Neo-colonialism coupled with capitalism – the embodiment of the philosophy of self-interest – has ensured that the USA is dominant in economic, political, military and the techno-informational-cultural sphere worldwide. This network of communication is a direct reference to mass media (television, film, and advertising and news broadcasters) as well as information technology (the internet, computer hardware and software, video games) all of which have had and continue to have impact on the global population and the world as a geographical landscape. Never before has the plethora of information and its distribution through varied visual media been as pervasive as it is in the 21st century. Consequently, these informational/entertainment mediums, because they are largely created by the US, are under US dominion. So too are the people who experience and are influenced by the media under US domination, be they first or 'third world' subalterns (17). In the light of contemporary globalisation the modern-day 'native', the modern day 'subaltern', is no longer available as an intact, untainted object of Orientalist enquiry – she is contaminated by the west, and hence dangerously un-otherable (Chow cited in Gandhi, 1998, p. 127).

The USA, along with Western Europe and Japan, has firmly established itself as a dominant first-world super power. Power is centred in the west as is the concentration of world capital, technologies, and advanced labour. The above, coupled with pervasive narratives and imagery of western societies, motivates the raison d'être of global mass culture such that the rest of the contemporary global landscape is subject to the control of these powerful nation-states (Hall, 1997, pp. 178-9). With regard to advances and discoveries in several fields including medicine, media and technology, and commercialised food production, the USA promotes itself as the standard that the rest of the world has to follow. Furthermore, in its capacity as a first world super-power the USA exercises an unspoken yet almost inflexible control over the world's assets via maintaining the dominant economic ideology, namely capitalism. In its contemporary incarnation neo-colonial capitalism remains an exploitative relationship between the west and its 'third world' others by tacitly implying economic prosperity can be achieved by following in the footsteps of first world countries' example (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 17). However, the philanthropic vision that the US has of itself, as a trail-blazing pioneer-cum-mediator for the rest of the world, is rather skewed in light of its being a neo-coloniser.

Where colonialism was primarily a European endeavour, neo-colonialism appears to be an ongoing 20th and 21st century American[4] enterprise. As a first world country, the heart of the contemporary west, America has historically promoted itself as the arbiter of democracy – the land of the free and the home of the brave – whilst heavily relying on imperial/colonial ideologies and structures of power. The fundamental nature of neo-colonialism is such that it depicts imperialism in its latest metamorphosis. The countries and peoples that are subject to it are, in theory, independent with all the trappings of international political, social and economic autonomy. In reality their economic system is a distilled product of colonial and latter day neo-colonial practices. Thus their political policy is directed from outside. This implies that control is deployed through economic channels of power by the neo-coloniser (Nkrumah, 1971, p. ix). Capitalism, particularly as the hegemonic global economic ideology, has flourished worldwide under western control. As the current authority on capitalism America wields power through this

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[4] For the purposes of this dissertation the use of words America and Americans in the text is a direct reference to only the USA and its people, not the continent of North America.

tool, imposing rules on third world countries that first world countries would never tolerate (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 17). Stuart Hall reveals this process by exposing that America polices world globalisation, "stage-managing independence" within it (1997, p. 179). American policies utilise colonialist/imperialist discourses as the ideological and linguistic apparatus that justifies retroactive colonial/imperial practices (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 18). This is not to say that neo-colonialism, and by extension the contemporary first world and America, is responsible for all the disadvantages in the contemporary third world, merely that they have, like all colonisers, capitalised on that condition.

In utilising colonial structures the US has implicitly encouraged the undemocratic tradition of Eurocentric[5] thinking, originally invoked by European colonisers, as a means of continuing the subjection of neo-colonised peoples. America has replaced the European colonisers as the paternal figure maintaining order amongst the chaos of its 'third world' children. Contained within the Eurocentric paradigm are several generations of marginalised women who have been raised with racist and sexist celluloid images (Tajima, 1989, p. 317). Enduring traces of centuries of European colonial control inform the general mores, daily language and registers promoted via mass media in modern 21st century life, thus "engendering a fictitious sense of the innate superiority of European derived cultures and peoples" (1). America has, furthermore, attached to Eurocentric thinking its own ideals such that the two have become tacitly naturalised as 21st century 'common sense'. Therefore American or western philosophy, literature and technology, ideology, as well as western perspectives on history, are still touted as the norm, thus continuing in essence the binaries existing between races, sexes, classes and so forth.

Insofar as neo-colonising is concerned America has used to its advantage the theoretical underpinnings of egalitarianism explicit in the ideology of democracy. The American

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[5] Eurocentric thinking and structures continue to permeate *contemporary* practices and representations even after the formal end of colonialism (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 2).

government holds up itself and American history as the successful, if at times problematic[6], example of a democracy in action whilst glossing over its failings. Bearing witness to this are several military campaigns[7], most recently the post 9/11 'War on Terror', in which the USA claimed a divine right to protect democracy, that is to say America, as a concept as well as a physical space, from potential future attack. In his now notorious oration former American president, George W. Bush, justified the legitimacy of war in the 21st century by his proclamation "you are either with us, or with the terrorists" (Bush, 2001). He might as well have been channelling Harold Macmillan and his infamous words: "what is now on trial is much more than our military strength or our diplomatic and administrative skill – it is our way of life" (cited in Nkrumah, 1971, p. 54). Thus the Bush administration forced countries allied in whatever capacity to the USA to be dragged into supporting their war like dependent colonies. With one statement the Bush administration openly binarised the world into 'us' and 'them', homogenising the 'us' into a singular American monoculture following one imperial voice (Hawthorne, 2002, p. 342). In doing so America flexed its influential political muscle, calling to arms all countries, first and third world, under the aegis of its neo-colonial power, thereby putting those countries and their citizens in danger of terrorist attacks.

Furthermore, Susan Pritchett observes that war is the *only* option offered as the solution to any threat of future terrorist attacks, completely bypassing the usual international protocol of diplomatic intervention and thereby adding to an already atrocious amount of suffering, sacrifice and loss of human life (2005, p. 11). As devastating as the 9/11 attack was it must be noted that the number of people, American and non-American, who have been killed or injured in America's 'War on Terror' far out-number those killed or injured in the 9/11 attack. Moreover, the constant rebroadcasts of video footage from the 9/11 assault ensure that the levels of panic over future attacks remains high. Other terrorist bombings in other countries were not given nearly as much airplay, nor importance, as the 9/11 attacks, leading me to the deduction that to a

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[6] Democracy was initially for white men only and was later amended to include men in general and eventually white women and then women in general. Democracy culminated in the inclusion of homosexuals. Most recently it includes all people, in theory.

[7] The Vietnam War, The Gulf War, Kuwait War, The War on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq.

large extent the US exploited the attack as justification for its appalling behaviour in the Middle East.

By no means am I suggesting that the pain and suffering endured in America post 9/11 is any greater, lesser or for that matter more important than the pain and suffering experienced in the Middle Eastern countries. However, I do wish to highlight that the greater number of casualties primarily centred in the Middle Eastern countries are treated as collateral damage, the unfortunate casualties of war. The Americans so assiduously being protected, however, voyeuristically and vicariously gaze at the carnage through the lens of news broadcasts from the safety of their armchairs and have the option of changing the channel for lighter entertainment. Additionally, "Hollywood, particularly during wars but indirectly all the time, arrogates power and importance" to its parent country through films that glorify, directly or indirectly, the choices made by the US military and government (Kaplan, 1997, p. 226). Hollywood as part of media hype therefore produces the brand of film filled with knowledge/justification which in turn begets yet more power for the USA. As such the loss of the nameless, faceless casualties – often women and children – is deemed acceptable.

There is an inherent arrogance involved when one country, especially a 21st century, first-world, western one can justify killing another country's men, women and children, in order to protect their own. It is even more disturbing in light of that same country's self-promotion as diplomats and human rights enforcers. There is the implication that rooting out terrorist cells has become less about stopping terrorism and more about proving who has more power. This allows America and Americans to absolve themselves of guilt over the price paid thus far: other countries' people, other people's fatalities.

It can therefore be argued that America, in a demonstration of power, have used their 'War on Terror' as a covert means of creating military outposts – neo-colonies – in countries under suspicion of terrorist activity. As prophesied by Kwame Nkrumah in 1965 neo-colonialism is the breeding ground for military conflict in which "limited wars" are waged by neo-colonisers with the objective of establishing in small but independent countries a neo-colonialist regime (1971, p. xi). America in its military occupation and invocation of martial law, particularly in the

Middle East, has created 'little Americas' in these war torn countries. Under the umbrella of rooting out terrorism they have implemented martial law in the neo-colonised countries, inspiring democratic governments staffed by locals who derive governing power not from the partiality of their people but instead from the "support which they obtain from their neo-colonialist masters" (xv). Following this, the Americans intend to leave the fledgling, war-torn democracy to its own devices. As yet American troops have not been removed from all occupied Middle Eastern countries. As a neo-coloniser America thus satisfies the prescribed criteria of colonisation by first invading a country, and then setting up military bases and enforcing martial law, and finally by imposing on the colonised country and people their ideologies and "global mass culture" (Hall, 1997, p. 178).

In 1997 Stuart Hall theorised that the explosive growth of globalisation, which he terms "global mass culture", did not try to create, as colonialism did, satellites of the metropole, which he terms "little versions of Americaness [*sic*]" (1997, p. 179). I would dispute this by pointing out that twelve years on the proliferation of all things American, from clothing to music, commerce to media, the words and accents we use, indeed the very constitutions newly independent third world countries mimic, are all in some way predicated on "little versions of Americanness". The absorption and homogenisation of third world cultures and otherness become instead a kind of assimilation in reverse. It is the 'Americanness' with all its stratified social layers that is advertised as the superior lifestyle. That is what is assimilated by countries and subaltern peoples inside and outside America. Wherein then lies the difference between colonial powers and American neo-colonial power when both graft their ideological structures onto 'colonised' spaces?

Consequently, according to Peter McLaren and Tomaz Tadeu da Silva's apt interpretation of Paulo Freire's theories, America cannot be considered an agent of empowerment, liberating oppressed peoples both in mind and territory. Furthermore:

> the politics of difference that underwrites a pedagogy of empowerment does not locate identity in a centrist politics of consensus that leaves individuals to function and flounder as unwitting and obeisant servants of the state [neo-coloniser] but rather in a politics of location that invites them to be active shapers of their own histories. (1993, p. 57)

I would argue that America continues to, knowingly or unknowingly, export its 'Americentric' ideals and hence its inherent prejudices to other countries. In other words America 'liberates' other countries and peoples through a projection of what could be – the American utopian ideal and consequently the assumption of 'American' identity – instead of dealing with what actually exists in the countries being liberated/educated. At this point 'liberated' can be substituted by 'colonised'. Furthermore, the US undermines democracy, which in theory remains an admirable ideology, by coupling it with capitalism and Eurocentric thinking. The combination of a democracy operating in conjunction with Eurocentrism and capitalism is extremely problematic as the latter two are in direct opposition to the mandate of the former. Where democracy offers freedom of thought, speech, religion, sexuality and press to all people regardless of colour, creed, gender, religious affiliation, cultural or sexual practice, Eurocentrism by definition "bifurcates the world […] and organizes everyday [communication] into binaristic hierarchies implicitly flattering", in this case, to the neo-coloniser (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 2). What's more, capitalism categorises people further into class hierarchies based on their economic status.

The 'American dream' comes into play here as the supposed leveller of all prejudicial hierarchies. It is venerated as the formula for self-betterment which promises wealth, success and most importantly power through hard work and perseverance. The idea is that everyone in the United States regardless of colour, class, gender, or immigration status, has the potential to achieve success and prosperity, if one defines success and prosperity in materialistic terms. Furthermore, upward class mobility is tacitly intertwined in the nouveau riche package. In conjunction with this notion privileged leaders of monopoly capitalism build up an image in the global public consciousness of the 'American dream'. They utilise socio-cultural vocabulary with which they transform the 'American dream' into an idealised, harmonious civilisation that must be cherished at all costs (Nkrumah, 1971, p. 54). In order to make it attractive to those upon whom it is practised, the neo-colonised, it is publicised as proficient in raising living standards. However, the economic objective of neo-colonialism is to keep those standards depressed subject to the interests of the first world America (xv). Immigrants and travellers seek out the United States inspired by the mythic construct of America. However, once in the reality of America people find themselves "up against a social/psychic limit – a border they cannot cross" (Kaplan,

1997, p. 27). Considering that it is preached as one, the 'American dream' so desperately sought should be a birthright.

The 'American dream' has become normalised to the extent that it is a visible enticement embedded in everything attached to the neo-colonial capitalist agenda. This includes mass media, specifically film; and unfortunately contemporary popular mainstream cinema cements the fallacy through varying levels of media literacy and film codes. These structures continue to serve as the network for informing/educating a hierarchically stratified mass audience. Furthermore, the 'American dream', much like democracy, was founded upon principles of equality; however, this equality originally related to white males and the hegemonic white family. Louis Althusser argued that we are never removed from ideology, and consequently the "Ideological State Apparatuses" in any culture embody and disseminate a dominant ideology that favours the ruling classes (1971, pp. 127-186). The fantasy of the 'American dream' and its more truthful subtext are completely contradictory, as attaining the dream becomes an exercise in futility. In accordance with Althusser's rationale, if as 'third world' subalterns we are always in 'American dream' ideology we are always prone to its inherent prejudices, especially when we are not part of the status quo. Furthermore, the dream becomes a nightmare because we are perpetuating the scheme that keeps us oppressed. By constantly trying to attain the promised utopian ideal we ignore, to our detriment, the history of previous colonial patterns. With this in mind there are several prejudicial pitfalls hiding beneath the smiling surface of corporate and suburban America.

Hollywood cinema – one of the most significant and powerful machines for the imaginary constructions and repetitions of social identities – has set the tone that other cinemas often blindly follow. The watchers of western films have been "imperialised" by the ways in which ethnic minorities have been imaged (Kaplan, 1997, pp. 219, 222). Popular films deal in stock characters, a term synonymous with stereotyping. As such these stock characters are easily recognisable to the different viewer demographics as the general population accept and then project these stereotypes onto us, the subaltern females, without our consent (Heung, 1995, p. 83). While stock characters are used as a means of giving order to the stratified layers of

societies, in film realities, they are inadequate as they are almost always biased, resist social change and hence reinforce the status quo within and beyond the film context.

Sigmund Freud established that identification is not "mere imitation, but an assimilation" that "refers to some common condition which has remained in the unconscious" (cited in Friedberg, 1990, p. 37). I posit that if contemporary subalterns' psyches have been primed, via centuries of "internalized colonisation" and more recently neo-colonial indoctrination, to believe in their inferiority, displays of such abjection in the visual context only strengthen conscious identification with the negative characters represented via film stereotypes (Heung, 1995, p. 83). Furthermore, these stereotypes obscure objective rational assessment of media communication because they are too easily identified with. Unfortunately, identification with the fictional context and characters, so often similar to realities outside of the film, is woven into the collective consciousness and hence the realities of viewers' lives. The inability to discern between the cipher on screen and woman on the street is a problem exacerbated by generalisations presented in visual media (Potter, 1998, pp. 48-57). Thus as subaltern females, as audiences or performers, we have learned to settle for less – we accept that we are one-dimensional, decorative, invisible (Heung, 1995, p. 84).

We must, of course, take into account that 21st century audiences are not simply passive spectators. As an integral part of mass media, films are "complex modes of communication involving the interplay of pictures, speech, music, graphics and special effects" (Potter, 1998, p. 4). Audiences, in all their social diversity, display varying levels of media literacy, ranging along a continuum from high to low. James Potter assigns the term 'high literacy' to people able to categorise and interpret the myriad media messages thrown at them daily on a conscious and unconscious level. Individuals with high media literacy are capable of the self-reflexivity and intertextuality which allows them to successfully read and interpret the many layers embedded in media messages. By accessing cognitive, emotional, moral and aesthetic perspectives people with high media literacy display greater efficacy and lateral thinking in how they receive, analyse and internalise media messages. They therefore exercise greater control over those messages.

In theory individuals with high media literacy are able to see past misrepresentations and question their veracity. The problem therefore lies with persons who operate at levels of 'low media literacy'. Their basic reading of the complex codes and subtext present in media messages puts them at risk of almost always reading media texts at the superficial level. They are far more likely to accept the surface meaning as the only message being delivered in a film without identifying inconsistencies such as subtle inaccuracies, stereotypes and prejudices. Furthermore, persons with low media literacy can be easily manipulated. It is the inability to correctly divine the subtext of a visual narrative that allows for social prejudices engendered via negative, often false, representations to remain normal and concretised in the minds of the viewers. Thus audiences with low media literacy, and more importantly the demographics that make up those audiences, are manoeuvred into believing the dominant themes, values, philosophy and ideology illustrated in western cinema. What makes perpetuated negative film images damaging is that the majority of audiences worldwide, although media literate to varying degrees, are *fluent* in only one visual language: Hollywood. The consistent flow of repetitive Hollywood messages only bolsters narrow, unbalanced, often subjective information against the lived realities of the unfortunate Indian women being portrayed (5-8).

E. Farquhar points out that, regardless of its origin, once a set of stereotyped images takes hold about a woman or group of women the result is that all subsequent representations are similarly, virulently tainted (cited in Kray, 1995, p. 226). Thus colonial representations of Indian women as 'benighted by culture/tradition', 'helpless and in need of rescue' or conversely as 'mistresses of exotic sexuality', courtesy of the misinterpretation of the Kama Sutra, have remained the dominant depictions[8]. Therefore, being Indian and being female are rarely separated as the imposed representation, informed by a lengthy colonial/neo-colonial industry, is always contextualised in terms of the exotic, subservient, pure Indian female icon. In contemporary times the reproduction of these stereotypes in popular films, if an Indian actress or character or 'woman' is included in the cast at all, serves to reinforce gender and racial inequalities within

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[8] These stereotypes are evident in mainstream films such as *The Mistress of Spices* (2005), *The Namesake* (2006), *Before the Rains* (2007) and *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008).

various Indian communities. As the images and their messages are so normalised and universally recognised, audiences, stratified though they may be, accept almost unquestioningly what they see with little or no critical engagement with the message or its subtext. The recognition, and more importantly the audience identification that occurs with the unrealistic characters, thus enables further entrenchment of damaging ideas in the minds of the Indian women viewing the representations.

E. Ann Kaplan hypothesises that as long as the United States is unable to fully comprehend and appreciate that its relationships with minority groups is analogous to the much more obvious imperialism of European nations, legacies of slavery/oppression will remain in its cultural images and constructions (Kaplan, 1997, p. 190). With this in mind it is difficult to believe, in our contemporary postcolonial world, that the continuing media misrepresentation of minority groups, specifically Indian females, is merely mistaken or coincidental. Colonial myths, fictions and fantasies have shaped the nature of encounters between contemporary 'third world' subalterns and the predominantly white populace of the metropolis (Parmar, 1990, p. 115). Accordingly, male media executives and creative workers in the metropolis use their control over visual material to express their own fears and fantasies (Faludi cited in Kray, 1995, p. 225). This implies that generalised tropes attached to Indian females such as 'benighted', 'helpless', 'subservient', 'dutiful', and conversely 'exotic', are the inherited and sustained inventions of white hegemonic males in control of the visual diet fed to passive audiences. Mainstream cinema – Hollywood – ensures that tropes affixed to Indian women showcase the stereotypes as the rule and any alternative cinema offerings as the exception. Thus cinematic representations, the direct fabrications of fear and fantasy, create assumptions about Indian women including their sexuality, culture/traditions and public roles. However, a vast majority of the assumptions and misrepresentations are subject to the whims of the caricatures created centuries ago by colonial forces. Furthermore, the colonially inherited stereotypes, specific to Indian women, are recycled into the almost formulaic representations depicted in contemporary, popular western films[9].

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[9] If Indian female characters appear at all in film they are usually there in capacity as the exotic counterpart to the main white hegemonic actress.

As 'third world' subalterns it is incumbent on us to actively develop our skills and knowledge structures in order to extend our conscious levels of reasoning. Merely being exposed to mass media guarantees nothing but the most basic ability to read the media texts at a superficial level. The effects of mainstream western cinema are subtle and cumulative in the general psyche of people. The information that infiltrates into our subconscious is so resilient that even when saturation levels have been reached, and the effects can be identified as detrimental, the messages persist and are problematic to uproot or change (Potter, 1998, p. 9). The question remains: how do people increase their proficiency in media literacy? The active, critical, conscious interpretations attributed to the highly media literate are neither spontaneous nor an innately organic processes. Critically reflexive thinking is a learned skill and one that must be habitually exercised in order to pick up on the subtly evolving film cues and codes.

There is a distinct subliminal educating that permeates western films distributed across the world and there is a proportionate lack of taught media skills to counter their effects. This leads me to deduce that there is a link between low levels of media literacy and people considered 'third world'. The social, economic and ideological practices that label people 'third world' enable reproduction of stereotyped representation in film whilst simultaneously suppressing active critical engagement or subversion of media messages. Potter explains that high levels of exposure to media communication do not automatically translate into greater analytical insights and hence agency regarding the messages delivered. In fact, habitual passive exposure to superficial media messages can reduce analytical thinking further, reinforcing harmful negative ideas about the world and more importantly about ourselves (31). Thus the subaltern Indian female is at risk of internalising the flawed messages and dangerously acknowledging them as true.

In concert with the ability, or lack thereof, to critically read film texts, subalterns are also faced with the problem of the "imperial gaze" (Kaplan, 1997, p. 28). Initially looking relations, particularly agency over the power to look, lay in the hands of white males, as they were the primary producers and procurers of information. Furthermore, only white people, those considered as subjects, had the ability to see and be seen (4, 7). Predictably, mainstream cinema evolved out of a "voyeuristic male gaze which reproduced fetishistic stereotypes of women"

(Humm, 1997, pp. 3-4). According to seminal film theorist Laura Mulvey, voyeurism, fetishism and narcissism structure film viewing such that films intentionally generate masculine structures of 'looking' – the gaze – which is the main control mechanism in film. In other words men look at women; women watch themselves being looked at (cited in Humm, 1997, p. 17). I would take it a step further to include: men create 'women', men look at the 'women'. Women watch 'women'.

There is a macabre fascination with who has the right to look at whom. Prohibition of cross-cultural looking was predicated on western cultures' fear of inter-racial sex, more so of inter-racial relationships which continue to be a societal taboo (Kaplan, 1997, pp. xvii, xix). One's first reaction when seeing an inter-racial couple in public is to stare at the abnormality before self-consciously looking away. It was safer for white males to create ciphers out of their fears and fantasies to satisfy their curiosity. Rather than publicly acknowledging the real women, who were socially taboo yet attractive to their gaze, the white males succumbed to creating abject objects to look at whilst seemingly preserving the social sanctions on inter-relations between imperial subjects and colonial objects. By literally creating that which he wishes to see the white male maintains control over his dependent subject, in a god-like fashion. Furthermore, he distorts for all female spectators the process of knowing oneself, and being known by others. Thus the gendered filmic stereotypes of subaltern 'women' are in actuality the fetishised caricatures fabricated in the minds of white males and brought to 'life' in the fictional yet confusingly realistic film spaces. Maggie Humm points out that "all representations, visual or otherwise, are what make gendered constructions of knowledge and subjectivity possible" (1997, p. vii). Without representations we have no gender identities. As subaltern women, it is through gendered identities that our worlds have been shaped for us.

The advent of image-based texts and narratives in the late 19th century has ensured that 'third world' women are relentlessly inundated with western images as the norm. Nearly all the female protagonists/antagonists are physically perfect, white, American-born, Christians of North European extraction (Kray, 1995, pp. 221-222). We, the 'third world' females, grow up fed on a diet of Caucasian blonde/brunette/redheaded fantasies. Rarely does dark hair colour feature, nor does it have ultra-chic connotations. Apart from western ideals there is also the pervasive

Christian culture, abstractly linked to actual religious Christian dogma. This occurs via the proliferation of recognisably visible Christian traditions as the hegemonic standard. Hence western traditions, holy days and holidays – Christmas, Easter and the all-important 'white' wedding – have become universally accepted and celebrated in certain countries as secular holidays, regardless of whether or not the celebrants are Christian. Centuries of colonial and more lately neo-colonial influence have ensured that commercialised western/Christian propaganda is indelibly imprinted on the collective consciousness of the world. Mass media and consumerist culture in the form of greeting cards, movies and gifts all oriented towards western Christian ideals, further entrench the recognisably western and Christian patterns. This deliberately places other cultures and religious practices in a subordinate position.

As a third generation Indian female living in South Africa I was well into my late teens before I realised that no amount of American dreaming was going to include white tulle and taffeta in the reality of my wedding. My 'dress' will be a sari, guaranteed to be colourful; not white, a colour representing mourning in Indian culture. My vows will be spoken in Telegu, a Hindu dialect I neither speak nor understand, as English was the pervasive colonial language thrust upon my indentured labourer ancestors and remains my mother-tongue. To quote Arjun Appadurai, "It's not exactly that I thought I was white before, but as an anglophone academic" born in South Africa, "I was certainly hanging out in the field of dreams, and had no cause to think myself [Indian]" (1993, p. 802).

In *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), Lalita's willingness to jettison her country, culture and religion in favour of a western ideal, especially as regards an event as important as her wedding, is indicative of the cultural implications of ongoing neo-colonisation. Despite Lalita's vehement defending of her Indian heritage, her dreams reflect her subconscious desires. She dreams of marrying a white man in a Christian ceremony in the west. Her 'white wedding' is enthusiastically depicted in a positive light, indicating the depth of her socialisation. The setting, a quintessential English countryside, is in complete opposition to the bustling, quasi-rural, colourful reality of her Indian home. The implication is that, to a certain degree, Lalita believes her happiness lies in the west among western people and traditions. It is only the revelation of the incorrect groom at the altar that puts a damper on the dream. The shift from positive dream to

negative nightmare occurs with Lalita's realisation that Mr Darcy is her groom rather than the expected Johnny Wickham. In no way does she display anger or sorrow at the overtly western settings and rituals of the wedding. In no way does she lament the lack of Indian culture as I do. All the happily-ever-afters I've seen countless times on the silver screen are never going to be my reality, or hers, and I am wistful when I realise they never can be unless I paradoxically renounce my own religion and culture to be saved by the Christian/western faith as Lalita does in her dream.

My wistfulness turns to anger, at myself and the western hegemonic status quo which has taught me to dream in such a manner. These emotions arise firstly because as a conscious, self-reflecting Indian female I can still experience such perverse pangs of longing and in doing so perpetuate the inferiority of my own culture and traditions. Secondly as a Freirean devotee who believes in self-awareness, critical thinking and "concientization", I should have transcended this foible (Freire, 1985, p. 85). "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of looking at one's self through the eyes of others", and realising what I see, what I *imagine* is not who they see (Du Bois, 1903, pp. 16-17). There is ever the negotiation with my selves: always a need to oscillate between them.

My screen idols are almost all western, white males and females. My perception of the ideal in physical beauty, body image, femininity and masculinity is all predicated on western norms. The bikini perfect body is what I strive for even though public displays of my female Indian body are taboo. The 'tall, dark and handsome' soubriquet does not translate to the colour of an attractive Indian male's skin or to his non-European descended features. Furthermore, the lighter the skin colour of any Indian, male or female, the better his or her reception in the Indian communities and the western ones. As Jessica Hagedorn points out, "[m]y fertile imagination was thoroughly colonised by American fantasies" (1994, p. 74). The way I speak, the way I look, where and how I fit into societies, the very way I think are products of the ongoing process of neo-colonisation. I, like many others, have already internalised western culture in all its myriad forms.

However, despite the centuries of inherited memory and all that I, and other subalterns like me, have internalised, resistance to media control and by extension neo-colonising is not a futile

endeavour. We must take into consideration that whilst Hollywood and its media communications have long been used as a stronghold of neo-colonial power over the undiscerning audiences – indeed several criticisms of media efficacy have focussed purely on the negative effects – media, particularly film, can be used as a vehicle for promulgating and providing positive messages, interpretations and texts about minority groups (Potter, 1998, p. 31). Positive depictions in film can change if not obliterate the centuries of oppression and myths distilled into western stock characters. Going beyond merely subverting mainstream cinema, positive stories and presentations of Indian women, by themselves about themselves, can shift paradigms away from false perceptions, in effect "heal[ing] our imperialized eyes" (Dash, 1992, p. xii). The power of these types of films lies in their conscious decision to not 'speak for' others, and in acknowledging that racial similitude does not automatically equate to a universal lived experience amongst subalterns. I choose to manipulate the western superimpositions to my advantage. I embrace the combination of my east-west multiculture and declare myself a self-aware citizen of a multicultural society with the ability to choose the best from both systems whilst simultaneously transcending the negative aspects of my postcolonial, neo-colonial present.
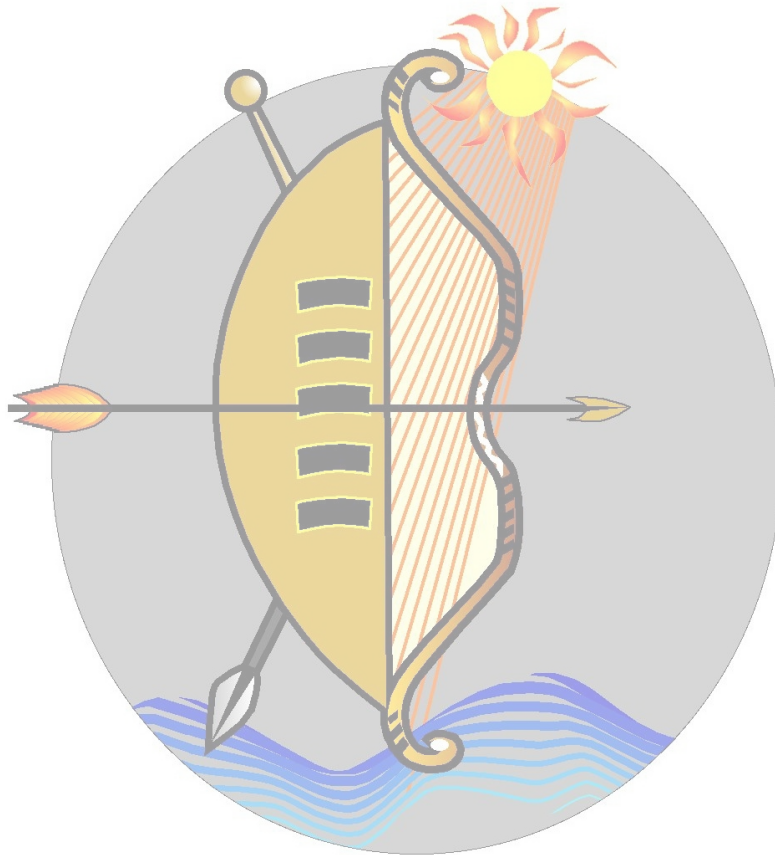
I have mentioned above that western spectators see through imperialised eyes. I have also used myself as an example of a 'third world' female subaltern with imperialised eyes. Furthermore, I have drawn together the strands of theory linking neo-colonialism and capitalism to media literacy and conscientization in a bid to engender greater viewer agency. Agency in film interpretation may well prove to be a turning point in reversing existing media/neo-colonial manipulation. However, promoting agency in spectators, whilst a good starting point, is simply not enough. It is the films and their content, their inferred and accepted codes, which must evolve. In recognition of this idea female directors such as Pratibha Parmar, Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha[10], themselves subaltern women, have been conceptualising films in and out of the Hollywood norm as a means of changing audience and cultural film reading.

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[10] Parmar and Chadha are both Indian females born in African countries but raised in England. Nair was born and raised in India but currently lives and works from the USA. These directors are multicultural travellers in their private backgrounds as well as through their film-making.

Parmar and Nair work in predominantly countercultural cinema styles such that identification becomes a more honest process. Brechtian techniques of alienation are sometimes used, incorporating a more documentary-type cinematography, editing and film diegesis. This can at times also become problematic as the director runs the risk of alienating audiences on two levels. The first is an intentional 'alienation' as prescribed by Bertolt Brecht who believed that by clinically documenting social issues in a performance one allows the audience to be sufficiently distanced from the mimesis of the performance. They are then able to see the artificiality of the world and the social issues are problematised instead of them only seeing and identifying with the quasi-real world being presented. In Brechtian terms, viewers resist identifying with characters through the performance and context, thereby subverting the status quo (Plantinga, 1997, pp. 373, 374, 384). A possible risk to this process lies in actual alienation from the alternative film and its messages because it is so far removed from the lived experience, the norm, as to be impossible in the minds of subaltern viewers. A complete difference in film structure: codes, cinematography, and diegesis, may distance audiences to the degree that they feel uncomfortable in their alienation. In other words, they are cognisant of the social issues but are either uncomfortable with challenging the status quo or too disenfranchised to believe they can make a difference. As postmodern subjects these female directors, like many others, search for truths about the lives of subaltern women, often delving into the unavoidably multicultural contexts in which we exist. Chadha is of particular interest to me as she works from within Hollywood/mainstream cinema structure. She uses this content and narrative in her films, along with editing that promotes a subaltern female gaze and strong, positive female characters to re-define the identification process.

Regardless of the option chosen, the subaltern female directors are actively producing fresh, unsullied ways of seeing, incorporating new readings of the past as well as new images for inter-racial looking relations. They seek to intervene in the imaginary – to mediate how images are produced rather than present minorities "as they really are" (Kaplan, 1997, p. 219). This production of images of women "as they really are" may appear naive or even exemplifying faddish multiculturalism when compared to the mammoth body of existing imagined/negative images. However, in changing film content and the structures through which images unfold, audiences, along the continuum of media literacy, receive unbiased accounts from real – not

imagined – women. Furthermore, if those audiences viewing the films are from the communities depicted on screen, the shift in paradigm stands a greater chance of being successful. With this in mind, in the following chapter I examine and analyse two of Gurinder Chadha's movies as film texts representative of negotiations inherent in multicultural travelling.

Chapter 3

Multicultural Identity in film: A Textual Analysis of *Bend It Like Beckham* and *Bride and Prejudice*

In the previous chapters I have established the history and consequent effects of colonialism on subaltern females. Following those effects has led me to the epoch of American neo-colonial capitalism, incorporating global mass culture – media and film – as an important tool in neo-colonial endeavours and, furthermore, in the construction of multicultural identities. E. Ann Kaplan theorises that "in one sense or another, all films deal with questions of hybrid subjects, subjectivities-in-between and the diaspora" (Kaplan, 1997, p. 220). Films self-consciously representative of these hybrid subjects are therefore at the heart of this chapter in which I analyse Gurinder Chadha's *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002) and *Bride and Prejudice* (2004). The chosen films serve as case studies in which subaltern Indian females are presented in popular cinema as multicultural entities influenced by postcolonial and neo-colonial actions. I examine the films at the theoretical level through the lens of film code/theory, and also at the analytical level to discover where women both constructed and real position themselves in and out of the films (Mohanty, 1991, p. 53).

In *Bend It Like Beckham* director Chadha cunningly splices an underdog sports-film convention with similar escapist genres – teen coming-of-age movie, romantic chick flick, family drama – as the vehicle for interrogating social issues in a middle-class, third generation Indian family situated in London. As a Kenyan born NRI (nonresident Indian) transplanted to Britain, Chadha has first-hand knowledge of the characters, content and contexts she depicts in her films (Mishra, 2002, p. 236). According to her *Bend It Like Beckham*, much like her other films, refuses to be categorised as a distinctive genre because it employs multiple genres at once, giving viewers the complexities involved in generational integration. The film explores generational differences by clarifying the divergent perspectives, and understanding, of race and communities. Therefore *Bend It Like Beckham* illustrates diasporan Indian people, parents, who are somewhat fearful and divided from co-existing races and communities, and daughters, who navigate between those races and communities. Chadha presents versions of NRI women and the fine balance they

cultivate in order to negotiate between culture, gender and sexuality. Of *Bend It Like Beckham* Chadha says: "it's all so complicated, dealing with boys, your girlfriends, your parents, trying to be your own person. And [the protagonist, Jess, is] Indian, so you have all the Indian cultural stuff, and race, since she's in London" (Fuchs, 2003).

Bend It Like Beckham revolves around the coming of age of Jess Bhamra, an Anglo-Indian teenager living in 21st century Hounslow, West London. Like most multicultural, diasporic Indian females she is caught between the expectations of her 'traditional' Sikh family/community and her seemingly western desire to follow her ambitions as an individual. Jess's life is juxtaposed with that of her older sister Pinky, whose wedding is imminent. Jess is a football fanatic who idolises soccer star David Beckham, which appals her family on two levels: firstly because football is an inappropriate pastime for an Indian female and secondly because she idolises a white male.

Jess is a sufficiently good footballer that she has the option of playing professionally, is in fact scouted by Jules Paxton to play for the local girls' team. Jess proves to her doubters that neither her skin colour nor her gender dictates her talent. She lies by omission to her parents in order to join the team, defending her actions by stating, "Anyone can cook Aloo Gobi [potato curry] but who can bend a ball like Beckham?" (Chadha, 2002). Her closest and most honest relationships occur with the white[11] Jules and Joe, and gay, Indian best friend Tony. She falls in love with her white, Irish coach, Joe, which adds another layer to the escalating lies she uses to fulfil her dreams. She is eventually caught out disobeying her parents' edict and despite them forbidding her to continue playing she does just that. However, by this stage her father, the patriarch of the family, is forced to reassess his initial reasons for not wanting her to play. He realises that his personal objections have little to do with protecting his daughters' and family's reputation from Indian community disapproval and more to do with his own painful experiences with racism.

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[11] I point out Jules and Joe's race simply to prove that Jess is more comfortable – possibly because of her acceptance of her multicultural identity – in her relationships with them than she is with those of her own community, with the exception of her male best friend. In fact he is her only other honest relationship and he happens to be gay and thus equally counter-cultural.

This is a breakthrough moment in the film, one likely to affect audiences as much as it does Mr Bhamra. Jess and Jules are scouted and awarded full scholarships to attend an American college for women's football. After tearful goodbyes to her parents, and a kiss from her now accepted boyfriend Joe, Jess, along with Jules, departs for America with parental approval.

Despite its combination of several escapist genres and the inevitable happily-ever-after ending, the film and characters manage to resonate on several allegorical levels. With particular reference to the relationships – Jess and Pinky act as foils to each other, Joe and Jess's interracial relationship as well as the cleverly presented differences between Jess, Jules and the other women in the film, both Indian and white – one sees that Chadha goes beyond reprising stereotypes of character and situation. If Chadha uses stereotypes, in her characters, she does so to prompt the audience's recognition of those stereotypes. Furthermore, by positioning the stereotypical characters in farcical situations Chadha is able to subvert the negative connotations attached to them.

In the first scene, showing the three Bhamra women, Mrs Bhamra wears a traditional Indian outfit, whilst her daughters are attired in typically western clothing, Pinky in fashionably tight jeans, jewellery and t-shirt, Jess, conversely, in a tracksuit. Their actions and costume display the disparity between accepted and unaccepted activities and conduct. Mrs Bhamra, acceptably, is cooking and Pinky is ready to go trousseau shopping. Conversely, and unacceptably, Jess is watching Beckham play football on TV, simultaneously daydreaming about playing herself, and has no interest in shopping. Jess is abruptly wrenched away from mentally scoring a goal and forced into a shopping trip with her sister to avoid confrontation with her mother.

In her mother's eyes Jess's redeeming quality is that she is intelligent, awaiting her A-level results with the ambition to read law; no frivolous options would be accepted. In Jess Mrs Bhamra sees the opportunity to vicariously increase her family's status in the eyes of the community, and more importantly her daughter will be financially secure and a better marriage prospect. Jess's family do not realise the extent to which they oppose her wants or needs. In fact the cultural pressure brought to bear on Jess is normalised in Indian communities; even in those

of diasporic distinction[12]. Duty to one's family is a highly laudable sentiment represented in the 'ideal Hindu woman' packaged and exported via extensive media messages (Gangoli, 2005, p. 146).

It is established early on that Jess does not fit the accepted mould for Indian girls, yet the director depicts this resistance in a positive light. However, the other girls are by no means traced as one-dimensional, but instead they appear as a type of Indian woman, a further hybridisation of the older generations' Indian feminine ideal coupled with their own subversive fight for freedom. They subvert the representational trope[13] of Indian woman as chaste, dutiful and maternal by pandering to some of the requirements rather than all of them (Parker cited in Ray, 2000, p. 3). The parents expect their daughters to be the exemplars of a traditional society, despite being several generations removed from mother India and the social mores of that country. Therefore, the NRI parents place the burden of preserving Indian culture upon the all too human shoulders of their creolised daughters. In juxtaposition to Jess, the other girls conform to parental pressure just enough to satisfy the social and cultural demands placed upon them. Perhaps this is their covert form of agency, an agency Chadha recognises in her film though she does not necessarily agree with it. In contrast, Jess is positively depicted as strong and resistant in the face of oppressive traditions, evincing Chadha's support of Jess's stance. There are several scenes where one-upmanship is apparent between Pinky and her cohorts over accessories, boys, clothing and so forth. Jess removes herself from such negative representations by refusing to participate in Pinky and company's skirmishes. Chadha subverts the obvious readings that Indian women are superficial through Jess's character and her actions. Jess is again juxtaposed with her foils but continues to resist cultural and familial pressure to fit in, thus proving herself capable of agency.

Jess and Pinky consistently act as foils for each other and while Jess is visibly resistant to oppressive but accepted codes of Indian female behaviour, Pinky appears to conform. A scene typifying this has Jess drawing a significant comparison between herself and the conventional

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[12] This occurs to varying degrees in diasporic communities; however, the silent admonition to always be dutiful to parents, family and culture is always there and is stringently linked to females and their reputations.

[13] This speaks back to the ubiquitous trope of 'woman-as-nation' explored in chapter 1 (Ray, 2000, p. 1).

Indian girls, including Pinky. Jess vehemently states her dislike of make-up and tight clothing, she has never cut school, and does not chase after boys or sleep around, yet she is the cuckoo in the nest. In emphasising the negative traits the conventional girls display, which are contradictorily tolerated if not completely accepted, Chadha, through Jess, exposes the hypocrisy in the sanctimonious Indian community. The manner through which this is done, namely comedy, allows Indian audiences to see and laugh at the 'ideal Indian women', and by extension themselves, and hopefully recognise their own foibles.

It is telling that Jess's overtly multicultural self is always in opposition to the expectations of her family. She points out: "Anything I want is just not Indian enough for them" (Chadha, 2002). One could argue that Jess is forced to lie, in order to play football, and furthermore, uses precedents set up by her sister to achieve a semblance of independence. As best friend Tony advises: "Why don't you just play and not tell them? Look, Pinky's been sneaking off for years to see Teets and now they're getting married. Nobody cares. What your parents don't know won't hurt" (Chadha, 2002).Whilst Jess does not want to lie, this seems the only viable option for her to get what she wants and simultaneously keep the peace in her family. If one goes by Pinky's example, discreet deceit seems to work. This appears to be an unfortunate trend common to many Indian communities around the world. Thankfully, Chadha exposes the hypocrisy in an effort to bring viewers to the realisation that existing methods of inter-generational negotiations must evolve and in doing so open channels of communication between generations. As testimony to this Jess's confession scene, about her dishonesty, is crucial as it depicts the initiation of open communication between generations. Jess's best friend Tony announces to the wedding party that he and Jess are getting married. In Tony's opinion a marriage of convenience would be mutually beneficial to him and Jess for two reasons: firstly, his sexual orientation would remain a secret and secondly, Jess would be free to play football with his approval as her husband. However, Jess is unwilling to buy parental and community approval, through marriage, and refuses to allow Tony or herself the easy option. Jess expresses her dissatisfaction with the tolerated modes of behaviour, exposing the cracks in Pinky's and the other girls' system, and admits that she is tired of lying to her parents. The implication is that Jess would prefer to be open and honest about where she goes, what she does and whom she sees, even if she is being judged and found wanting. Ideally open communication should be paired with empathy on both

sides of the generational border, but taking into consideration their historical contexts, it is easy to understand that various oppressions have coloured the perceptions of different, specifically older, generations such that they are suspicious of contemporary interracial and intercultural relations. However, "Culture is a process" and different generations are part of that process, regardless of where individuals, within their specific generation, position themselves (Chadha in Fisher, 2003). Jess's conflict, and the manner in which it comes to a head, suggests that communication must occur in order for people, and the prejudices they maintain, to be positively transformed.

Jess's parents, sister, and Indian female contemporaries view her as an oddity. In demonstration of this Chadha includes a scene where Jess is playing football with boys – she is treated like one of them – whilst the more conventional Indian girls, in a parody of *Grease*'s pink ladies, ogle the athletic, T-Bird-esque, Indian boys. Here Jess is watched by three different gazes: firstly by the girls in the film, secondly by Jules in appreciation of Jess's football skills, and thirdly by us, the viewers of the film. Consequently, three separate critiques of Jess occur simultaneously: firstly the overtly recognisable stereotype presented to us by the disparaging girls, secondly Jules's admiration of an Indian girl's athletic ability, and thirdly the one we make as cogent, media-literate viewers of Jess, Jules and the girls. Thus Chadha takes elements of an established and imposed culture and throws back a different set of meanings by utilising the tactics of reversal, recycling and subversion (Fusca cited in Heung, 1995, p. 89). In doing so Chadha underscores the contradictory, facile behaviour of the monotonous Indian female stereotypes in a comedic manner which satirises the stereotypes, thus preventing further entrenchment of them as the norm. She also reverses looking-relations, and hence power-relations, to the women's gazes; it is Jess's, Jules's and the girls' perspectives that guide our gaze as viewers. Furthermore, it is the women's gazes that communicate the film's messages to audiences.

I have mentioned earlier that the stereotyped girls watch Jess during an impromptu soccer match; more important is their positioning, while watching, in relation to Jess. Jess, as a boisterously active participant in the match, is in the middle of the boys, as well, it could be argued, as the

raging debate over male-female inter-relationships in the Indian community[14]. Conversely, the stereotyped women are positioned passively, outside of the game, and seated far away on a park bench. This works as a visual sports metaphor: the girls are the ones being 'benched' despite using generally effective, feminine wile and guile in an attempt to attract the boys' attention. Physically and psychologically these girls represent the epitome of the Indian female ideal, which Indian men supposedly covet. Unfortunately, in this case, their efforts are in vain as the boys are more interested in football than in the girls. The girls never attempt to break into the male bastion of the football match; instead, they draw Jess out of the game to extract from her information about the boys. They seem content to go along with their socially prescribed roles, ostensibly oblivious to the possibility of openly rebelling against the social roles and rules laid out for them.

Their distance from Jess and the 'games' being played is emphasised via their attire; tight, revealing clothes, make-up and perfectly coiffed hair are inappropriate for playing soccer. Furthermore, the foils sit watching and lamenting that Jess is irredeemable: she does not look like them nor use her popularity as a footballer; Jess is within touching distance of the shirtless boys and could be using feminine wiles, as they do, to further her prospects with the guys. In secular mainstream movies this kind of Indian female stock character entrenches stereotypes about Indian women: they are obsessed with superficial looks, men and getting married whilst projecting the image that Indian women are 'high maintenance' and dependent on men for validation. They also engender the sense that women, in general, are vying with each other for male attention and see each other as competition. Ironically, Jess, in her ubiquitous tracksuit, is not seen as competition because she is not like them, internally in thinking and externally in dress. Interestingly, there are only two occurrences of Jess stepping into heels and make-up in the film. In the first, during an away match in Germany Jess is convinced by Jules to let down her hair, in the second, at sister Pinky's wedding Jess wears a traditional sari.

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[14] According to Mrs Bhamra, Jess will never get married if she's running around playing football with men, letting them touch her, showing her legs and her burn scar; bringing shame on the family. Ironically, however, even when wearing her soccer kit, Jess is always more covered than the other Indian girls.

It is intriguing that Jess's sister Pinky and their mother display similar attitudes toward Jess and constantly nudge her toward being more feminine, more acceptable. It is ironic then that these Indian females, separated by a generation, display almost absolute faith in community and cultural approval whilst allowing themselves to get away with very un-Indian practices. Pinky and Mrs Bhamra manipulate the 'ideal' Indian female model of humble feminine duty and piety to achieve their ends, in Mrs Bhamra's case to mould Jess into a good Indian girl. Pinky's engagement to her fiancé Teetu[15] is formally recognised via a traditional betrothal ceremony staged to incorporate the endorsement of family and friends. However, privately the affianced couple meet at the airport, where Pinky works, to indulge in secretive, pre-marital sex far from the madding crowd of the nosy, judgmental Indian community. They think they have successfully revealed the extent of their relationship, but Mrs Bhamra is aware of it. In a scene where she rebukes Jess for her abnormal behaviour Mrs Bhamra shocks a smug Pinky by divulging her knowledge of Pinky's pre-marital activities. Although Pinky is dismayed at her mother's revelation there is no abject horror or fear of reprisal at being caught. Pinky is safely shielded behind her engagement ring. Mrs Bhamra admits that while she is disappointed by Pinky's less-than-ideally Indian behaviour she is willing to overlook the transgressions because they will soon be voided by a marriage ceremony. She consistently overlooks Pinky's social transgressions – Pinky is sexually active and often uses profanity – because even though Pinky is committing social misdemeanours they have been normalised and are thus acceptable. Pinky is scolded but forgiven because she has the social shield of an engagement. I wonder if part of Pinky's dismay results from her secret rebellion being divulged, if the satisfaction she felt over contravening the strict parental/cultural rules may lose some of its appeal, especially as her secret rebellion is not so secret.

Ironically, it is not Pinky and Teetu's un-Indian behaviour or the exposition of Mrs Bhamra's knowledge that disrupts wedding proceedings. Jess and Jules are seen laughing and hugging on a street corner by Pinky's potential in-laws. The in-laws assume that, because of her short haircut, Jules is a white male and Jess's conduct, on a street corner no less, is indicative of the Bhamra

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[15] Incidentally, Pinky and Teetu's relationship is not arranged; however, their respective parents have absolute control over their traditional, ritualistic engagement and consequent wedding.

family's lack of Indian moral fibre and furthermore, their inability to control their daughters' actions; after all, "children are a map of their parents" (Chadha, 2002). Jess's minor infraction is blown out of proportion despite her explanation that Jules is white but female. Furthermore, in a fit of pique over her cancelled wedding, Pinky shouts at Jess: "Stupid, flippin', cow! […] My whole weddin's been called off because of you! […] They saw you today at a bus stop kissin' him! Stupid bitch, why couldn't you do it in secret like everyone else?!" (Chadha, 2002). Profanity notwithstanding, there is a definite schism between Pinky's censure of Jess and her own behaviour at home, in private, and how she presents herself to the Indian community in public situations. It is telling that both parents display anger and disappointment with Jess but no similar reaction to Pinky's words and revelations.

Kaplan's opinions can be applied to filmmakers like Chadha who show us the lives of NRI women whose families have developed a unique subculture within Britain, and other western countries, but remain other; to western Caucasians as well as their own generational communities (1997, p. 251). They inhabit a third space, dexterously negotiating western and eastern positives and prejudices. It is noteworthy that in the 21st century prohibitions, and hence attitudes, about interracial looking have become somewhat relaxed among certain pockets of cosmopolitan, European-descended western individuals. Taking into consideration that it was their imperial ancestors who originally endorsed interracial prohibitions it would not be surprising if their descendents were to continue similar prejudices. However, it is the marginalised, minority communities that appear to further entrench the proscription policy on interracial heterosexual and homosexual involvement. The social penalties of conducting relationships outside of one's race and culture are overt disapproval and covert slighting by one's people. This begs the question: why are interracial relationships so objectionable, even threatening, to Indian people? In a scene dedicated to sisterly advice, itself a commentary on the somewhat absurd reasoning behind prohibition of interracial relationships, Pinky explains:

Pinky: Look, Jess, you can marry anyone you want. It's fine at first when you're in love an' all that, but do you really want to be the one everyone stares at, at every family do 'cause you married the English bloke?

Jess: He's Irish.

Pinky: Yeah, well, they look all the bloody same to them, innit? An' anyway why go to so much grief when there's so many good lookin' Indian boys to marry? (Chadha, 2002)

Chadha, through Jess, explains that westernisation, inclusive of interracial relationships, takes Indian women, however multicultural, away from their parents and into an unknown world, a world where they cannot protect their daughters from what they have learned through history and experience: subjection, racism, prejudice. The implication is that in NRI communities it is not merely subscription to tradition that holds women in its oppressive grip, but also a parental, and commendable, need to protect one's offspring from disappointments.

On several occasions Joe demonstrates more empathy with Jess and the problems she faces than any other character. Jess carries a bad childhood scar on her thigh, which accounts for her love of tracksuit pants. She is embarrassed by it but Joe puts her at ease by nonchalantly complimenting her on it, comparing it to his own. Thereafter Jess wears her scar as a badge of honour. In fact, after receiving Joe's praise she proudly displays it at a later football game with the Indian boys. The boys make puerile jokes about the scar, and where she would previously have been hurt by their mocking her perspective has altered and she responds insouciantly that her scar does not determine her ability. The match continues and Jess is once again accepted by the boys for her talent and herself. Predictably, it is Mrs Bhamra who exhibits the most horror over Jess's scar, because it is on display and Jess shows no shame in flaunting it.

The concept of shame is often related to Jess, in the form of warnings about her behaviour, specifically from her mother and sister whose attitudes reflect those of the Indian community. Both Pinky and Mrs Bhamra, despite being separated by a generation, easily replicate their community's intolerant views toward women who veer from the cultural norms. In the eyes of her mother Jess is shameful because she wants to play football with boys and hence put her body and scar in the public domain. It is understandable that Mrs Bhamra has such opinions as she is of an older, more traditionally subservient, generation; however, Jess's sister Pinky, despite being of the same generation, similarly considers Jess abnormal. In Pinky's case, her rejection of

Jess's difference is indicative of a possible envy of Jess's agency. Although Pinky clearly wants some of the trappings of tradition[16] she would also like some of the agency Jess invokes.

Jess and Joe's mutual empathy stems from several similarities, common to both their cultures, including living up to parental expectations. When Jess's lies are initially exposed it is Joe who tries to convince her parents to change their edict. In defence of Jess, Joe logically reasons with her parents, expounding on her talent and potential to play professionally, and later appeals to Mr Bhamra's love for his daughter. Similarly, Jess advises Joe to mend the rift in his relationship with his overbearing father. Furthermore, in a scene about racial discrimination, it is Joe who provides Jess with comfort and support. After an altercation occurs between Jess and an opposing team's white footballer, Joe, unknowingly, reproaches Jess after the game, to which she replies: "she called me a Paki, but I guess you wouldn't understand what that feels like?" Joe parries that because he is Irish, referencing the conflict between the English and Irish, he understands what it is like to be a minority living in a racially prejudiced society. Joe and Jess's relationship serves superficially as the romantic element of the film, but on a profoundly deeper level as a commentary on contemporary interracial, heterosexual relationships. At first glance all we see is a white man interacting with an Indian woman, but layers soon emerge about their common ground rather than any displacing sense of awkwardness about their differing skin colours. In fact, their first meeting at her football tryout is riddled with his negative, pre-conceived ideas about Indian women. After she proves herself more than capable he shakes off his generalisations and is big enough to admiringly admit: "I've never seen an Indian girl into football" (Chadha, 2002).

Joe and Jules are indicative of actual shifts occurring in white communities toward minority peoples. In one fell swoop Chadha demolishes several layers of prejudice. One way in which she does this is by conceptualising an empathetic white man, himself a type of minority, who

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[16] In a private aside with Jess, after her wedding, Pinky espouses her contentment with her lot. She has achieved her goal, to be a bride with all the visual glamour of starring in her wedding production, and later the social status bestowed upon a wife. She asks: "Jess, don't you want all of this? It's the best day of your life, isn't it?" to which Jess, in a tone neither superior nor ashamed, replies that she wants more than just marriage from life.

coaches an otherwise marginalised all-women's soccer team consisting of different races and classes. Despite having a reason to be bitter[17] he actively encourages Jess and Jules to pursue their football dreams.

As mentioned earlier, Jess and Joe both have physical scars; Jess is taught to be embarrassed about hers. Joe, however, compliments her on it, comparing it to his own. They both experience racism, Jess as an Indian – she is called 'Paki' by a white footballer during a game – and Joe as an Irishman in England. Moreover, Jules is a white woman who interrupts an all Indian football game to invite Jess to try out for the football team she plays on. Jess and Jules both have mothers who would prefer their daughters to demonstrate a more conventional interest in boys, homemaking and make-up instead of football. The three share, in varying degrees, similarities in failing to live up to parental expectations. Perhaps it is because of their common ground that they confide in each other, often motivating each other to be true to themselves. Thus Chadha breaks the boundary between races by focussing instead on points of commonality in the triumvirate of Jess, Jules and Joe.

In *Bend It Like Beckham* concepts of socialisation and identity formation are depicted as a legacy of colonial interaction. Furthermore, the global processes of assimilation and replication of cultures are explored in the more local communities of Hounslow. Under Chadha's direction the film explores notions of multiplicities of belonging regarding the different cultures, races and genders we negotiate as multicultural citizens of the world. Chadha creates, within the fictional film context, an alternate universe that closely resembles our own reality. Within the reality of *Bend It Like Beckham* she puts forward options and potential solutions to relevant issues of gender and racial and generational disputes. Thus, Chadha gives us, as diverse viewers, a safe medium to begin understanding the importance of agency in women's lives. Furthermore, she also gives audiences numerous opportunities to witness the damaging consequences of conformity and otherness pertaining to Indian women, within the microcosm of their sub-cultures and the macrocosm of international multicultures.

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[17] Joe lost the opportunity to play professionally due to his knee injury.

If *Bend It Like Beckham*'s focus is on teenage Jess Bhamra and her achieving agency, then *Bride and Prejudice* revolves around Lalita Bakshi and her confidence in her agency. In this film Chadha reconceptualises Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* into a film text that visually comments on class, race and gender relations. Therefore, aside from being a container of 'Indianness' – idealised cultural values – the film also works as a canvas for negotiating a fractured sense of 'Indianness' and 'westernness' (Brosius, 2005, p. 219). Chadha takes Austen's country gentry, English Bennets off the page, transforms them, and adds to their social issues on-screen. Through the middle-class Indian Bakshis, she creates a film which inspires self-reflexivity, via identification and media literacy, in its viewers.

Based in Amritsar, India, the Bakshis have four daughters whose single state is the bane of Mrs Bakshi's life. In accordance with Austen's plot Jaya and Lalita Bakshi, Jane and Lizzie's Indian alter egos, respectively encounter Anglo-Indian barrister Balraj and his American hotelier friend, Will Darcy[18]. Balraj and Jaya fall in love whilst Lalita and Will Darcy strike sparks off one another. The entrance of Johnny Wickham causes more friction between the cross-purposed Will and Lalita, whose mutual pride and prejudice increase apace. Johnny initially pursues Lalita but secretly switches his attention to her younger, teenaged sister Lakhi. Mr Kholi, an Indian immigrant living the American dream in Los Angeles, also arrives in India seeking an 'Indian' bride, and promptly begins courting Lalita. She brutally rebuffs his marriage suit and he retaliates by becoming engaged to her best friend, Chandra.

Mr Kholi whisks his new bride away to America and extends an invitation for the Bakshis to attend his American wedding ceremony. Balraj and Darcy suddenly depart, leaving behind a heartbroken Jaya and scornful Lalita. Mrs Bakshi accepts Mr Kholi's invitation in a bid to stop over in London and repair Jaya and Balraj's relationship. A visit with Balraj's sister, Kiran, tells them he is unfortunately away in New York. In America Darcy admits that he is in love with Lalita, against his will, and asks her to marry him. He also reveals that it was his advice that caused Balraj to leave Jaya. Lalita, insulted by Darcy's proposal and aghast at his interference in Balraj and Jaya's relationship, promptly refuses him. The family attend Mr Kholi's wedding and

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[18] Balraj and Will Darcy are the counterparts of Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy, respectively.

return to London where Lakhi sneaks off to rendezvous with Johnny Wickham. Her disappearance sparks off a joint effort between Lalita and Darcy to save the younger girl. Whilst the scales fall from Lalita's eyes as Lakhi is saved from the licentious clutches of Johnny Wickham, Balraj and Jaya reunite and marry, as do Lalita and Darcy.

It is the female characters that I focus on in analysing *Bride and Prejudice*. It is their ability to travel, their physical movement, across global geographical and social borders, that demonstrates the fluidity of multicultural women within the film context, and by extension the potential for multicultural women to travel in lived realities outside of the film. The geography that the female characters traverse includes India (Amritsar), Britain (London) and America (Los Angeles), three sites of syncretism, themselves contributors to the colonial and now neo-colonial world. Furthermore, in reconceptualising *Pride and Prejudice* as a multicultural text, Chadha breathes life into dynamic and complex characters and substantiates Ulf Hannerz's argument that identities are shaped by overlapping, partly competing social milieus (1992, pp. 204-10).

The protagonist, Lalita, is extroverted, erudite, educated and fully conversant in global politics, but she is also steeped in her own historical discrimination. This exacerbates in her a cynicism of any western involvement in her country. Furthermore, as a woman born to an upper caste in a hierarchical caste society, complete with servants, it is hypocritical of her to belittle the American Darcy's imperialist culture, and consequent wealth, whilst tacitly continuing the social injustices inherent in her own. With this in mind, Lalita reads as a cosmopolitan Indian woman who is theoretically multicultural yet confined within an intelligentsia specific to her class/caste. Furthermore, the Anglo-Indian Balraj, a contemporary of Darcy's, never comes under her fire for his similarly capitalist endeavours. Seemingly, Lalita exercises a double standard in principles based on her divergent reactions to white, American Darcy and the Indian, if anglicised, Balraj. I must then consider the possibility that Lalita's rules change because Balraj is an Indian man succeeding in a white world. Furthermore, I interpret his exemption from judgement as nepotistic deference, on Lalita's part, to her sister Jaya's sensibilities.

The very patriotic Lalita is recurrently disgusted by American Will Darcy's behaviour. His apparent disdain of India – its culture, people and resources – and later his supposed ill-treatment

of Johnny Wickham support her beliefs about his attitude toward people as a whole. Furthermore, she cynically views all of Darcy's decisions and actions as the behaviour of an imperial capitalist bent on commodifying her beloved India. During a poolside argument Lalita berates Darcy's oxymoronic, capitalist altruism towards Indians, saying:

> Lalita: Isn't that [gestures to the luxurious hotel] what all tourists want? Five star comfort with a bit of culture thrown in? Well, I don't want you turning India into a theme park. I thought we got rid of imperialists like you!
>
> Darcy: I'm not British, I'm American.
>
> Lalita: Exactly!

I propose that her reaction to and rejection of Darcy stem partially from her projection of her cynicism regarding Americans and imperialism, but mostly from her recognition of America's neo-colonial practices. Darcy accompanies Balraj to India to attend their friends' wedding, but his primary motive for visiting India lies in his evaluation of the country as a viable market for a new hotel in his chain. This is in keeping with the American concept of franchising little versions of Americanness to other countries, with a little bit of indigenous culture thrown in to teach the tourists how to "dance like the natives" (Chadha, 2004). Ironically, despite Lalita's socialist beliefs, we never see any gestures or implications of her philanthropy toward her disadvantaged Indian brethren.

It is unfair to paint Darcy as an irredeemable capitalist; he is as much a product of his class and culture as Lalita is of hers. Furthermore, his Indian culture shock can be explained as the partial cause of his initial 'dissatisfaction' with India; Darcy is by no means entirely guilty or innocent of prejudging India and its people. He makes several negative comments about India immediately after alighting from the plane, such as "this is mayhem, this is like bedlam", "what do you mean, this is like New York?", and "Jesus, Balraj, where the hell have you brought me?" (Chadha, 2004). His liberation from imperialised eyes occurs gradually, beginning in India with Lalita's challenging of his pre-conceived notions, and continues across three continents with Lalita as his conduit for change. In Lalita's case, her misjudgements about Darcy only abate

when she is away from the influential, inherited memories of her country and the constant reminder of her people's oppression during colonial rule. It is only when she encounters Darcy in London and Los Angeles, his western milieus, that her literal ability to travel allows her internal paradigm to shift.

This is reminiscent of the road movie genre, a type of bildungsroman in which characters experience growth and an internal shift as each part of their journey unfolds. In *Bride and Prejudice* Lalita and Darcy's literal and metaphoric journey can be traced as follows: beginning in Amritsar, shifting to Goa, then on to London and Los Angeles, returning to London and finally ending, at the beginning, in Amritsar. The travelling occurring within a country, as in the case of India, explores real and imagined spaces pertaining to rural and cosmopolitan life as well as depicting levels of Indian women's agency. The travelling across different continents and countries – respectively India, England, and America – reflects Darcy's shift in western perceptions and about real and imagined women and the shift in Lalita's generalisations about Americans. Furthermore, the repeat visits to certain spaces, India and Britain, and more subtly the referencing of Americanisms, and hence America, in the daily lives outside of the actual site, speak back to ongoing negotiation of global integration. This global integration culminates at the end of Lalita and Darcy's journey, when they return to Amritsar, see each other through empathetic, un-imperialised eyes and, therefore, successfully conclude their journey wiser for their experiences.

One of the dilemmas Lalita has to negotiate occurs in the form of her choosing to give up, for love, her country, culture and religion. After diligently defending, to Darcy, the validity of her country and culture one has to wonder at her sudden willingness to disregard her convictions for the empty promise of Wickham's love. During a Bollywood-esque musical arrangement she lists the attributes of her ideal man, consciously superimposing Johnny Wickham onto her ideal while labelling Mr Kholi as his antithesis. Wickham's apparent agreement with her socialist beliefs endears him to Lalita while Mr Kholi's overtly capitalist ambitions repel her. Lalita experiences a dream/nightmare sequence in which she sees herself walking through a picturesque English village, replete with maypole and dancing British natives, whilst wearing a white meringue of a wedding gown with blonde attendants and Johnny Wickham waiting for her at the altar.

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Unfortunately, it is not Johnny Wickham waiting for her on the other side of her raised veil, but Will Darcy. Ironically, she misinterprets her dream as a nightmare when it is a premonition of her future happiness. The lifting of the veil is also a metaphor, referencing the *Pride and Prejudice* plot, indicating Lalita's eventual realisation of Wickham's philandering duplicity. Furthermore, the dreamed-of white wedding is juxtaposed with her real wedding to Darcy, wherein they are married in traditional Hindu garb with accompanying Hindu rites. Ironically, in her real wedding Lalita is not expected to sacrifice her culture or religion, as it is Darcy who compromises and willingly agrees to being married with Hindu rites.

Bride and Prejudice is layered with several musical sequences in homage to the Bollywood technique, but also as a method of exploration of different regimes of the gaze and realism (Brosius, 2005, p. 220). The musical montages replace conventional western approaches to sex/love scenes, enabling a more allegorical form of filmmaking whilst simultaneously demoting mainstream western cinema's need for gratuitous female nudity and sex.

As the only NRI female in the film Kiran, Balraj's sister, is condescending and quick to point out her difference and superiority in relation to the resident Indian women. She often forgets that she too is Indian, after a fashion, and embraces her Britishness; the cut-glass accent, gym-honed bikini body, and western dress sense, in other words her moneyed upper-class status, as the dominant facet of her identity. At the wedding scene that introduces Darcy, Balraj and Kiran to the Bakshis she complains about India until Balraj remonstrates, "don't be such a coconut" (Chadha, 2004). Kiran distinguishes herself, citing where she is from, England, as more important than where she has come from, an Indian background. Kiran's obviously conflicting cultures, Indian and British, may be evidence of the media's effect on creating her identity (Ballard, 1994, p. 17). For her 'Britishness' is a reference to her civic as well as cultural identity, a reference which differentiates her from her parents' generation as well as the contemporary resident Indian women. Incongruously, it is Kiran who willingly translates the Hindi wedding songs into English for Darcy, proving she is not as removed from her Indianness as she would like to think.

Kiran's attitude resonates with Mr Kholi's[19] who, despite being an Indian immigrant, criticises resident Indians as lacking in American sophistication. He considers himself a part of a category of select NRIs, born and living in America, describing them as "very professional, all doctors and computers", concluding that America is "ours for the taking. Anyone can become an American" (Chadha, 2004). Similarly, Kiran vilifies India as a marriage trap for her brother with "every mother [...] wetting her knickers for [Balraj] for their daughters" and insultingly adds "the only thing India's good for is losing weight" (Chadha, 2004). One wonders if it is insecurity, not superiority, that drives Kiran's snide remarks; she is always shown up by Lalita when she competes for Darcy's attention. In India she is the outsider and is set up as a negative diasporic, Anglo-Indian who is *other* to the resident Indian women. Furthermore, she is constructed, embodying the binary between 'us' – the good/Hindu resident Indian woman, and the immoral/western Anglo-Indian – 'them' (Gangoli, 2005, p. 145). In a deleted scene she mocks the Bakshis' British relatives for still living in Southall, a working class area synonymous with first generation Indian immigrants. She successfully aims this verbal barb at the Bakshis: "I just don't know why anyone would stay there. I thought anyone who'd made it moved out ages ago" (Chadha, 2004). She defends her insults by admitting that it is not Jaya but her inappropriate family that she could never accept, proving her elitist attitude toward first generation Indians.

During a rather English high tea Kiran invites Mrs Bakshi, Lalita and Jaya into her parents' mansion and 'absent-mindedly' points out the Thames through one window and Windsor castle through another. She makes the Bakshi women, especially Mrs Bakshi, look and feel like poor, ignorant country relations, very much a reference to her belief in their social/cultural inferiority. She takes malicious pleasure in informing Jaya that Balraj is in New York looking at potential brides. She then offers them low-fat cake; a definite Marie Antoinette reference to their 'peasant'

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[19] Mr Kholi easily sheds his Indian culture and patriotism in favour of the ideals of his consumerist adoptive home, America. With fanaticism he tries to remake himself into all things 'American'. He power walks, has an expensive home and vulgarly bandies about the price tag of his achievements in the hopes of impressing an Indian bride. Ironically, he does not want to marry an NRI bride from America because they are have lost their roots and are "too outspoken, career orientated and some have even turned into the lesbian" (Chadha, 2004).

status, and moreover to their weight and to her obsession with body consciousness. Quite apart from Kiran's character being the amalgamation of Austen's Mrs Hearst and Miss Bingley, I believe that Chadha is using her as a commentary on the false superiority many NRI women feel. Austen's characters' snobbery is used as a device to further the action of the book's plot but also a commentary on the irrationality of class distinctions. If money equates to class then nouveau riche Mr Kholi and Kiran, and old money Mrs Darcy, are not good examples of the theory in practice. Chadha uses Kiran to her advantage, presenting an Anglo-Indian, upwardly mobile figure to identify the pitfalls of ignoring neo-colonial social ideologies on power that are used as the means to create contemporary class hierarchies. It would appear that the more generations that separate one from the motherland, the more one's transformation into a multicultural citizen entails the risk of becoming elitist toward one's resident Indian compatriots.

Anupam Kher plays the role of benevolent father in both *Bend It Like Beckham* and *Bride and Prejudice*; a stock character he is famous for in Bollywood movies. Despite being the patriarch of his on-screen families, it is always his female counterpart, his Indian wife, the mother, who is demonised as the nagging arbiter of Indian patriarchal tradition and hence continued Indian female persecution. As the male head of the family he always has the final say in familial conflicts, to which his wives, in *Bend It Like Beckham* and *Bride and Prejudice*, defer, even when his view is divergent from theirs. Significantly, his male view tends to correspond with his daughters' pro-feminism and equality views, thus depicting Indian men and fathers in a positive light. It is a step in the right direction that Mr Bhamra and Mr Bakshi as fathers and individuals see and act upon their daughters' needs for support in the changing, multicultural world. Their close relationships with their daughters also imply a greater depth of involvement in their daughters' lives and emotions.

Unfortunately, the image of Indian wives and mothers suffers as they are no longer dutiful Indian women following the edicts of their husbands but instead are distorted twice over. They are made to look stupid/backward, stuck in old-fashioned methods of thinking, and weak/powerless in their immediate deference to their husbands. It is therefore paternal, 21st century patriarchal approval that is primarily sought after by the female protagonists instead of maternal support. Thus mothers, and the older generation of women, are subjected to the same categorisation and

centuries-old patriarchal oppression they've always experienced, with the added contempt of their own daughters who view them as curators of an archaic way of thinking.

Mrs Bakshi, counterpart of Austen's highly strung Mrs Bennet, is similarly desperate to marry off her daughters to wealthy husbands. She pores over Indian websites dedicated to arranged marriages with good reason; she is an Indian mother living in a society that demands monetary restitution as part of a marriage contract. It is the bride's family that has to pay her dowry, and Mrs Bakshi has four daughters and no money to pay their dowries. It is therefore feasible that she would look for wealthy husbands, who might waive the dowry clause, and furthermore if the groom is an NRI he might be westernised enough that he will ignore the dowry completely. She is presented as uncouth and socially inept, by Indian and international standards, and always treated as dense by her family and visitors alike. Her genuine ignorance is viewed as stupidity whilst her social faux pas are evident to everyone but her. Lalita euphemistically calls her mother "abrupt", while Darcy's sister Georgie repeats his description of Mrs Bakshi, labelling her "a gold-digger out to nail a rich husband for her daughter" (Chadha, 2004). Ultimately, and I think this is what Chadha is aiming for, Mrs Bakshi should be read as an Indian woman, a mother trying to do the best she can for her daughters.

Does material wealth make interracial relationships more acceptable in the eyes of one's parents? Chadha explores this notion in both *Bend It Like Beckham* and *Bride and Prejudice*. In *Bend It Like Beckham* we witness the Bhamra family coming to terms with Jess and Joe's relationship as result of mutual compromise due to a shift in understanding and thinking that was always potentially waiting to occur. As third generation NRIs the Bhamra family were always part of the established Indian subculture in Britain. In the Bhamras' case, Joe's class and material status are not as relevant to his and Jess's relationship as his negatively viewed, white, race. The resolving of their interracial issue occurs as a result of the Bhamras' willingness to put their daughter's happiness ahead of any ephemeral community reputation as well as the recognition and re-evaluation of their own racism. Furthermore, any disappointment over Jess's earning power as a lawyer has disappeared in light of her international footballer status. Moreover, as a professional footballer, it is highly probable that Jess commands a high enough salary to reverse existing stereotypes about avaricious Indian women. If anything, it is not Joe who is the marriageable

prospect, but Jess. Of course, this speculation is what I interpret from the subtext as the film's final scenes show Jess and Joe openly kissing without fear of reprisal and later Joe playing cricket with Mr Bhamra outside his house. Jess and Joe's relationship is oversimplified but the entire film is dedicated to the underdog and if Jess, as the underdog, gets her career it follows that she should also get her man. Furthermore, the film explores the beginning of change, not the entire process.

The evidence provided by *Bride and Prejudice* suggests that in Lalita and Darcy's case his material wealth, whilst not necessary, is definitely not unwanted either. Darcy's command of power, through wealth, will protect him and Lalita from open scorn in any social arena. However, realistically their relationship could be limited by superficial acceptance of their relationship by certain social classes. In other words, their wealth will insulate them from conventional social pressures whilst it ensures acceptance in those upper classes. Our first description of the ideal son-in-law, as given by Lalita, is a reflection of her mother's thoughts: "All mothers think that any single guy with big bucks must be shopping for a wife" (Chadha, 2004). She should have included that the guy with big bucks usually wants a wife with equally big bucks. Furthermore, our first introduction to Will Darcy is via gossip being passed between two matchmaking mothers, Mrs Bakshi and Mrs Lamba. They discuss his friendship with Balraj, his Oxford education, his rich American family, and conclude by lamenting, "Shame he's not Indian though" (Chadha, 2004). The irony is that Will Darcy does indeed become the ideal husband despite his difference in race and culture, and I am certain it is his wealth that eases the way, at least in Mrs Bakshi's eyes. The gossip does give a negative impression of an already beleaguered Mrs Bakshi, and partially confirms Darcy's original assessment of her as a gold-digger, but her position is defensible as Mrs Bakshi is a repetition of sorts of Jane Austen's Mrs Bennet, who was equally mercenary. I can only conclude that the gold-digger moniker does not discriminate; it belongs to all races, cultures and classes.
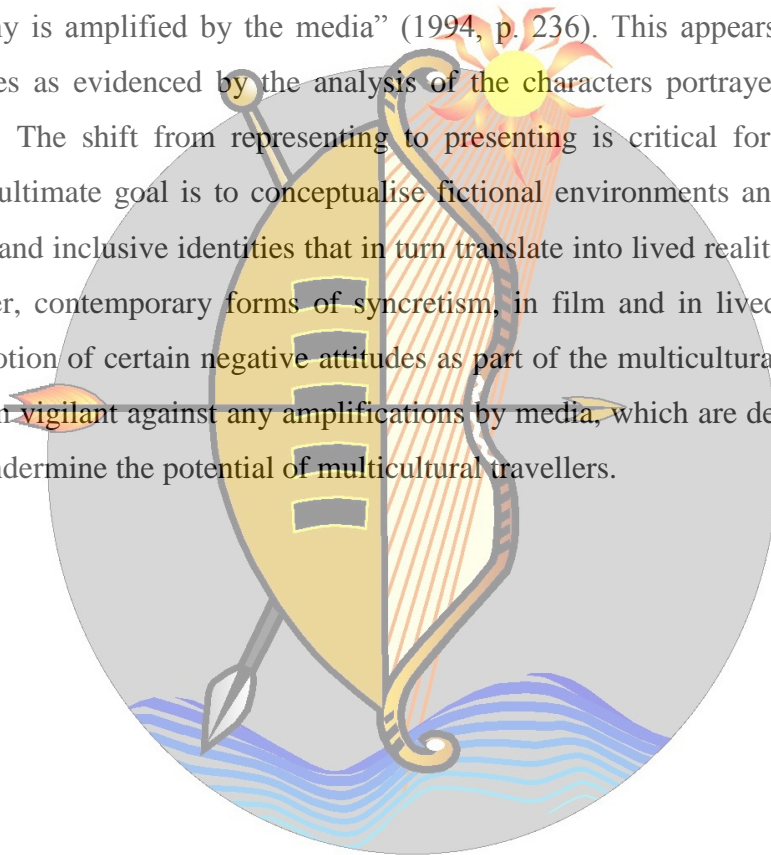
The scenes in which Katherine Darcy appears are telling instances of the attitudes and opinions expressed by some older white generations. Despite being a successful businesswoman of the 21st century her American imperial conceit echoes 18th century sentiments (Kaplan, 1997, p. 137). It is more than just her pique with her son's decision, to not exploit the Indian hospitality

industry, which decides for Katherine Darcy her distaste for India. There are no Darcy hotels in India, and hence no version of Americanness to temper the 'Indian' experience. She believes that because America has Indian imports – the like of spices, yoga, and Deepak Chopra – there is no need for her to travel to the country when she can experience a sanitised slice of 'Indianness' in her own back yard. Additionally, Mr Kholi's obsequious presence provides a subtext which reinforces, for her, that there is no need to go to India to meet Indians: they come to meet her. Katherine is intent on maintaining class distinctions to further invoke race distinctions. She accepts Mr Kholi because he is an employee. Therefore all her dealings with him, including allowing him to stage his wedding ceremony at her hotel, are reminiscent of noblesse oblige. She may not be a titled European aristocrat but she, and Mr Kholi, most certainly see her as an American one.

In both *Bend It Like Bekham* and *Bride and Prejudice* the Indian protagonists enter into interracial relationships with white men. As a commentary on multicultural integration the films are stellar examples of a vision of togetherness; however, in both cases the men just happen to be the ideal physical specimens of manhood as deliberately espoused by media representation.

With the plethora of, socially deemed, attractive white men constantly paraded via visual media, and further the endorsement that they are the epitome of masculine psychical beauty, is it any wonder that Jess and Lalita are, respectively, attracted to a white man? Jonathan Rhys-Meyers, who plays Joe, is a physically handsome man and Chadha by casting him, knowingly or unknowingly perpetuates certain socialised ideologies about physical masculinity while subverting others about masculine attitudes. Similarly, Will Darcy, played by Martin Henderson, is an attractive, white man. Furthermore, in an interview conducted during the making of *Bride and Prejudice*, Chadha admits to casting him because he is good-looking. She explains that she wanted the image of an old-style Hollywood hero, a stock character who is generally rich, suave and arrogantly uncompromising. However, in this case he is rich, suave, and most importantly capable of change. It is probable that because we are socialised into the binary that attractive is positive and ugly/average is bad we believe, as do the protagonists, on screen, that they have made a good choice. I believe that Chadha is once again using a kind of film sleight-of-hand, in which she presents the expected but subverts it to generate the unexpected.

It is significant that in both films, possibly because they were made for mainstream audiences, Jess, Jules and Lalita end up in America, or in Lalita's case with an American. Ostensibly their individual goals of freedom and equality are integrally linked to America. Thus the United States still holds onto its status as the land of milk and honey; the American dream is alive and kicking. The success of all of these women, and Chadha's personal success as a director, culminate in American success, the implication of which leads me back to depth of societal belief in America's power as a neo-coloniser. According to Ella Shohat and Robert Stam the concept of the self is inexorably syncretic in a multicultural society, particularly when "a pre-existing cultural polyphony is amplified by the media" (1994, p. 236). This appears especially true of subaltern identities as evidenced by the analysis of the characters portrayed in the two films under discussion. The shift from representing to presenting is critical for changing existing stereotypes. The ultimate goal is to conceptualise fictional environments and characters which promote positive and inclusive identities that in turn translate into lived realities to effect similar changes. However, contemporary forms of syncretism, in film and in lived realities, seem to include the promotion of certain negative attitudes as part of the multicultural package. As such we need to remain vigilant against any amplifications by media, which are designed to reinforce separatism and undermine the potential of multicultural travellers.

Chapter 4

Difference and Power:

A color line that is global

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 2004, p. 192

In this chapter I comment on late 20th and early 21st century shifts in power where class is privileged as the hegemonic standard subordinating issues around race and gender. Indian women, as presented by Chadha in her films, are seen traversing class barriers, and consequently geographic and cultural barriers. Their ability to shift fluidly across all borders appears to be a pathway toward reclamation of power, at least in the films. Therefore my objective is to find correlations between the content and realities of the films and their potential for translation into realities outside of the films. In other words, are the films by directors like Gurinder Chadha barometers of racial, sexual, economic, class and cultural shifts at a theoretical and practical level in the real and affective world? According to the fictional realities, as depicted in Chadha's films, shifts are occurring. However, it is the translation of those shifts into lived realities that is pertinent. Consequently, this chapter includes an analysis of Indian women film-makers' responses to working in the popular cinema industry, in order to assess the translation of practical and affective changes from film realities into our lived realities.

In a world previously dominated by racial, and gender, segregation, Ambalavaner Sivanandan's "Colour line is the power line is the poverty line" has been conveniently transformed into: class line is the power line is the poverty line (1990, p. 13). This is particularly true for third-world countries and peoples. In terms of class, bourgeois middle-classes have become the arbiters of power, creating poverty as a by-product of upward class mobility. In accordance with capitalist ideologies the 'rich' cannot exist without the 'poor', and in our contemporary world we involuntarily continue the binaries created by imperial powers in every aspect of our daily lives. For instance, the concept of winning and losing, operating as a binary, is unconsciously imprinted on everything we undertake to achieve. Regardless of the sphere of influence – economic or social – the majority of men and women, unconsciously and constantly compete for better jobs and salaries, bigger houses and faster cars; even our estimation of the ideal life-

61

partner is predicated on a notion of the best. Only an alpha male or female will do, regardless of one's sexual orientation, racial or cultural background. Seemingly, 'alpha' status is predicated on socialised physical beauty and, more importantly, superior wealth.

According to Chandra Talpade Mohanty, the contemporary challenge in debates of race, gender, nation, feminism and multiculturalism now lies in understanding a colour line that is global (2004, p. 192). However, imperial ideologies continue to compete for dominance with the ultimate goal being neo-colonial control of economic and social systems, and thus power over peoples of all demographics. We have learned to interpret and survive in relation to the racial, sexual, national and class scripts embedded in and circulated by American neo-colonial culture (2). Our groomed desire for the best, the latest, the fastest – to still our subaltern yearning for recognition from the neo-coloniser – is indicative of capitalism's need for profit and domination. As an ideology capitalism cannot co-exist with a praxis that normalises social and economic equality. On a psychological level it works to increase feelings of superior 'us' versus inferior 'them'. However, unlike the colonial or Eurocentric binary, the contemporary 'us' versus 'them' is demarcated by class lines. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer remind us that two races still exist by 'nature': the greater and the lesser (1979, p. 232). Therefore, it is neither unexpected nor surprising that a shift in hegemonic discrimination from nation, race and gender to the encompassing term of 'class' has occurred. Furthermore, 'first-class', supported by our capitalist, commodity-driven world, is the dominant attitude endorsed by social consumer identities where "something is provided for all so that none may escape" (123). 'First-class' becomes an intertextual fabric interweaving attitudes, identities, economic standing and upper-class status into power.

In the face of the economic and electronic homogenisation of the globe, national boundaries are redundant or unsustainable in our contemporary world. The random, often chaotic, flow of capital is accompanied by an unprecedented movement of peoples, technologies and information across previously impervious borders – from one location to another (Appadurai cited in Gandhi, 1998, p. 125). In this overtly capitalist world money equals power and entry into upper levels of capitalist society. The most glaring problem with this new spin on capitalism is that, despite the lowering of certain boundaries, all the old problems remain, but are disguised by the sense of

material equality. In keeping with capitalist, and neo-colonialist, practice the material equality is offered to a select few. This small percentage, now minimally race and gender inclusive, maintain control over the economics and politics that run the world. This group is still located in the west, still exercising imperial control over the third world and neo-colonised peoples and, as with democracy, still contradictorily endorsing capitalism as compatible with multicultural visions of socio-economic justice (Mohanty, 2004, p. 9).

Multiculturalism is used here as a viable smokescreen for an on-going, segregating, capitalist tradition. This is evident in *Bride and Prejudice* (Chadha, 2004) as it is the 'multicultural' and transnational Mr Kholi, along with his Anglo-Indian compatriot, Kiran, who projects elitism toward the resident Indian characters. Mr Kholi willingly sheds his Indianness, despite paradoxically reminding us of it every time he tries to assert his Americanness. He speaks American colloquialisms with an Indian accent, always reminding viewers of the dissonance between his two worlds: he uses the right phrases but they do not sound right. This puts him in embarrassing situations which always depict him as a pitiable subject of derision. Through Mr Kholi, and Kiran, Chadha identifies two disturbing portrayals depicting that which constitutes transnational belonging and that which does not. Hamid Naficy describes the condition as "new forms of dystopian cosmopolitanism and opportunistic identity politics" (2001, p. 269).

Mr Kholi is willingly assimilated into American culture and although he feels enlightened by his direct contact with all things American he returns to India to find a bride. His denigration of NRI women as potential brides confirms that he is operating on double-standards in relation to gender roles and Indian women. According to Mr Kholi NRI women have lost their roots, their subservience, while resident Indian women are traditional. Mr Kholi despises in the NRI women what he himself is aspiring to become: American. Conversely, his sexist perspective, regarding men's and women's roles and interactions, inexorably draws him back to his Indian patriarchal roots. However, in his attempt to blend his new spouse into his American life he encourages her to clothe herself in the appearance of western women, whilst continuing the actions of a traditional, servile, Indian wife.

If he were not Jane Austen's hapless Mr. Collins remade, a character such as Mr Kholi would probably deny his traditional Indian bride the same American 'sophistication' he has experienced. Unbeknown to him, Chandra, his wife, is not the simple Indian bride he envisages. She is possibly more creolised by the west than he is. This is evinced by the scene in which she recognises Darcy's attraction to Lalita. Chandra posits that Lalita should marry Darcy with the mercenary intentions of a large divorce settlement which Lalita can then live off. She goes on to hypothesise that Lalita can split the money with her and both of them can be free of parental interference. This proposition is laughed off as a joke by both women, as is the bumbling courtship Mr Kholi attempts with Lalita. However, in Chandra's sudden volte-face, she marries Mr Kholi, and later her revised opinion of him is evidence of her avarice. Furthermore, her attitude and actions coincide with capitalist beliefs that associate money and status as the means to power. Chandra's marriage affords her material possessions, status as a wife and a new life in Los Angeles. In other words, her transnational travel has gained her a degree of class mobility in the western world.

Kaplan theorises that travel destabilises fixed notions of culture while simultaneously strengthening the traveller's sense of national identity (Kaplan, 1997, pp. 5-6). I posit that this is not always true. We must take into account that the possibility exists of an alternative when there is friction between one's national identity and the national identity of one's adopted country. Furthermore, if one of the competing identities is first world, and propagandised as superior as in the case of American national identity[20], then the subordinate identity may be scorned or abandoned. Mr Kholi is a relevant example of travellers who have left their countries of origin, for a multitude of possible reasons, and experienced a clash between their identities. Mr Kholi goes to America, idolising the American dream, seeking enlightenment and acceptance through material wealth and yuppie status. However, his American idolatry more closely resembles covetousness. He is envious of American identity yet he can never be that which he wishes,

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[20] The idea of a singular, monolithic American national identity is false as America, as a culture, comprises many differing identities which are neither unified nor unitary. Consequently, there is "always a process of hybridity, incorporating new 'people' in relation to the body politic, generating other sites of meaning, and [...] producing unmanned sites of political antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation" (Bhabha, 1991, p. 4).

American, because he is Indian by birth and tradition. He compromises by adopting American culture and ideology in an attempt to fit in. However, the closest Mr Kholi will ever get to his dream is to be considered Americanised, a pale comparison in the eyes of those who judge him and find him wanting. Ironically, his judges are the Indians he disdains and the Americans he idolises. Thus his exploitation of America, via its resources: the house, the car, his job and social connections, all act as a kind of sub-conscious revenge on a society that merely tolerates him. Furthermore, it is safe to say that while he is exploiting America, America is just as easily exploiting him. As film-maker Mira Nair points out: "[America] is the speciality of America – [Americans] only know their world" (Greer, 2002). The implication is that neo-colonial America displays imperial illusions of grandeur that Americans and neo-colonised peoples buy into.

Anglo-Indian Kiran, on the other hand, is an NRI several generations removed from India and a civic Indian identity. She is a part of English metropolitan culture as well as a subaltern within it by virtue of being identified, by others, as part of the diasporan Indian subculture. She can be interpreted as an Anglo-Indian yuppie; her status is such that she displays the attitude of a subaltern intelligentsia who use the act of knowing to power self-definitions of superiority (Mohanty, 2004, p.195). She disdains Mr Kholi, who is inept and a caricaturised Indian immigrant, not her idea of the ideal male, physically or mentally. However, the two are similar in that they misconstrue, in their versions of multiculturalism, ideas on class, gender and race. They privilege Darcy because he is rich, American, white, male and attractive, in that order. It is Darcy's money, first and foremost, quickly followed by his nationality, race, gender and physical attractiveness, which dictate Kiran and Kholi's approval[21]. Thus multiculturalism, as Kiran and Kholi represent it, is an amalgamation of the *other*'s old yearnings, to be recognised by the coloniser, with new money as the passport to acceptance.

Augusto Boal, in his work on forum theatre, developed an active method to empower oppressed classes. Forum theatre presented allegorical sketches to oppressed peoples depicting their social problems. Actors delivered a performance and the spectators, whom Boal wittily named with the

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[21] Kholi and Kiran see Darcy through western, socially sanctioned eyes; Kholi views Darcy as an alpha male he wishes to emulate, while Kiran sees an alpha male she'd like to date.

neologism spectactors, were invited to comment and, more importantly, perform any solutions they devised within the context of the fictional space. The agency inherent in such performance works on two levels: it instils a sense of empowerment by breaking the cycle of inferiority and it gives disenfranchised peoples the opportunity to construct and test out their ideas in a space safe from judgement by the status quo. Although much was accomplished in this forum Boal discovered that shifts in paradigm could not occur if the solutions sketched were too far removed from the realms of the oppressed's imagination. Solutions immediately disqualified by the spectactors were labelled 'magic': too far-fetched to be believable or realistic (1995, p. 142). I propose that by incorporating a series of sequential sketches, which gradually work toward the 'magic' solutions, a facilitator can improve the chances of 'magic' ideas being accepted as viable possibilities. By creating a believable build-up to a once 'magic' idea one can break down barriers of ingrained oppression whilst simultaneously providing opportunities for people to be the decision-makers in their own lives and destinies.

I posit that film, in similar fashion to forum theatre, acts as a medium for education and empowerment, with films acting as forums and film-makers acting as facilitators. Furthermore, by testing the viability of situations and circumstances in the relative safety of the fictional context one is able to experiment with solutions for positive change. The principal difficulty is the low level of inter-communication between spectators/audiences, and the medium/film. However, if documentary-style filmmaking techniques, such as Brecht's alienation device, are used to promote self-reflexive awareness in audiences then it is possible for change to occur. We must remember that the medium of film, especially as regards popular film, is generally constituted of routinely escapist genres that employ conventions which require a certain level of passivity and uncritical thinking from its viewers. However, I would argue that, despite the medium being described as a one-way communication, 21st century viewers are media-literate and can increase their literacy level, as previously explored, if presented with film texts that engage with issues at the pedagogic level.

It could be argued that since the vast majority of mainstream films are biased works of fiction, relating them to realities outside of the film context is problematic. Extrapolating the issues depicted on screen and their potential solutions into audience's realities, even if relevant and

identifiable in those realities, is impractical as the imaginary solutions shown to very real problems are, in Boalian parlance, 'magic'. One could also argue that any suspension of disbelief is restricted to the cinema environment, or any film viewing space[22], because viewers follow certain rituals infused into the film-watching experience. As contemporary subaltern viewers we may identify with characters and their circumstances, but concurrently maintain defeatist attitudes toward the solutions presented. It is paradoxical that we can cheer the underdog, buying into an American ideology, but simultaneously believe 'that would never really happen'. This is indicative of the depth of the ingrained defeatist attitude subliminally concealed in our psyche.

While watching films is not as active a process as spectacting in forum theatre I propose that 'magic' solutions in films can have similarly empowering effects on subaltern viewers. In my analysis of Chadha's two films I encountered several moments that jarred in otherwise seamless productions. It is the moments of dissonance that I believe are the most crucial, for they provide visual attestation and verification of the disguised issues we often ignore as multicultural travellers. *Bend It Like Beckham*'s adamantly racist Mrs Bhamra presents no opposition to her daughter's interracial relationship, and *Bride and Prejudice*'s equally racist[23] Mrs Bakshi cries tears of joy at Lalita and Will Darcy's wedding. The complete reversal of perspective by the older generations, especially the women/mothers, is unbelievable. I understand and applaud Chadha's daring in rehearsing the revolution[24] in film realities, but still feel that I, and probably other generations, who exist along a continuum of multicultural enlightenment, need a few more mitigating steps before we are willing, in our diversity, to believe that so abrupt a change will occur in our realities with equally positive results as those displayed on celluloid.

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[22] Not all viewership occurs in cinemas. Video recordings and DVD's make the home theatre experience an ever-increasing one. The salient point is that similar rituals of viewing occur regardless of 'theatre' venue.

[23] Mrs Bhamra calls Joe *gora*, a racist comment pertaining to white men, whilst Mrs Bakshi generalises that the white Johnny Wickham is a smelly hippie who must therefore be a thief.

[24] Augusto Boal called the process for change experienced within the safety of the forum theatre space "a rehearsal of revolution" (Boal, 1979, p. 141). The idea was once you have hypothetically tested out theories the ones that worked can be carried over into reality.

Having said this, films the like of *Bend It Like Beckham* and *Bride and Prejudice* do act as visual inroads into subaltern stories. They describe veridical worlds which allow the problems of subjectivity and identity in postcolonial situations to be played out in similar fashion to forum theatre. The aptness of such fictional forms depends on their practical ability to reconstitute, within their imaginary arenas, the characteristics of our real spaces and in doing so rehearse viable solutions for the material and affective world. Such works are the 'arts of resistance' that acquaint us with liminal and un-signified features of human becoming that 'objective' discourses cannot (Venn, 2006, p. 82). Film-maker Pratibha Parmar believes that cultural change is possible and what's more, she has witnessed forms of such change. In an interview with Sharon Hadrian, Parmar recalls the experience of attending a lesbian civil partnership ceremony. Parmar recounts that the Indian couple wore traditional bridal outfits, and that both extended families were in attendance. To all intents and purposes it was like a typical Indian wedding except that there were two brides. She ends the anecdote by saying: "Now *that* is progress. That is change. So my [films are not] just complete fantasy; things like that do happen" (Hadrian, 2007).

It would be remiss of me to ignore the fact that of the cast members of *Bend It Like Beckham* and *Bride and Prejudice*, those who have achieved continued Hollywood distinction, are the white males and females, with the notable exception of Aishwarya Rai and Naveen Andrews[25]. Despite the film's popularity and box office success the Indian actresses, specifically Parminder Nagra[26] who played Jess Bhamra, have faded into relative obscurity. This is ironic considering she, as the lead actress and main character, had the most screen time and that the film was primarily Jess's story; not Jess and Jules's story. Conversely, for Keira Knightley, the actress who played Jules, *Bend It Like Beckham* was her breakthrough role, bringing her to the attention of mainstream Hollywood film-makers. It can be argued that Hollywood's film scripts and roles cater for a

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[25] Aishwarya Rai was already a popular established model and Bollywood actress prior to starring in *Bride and Prejudice*. Naveen Andrews is a British actor who successfully crossed over into Hollywood. However, the characters he plays are often marginalised, as in *The English Patient* (Minghella, 1996) or negative reinforcements based on terrorist stereotypes, as in the television show *Lost* (Abrams, 2004).

[26] In 2003 Parminder Nagra made inroads into the American television market by joining the television show *ER* (1994), yet she is nowhere near to being a world-renowned, household name as is Keira Knightley.

white majority, both male and female, hence roles conceptualised for women are written with white women in mind. Furthermore, the vast majority of Hollywood film-makers are white and consequently their films are white-oriented, drawing on the dominant text of white history. Knowingly or unknowingly these producers, film-makers, writers and directors, because of their dominant white heritage, all contribute towards the perpetuation of biased inequality in power and representative narratives.

Therefore actresses of colour – in this case Indian and NRI – run the risk of always being categorised as ambassadors of the independent, 'arty', peripheral or counter-cultural films. Moreover, these art-house films may be neo-conservatively ridiculed as subaltern sympathy movies. If Indian actresses do appear, at all, in films as Indian characters they are expected to stick to 'their' cinema: Bollywood or independent film. The very fact that the actresses and the films inhabit a completely different cinema, or the niche market of the art circuit, marginalises and separates them from norms of mainstream film viewership.

As an NRI academic I am disturbed by this continued partiality; furthermore, as an Indian actress I am personally affected by this trend which pigeonholes me and other NRI actresses. Consequently, instead of taking our rightful place as equals of our white fellows we are overlooked and remain on the fringes of Hollywood and society. A parallel can be drawn here wherein independent cinema, and by extension Indian actresses and Indian characters, co-exist with mainstream cinema, mainstream white actresses and white characters, but the two are never homogenously integrated. This is indicative of the power of mass media, with its vast array of technological dissemination, which ensures the propagation of socially coded messages without taking responsibility for their effects. If the revolutionary economic and social opportunities and pedagogic changes espoused in the Indian characters' lives do not resonate with the lives and careers of the established Indian actresses who play them how can we, as actresses and audiences, believe those same opportunities and changes exist for us?

Incidentally, those NRI actresses who have attained a relative form of success are usually cast in stereotypical roles, usually as doctors. Furthermore, it is telling that all of the 'doctors' appear on American television programmes, a visual medium that is considered second best to Hollywood

and full-length motion pictures. After playing Jess *Bend It Like Beckham*'s lead actress, Parminder Nagra, played a doctor in the television hospital drama *ER* (1994), as did *Bride and Prejudice* actress, Indira Varma, in the medical show dedicated to neurosurgery, *3 lbs* (2006). Rekha Sharma, in her recurring role on *Smallville* (2001), was also typecast as a doctor, as was Reshma Shetty in *Royal Pains* (2009). It is interesting to note the shift that has taken place in the depictions of Indian women. Instead of being labelled either helpless damsel or exotic vamp, they are now portrayed as doctors with all the attendant labels. As doctors these women are portrayed as healers, holders of specialised knowledge. Within the framework of their fictional realities they work in tandem with other races, genders and classes of people in a state of equality. In conjunction with the recognition of their ability to heal comes a certain raised status owed them because of their medical training. While the 'doctor' model is by far more flattering than the damsel or vamp stereotypes I must point out that it is the socially accepted 'doctor' that we as viewers initially see. The Indian women, who are simultaneously the character and the actress, are afterthoughts. They are obscured by the career of the characters they portray. As they are almost always depicted in their 'doctor' guise, in the medical context, there is little or no engagement with the characters' lives outside of their occupation. Moreover, because there are so many television 'doctors', who happen to be Indian women, another stereotype is being created.

As seen in *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002) Indian communities validate, and hence normalise, occupations such as doctors, lawyers, and accountants. Thus anything outside of the norm is often viewed with cynicism. By providing numerous examples of Indian women doctors on television these programmes reinforce the narrow-minded beliefs regarding notions of gendered acceptability in Indian communities. Furthermore, they are entrenching them in the minds of impressionable Indian women. It is ironic then that the Indian women who play the lauded and acceptable role of doctor on screen are themselves Indian women engaged in an unacceptable occupation: acting.

On a fundamental level we validate "anticipatory identification" wherein we become what we think we are in the eyes of the other (Žižek, 1994 p. 76). We either internalise or refute that which we see. Therefore, our acceptance occurs as a result of socialisation but our rejection is

equally predicated on processes of socialisation as we 'choose' to deny anything outside of our locus of 'normal'. Similarly recognitions of 'truths' and methods of identification in film are double-edged swords. Depending on levels of media literacy we either accept or subvert meanings, yet even that process of subversion is reliant on the intertextual lives of film-makers, who like Chadha express their intertextuality in their films. Chadha's initial projects, including *I'm British, But...* (1990) and *Bhaji On The Beach* (1993), reflect an ongoing dialogue with social issues based on intercultural integrations, specific to the sub-culture of NRI women. However, with the commercial success of *Bend It Like Beckham* and *Bride and Prejudice* Chadha has crossed another boundary: from independent film-maker to mainstream box-office success[27]. In a recent project, a complete deviation from her usual subject material, she directed a film adaptation of Louise Rennison's novel *Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging* (1999). As a sop to a multicultural conscience she cast a young Indian actress in the supporting role of Ellen[28]. This begs the question: has Chadha, to a degree, sold out? Has she cashed in her feminist, pro-social reform chips in favour of a VIP entrance to Hollywood's money-making machine?

Certain tones in *Bend It Like Beckham* are suggestive of the director's defection to mainstream Hollywood's propaganda. Indian Jess and white Jules are talented at football and are scouted to join an American college to continue their training. Jules convinces Jess of the material benefits of professional football, explaining that America has its own women's league where women are recognised as equally able football players. Furthermore, in America there are tertiary education sports scholarships to be won. While Jules's claims are likely true, when taken in context of America as a neo-coloniser we see that Chadha has made a distinct commentary on the superiority of American educational and sporting institutions as well as the superiority of American equality for all women[29]. Chadha cleverly reinforces the idea of America as superior

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[27] The film *Bend It Like Beckham* was one of Britain's highest grossing movies of 2002 (Fuchs, 2003).

[28] In the book *Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging* (Rennison, 1999), Ellen is white; however, in the film adaptation *Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging* (Chadha, 2008) she is Indian.

[29] Jules assumes that both she and Jess will be afforded the same opportunities once in America. However, we never actually see them living the 'American Dream', as the director chooses to depict a quick montage of snapshots chronicling their initial American experience.

on and off the field, and further, on and off the screen. It is difficult to identify if she does this to promote the idea that equal opportunities are available, regardless of race and gender, or that the opportunities touted are primarily American in nature. Under Chadha's direction America holds onto its position as the pinnacle of success in our contemporary world.

The social commentaries depicted in *Bend It Like Beckham* suggest real world problems encountered by real world NRI women. However, the film ends on a simplistic, unrealistic Hollywood escapist note. Some of the issues problematised are too easily solved when compared to lived realities. Understandably the film cannot solve the world's ills, but it is not 'just a movie'. The film and director, by virtue of the issues she accentuates, and the manner in which they are presented, are doing a disservice to real women experiencing such scenarios by oversimplifying the answers to problems. They send out either a fantastical reading – 'it's this simple' – or conversely a defeatist reading – 'that will never happen in reality'.

As a film-maker tackling this significant issue Chadha could have dealt with *Bend It Like Beckham*'s ending differently. She almost does in the scene where Jess triumphantly tells Joe that her parents have agreed to her going to play football in America. In doing so her parents put Jess's desires ahead of their own and discard not only their aspirations for her, but also their fears. Joe eagerly moves in for a kiss to congratulate but also to formalise a relationship between him and Jess. Jess, however, pulls away, explaining the huge leap of faith her parents have displayed: reversing their attitude toward Indian women playing football as well as traversing continents to do so. She explains that the addition of an interracial relationship may prove too much for them to accept. Joe reluctantly agrees with her, but in true Hollywood style arrives at the airport with kisses and declarations designed to fulfil the expectations of viewers of the film, but not those of the Indian parents in the film. Ironically, Jess displays none of her previous trepidations: she kisses her white boyfriend in the airport, in full view of her parents. Contradictorily, they display none of the dismay or disapproval witnessed in earlier encounters with Joe. I must point out that Chadha cheats us of the Bhamras' reaction by directing Joe and Jess's kiss to coincide with the appearance of celebrity footballer David Beckham. Thus the Bhamras, and Jules and her parents, are all distracted by Beckham, giving Joe and Jess the breathing space to publicly, yet paradoxically privately, affirm their feelings for each other.

Perhaps the airport serves as a visual metaphor for changing spaces; it is an interstitial space itself where delays and departures are frequently interchangeable.

It would seem that identity is now recognised as socially produced, and is somewhat "released from the biological moorings of blood and descent" (Naficy, 2001, p. 269). However, diasporan film-makers return to variations of 'blood and descent' for the controversial issues contextualised in their film corpus. Commercially successful women directors, like Gurinder Chadha, Mira Nair, Deepa Mehta and Pratibha Parmar, have presented feminist understandings of production and politics in their films, with specific regard to Indian women's identities and sexual agency. Jigna Desai believes that it is their focus on these topical issues that has been the greatest contributor to their personal success and the success of their films (2004, p. 213). Perhaps it is a coincidental case of their being at the right place, making topical films, at the right time, but these women and their films also serve as intermediaries for change. Furthermore, they are appropriate commentators on the translations that are taking place on-screen and consequently off-screen. In this section I analyse their responses and commentaries to changes occurring as a result of their work.

Western cinema's influence on Bollywood is evinced by the internalisation of certain western ideals. Therefore, Bollywood typically depicts India and Indianness as an exotic utopian ideal, conveniently ignoring the divisive realities of poverty, caste, religion and gender discrimination. Furthermore, a certain type of Indian is represented, projecting a false sense of politically correct nationhood. Bollywood often glosses over, or completely reinvents, the truths of its dystopian country and society. Conversely, Mira Nair, with her documentary camera style, seeks to film 'truths'. She acknowledges, however, that film is never without manipulation (Greer, 2002). Bonnie Greer succinctly sums up Nair's directorial style, explaining that she puts herself and her camera in among the marginalised people in order to tell the story from their point of view (Greer, 2002). Nair's interest lies in the line dividing so-called 'good' and 'bad' women. This is a theme that resonates with Indian traditions, taboos and patriarchal perspectives of women. She believes that these lines demarcating socially acceptable and unacceptable modes of behaviour are inherently related to women's sexuality, and this is what she exposes in her films. Her

questions explore beyond the limits of societal boundaries; moreover, she sees marginalised outsiders as inspiring[30] as they are often able to see through double standards (Greer, 2002).

In her interview with Greer, Nair admitted that the content and the manner in which she conducts research for her films have caused awkwardness for her family, primarily because she is an Indian woman dealing with the underbelly of Indian, and world, realities. Thus Nair transgresses cultural taboo on two levels: firstly, as an Indian film-maker, she is a woman working in a male dominated industry; and secondly, by questioning and exposing that which is generally concealed. Nair, like her counterpart Deepa Mehta, has been vilified in India for some of her films and her 'unnaturalness' as an Indian 'woman'. Both film-makers are originally from India but tertiary study and work opportunities, respectively, took Nair to America and Mehta to Canada. Having experienced interstitial spaces first hand, and subalternity in North America, both women have used film to open doors into peripheries that are forgotten or deliberately ignored because they are ugly to a world that refuses to see and acknowledge its faults. Nair believes that the unique medium of film and the language of cinema express multiplicities of self and space in a manner accessible to its audiences (Greer, 2002). She explains that cinema works similarly to literature in that it creates visual allegories and lends itself to subtextual interpretations.

Nair's *Kama Sutra: A Tale Of Love* (1997), a commentary on gender binaries and women's agency, oscillates between the so-called 'good' wife, who dreams of liberation, and the 'bad' courtesan, who buys a kind of liberation. This film resonates with Deepa Mehta's *Fire* (1996). *Fire* tells the story of two lower middle class Indian women, both trapped in arranged marriages, who form a lesbian relationship. In one fell swoop Mehta attacked fundamental flaws in the foundation of Indian culture: the heterosexual national icon 'woman' and the patriarchal institution of arranged marriages. The film was received with hostility by Hindu fundamentalists,

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[30] Nair has included diverse, yet marginalised, characters in her work such as the exotic dancers in *India Cabaret* (1985) and the street children of *Salaam Bombay!* (1988). Furthermore, she has explored the idea of interracial relationships between two subaltern identities, an African-American man and an Indian woman, in *Mississippi Masala* (1992), and the prostitutes/courtesans of *Kama Sutra: A Tale Of Love* (1997).

who demonstrated to have it banned, but succeeded in having it submitted for censorship. However, the Indian censors neither edited nor banned the film, but instead unexpectedly approved its screening throughout India. It is possible that the censors' surprising encouragement of the film resulted from their recognition of its popularity in the western world. Hence the film's topical issues, although contradictory to Indian patriarchal hegemony, were tolerated in a prudent attempt to avoid international disapproval. Regardless of the political machinations surrounding it, *Fire* remains a powerful study of film and cinema's capacity to evoke empowerment among the disenfranchised. The contention over *Fire* initiated radical debate in India; more importantly, it inspired a mobilisation of the women's movement and an outcry for freedom of expression. Although the male fundamentalists had begun the protests over the film's content, *Fire* became a symbol for a much larger issue as it embodied the dialogue about women's lack of agency in India (Phillips, 1999). Furthermore, it served as a springboard, an opportunity for people to speak out against morals and choices being dictated to women. It mobilised not just the intellectuals, but also housewives and students (Phillips, 1999).

Pratibha Parmar is another film-maker in the vein of Nair and Mehta. Her issues-based documentaries focus primarily on women's sexual agency. She shares with Gurinder Chadha Kenyan origins as well as a forced immigration to Britain during her childhood. For safety reasons her family moved to the United Kingdom and began a working-class life. Parmar states that her parents worked hard to send their children to university because education meant a way of overcoming their class and the prejudices they experienced (Hadrian, 2007). Parmar explains that as an Indian woman the assumption was made, on her behalf, that she would marry and that she would marry an Indian man[31] (Hadrian, 2007). However, as a film-maker, who focuses on women's agency, and who just happens to be lesbian, Parmar defies all assumptions. She has made films ranging from *Warrior Marks*[32] (1993), a documentary about certain African countries' tradition of female genital mutilation and the activism against continuing the practice,

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[31] This is similar to the assumptions depicted in Chadha's *Bend It Like Beckham* and *Bride and Prejudice*.

[32] Parmar collaborated with Alice Walker on this documentary; Parmar directed whilst Walker produced the programme. Walker has written at length about race and gender issues and is best known for her critically acclaimed novel *The Color Purple* (1982).

to *The Righteous Babes* (1998), a documentary about popular culture, women rock musicians and feminism.

At some point, either overtly or through more secondary means, these film-makers incorporate commentaries on contemporary capitalist processes in their films. In a reference to colonial practices, and contemporarily neo-colonial exploitation, Mehta is of the opinion that "it is basically the dollar that drives the demands for separation" (Phillips, 1999). Hence divisions in class, race, religion and gender are exacerbated by capitalist multinational corporations. The pervasive nature of capitalism is such that it cannot be escaped, especially as the very industry of cinema revolves around obscene amounts of money of which the average subaltern ticket buyer has no actual conception. Nair, Mehta and Parmar explain that their mainstream popularity as film-makers was achieved by coincidence and not design. With the exception of Chadha, it was their notoriety that brought the afore-mentioned film-makers, and their films, to the attention of mainstream audiences. Nair has expressed surprise at *Monsoon Wedding*'s (2001) popularity among mainstream audiences and critics, when it is usually controversy that is linked to her and her films (Greer, 2002).

Something that is clearly important to all these directors is the embracing of emotion and humour as integral to the exploration of women's social issues in their films. Furthermore, they have all expressed their need to make films as a vocation; it is the social issues and not the potential profits that drive their desire to make films. In her interview with Sharon Hadrian, Parmar says "My work spans many themes and ideas which often come from my own passions" (2007). Similarly, Nair explains: "my films, especially the ones I independently produce and direct, come out of things that engage me fully [...] I just set out to make the film that is burning me up" (Greer, 2002). Chadha's sentiments follow along the same line, such that any films she creates "will have the undercurrents of identity and culture and the sense of diversity or camaraderie, in metaphorical terms [...] I want to use the camera, which is so powerful, to change the way that people are portrayed" (Fuchs, 2003).
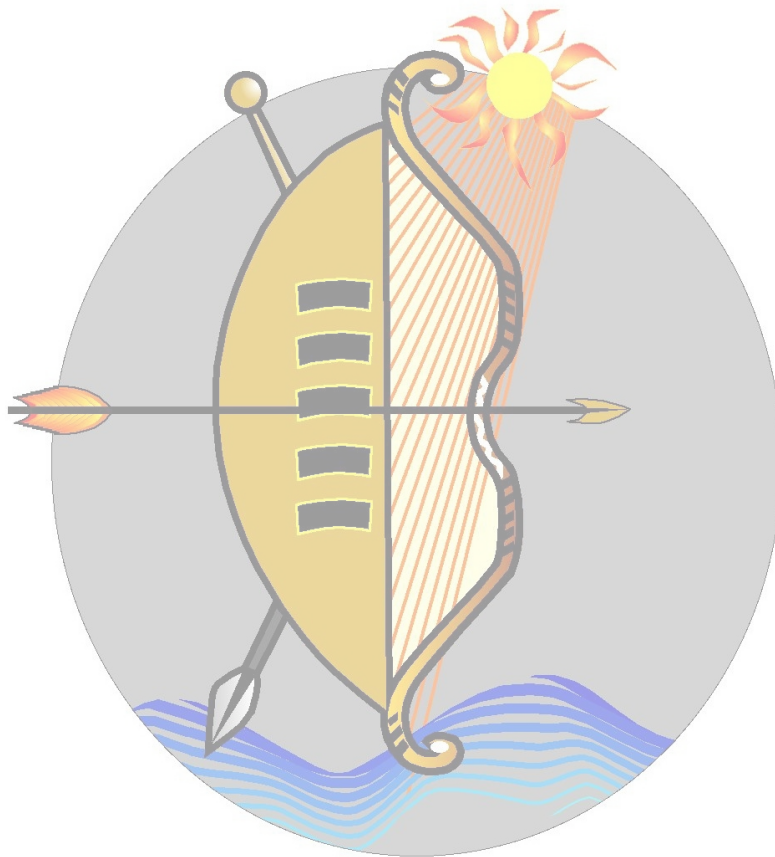
The distortion of the multicultural ethos is offensive, yet it emphasises a need for vigilance in order to create truly multicultural identities. Those of us who would prefer an anti-racist world,

decolonised at social, economic and pedagogic levels, embrace the process as gradual but achievable. It took hundreds of years, and generations of divisions, to create the contemporary oppressive structures we experience, and a multiculturalism achieved, by some, on superficial, material levels cannot address the social and economic injustices still endured by the vast majority of third world and first world subalterns. Furthermore, multiculturalism cannot be a static goal waiting to be completed, a box waiting to be ticked by a creolised elite who have achieved 'multicultural equality' through their material wealth with little or no ethical considerations. If the majority of exploited global nations view multiculturalism as the domain of an educated[33] subalterns' elite we have indeed created Henry Giroux's idea of a "pedagogy of normative pluralism", where communities of race and gender are represented by individuals who claim their personal experience and history as indicative of the entire group's (1988, p. 95). This is exclusionary and suppressive of experiences and stories outside of the intelligentsia's rarefied milieu. Thus, certain parts of Eurocentric ideology are perpetuated wherein education – empowerment – is available to only a select few. Furthermore, this time we are creating a segregation not dictated by formerly racial or gendered prejudice but rather by a class hierarchy, which subsumes race and gender issues without accounting for them. As such the possibility of a colour line that is global is coming true, if in a rather distorted fashion.

One point of clarity is that in order to achieve any sense of true equality we must, as a global community, understand the variables and vagaries of race, class, gender, nation, sexuality and postcolonialism in terms of histories and experiences that tie us together (Mohanty, 2004, p. 192). Change is occurring but the type of change is not necessarily positive. Parmar points out that culture is not monolithic, but always on the move and fluid (Hadrian, 2007). As such, multicultural travellers have more to negotiate than sexism or racism from the once white coloniser. In our media-linked culture it is imperative that film-makers like Chadha, Nair, Mehta and Parmar continue to grapple with issues as they present themselves. Despite the contradictions within their work and the blandishments that have manifested as the darker side of

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[33] A contentious term at best when educational institutions are creating liberal arts practices, that border on the routine, to teach comfortable versions of postcoloniality wherein the students are groomed into a subaltern intelligentsia (see Mohanty, 2004, pp. 200-7).

fame and success, the growing popularity of the films is significant. These women directors, through their films, have made access into the dilemmas of the multicultural traveller available to a wider audience.

Conclusion

Indian female identity is located at the heart of this dissertation. Representations of oppressed peoples grew out of colonial fears and fantasies that were then imprinted into ideologies forced upon those colonised. Representation translated easily from ideologies into mainstream cinema. With regard to contemporary film, ethnicity, and hence ethnic representation, are marginal and peripheral to the mainstream. By contrast, colonial Englishness and neo-colonial Americanness are never represented as ethnicity (Hall cited in Gandhi, 1998, p. 126). It is a daunting prospect to effect change when one realises that accepted modes of popular, western cinema provide provokingly incorrect portrayals of subaltern peoples and cultures. Furthermore, from female subalterns' perspectives the fallacies are tellingly destructive.

Is it still our story if the 'words' and 'images' we use are someone else's idea of what constitutes us, a someone who allows 'our' story not for altruistic reasons – presenting alternative cultures and peoples in documentary-style[34] fashion – but rather as a means of milking the exotic sacred cash cow? In light of this we must recall that postcolonialism is not merely a reference to the time period after colonialism, delineating its demise, but also a reference to the contestation of colonial domination and colonial legacies operating in the contemporary world (Loomba, 2005, p. 16).

It is a fact that European colonisers viewed themselves as superior to Indians, and other peoples, they oppressed. It is a fact that Indian women were doubly persecuted through Indian and colonial patriarchies. It is a fact that the subaltern's ability to speak for herself was taken away and that the words forced into her mouth, repeated over centuries, made her believe what she was

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[34] Certain Indian women film-makers, such as Pratibha Parmar, utilise documentary methods in their film-making as a means of producing knowledge, disseminating information or revealing unusual or repressed images (Kaplan, 1997, p. 17). Their conscious choice to present women characters, instead of representing them, is a stance taken against conventional/mainstream filmmaking which, unfortunately, often puts forth potentially false or distorted western imaginings of minority cultures and women. In this manner they provide one of the more honest accounts of characters, and hence women, via film.

saying. In western media the fantasy has altered incrementally over the years, become so subtle that we do not see that it is still representation. Thankfully, Indian women writers, directors and producers like Gurinder Chadha, Mira Nair, Deepa Mehta and Pratibha Parmar, themselves subaltern, are speaking back to the western, and eastern, oppressions and conventions inherent in mainstream cinema. Their film narratives and contexts envisage positive, alternative futures whilst problematising, for their audiences, contemporary issues of agency pertaining to race, gender, sexuality, nation and class. However, their films, alternative though they may be, are still conceptualised and produced within capitalist frameworks. According to Hamid Naficy "accented films are not necessarily radical" because they act not only as agents of expression and defiance, but also legitimise their creators and audiences (2001, p. 26). As such the truths they offer are bound by the intertextual histories and postcolonial legacies of their makers.

In the films analysed, *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002) and *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), director Gurinder Chadha pursues the nexus of two cinemas and multiple cultures through conventional escapist genres (Desai, 2004, p. 212). The realities of the films closely mirror our lived realities with one notable exception: change occurs at an increasing rate in each film, and from one film to the next. It is typical of film interiority that once an issue has been resolved the fictional characters move on to the next one with increasing, often inexplicable, dexterity. Thus, by the end of the film all the conflicts/obstacles are overcome, but once the credits roll there is no accounting for the aftermath of the resolutions and shifts in paradigm. Ironically, as is the case of the two films analysed, the films end at the beginning of their characters' new lives. Personally, I would like to know if Jess and Joe stay together, proving the world wrong, or does a long distance relationship coupled with extreme disparity in their incomes breed additional problems? Furthermore, do Lalita and Will Darcy have children, does his mother accept her bi-racial grandchildren, and how do they negotiate religion and traditions? My most pertinent criticism is definitely linked to the question: where do we go from here?

It is not necessarily the convention of the happy ending that is the problem but rather its impact on subaltern audiences. Many, if not all, of the films we have as presentations of normalised alternatives stop, *in medias res*, at the beginnings. The implication is, of course, that the characters begins their new lives and continue on, out of sight of the viewers. When taken within

the context of a film or literary staple/convention then the happy ending is merely a technique or device. However, we do not live in a compartmentalised spaces; a vacuum where a 'happy ending' refers only to a film or literature device. In lived realities, where life imitates art, the happy endings transcend being mere devices and instead double as, unknowingly, suppressive tools.

Perhaps it is because the women filmmakers still envision a distant promise of difference that they have not thought beyond beginnings. However, I posit that if life is imitating art, and I do believe it is, then we, the audiences, need more precedents than just the beginnings to imitate. The 'happily-ever-after', as implied in films, needs to be reassessed so that it is not synonymous with 'the end'. It needs to be converted into a dynamic process and not a static finite goal. Of course, I am not suggesting that film-makers conceptualise a string of sequels or that they create cinematic lives for us to repeat off-screen. What I am suggesting is that they see beyond beginnings and create potentialities, films which imagine worlds where interracial and cultural conflicts have moved away from inherited colonial legacies. Perhaps I am getting ahead of myself in envisaging a point where the films that present only 'beginnings' will be contextualised as belonging to a different time.

On a daily basis, we overlap several multifaceted identities that are in a continual state of flux. We are both insider and outsider, embedded in our origins and yet diasporic in our natures. Very often we thrive by using spaces in between, both academic and geographic spaces where we create our own sub-communities. Interestingly, these liminal, in-between spaces are becoming normalised. Moreover, they are expanding beyond the old borders of east versus west to incorporate the old as well as the new travellers.
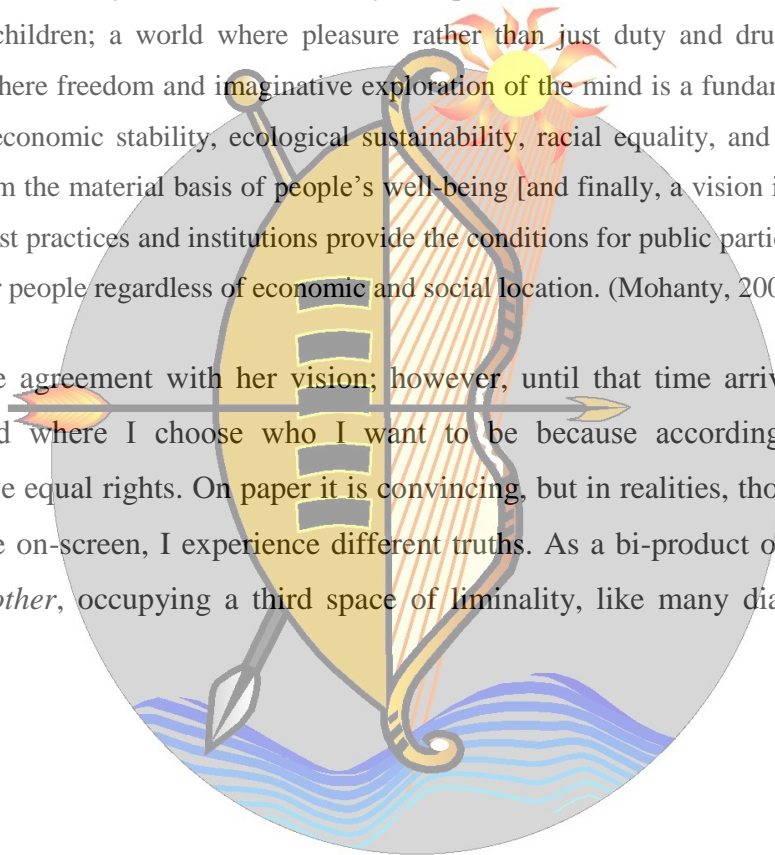
A truly multicultural approach can only become successful if it functions in daily life on several levels. It must be consciously incorporated into everyday acts that compose our identities and inter-related communities so that the joint actions of groups and networks serve the vision of multicultural social transformation. This leads me to repeat Holst Peterson's question: "which is more important, the fight for female equality or the fight against western cultural imperialism?" (cited in Gandhi, 1998, p. 93). We cannot divorce one from the other as they are linked on

several pedagogic levels. Eradicating western cultural imperialism implies reassessing ideological constructions in all strata of contemporary societies, and this reassessment must include oppressions perpetrated against all women.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty's laudable aspiration for the future describes a truly multicultural vision of the world where:

> Women and men are free to live creative lives, in bodily health and integrity, where they are free to choose whom they love, and whom they set up house with, and whether they want to have or not have children; a world where pleasure rather than just duty and drudgery determine our choices, where freedom and imaginative exploration of the mind is a fundamental right; a vision in which economic stability, ecological sustainability, racial equality, and the redistribution of wealth form the material basis of people's well-being [and finally, a vision in which] democratic and socialist practices and institutions provide the conditions for public participation and decision making for people regardless of economic and social location. (Mohanty, 2004, pp. 3-4)

I am in complete agreement with her vision; however, until that time arrives I will live in a democratic world where I choose who I want to be because according to my country's constitution I have equal rights. On paper it is convincing, but in realities, those which I live and those which I see on-screen, I experience different truths. As a bi-product of a western-eastern union I remain *other*, occupying a third space of liminality, like many diasporic nonresident Indian women.

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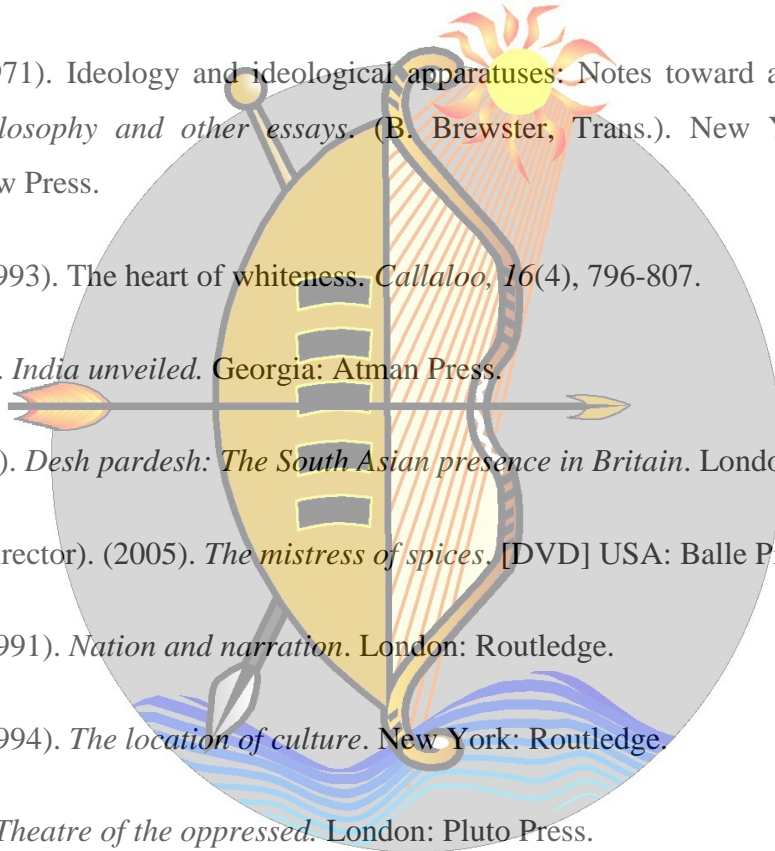
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