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Diasporic Women and Feminist Representation in Mira Nair's Films

shubhra verma , Dr. Ratika Kaushik

NIIT University, India

Abstract

Mass migration has transformed identity and belonging worldwide; however, for women, the diasporic experience entails an additional burden of navigating patriarchal expectations in conjunction with racial and social displacement. Diasporic women are frequently doubly marginalised as they navigate contested citizenship, strained family structures, and the demands of cultural preservation. In this paper, we investigate the manner in which Mira Nair's cinema reframes these experiences through two films: *The Namesake* (2006) and *Mississippi Masala* (1991). While her films come from various contexts, they all explore how women negotiate authenticity, nostalgia, and home in transnational spaces. In *Mississippi Masala*, Mina's interracial romance challenges both family authority and communal boundaries. Secondly, in *The Namesake*, Ashima personifies the daily struggles of immigrant life, transitioning from isolation to a hybrid identity that transcends national boundaries. Collectively, these two films present diasporic women as subjects who are reimagined through hybridity, resilience, and rupture, rather than as static cultural bearers. This paper examines these works in the context of postcolonial feminist and diaspora theory, contending that Nair employs cinematic language to reveal the intersections of gender, race, and displacement, thereby disrupting patriarchal and nationalist narratives. South Asian women on screen transform diasporic victimhood into agency and new cultural subjectivities, as her films ultimately demonstrate.

Keywords: Diaspora; Gender; Migration; Postcolonial Feminism; And South Asian Cinema