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HYBRID CINEMAS AND NARRATIVES: GENDER REPRESENTATIONS IN WOMEN'S CINEMA OF THE SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORA

Tesis Doctoral



Jorge Diego Sánchez

Directora: Olga Barrios Herrero

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UNIVERSIDAD DE SALAMANCA

FACULTAD DE FILOLOGÍA

DEPARTAMENTO DE FILOLOGÍA INGLESA



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Tesis para optar al grado de doctor

presentada por

Jorge Diego Sánchez

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V°B°

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This is how I started this PhD, by chance, and with a question that was ever present although it was invisible. What made me grab a copy from Lahiri's *The Interpreter of Maladies*? I could not identify where she was from, what she would talk about, which country she was from, which culture the book related to. Somehow I answered questions about Woolf, Boland and Sarah Kane. But I still had more and more questions about Lahiri's background and about the dilemmas of their characters. It is probably twelve years

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INTRODUCTION

It is a fact that we currently live in a transnational world where we all are potential migrants as well as ambiguous and heterogeneous characters of a hybrid identity. It is in this sense that art opens up new spaces that illustrate the territorial and cultural coexistence, offer an interconnection of languages and symbols, evaluate power relations, overturn hegemonic political assumptions, challenge gender inequality and foster *another way* to come to terms with present-day reality. Then, art emerges as a powerful tool to describe, appraise and propose different cultural and socio-political alternatives for the contemporary geographical disputes, racial upheavals and socio-economic differences that define the two first decades of the twenty first century.

At this global *stage*, this dissertation proposes a postcolonial and feminist reading of the gender and socioeconomic disparity faced by the South Asian diaspora in the UK and the US. Hence, it is my aim to recognise how British and US culture negotiate their own intrinsic ethos with the arrival and proliferation of the South Asian cultural traits into their daily lives as confirmed by exhibitions such as *Beyond Bollywood. Indians Americans Shape the Nation* hosted by Smithsonian Asian Pacific Center at National Museum of Natural History in Washington (shown from February 2014 to August 2015) or the group discussions for the study of British Asian Style held by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (2008, 2009). Moreover, it is my objective to show the inequality experienced by South Asian migrants and, specially, South Asian women in the new identities created. Also, I aim at investigating if this new South Asian ethos in the diaspora somehow denounces, changes or improves the gender and race discrimination in the homelands.

Thus, in order to do so, I propose the study of those films that are directed by South Asian women in the diaspora to identify the interlocking systems of domination that are placed on the migrant subject in terms of, as African American critic bell hooks points out, “race, sex and class” (1981: 21). Here, I believe that the revision of cinema unveils a reflection about the cultural, social, political and economic variables that determine the experience and progress of making a film. Therefore, I consider particularly recurrent to enhance a postcolonial and feminist study of the South Asian cinema filmed by women in the diaspora that emerged in the 1990s because it lets us measure whether the subaltern position occupied by both women and cinema in the artistic and cultural world has improved. This study would consequently illustrate if British and US identities still privilege white and male identities in the cultural, social, political and economic structure of contemporary society. Beyond, it will also depict if the presence of South Asian women in the diaspora in the UK and the US modify the subaltern position of South Asian women in the homelands.

Accordingly, I consider that the movies filmed by South Asian directors in the diaspora Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair have been pioneering since the 1990s because they have defined diaspora as a space of sociocultural coexistence and have portrayed new roles for South Asian women in the diaspora and the homelands. Accordingly, their films have dismantled *Orientalised* conceptions (Said 1979) about the South Asian Subcontinent and its diaspora because they have portrayed revolutionary female characters that struggle against gender and race inequality in the UK, the US and the Subcontinent. Besides, Chadha and Nair use narrative genres and performing techniques from the South Asian performing arts tradition to describe how these characters negotiate “old roots” from the homelands and “new routes” in the diaspora to the UK and the US (Gilroy 2000: 34). In my opinion, this new creative language allows the intersection of cultural identities from an

international and interdisciplinary perspective that is illustrative of the intermingling of cultures that defines the twenty first century.

Consequently, I propose a convergent study of Nair and Chadha as the means to give voice to the cultural and artistic distinctiveness of the South Asian diaspora that is vastly ignored in the current curriculum of most of Spanish universities. In consequence, and following the words by Indian feminist Chandra Talpade Mohanty that “a study of a female voice always unveils a claiming of her own voice and the complex *historical and political* acts that involves the *interrelationship of voices*” (1990: 89-90, my emphasis), the purpose of this dissertation, and its corresponding structure in five chapters, is five-fold. It firstly contextualises the history of the South Asian Subcontinent and its diaspora. Then, it defines the theoretical notions of *diaspora*, *postcolonial cinemas* and *gender representations* in relation to the South Asian cultural uniqueness. Later, it studies the South Asian particularities of the South Asian performing arts tradition as *hybrid narratives* that favour postcolonial acts of historical and gender subversion. Furthermore, it analyses the specific gender conflicts represented in the selected films by Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair and the new social roles and professional possibilities assigned to South Asian women in diaspora and in the Subcontinent. To conclude, it recognises how the use of elements from South Asian performing arts tradition facilitates the collaborative empowerment of South Asian women in the diaspora and the homelands.

Thus, Chapter I accounts for the historical and political misconceptions that are still placed on the South Asian Subcontinent and its diaspora and that are clear exponents of the current ignorance placed on the world’s diversity of cultures. Grounded in the critical theory of the Cultural Studies and relevantly inspired by the critical writings of Richard Dyer’s “Teaching the Film Teacher” (1971), Homi K. Bhabha’s *Nation and Narration* (1990), Gayatri Ch. Spivak’s “Teaching for the Times” (1992), Inderpal Grewal and Caren

Kaplan's *Scattered Hegemonies* (1994), bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994) or Henry Giroux's "When Hope Is Subversive" (2004), this chapter aims at providing an account about the history of the Subcontinent by reviewing colonial and postcolonial stories. Hence, this section grounds the methodological postcolonial approach of this dissertation as it highlights the recurrence of the colonial hegemonic structures that were, and still are, developed by certain countries like the UK or the US over *other* cultures such as Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi. It is in this sense that I understand that postcolonial art necessarily challenges the previous imperial hegemony and so the postcolonial artist offers *another voice* and *another vision* that constantly seeks to disestablish dominant artistic, politic or socio-economic discourses.

Consequently, in Chapter I I will present the cultural particularity of the South Asian Subcontinent and its diaspora enhancing an evaluation of the previous colonial British intervention and an approximation to the current economic and socio-political situation of present day Subcontinent. As illustrative of this remark, I consider that the following words stated by Che Guevara in a speech delivered to The United Nations in December 1964 are still recurrent in our present age. He claimed that "the final hour of colonialism has struck, and millions of inhabitants of Africa, Asia and Latin America have risen to meet a *new life* and demand their unrestricted right to self-determination" (1, my emphasis). So I believe that, as applied to the context of the post-Partition South Asian Diaspora (1947 onwards), Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair's films describe that there is still a long way towards that "new life" Guevara talked about. Under these postcolonial considerations, and deliberately avoiding discourses of victimisation, I have taken into consideration postcolonial *canonical* texts such as Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) and *Black Skins, White Masks* (1986), Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979) Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), and Gayatri Ch. Spivak's "Can the

Subaltern Speak?" (1995) as well as I have been inspired by other postcolonial critics and writings such as bell hooks's *Talking Back* (1989), Carol Boyce Davies's *Black Women, Identity and Writing: Migrations of the Subject* (1994), Ania Loomba's *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (1996), Avtar Brah's *Cartographies of Diaspora* (1996) or Virinder S. Kalra et al.'s *Diaspora and Hybridity* (2005). Subsequently, the postcolonial optics enable me to analyse the contradictions, confusions and hybridity of the postcolonial identities depicted by Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair's characters as well as their own personal cartographies of diaspora.

In Chapter II I will develop a theoretical approach about diaspora and gender theories in postcolonial cinemas that will be applied to define the dynamics of the South Asian cultural idiosyncrasy in the homelands and in the diaspora. The postcolonial background of this section will therefore present the subversive reading of our contemporary age as an abstract space of coexistence where, in relation to Avtar Brah's concept of "Diaspora Space" (1996), hybrid identities are produced. Likewise, it will be from this theoretical perspective that I will recognise how the transcultural contact performed at this space leads to the construction of a hybrid identity that articulates the distinctive particularities of the South Asian diaspora together with the contemporary diversity of cultures.

By so doing, it is my intention to evaluate how the definition and production of a so-called postcolonial cinema explores the conflicts that, in terms of race and gender inequality, exist in that diaspora space. In this sense, the analysis of the politics of cultural representation in diaspora and its cinematographic depictions will lead me to reveal the transnational dynamics of that diaspora space and the lack of a definition that truly reflects the resultant cultural diversity and the possible emerging socio-political, economic or identity conflicts. At this stage, and by offering the term *hybrid cinema*, it is my attempt to

focus on the contesting power of filmmaking as cartography of that cultural intersection and depiction of the resultant hybrid identities. Furthermore, I will prove the relevance of hybrid cinemas in the reality of the post-Partition South Asian diaspora and the homelands, pointing at how Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair's films are true expressions of hybrid films that describe the transcultural flux of identities previously ignored by Western and Eastern academia. Here, my personal experience as an undergraduate student of English Studies in Spain confirms that I was never introduced to the cultural presence of South Asians in the UK and the US. Moreover, it is also in first person that I have found some undergraduate students in India who proclaim that Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha's contemporary portrayals of India are inaccurate for, in their opinion, recurrent issues like mistreatment against women or prosecution against homosexuality do not happen in the Subcontinent. Actually, in their opinion these film directors only exaggerate and make up these topics to appeal Western audiences, an opinion I will dismantle throughout the following pages.

Hereby, it is also my purpose to acknowledge the subaltern position of women in both the diaspora space and the postcolonial cinemas and so I will provide a general approach to the location of the woman in the diaspora as a figure interwoven in what bell hooks called "the interlocking systems of domination—sex, race, class" (1981: 21) as well as in the prejudices and inequalities of cinema. Thus, this section will reflect the gender discrimination that still pervades our twenty first century by reviewing the position of women filmmakers in the social and economic structures of cinema. As a result, the scrutiny of Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair as female filmmakers of hybrid cinemas will allow me to illustrate and exemplify their importance as South Asian women in the diaspora who represent the racial and gender problematic of the whole world.

Furthermore, I will clarify in Chapter III why the hybrid films by Chadha and Nair describe new and complex female characters who are constructed through different

narrative languages and genres. Therefore, I will illustrate how these characters have hybrid identities that are shown on screen through the heterogeneity of the South Asian performing arts tradition and a myriad of artistic forms such as dance, music or acting which allow new stories and roles to be told mixing South Asian specific performing traits with Western artistic forms. Thence, I will describe the particularities of South Asian performing arts tradition to provide an understanding of its eclectic nature and, by studying Bharata Muni's *Natyasastra* (200 BC), I will be able to describe why the gathering of performing techniques used by Chadha and Nair is representative of the holistic nature of the different ways of expression within South Asian performing arts. Here, I will focus on the concept of *rasa* (empathy in Sanskrit) so that I can draw special emphasis on the traditional interconnection between performers and audience in South Asian tradition and how this communion plays an important role in the films by Chadha and Nair.

Afterwards, I will contextualise the important role given in South Asian tradition to the sacredness of any being as descriptive of how Chadha and Nair facilitate the empowerment of their female characters. By so doing, I will identify the theoretical accounts that prove that the inclusion of dance scenes in their films do not follow an *Orientalist* fancy but a conscious choice that aims at enhancing the relation between dance and postcolonial art through a desire to derogate social, political and economic structures of domination imposed on the human being. At this point, I will detail how the history and development of bharatanatyam, a regional style of dance from the South East of current India, illustrates that the inclusion of dance in Chadha and Nair's films allows a postcolonial act of historical and gender subversion.

Beyond, I will propose the term *hybrid narratives* as a definition that gathers the extensive mixture of performing techniques, narrative languages and artistic genres from different traditions within Chadha and Nair's features. In my opinion, these hybrid

narratives enhance a postcolonial revision of South Asian arts and South Asian identities in the diaspora space and the homelands. I will also propose that the category can be extensive to other artists (postcolonial or not) that want to foster empathy and make any spectator participant of the artistic experience while facilitating a call to action for a change against simplistic representations of cultures within the diaspora space.

Furthermore, I will examine in Chapter IV the specific gender conflicts found in the selected films by Chadha and Nair. It is in this sense that it focuses on the depiction of the gender limitation that circumscribes the notions of educational attainment, arranged marriages and interracial love relationships of the South Asian woman in the diaspora as inherited from the traditions in the homelands. Therefore, I will highlight how Chadha and Nair present characters that subvert the traditional dominant male and white discourse of cinema in order to promote the new opportunities that diaspora space offers for them as women of the world. At this juncture, this dissertation adopts a feminist perspective because, as it will be asserted throughout the following pages, it targets at establishing equality as the basis for any relation and relationship between men and women. Through this feminist optics, I will offer a hopeful reading of the gender conflicts faced by the South Asian migrant woman who inhabits a subaltern position where she stands under a double patriarchal and racist yoke imposed by both the receiving culture (from the UK and the US) and the South Asian community.

As a result of this conceptualisation, I will verify the feminist recurrence of Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair's selected films through inspiring postcolonial feminist critics and writings such as African American Alice Walker and bell hooks, North American literary critic Susan Friedman or South Asian descendants Valerie Amos, Pratibha Parmar, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Amrit Wilson. In this regard, Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair will be considered as pioneering female filmmakers with a

postcolonial background and a feminist awareness who emerged at a time (early 1990s) when there were hardly any similar figures. Then, the chapter will present how both Chadha and Nair's characters interweave collaborative spaces that, within the all-inclusive abstract diaspora space previously described in Chapter II and Chapter III, make them feel stronger by providing an alternative and all-female site from where they nurture and comfort each other towards their final empowerment as South Asian women in the diaspora space.

Subsequently, I will clarify in Chapter V how these characters are created through hybrid narratives that subvert cultural clichés that had previously derogated South Asian tradition as a mere *Orientalist* artistic apparel. Likewise, I will analyse Chadha and Nair's hybrid narratives to study how both filmmakers are able to define new identities for women through classical performing arts techniques from the South Asian performing arts tradition. Thus, I will detail how Chadha and Nair define new identities for women through expressive techniques that foster the empathy among performers and audience as well as among South Asian, British and US cultures.

Also, I will explain in detail how the characters in Chadha and Nair's selected films make use of the subversive role of dance analysed in Chapter III as a way to contest monolithic considerations simplistically established upon them for their condition of being women and migrants. Similarly, I will identify how this empowerment of women is possible after the new identities described for South Asian women in the diaspora by Nair and Chadha's films and explained in Chapter IV. By so doing, I will examine specific scenes that inform through dance about the possibility of empowerment for South Asian women in the diaspora and the homelands.

Similarly, I will illustrate how this challenging change of roles and opinions is carried out by both directors when they use hybrid narratives to re-tell British literary

classics such as Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1815) and William M. Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847). In this sense, I will focus on the postcolonial uptake given by both directors to object and transform a society that had previously simplified and neglected South Asia and South Asian people during the British Empire. Therefore, I will show that Chadha and Nair's rewrite British classics into hybrid narratives in order to illustrate how anybody can talk back and anew from the classics to empower female characters in the diaspora space. Subsequently, Chadha and Nair exemplify how we can all subvert those interlocking systems of domination if we reconnect to our own individual and sacred unity in diversity.

Having contextualised the critical and methodological approach of the following pages, let me state that I will be working with a set of selected movies directed by Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair that I have called *diasporic films*. I have chosen those features that portray the postcolonial experiences of the characters as direct consequence of the constant cultural interaction and social connection among the UK and the US and the South Asian Subcontinent¹. Similarly, I believe that these films provide an all-inclusive account of the South Asian diaspora because they are solely based on the transcultural conflicts that, in terms of race and gender, are encountered by the hybrid identities represented. It is in this sense that I will be dealing with Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) and *Bend It like Beckham* (2002) as representative of the South Asian diaspora and first/second generation born in the UK; Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala* (1991) and *The Namesake* (2006) as illustrative of the same reality in the US context; and Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) and Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) as exemplary of how the South Asian diaspora in the UK and the US reciprocally connects back with the Subcontinent.

¹ A summary of plot and the most illustrative taglines is offered in the section *Summary of Selected Films*. Also, this dissertation is accompanied by a DVD of Selected Clips excerpted from the selected films by Chadha and Nair that will be analysed.

Moreover, I will show how Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* and Mira Nair's *Vanity Fair* (2004) re-tell Austen and Thackeray's stories to give voice to the South Asia Subcontinent cultural tradition and to let characters *talk back* and *subvert* what was imposed by the British Empire.

To sum up, this dissertation fosters an empowering reading of South Asian women in the diaspora space as a way to denounce the systems of inequality that, grounded in historical and chauvinist roots, are still imposed to their/our daily routes in the diaspora and in the homelands. The spirit of this work is then that of subverting the misconceptions placed on the South Asian diaspora and so I deliberately will acknowledge that consciousness-raising against gender and race inequality must be implemented. It is here that Chadha and Nair's hybrid filmmaking opens an artistic and academic space from where women can talk back, speak aloud, be heard and, above all, empower us all.

CHAPTER I

THE MANY SOUTH ASIAS OF THE MIND

A HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALISATION

The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is “knowing thyself” as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. (Gramsci 324)

The South Asian Subcontinent is characterised by the coexistence of the many cultural traits which co-live in the vastness of its own plural history. Nowadays, political, educational and artistic answers to the South Asian Subcontinent seem to prevail over questions and, as a consequence, the Subcontinent is simplistically conceptualised in a mere tautological analysis. In my opinion, the structure of this discourse is ineffective to define a civilisation which, as Augusto Pániker asserts, it is “more interesting to wonder about than to answer to” (8, my translation). Therefore, I propose a *questioning* approach to avoid the ever-existing writing of stereotypes in the study of the Subcontinent’s¹ cultural identity² for, as former Indian ambassador to Spain Sujeta Mehta asserts about the Indian reality, “every cliché has its reality in India, the labels that apply but that do not give an absolute truth” (4). In a way, and quoting Dipesh Chakrabarty’s “Postcoloniality and the Artifice of

¹ When I started academic writing about the South Asian subcontinent I wondered whether following a distinction between *India/Indian* and *India/India* as an attempt to differentiate the colonial Subcontinent and the Republic of India. Nevertheless, the progressive critical reading and the analysis of the films proved my narrow-minded contextualisation. The metaphorical construction of colonial *India* as a referent to the whole South Asian Subcontinent (including the Republic of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh Sri Lanka and Myanmar) proved itself misleading and simplistic as long as I carried out the research process. It is now by reviewing these pages, that I can corroborate how all film directors of the corpus of my work (including Mira Nair, Gurinder Chadha, Pratibha Parmar or Sandhya Suri) never define themselves as Indian but, instead, as Punjabi, Sikh, British Asian, Indian American or citizens of the world. I therefore believe that any academic and pedagogical approach that truly aims at addressing the post-Partition cultural South Asian identity both from the Subcontinent and its diaspora must avoid general references to India (which, in fact, it is not born as a demographic entity until Partition in 1947, and so designed merely following British interests), because they normally hide a restrictive Hindu/Hindi prominent reality that does not exist as such beyond imperialistic discourses.

² *Cultural Identity* is understood throughout this dissertation within the parameters proposed by Stuart Hall in his article “Cultural Politics and Diaspora” where he points out that “cultural identity . . . a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’ . . . cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical they undergo constant transformation - subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (1992: 225).

History: Who Speaks for Indian Pasts?" (1996), this *inquiring path* is the only possibility to subvert the "themes of failure, lack and inadequacy that so ubiquitously characterize the 'Indian' history" (1992: 230). It is in this sense that this chapter rephrases Salman Rushdie's famous remark of "the many Indias of the mind" (1999: 192) with *the many South Asias of the mind*, as an attempt to illustrate the diversity of homogenising discourses and misleading interpretations constructed about the South Asian Subcontinent.

Consequently, this first chapter provides a historical contextualisation of the South Asian culture(s) from the premise of what Helen Tiffin calls the "layering effect of history" (71). Hitherto, the chapter promotes an understanding of the history of the Subcontinent through an inclusive and *multivocal* interpretation, looking at the many singular skeins that are interwoven in the cultural amalgam that defines the richness of a millenary historical *composite* which, with figures such as Indian filmmakers Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair, is still in the making.

Accordingly, the first part of the chapter comprises the many historical events which, all along the Indus and Ganges, have left the sediment of multiple religious beliefs, a plural linguistic diversity and the existence of different structures of social privilege. What I have called *Indian Palimpsest*³ is deliberately proposed to avoid the *Orientalist*⁴ responses based on a colonial dichotomous discourse and a restrictive stereotyping given to introductory questions like Partha Mitter's "[what] does India contain?" (7). Here, the preference of the use Indian to South Asian aims at illustrating the historical density and consequent cultural diversity of the South Asian Subcontinent as departing from Xavier

³ Palimpsest is defined by Bill Ashcroft et al. as "the parchment on which several inscriptions had been made after earlier ones had been erased. The characteristic of the palimpsest is that, despite such erasures, there are always traces of previous inscriptions that have been 'overwritten'" (2000: 174).

⁴ When I use the terms *Orientalism* or *Orientalist* in italics throughout these pages I am always referring to the concept sketched by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1979) to address the imposition of a cultural differentiation established by the West in the East. In his own words, the cultural creation of the Orient is always "irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, *different*; then Europe is the other: rational, virtuous, mature, *normal*" (40).

Batalla famous remark “India contains a lot of Indias” (3, my translation) as well as the proliferation of encounters among cultures in the Subcontinent along the banks of the Indus river (which runs through currently recognised China, Tibet, Pakistan and India).

Afterwards, in the second part of the chapter, I will deal with the notion of South *Asianness* beyond its presupposed Indian boundaries, gathering the many experiences of the cultural plurality and the post-colonial national diversity (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan...) that is within South Asian diaspora(s). As Benedict Anderson points out that “the biographies of nations and its peoples are never finished” (46) and Ana Agud claims that “India is a country that does not intend to break with anything that happened before . . . always willing to bind the present moment with a real presence . . . for they do not understand the concept of history but as a fragmented, contradictory myth, both allegorical and symbolical” (12-18, my translation). I believe that a contextualisation of the Subcontinent’s historical complexity is absolutely necessary to understand the plurality and partiality of the films by Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair, whose biographies and cartographies prove very relevant to understand the contradiction and discontinuities of their postcolonial identities.

Thence, the third part of the chapter presents the biography and filmography of the two filmmakers as a prior step to furthermore analyse their South Asian distinctiveness. Consequently, if Mira Nair’s *Mississippi Masala* (1990) and Gurinder Chadha’s *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) both display national South Asian identities as well as US and British peculiarities, then the following study of both *inwards* and *outwards* flights of the South Asian culture(s) is indispensable to understand the artistic grandiosity of the two figures

chosen who, rather than “decoding” and “interpreting”⁵, see culture for what it is, a hybrid⁶ composite, identifying the intercultural and gender challenges that still need to be faced.

1- INWARDS FLIGHT TO THE HISTORY OF THE SOUTH ASIAN SUBCONTINENT

India did never exist as India until the British *created* the concept. Created, in this sense, conveys the following nuances: The British *Orientalised* the image of a vast heterogeneous region, *continentalised*⁷ the conception of India and *colonised* the land and minds of many people under a British patron. Thence, the artificiality of the unity and the different nations of post-Partition South Asian and India runs the risk to domesticate India into stereotypical distortions that reduce the so-called Indian history to tropes such as the discriminatory

⁵ Gyan Prakash asserts that “to decode and interpret are the basic accounts of a simplistic anthropological study” (5).

⁶ According to Bill Ashcroft et al. (2000), hybridity commonly refers to “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization. . . [and it] takes many forms: linguistic, cultural, political, racial, etc” (118). Homi K. Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture* (1994), subscribes the term with his reconception of “culture’s hybridity” as the cultural identity that merges into the “contradictory and ambivalent Third Space of enunciation . . . the in-between space that carries the international inscription and articulation of the cultural hybridity” (37-8). Besides, the concept of hybridity implies the mutuality and equality of the different cultures, all in contact and in conflict in the postcolonial age of transculturation beyond the colonial and imperialist discourse that have defined hybridity as a mere cross-breeding of two species, as Robert Young states in *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (1995). In my opinion, hybridity is the most appropriate term for the current disposition of cultures and societies because it combines Ashcroft et al.’s previously mentioned “postcolonial essence” to the national “in-between” conscience of the “Third Space” Bhabha defines in *The Location of Culture*. Accordingly, I propose that the cultural, linguistic political and racial hybridity that defines our current world trespasses and incorporates its postcolonial theoretical terms as part of current global contact zone where we all live, what Ashcroft et al. calls the “cross-pollination of the hybrid” (118), the authentic essence of the so many times called our contemporary age. In other words, the proliferation of a universal diaspora identity understood, quoting Stuart Hall, “diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference (1992: 253).

⁷ According to K.N. Chaudhuri, the notion of Asia as a continent responds to the classifying Western will. In his own words, “the conception of Asia as a . . . is essentially Western. There is no equivalent word in any Asian language or such a concept in the domain of geographical knowledge” (23).

social relationships based on caste (*varna**⁸), the notions of honour (*izzat**) and the power of kinship organisations (*biraderi**). Hence, so as to thoroughly understand the peculiarity of the territorial, religious and linguistic variables of the Subcontinent in the 21st century (Image 1 and Image 2 in *Appendix of Images*) I will be contextualising the historical origin, development and current outcome of the multiplicity and transculturation⁹ which defines the South Asian Subcontinent as the result of what German Indologist Herman Kulke calls “the dynamics of cultural borrowing” (24).

1.1 THE INDIAN PALIMPSEST. A FRACTAL OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORICAL CONFRONTATIONS IN THE SOUTH ASIAN SUBCONTINENT UNTIL THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BRITISH RAJ

Although the oldest vestiges of the Subcontinent are the cities of Harappa (1800 BC) and Mohenjo-Daro¹⁰ (1700 BC), the Aryans and the so-called Vedic culture are considered the first civilisation with written record in South Asia. The Aryans arrived at the Indus valley through the territory that currently occupies Iran, carrying an “immense absorbed culture” (Kulke 36) and a great deal of Central Asian Aryan heritage¹¹. The Aryan arrival at the South Asian Subcontinent introduced the permeability of the many contacts that integrate the historical strata along the Indus and Ganges, for there was not a fixed and straight

⁸ In the *Glossary of Terms* of this work, longer definitions for relevant non-English terms (in italics and with the symbol *) are provided.

⁹ Transculturation is understood throughout this dissertation following Mara Louis Pratt’s definition in her inspiring *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992), where she defines transculturation as “a phenomenon of the contact zone . . . the social space where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relationships of dominance and subordination” (4).

¹⁰ Both settlements were accidentally discovered by British officers working on the construction of the Indian railway in 1920. British historians determined that both settlements were simple Mesopotamic heritages, an option later rejected by scholars such as Herman Kulke, Burton Stein and Enrique Gallud-Jardiel who recognised them as original *Indian* indigenous civilisations.

¹¹ There is an interesting debate about the precedence of the Aryan presence in the Subcontinent. Scholars such as Edwin Bryant claim that the Aryans came from the Eurasian plain. Nevertheless, Indian post-Partition nationalism proclaims that the Aryans came from within the own Subcontinent.

pattern of migration and thus, as Pravan K. Varma points out, “the Aryans left a huge cultural, linguistic and religious/philosophical legacy” (21, my translation).

Hence, the Aryans instituted the first social differentiation in the Subcontinent when, due to the loss of the semi nomadic agricultural and pastoral activity, the work division started. This social stratification meant the emergence of the *varna** structure, later to be transformed into the caste system by the Mughals, the British Raj and the *Hindutva** nationalism. The *Vedas* (the Aryan revered texts describing the procedures for sacred rituals) portrayed the polytheist shrine of the Aryan civilisation that was dedicated to the forces of nature and, among others, the figures of Prajapati (creator of the Universe) and Vishnu (Hindu avatar of Protection). Nevertheless, the *Vedas* did not respond to any religious or philosophical credo, but to a mixture of both disciplines.

The *varna** of the Brahmins allowed them the privilege to transmit the *Vedas* doctrine, positioning the Aryan diffusion of culture at the origin of the social control involved in the dogmas of revealed knowledge (*apauruseya**). At this point, Buddhism¹² and Jainism¹³, with their understanding of human existence as a part of an interconnected whole (*pratiya samutpada**), would praise the necessity of the self-knowledge development (*sramana**) as opposed to that *revealed* doctrine. Their challenge to the Vedic notions of physical, psychological and spiritual doctrine (*dharma**) would denounce the *varnas** structure throughout a dialogue based on the permeability of the three discourse (Vedic,

¹² Buddha appropriated the Vedic concepts of *samsara* and *dharma* to illustrate the notions of individual liberation (*mokhsa**) and the understanding of the notions of cause and effect (karma and nirvana) as the means to escape from the spiritual suffering (*dukha**). Therefore, Siddharta Gautama's *dharma* was based on a plural and inclusive understanding of human existence as a part of an interconnected whole (*pratiya samutpada**) from which the individual had a possibility to break free, on condition of a heterogeneous respectful consideration for any of the heterogeneous components involved.

¹³ Like Buddhism, Jainism recognised no god and proclaimed the necessity to break with the material world and the concept of suffering (*dukha**). Nevertheless, their scission from the Brahmanical doctrinal transmission (*apauruseya**) soon derived into radical notions of non-violence (*ahimsa**) and non-possessiveness (*aparigraha**).

Buddhist and Jainist) especially in the Punjab¹⁴, where the Buddhist and Jainist peregrinations became the base of trade and the source of cultural and linguistic intercourse among the many Aryan communities of the times. Thence, the Aryan settlement hosted, as Herman Kulke points out, “the beginning of a heterogeneous flux of contacts and dialect accommodations” (12) which would soon turn into internal disputes among the Aryan regions.

With this heterogeneous cultural background, Alexander the Great would arrive in the Punjab around 327 BC from Central Asia to find the Aryan inconsistencies and promote the expansion of Greek political administration and cultural influence over the Subcontinent under the Greek conquest. For instance, the Greek structures of social community and economy alongside the Hellenistic literary forms would illustrate the two classical epics of the tradition South Asian civilisation, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*¹⁵. Furthermore, the inner regional cohesion provided by Alexander the Great would be used, in the following years, by Mauryan Emperor Ashoka (269 to 231 BC) to establish, as Enrique Gallud-Jardiel points out, “coexistence, assimilation and tolerance as the base of his empire across the Subcontinent” (45, my translation).

Thus, the religious and social organisation of the Subcontinent was in a continuous process of remaking its own history. As to illustrate this constancy, the Aryan Brahmanism also initiated a transformation after the supposed conversion of Emperor Ashoka to

¹⁴ The Punjab is a region in the North-West of the South Asian Subcontinent. Due to this geographical situation, the region of Punjab is one of the most historically dense areas of India, for it was the middle-passage used, for instance, by the Aryans and the Muslims. Besides, the Buddhist and Jainist traditions organised their first pilgrimages over the Punjab (to arrive at the Himalaya), so the flux and transculturation of peoples around the area has a millenary tradition. Also connected to this religious diversity, the Punjabi region around the city of Amritsar was the main territory for Khalistan (the attempt to create a Sikh state). The main languages spoken in the current province of Punjab are Hindi, English, Punjabi and Urdu. Under these premises, it is very important to remember the fact that both Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha’s Indian backgrounds are traced in the Punjab and its historical palimpsest.

¹⁵ Fernando Wulff Alonso’s *Grecia en India. El repertorio griego del Mahabharata* studies how *The Iliad* is the primary narrative source of both Indian epics. Wulff also highlights the great amount of significant Greek historical sediments that can be found along the Subcontinent in terms of dialect nuances and artistic conceptions.

Buddhism in 263 BC (Bentley 44). The teachings from the *Vedas* were *mixed* with elements from the *Ramayana* (Indian classical epic written in 300 BC by Valmiki and considered a sacred text) and the principal Aryan deity became a figure composed by three earthly manifestations, where gods Shiva and Vishnu were defined as two possible avatars of Brahma¹⁶. At the same time, Brahmins strengthened the influence of their power and toughened the *varnas** system “as a social totality” (Stein 146) because they could feel the progressive arrival of the Muslim world at the Subcontinent since the times of Alexander the Great, and so they aimed at forming a counterpart Aryan identity to survive the Muslim expansion.

Accordingly, from the 8th to the 12th century, the history of the Subcontinent is unveiled throughout the many histories of contact¹⁷ among the remnants of the Aryan settlement, the Greek Classical patterns and the impact of the arrival of Islam. However, British historians such as James Mill (1773-1836) obviated this cultural coexistence in the three fold historical division of the Subcontinent provided by the British: Aryan and Classical Period (4th BC up to the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in 1206), Muslim Empire (1206- 1765) and British takeover (17th century onwards).

As defined by this division, the British occupancy clearly tried to reduce the presence of Islam in the Subcontinent to an isolated moment, ignoring the also-existent Arab enrichment of Europe through the Eurasian plain, introducing the decimal system (*tarikh-i-hind**) and the knowledge about alternative medicine and holistic therapies (*ayurveda**), alongside texts such as *Panchatantra*. Thence, if the Arab empire was, as

¹⁶ Image of this deity split composed by three avatars is attached in the Image 3 of the *Appendix of Images*.

¹⁷ Besides, there was an important religious coexistence from the 8th to the 11th century between the Arab World, the Brahmanical doctrine and Buddhism. Ashoka recognised the three doctrines as *zimmis* (respected *revealed* faiths such as Christianity and Judaism). At the same time, Islam was trying to isolate Zoroastrianism, the Persian community who had arrived and settled in India from Persia after Muslim prosecution. Sooni Taraporevala (screenplaywriter for Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay* and *Mississippi Masala*) adapted Rohinton Mistry's Governor Prize winner novel *Such a Long Journey* (1991), a very powerful depiction of the current challenges faced by the Zoroastrian community in contemporary Mumbai.

Pániker asserts, “a universal civilisation” (231, my translation), part of its power departed from the Indus and the Ganges. In this sense, the initial and progressive introduction of the Muslim world in the Punjab is still erroneously reduced to the economic greed and violent arrival of Muhammad de Ghazni and the Mukkhals¹⁸ (in 1000 AD), who radicalised the Islam differentiation¹⁹ and preceded the unification of the Muslim power under the cultural opulence of the Mughal Empire. Mira Nair’s *Kamasutra* (1999) is settled in this historical period and illustrates the wealthy and cultural pomposity gathered around the Mughals.

Although the Muslim Empire in the Subcontinent started to fragment through its main religious foundations because of the struggle between Shi’as and Sunnis²⁰, Al-Hind (Arab denomination for the Islamised valleys along the Indus and Ganges) left an implausible Persian speaking layer in the Indian history. The Taj Mahal, built by the Muslim emperor Shah Jahan during 1631-1654, shines the most, illuminating the paradox of seeing a Muslim palace as the main symbol for the Republic of India, representing the

¹⁸ The Mukkhals were Africans and Turkish black slaves recruited for military purposes and will found the Delhi sultanate in 1206-1526.

¹⁹ Al-Beruni (973-1038), a Muslim chronicle writer in India stated:

The Hindus believe that there is no religion like theirs, no science like theirs. They are by nature niggardly in communicating that which they know, and they take the greatest possible care to withhold it from men of another caste among their own people, still much more, of course, from any foreigner. . . . If they travelled and mixed with each other nations, they would soon change their mind, for their ancestors were not as narrow-minded as the present generation is. (22)

The vigency of this discourse in the contemporary political scenario is doubtless. The current debate of the British National Party (BNP) as in February 2010, when the conservative right-wing oriented British part is set to change their rules and allow membership to the representative of the Sikh community in the UK, Rajinder Singh, is settled in the pillars of the demonization of Islam by the other religions in the Subcontinent. The heading of The Guardian’s quoted article clearly summarises the Islamophobic oppositional nature of the speech “Every Hindu and Sikh should be praising the BNP” (Kleeman 21), followed by Singh’s testimony about how Islam caused the Partition slaughter meanwhile the British interference was a matter of “running away”. The danger of this opinion clearly unveils the complexity of the cultural identity of the Subcontinent and the contemporary connivance of cultures that should be expanded in further pages.

²⁰ After the death of Mahoma, the Sunnis (term which means *example* and *illustration of the words and the action* and that represent 80-90% of the Islam believers) recognized that the succession after Mahoma died should correspond to a member of His tribe, the Quraish. The Chi’es (meaning *descendant of Shiat Ali*, Mahoma’s cousin and brother-in-law) proclaim that Mohama’s successor should be a noble man of the community, regardless of skin colour or occupation.

irony of living between many worlds, as we see in Mira Nair's *The Namesake* (2006) with the Gaunguli familiar visit to the monument.

1.2 THE JEWEL OF THE CROWN: THE COLONIAL ENCOUNTER AS THE END OF THE INTEGRATING DIVERSITY AND THE BEGINNING OF A CATEGORISING SOCIETY

The British East Indies Company arrived in the Subcontinent in the year 1601 to take advantage of the internal fights of the Muslim system of government (based on economic taxes) and so control the port of Kolkata. The British Company soon established alliances with the still surviving Hindu kingdoms administered by the Maharathas in order to counteract their plans for the Subcontinent: the absolute control of raw materials and the mental rule of the British canon. So as to do so, the British occupation guaranteed the mental surrender of the many religious and linguistic *South Asias* to the reducing dichotomy British/non-British, which affected every realm of social and individual life: British soon became synonymous with power and coloniser meanwhile *Indians* referred to the colonised non-British *other(s)*²¹. In this sense, the British Raj fostered the distinction of the non-British as the main foundation for the British Empire. It is in this sense that the following section reflects on the process through which the British rolled the Subcontinent flat and turned it to *India* and their *Jewel of the Crown* by a three-fold process: the establishment of a religious dichotomy, the expansion of English as the Lingua Franca and the colonial reinforcement of the discriminatory social structures. In view of this British triple control unveiled over the Subcontinent, I intend to encourage a subtle reflection about

²¹ As previously cited, Edward Said defines the qualities of the *Orientalised other* figure are those of "irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, *different*" as opposed to that of the European self "rational, virtuous, mature, normal" (40, my emphasis).

our contemporary age based on the fact that, before the 19th century, India was an economic and cultural magnet and, after the British takeover, India had succumbed to itself.

Therefore, if the Raj was based on the creation of a British/non-British difference, the imposition of a religious dichotomy soon proved itself the most powerful weapon to place a category from where to establish the interlocking structures of power for a colonial Empire. Thus, the religious map of the Subcontinent was reduced to a mere dichotomy: the great Hinduism²² and the horrendous Islam. Hinduism was misleadingly identified with the illuminating and exotic legend of the past Indo-Aryan civilisation, what British comparative jurist and historian Henry Maine called in 1875, in his lecture “The Effects of Observation of India on Modern Europe”: “[The] very family of mankind to which we belong . . . turned to barbarism after the Muslim arrival” (28). According to Maine, Hinduism was the religion of “every man”, while Islam represented the “darkness and violence of the world” (32). With the destruction of the religious diversity and the creation of a restrictive separation, the British had fulfilled what Karl Marx called the “British double mission of India” (19). In his own words, “England had to fulfil a double vision in India, the first was destructive and the second regenerating: to annihilate the Asian society and to establish the basis for an Occidental order” (19). The discourse is a clear example of the contemporary enhancement and *Orientalisation* of Hindu iconography as opposed to the *demonisation* of Islam in the European cultural background created after the 9/11th (2001), 3/11th (2004) and 7/07th (2005), 1/07th (2015) terrorist attacks in New York, Madrid, London and Paris.

Following Marx’s terms, the second stage of the colonial conquest fostered the institution of English as the lingua franca imposed by the British Empire dominance over the Subcontinent. Likewise, if “language is place” (101) as asserted by Makarand Paranjape, British India was dominated by the strictest accent of metropolitan London since

²² Buddhism, Jainism and even Sikhism were reduced by the British to *other manifestations* of Hinduism.

that linguistic standard of English became the language of diplomacy and bureaucracy. The Empire needed officers (bankers, merchants...) for its development and so, members of high-class society of the Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta²³ (capitals of the richest Provinces of the Subcontinent Punjab, Maharashtra and Bengal) were soon instructed in English to become *accommodated* (a word that should be exchanged for *domesticated*) to the British society. As a result, the vernacular languages identified those who did not speak English and therefore could not speak to the institutions. Under these terms, Sir William Jones's Asiatic Society of Calcutta²⁴ was a propagandistic attempt to master the vernacular languages of the Subcontinent besides making sure that the *discovery of India* would be narrated within the European ideological discourse of reductive *Orientalism*.

Moreover, as the vernacular languages defined the lowest classes of the British Indian society, England strengthened the social inequalities across the Subcontinent as the centre of its power. The richer were richer, the poorer were poorer and the metropolis was always wealthier. Since the very first arrival at the Subcontinent, British officers claimed that, as British historian Thomas R. Metcalf cites, "difference had to be visible" (116). The British sought information about the chieftains and the resources of every village and city and soon realised that the Aryan *varnas** was a structure around which they could impose hierarchies in the South Asian Subcontinent life²⁵. As Augusto Pániker corroborates, the extremely unequal and discriminatory caste system (the simplification developed by the

²³ The reader should notice that, in former references, I used the Bengali name of Kolkata and now I use the English imposed name to the cities of Mumbai (Bombay) and Kolkata (Calcutta). I will use the British standardisation of the names in this section to reinforce that I am dealing with the period of colonial occupancy and domination. In net section, and as I will point out, I will subvert this option and will choose the original name of the city before the arrival of the Company.

²⁴ A philological foundation established in 1856 to study the closed relationships among Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and Celtic Languages. The Society promoted grammars for Bengali (by Nathaniel Halhed) and Hindi (by John Gilchrist).

²⁵ The Empire's image thence clearly followed the traditional colonial notions of East/West, Europe/orient summarised by Edward Said in *Orientalism*, as "the oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, *different*; . . . Europe is the other: rational, virtuous, mature, *normal*" (1979: 40).

British administration out of the *varnas**) is a consequence of the colonial influence: “[Chaste], with the negative and terrible nuances we know it in the 21st century is the consequence of the encounter between the Indian society and the British Empire” (48, my translation).

In consequence, the colonial reinvention of the *varnas** system led to a radicalisation of the social inequity and to an encouragement of the British/non-British social disparity as the main discriminatory variable of the new colonial structure imposed over the Subcontinent lands and minds. For instance, peasants from rural and traditional settlements lost their property over British trade and so, by becoming unemployed, they could be appointed to construct the railways that would cross the Subcontinent so that merchandises would arrive faster at British harbours. Therefore, British India was *feeding* the prosperity of the British Industrial Revolution. Meanwhile, the British Empire had conceptualised India according to its economic purposes and thus the British Parliament strengthened the differences between extremely poor rural areas and flourishing (in an English fashion) cities such as Bombay, Delhi or Calcutta. Humanitarian catastrophes such as the 1860s Bengal famine reinforced the differences and proved that the *future* of British Indian society followed British fancy.

Not only did the British conceptualise the difference between Great Britain and the Subcontinent in terms of history, language and religion, but also through gender. The classic myth of the *coloniser* as a masculine force and the *colonised* as a female weak figure was immensely recurrent in the creation of British India. Hence, the British Empire defined its intervention in the Subcontinent as an attempt to *rescue*²⁶ the classical values

²⁶ The British Empire proclaimed that the values and grandiosity of Aryan India had to be returned back to the Indians. This discourse, as Herman Kulke notes (1988) of the English colonisation of the Indian mind, a clear example of the empire’s attempt to dismember the particularities of the Subcontinent to its mere difference: India and Indian should be synonymous with dark, poor and underdeveloped while British meant the

and prosperity of Ancient India, guaranteeing that Indian women could obtain the neglected freedom both by religious stereotypes (temple prostitutes or women constrained to the veil) and chauvinist commands (women had to stay at home and bring up the children). By so doing, the British strengthened the *Oriental* differentiation of the Subcontinent and its inhabitants, an image that is still recurrent for some British people as in the representation of the character of Ambrose Waddington in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993)

It is in this sense that the British occupancy toughened gender differentiation and so they sketched images of Indian women only as servants and victims through the passing of laws such as the "Abolition of the Sati" (1829), the "Hindu Widow Remarriage Act" (1856) and "The Age Consent Age"²⁷ (1891). British diplomats in India like Kenneth Balltchet proclaimed in the nineteenth century that prostitution was "a hereditary chaste" (14) and that an Indian woman was the perfect exotic servant for British officer's wife as he stated that "the pure-self sacrificing evangelical version of the Angel of the House of the Victorian times" (99). If Indians were non-British, then Indian women were non-British women condemned to a double subaltern position²⁸, another turn of the screw for the

prodigious splendour of a developed and advanced society that attempted to take India back to a British construction, that of the brilliant Aryan India.

²⁷ Indian scholars Lata Mani and Mrinalini Sinha reinforce my statement. Mani, in her article "Contentious Traditions: the Debate on Sati in Colonial India", defends that the passing of those laws were "a further step to demonize the Indian society and domesticate [again this word comes up] Indian women" (98). Accordingly, Sinha proclaims that "there were not any liberal intentions but the desire to emphasise the uncivilised and unmanly practises of the Bengalis" (34).

²⁸ Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci firstly used the term subaltern to refer to those structures and peoples that were no active benefiter from a hegemonic structure of power. The School of Subaltern Studies (SSS) was founded in the early 1980s by Ranajit Guha as an attempt to explain how the British occupancy was the main cause of the political turmoil and critical socio-economic prospects of the Sub-Continent. Guha's *The Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency* (1983), a testimony of the British occupancy in the Subcontinent from 1783 to 1900 told by the South Asian peasants will for subversion, initiated the subversive tone of a School that includes scholars that inspire these pages. Some figures are Touraj Atabaki, Homi K. Bhabha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Partha Chatterjee, Sudipta Kaviraj, Gyan Prakash, Edward Said and Susie Tharu and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. I personally consider that Spivak's definition of what Subaltern is one of the most enhancing remarks in postcolonial theory. In her own words,

[Subaltern] is not just a classy word for oppressed, for Other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie . . . In postcolonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern - a space of difference. Now who would say

British appalling endeavour to dismember the Subcontinent's society and so guarantee the British colonial profit. This representation of Victorian racist and discriminatory moral can be found in Mira Nair's *Vanity Fair* (2004). As a result, the British fostered a psychological destruction of the Subcontinent's possibilities, enhancing the vision that India had no hope of survival but for being under the British control. Consequently, the 1947 Indian Partition was advocated to become a dramatic venture.

1.3 THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY AS A POSTCOLONIAL ABSTRACTION: THE *PARTITION* OF THE RELIGIOUS, LINGUISTIC AND SOCIAL DISTINCTIVENESS

The Partition of India (1947) left two nations (India and Pakistan) paradoxically split and combined²⁹ in correspondence to religious principles. Factually, Indians and Pakistanis were forced to create a national identity³⁰ and reduce their millenary intermingled inner psyches to the creation of a free post-colonial nation constructed on the basis of a political

that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern . . . Many people want to claim subalternity. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being a discriminated-against minority on the university campus, they don't need the word 'subaltern' . . . [They] should see what the mechanics of the discrimination are. They're within the hegemonic discourse wanting a piece of the pie and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse. They should not call themselves subaltern. (1995a: 25)

²⁹ I use the verbs *split* and *combine* because the territorial setting of boundaries answered to the dramatist's lack of political consensus involved in the two verbs. Indian and Pakistani *inhabitants* were divided and later agglutinated in two countries only due to their religion. On the contrary, and as it has been seen, neither India nor Pakistan existed as an only-religion based country.

³⁰ By nation and nationalism as an imaginary construction, I am echoing Benedict Anderson's *Imaginary Communities*, where he conceptualises nation as a mere imaginative and abstract concept created by a community, not as an existing entity. Also, I believe that the definition given by North American historian Boyd S. Shafer in "Ten Beliefs and Conditions for a National Culture" (1955) enlightens the psychological realm of the word *nation*. In Shafer's own words, the concept of nation unveils "[a] certain level of territorial boundaries, . . . a bunch of common cultural traits, . . . the dependency upon shared social and economic institutions, . . . the existent will for an independent government, a certain belief in a common historical origin, devotion for the values of the new nation in the making, pried and nostalgia for common tragedies, knowledge about other nationalisms, hostility to those other nationalisms that are menace for the own nationalist pillars and the hope for the glorious national future" (7-8). Following these theoretical considerations, I particularly find stimulating Homi K. Bhabha's essay "DissemiNation: The Limits of the Modern Nation" (1989) where he addresses the abstractness of nation by deconstructing the nation's strategies of cultural identification and the discourse used to approach the nation's identity. According to Bhabha's theoretical terms, a nation is made but out of its dissemination, an idea that will be very helpful in the contextualisation of the South Asian diaspora.

re-structured and de-personalised double otherness promoted only from the United Kingdom's axis. Consequently, Partition was established as the last step of the British Empire's destruction of the Subcontinent, as it was afterwards illustrated by the fact that the British abandoned the South Asian Subcontinent knowing that the possibilities of prosperity of the region were very uncertain. The same happened with the previous existent cultural diversity because, as Augusto Pániker declares, "after Partition, an ever existent tradition of pluralism, heteroglossia and interfecundation has been anguishing in the World of modern Indian ever changing political relationships" (452, my translation). At this point, it is my belief that any current socio-politic and media reference to the Republic of India or Pakistan should involve a process of critical reflection about their postcolonial reality and the possible new colonial writings that may be based on that previous imperial double otherness that was imposed.

Subsequently, as previously asserted, the British Partition of India acknowledged the creation of the Republic of India and the Republic of Pakistan to radicalise the violent confrontation of the religious Hindu/Muslim dichotomy³¹. The religious polarisation of the Subcontinent could be summarized in the anecdote told in Augusto Pániker's *Índika*, describing Gandhi's visit to Delhi in November 1947 (two months after Partition) when Gandhi was perplexed at the fact of not seeing a Muslim person in Chadni Chowk, Delhi's city centre and previously the heart of Hindu/Muslim osmosis of languages, festivals and clothes. Nevertheless, the dissection of the Subcontinent had already attended the political scission of The National Congress Party by mere religious reasons and so, in 1906, Muslim

³¹ Although explaining the main ideological differences among Hindus and Muslims in a footnote is merely impossible, the principal divergences of both religions at this restrictive level of post-Partition religious dichotomy can be summarized as follow: Hinduism is a polytheist religion which considers life as constant cycle of reincarnations (*samsara**) and praises the cow as the holy animal. Islam does not recognise the notion of shrine and, instead, promotes the ascetics to follow Mahoma and the teachings of the Koran while condemning the pig as an animal of complete pollution.

politician Ali Jinnah³² headed the Muslim separation from the Indian National Congress Party with the creation of The Muslim League. The Muslim political religious break took place in the beginning of the twentieth century, when the British officers were fostering (with an imperialist endeavour) the Hindu passion of rescuing cows³³ from Muslim slaughterhouses. As a reaction to what the Muslim Indians thought an Indian-British alliance against Islam, The Muslim League would soon radicalise their religious thought and political action to claim that, as Jinnah writes to Gandhi in 1944, “Muslims and Hindus are two different nations from any definitory paradigm” (Jinnah qtd. in Wolpert 32). Moreover, there were also riots against Sikh Indians such as the ones described in Bisham Sahni’s *Tamas* (1994) that could be used in further studies undertaken by historian researchers.

Besides, with a world on the verge of the aftermath of the Second World War (WWII), Partition meant that the old Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) would support India while the US would hold up Pakistan. However, neither of them would try to solve the problems which arose as a consequence of the 1947 Partition: the upheavals of Kashmir³⁴ and the calamities suffered by East Pakistan³⁵ before turning into Bangladesh.

³² Ali Jinnah was the founder of the Muslim League and so he is considered the founder of Pakistan. His birthday is a national holiday for he played an important role in the 1946 British Cabinet Mission to India, the precursor of the 1947 Partition, where he gained a seat for himself and the so-called Muslim rights for the independent state of Pakistan.

³³ On the other hand, Islam demonised the pig. Nowadays, the struggle still continues, as we can see with the recent controversy surrounding Sarah Maple’s painting *Haram* (2007), condemned by the Muslim community for representing a woman dressed with the hijab embracing a pig, the evil animal for Islam. (See Image 4 in the *Appendix of Images*).

³⁴ Kashmir was the name given to the northwestern part of the Indian Subcontinent in the 14th century, when it established itself as one of the wealthiest princely states of India. After Partition, the region was divided into three sub-provinces to accommodate the region according to their triple majority of religious beliefs: the Hindu Indian provinces of Jammu and Ladakh (the fertile valley of the area), the Muslim Pakistani province of Azad Kashmir and the Buddhist Chinese administration based in Kanjut and Aksai Chain.

³⁵ The 1970 elections in Pakistan resolved the victory of the two rival parties: the Awami League wins in East Pakistan (Bengali speaking) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) West Pakistan (Urdu speaking). Nevertheless, East Pakistan ignored the victory of the Awami League, illegalised the party and prosecuted the East Pakistan intellectuals. The East Pakistani survivors would found the Mukti Bahini, a radical organisation which gathered help from India through Indira Gandhi. Nixon and Kissinger ignored the problem and continued their

With this background, current Western stereotypes about the Subcontinent such as the Hindu ascetic, the Muslim chauvinist domination illustrated by the so called derogating veil, the Sikh violent reactions, the democratic chaos of the Republic of India or the terrorist attacks suffered in Mumbai in January 2009³⁶ are, as formerly stated, the still present testimony of the inheritance of previous colonial times. Thence, in order to understand the historical process of our so-called global world and with the purpose of demystifying the cultural stereotypes about the Subcontinent, Nair and Chadha's films prove themselves more than necessary.

In addition to the religious upheavals of the territorial division, Partition also strengthened the categorisation of the Subcontinent into a plural linguistic and social scenario. Accordingly, the colonial and postcolonial pluri-linguistic reality of the Subcontinent was reduced to a subordinating classification: two official languages (Hindi and English) and the recognition of twenty-two dialects (as the Eight Constitution of the Republic of India, 2006, presently proclaims). Although the British Empire established English as the *lingua franca*, the British metropolis respected Urdu³⁷ while still dealing with the devaluated Muslim kingdoms during the first years of the British occupation. In this controversial setting, Hindi had become a colonial instrument to foster the differences in the violent atmosphere of social confrontation that surrounded the Hindu/Muslim divergence and there was a great rejection towards Urdu speakers. In an increasing violent

diplomatic support to Pakistan. Nowadays, The US political speech situates Pakistan as the third most dangerous country in the world.

³⁶ As a part of the Hindu nationalist re-making of the Republic of India (*Hindutva**), cities such as Calcutta, Madras or Bombay shifted their names in order to get closer to the Sanskrit roots. Thus, Calcutta turned into Kolkata, Madras to Chennai (a name which bears the French influence in the area back from the 17th c.) and Bombay to Mumbai.

³⁷ Hindi and Urdu are both dialects from the Khari Bholi, the original dialect from Sanskrit in the Western Uttar Pradesh and Delhi. They are, as Michael C. Saphiro points out, both are "standardised forms of the same language and can be either understood in a spoken level" (305). Their differences appear in the written form: Hindi adapted Devengari and Sanskrit vocabulary and Urdu took Arab, Turkish and Persian script. Saphiro states that Hindi and Urdu are languages clearly composed out of the interassimilation of many languages, "linguistic diasystems" (307) as Spanish-Ladino or Dutch-Afrikaans.

atmosphere, Urdu would then be categorised as official language by both the British Empire and the traditional Hindu high classes to avoid the worsening of the situation. Sheldon Pollock, in his *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, gathers instance of the prejudiced statements that illustrate the discriminatory endeavour of the linguistic reality. Some of these examples include references to usual quotations like: “Urdu made documents illegible”, “Urdu encouraged forgery” and “Urdu encouraged the use of Persian-Arab words” (24).

Furthermore, it should be said that post-Partition India not only speaks in English, Hindi or Urdu, but in Bengali, Marathi, Tamil or Punjabi (among many). For instance, the popular Hindi films (erroneously gathered under the label of *Bollywood**) use a non-Sanskritisated version of Hindi. Equally, South Asian teenagers are brought up in an atmosphere of Hinglish, a mixture between Hindi and English (Coughlan 2006), because of the linguistic hybridisation of English and Hindi as a result of the digitalization of popular culture (DVDs, VCRs...) and the contact with and from the South Asian communities in the diaspora. In this sense, films like Gurinder Chadha’s *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) and Mira Nair’s *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), alongside with the late 2009 Oscar triumphant Danny Boyle’s *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), illustrate the Hinglish tendency and guarantee its understanding in the Subcontinent as well as in the diaspora. In this sense, the subsequent appearance of a debate about the existence of an Indian English (Sedlastschek 2009; Wells 1982) also echoes the discourses of dominance and oppression to anticipate the postcolonial discussion about the *mixture* or *hybridity* created from the colonial intervention (which will be theoretically accounted in Chapter II of this dissertation). Nevertheless, I would like to introduce the idea that Indian English exemplifies what

Barbadian writer E. K. Brathwaite calls a “national language”³⁸ (314) when he talks about the use of English in the Caribbean. Here, he defines the permeated *reconfiguration* of a language (English in this case) when this language is infused with the autochthonous adoption of the many historical traces in the region where it is spoken. The same idea is explained by Indian writer Raja Rao (1908-2006) who sketches this idea in his foreword to *Kanthapura*³⁹:

[The] telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'alien' yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up – like Sanskrit or Persian was before – but not of our emotional make-up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our language and in English. We cannot like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. (vii)

In my opinion, only by bearing in mind all this cultural and historical background can the reality of the Subcontinent be understood.

Consequently, the current postcolonial reality in the Subcontinent needs to confront its own traditional heterogeneity and social contrasts to recognise the still existent colonial legacy in order to overcome extremely Hindu nationalist personalisation that may appear if the victory of current Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's right wing party, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party) that won in Indian national elections in 2014, were radicalised and misunderstood by different Indian politicians⁴⁰.

Likewise, post-Partition India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri-Lanka should be

³⁸ Although Brathwaite refers to the linguistic creolisation of the Caribbean, I think that the term and the Caribbean reality are perfect images of the Indian postcoloniality: a great diversity of cultures, the arrival/departure of the British colonial empire and the coexistence of many distinctiveness and languages.

³⁹ *Kanthapura* (1905) narrates the village's revolt against a domineering plantation based on the Gandhian ideal of non-violence. Its “Foreword” stresses how legend penetrates everyday *Indian* life under British dominion and English expression.

⁴⁰ Narendra Modi was Chief Minister of Gujarat (a Western Region in current India whose capital is Mumbai) during the Mumbai terrorist attacks in 2002. He has been openly criticised for how he managed the reactions after the attacks.

categorised beyond dreams of being a “superpower”⁴¹ or being embroidered in the discourse of the global world. Hereby, a description about the cultural diversity found in the South Asian diaspora(s) is essential to contextualise the many realities hidden behind the adjectives South Asian and Indian and the challenges that, both from the Subcontinent and its diaspora, are still to be faced. At this point, the realities behind the works by Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair are but a clear illustration of what the Subcontinent and its diaspora still need to confront.

2- OUTWARDS FLIGHT OF SOUTH ASIAN CULTURES: THE MANY INDIAN DIASPORAS

After having traced the historical complexity of the South Asian Subcontinent, now it is time to study the dispersal of the peoples and cultures of the Subcontinent around the world. Accordingly, this section aims at presenting the peculiarities of the South Asian diaspora and so it illustrates the notion that the Indian identity does not only correspond to a static reading of the traditions around the Subcontinent but to a combination of both the inwards and outwards movement of South Asian people around the world. Here, I will be using India and Indian within a two-fold nuance: India as the land spanned under the institution of British Colonial India and the post-Partition Republic of India where both Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair’s personal cartographies depart from. I will leave the inclusion and study of the Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Myanmar and Sri Lankan diasporas for

⁴¹ Sonia Gandhi, in her 2003 speech to open the National Congress party, addressed the audiences with a speech entitled “Is India the Next Superpower?” and the idea that the concept of being a superpower involved a new adaptation of Western imperialist concepts of hegemony, aggression and power politics of post-Partition India.

further studies, although it must be remembered that some of the migrants left the Subcontinent as British Indian citizenships and became Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Sri Lankan during their own migration.

Thence, the convergent study of all those *Indias* is yet another component of what I have categorised as the many South Asias of the mind, the complexity of the postcolonial identity(ies) in the Subcontinent, a product of the diversity of the many cultures that are currently in contact in both a psychological and a temporal space. Homi K. Bhabha exemplifies the previous complexity when he states that “the dissemination of the peoples of a nation should be considered as an important part of a national psyche” (1990: 204). Therefore, by contextualising the Indian diaspora during colonial times and after Partition (1947), I intend to display some light on the intricacy of the Indian cultural identity and so understand the coherent background and social commitment of the South Asian imaginary that gathers it and which appears in the films by Nair and Chadha.

2.1 RAW MATERIALS AND PEOPLES: INDIAN DIASPORA TO THE UK, CARIBBEAN AND EAST AND SOUTH AFRICA DURING COLONIAL TIMES

Raw Materials (cotton and species) and *peoples* (inhabitants of the Sub-Continent who worked as servants and nursemaids) firstly arrived in England in the period Nasreen Ali calls “Pre and Post Colonial Phase”. Likewise, and according to Ali’s “Imperial Implosions: Postcoloniality and the Orbits of Migration”, there are four waves of South Asian migration into Britain: the “Pre-colonial phase” (1608-1757) and the “Proto-colonial phase” (1757-1857) which consisted of natural resources and servants; the “Colonial phase” (1857-1947) in which a middle-high class introduced the first multi-ethnic, multi-class and multi-religious diasporic contact; and the “Postcolonial phase” (1947-), the age of the

hybridising diaspora. Thence, in an empire in the making, the flux of the peoples from the colonies to the metropolis was as important as that of the natural resources. Nevertheless, Indian peoples, as part of the Empire, were soon reduced to the coloniser's *Other* and became the basis for their colonial expansion.

A. ARRIVING AT THE BRITISH METROPOLIS: COTTON, LABOUR FORCE AND COLONISING EDUCATION (1765-1947)

British Indians arrived at British land with a British passport granted following the three-fold pattern of their migratory justification: as labour force to work at British industries, as servants and as receivers of an English education with which the Empire guaranteed the mental colonisation of the Subcontinent. To start with, Indian cotton played the most important part in the British Industrial Revolution: cotton was brought to England and, when crafted, was sent back to British India to be bought by Indians. While England developed new factories, Indians had to buy their own cotton, manufactured and overcharged outside India, and so they migrated to the UK to process their own *raw material*. Under these prospects, India was becoming poorer and the growing reputation of Great Britain as *the land of opportunities* annulled previous existing conceptions about the Hindu refusal to migration (*kala pani**). At that moment, the Subcontinent lacked the possibility of survival whereas Great Britain held a prosperous pledge.

After the Indian arrival in the UK, the British Empire offered and imposed the worst and most unhealthy jobs at the factories especially to Indian Muslim immigrants. Moreover, Indian males were recruited as British soldiers for the First and Second World War⁴² (1914-1918, 1939-1945) while the industrialisation of the United Kingdom in the early twentieth century was a source of jobs and salaries for the British population in the big cities. As

⁴² Hence WWI and WWII.

military officers, Indians received British citizenship but there was no consideration for their cultural peculiarities, especially in terms of language and religion. Thence, in WWI, most of them were commissioned to fight against the Ottomans and obviously there were lots of Muslims among them. Nevertheless, they were merely Indian immigrants under British consideration.

Equally, some of the intellectual high-class Indians migrated to the United Kingdom seeking a British education. Some of them did it planning to go back to the Subcontinent and solve its previous economic misery. On the other hand, despite exceptions such as already referenced figures like Gandhi or Nehru, these educated migrants were integrated into the English culture reinforcing the British assigned role of Indians as *inferiors* and *victims*. In this sense, the diasporic people, as people beyond two cultures, experienced what East African Indian Avtar Brah calls a “cultural clash” (1976: 176), which would later defy the British imposed education that was both reductionist and colonising.

B. WORKING FOR THE EMPIRE: INDENTURED INDIAN DIASPORA IN THE CARIBBEAN (1838-1917)

The British colonies in the Caribbean demanded labour force for the sugar plantations after slavery was abolished in 1834. Indentured work force sent from British India in 1838⁴³ was the perfect answer: a British patron would arrive at India and would recruit Indian labourers after the promise of a five or ten years contract of work in the Caribbean. The patron would pay the journey and would provide a salary for the work and a dwelling place. They normally included the promise that, after that indenture expired, indentured workers could go back to the Subcontinent. On the contrary, once in the Caribbean, indentured workers would occupy the old slave quarters and would be forced to perform their *labour task* in the

⁴³ The two first boats arrived in 1938. 1/3 of the passengers died in a journey which would last 3 or 6 months. Indian Trinidad scholars Sahadeo Baseo and Brinsley Samaroo assert that “only 25 % came back” (98).

time and quantities required if they wanted to obtain their income (something that they hardly received).

Likewise, British Indian workers were responsible for their own clothing and feeding so, if they were not paid, their basic necessities were hardly ever satisfied. According to Hugh Tinker, indenture was “a new form of slavery” (44) and so the British Indian hired labourers (known as *coolies**, a term which would then be used with a clear discriminatory voice although in the beginning it stood within the Sanskrit nuance used by the Indian indentured workers to refer among themselves) officially finished their indentures after Gandhi denounced the structures of the system in South Africa in 1895. At that point, the presence of People of Indian Origin in the Caribbean was very significant. The indenture system was also established in the Pacific Isles and, as an illustration of the great cultural sediment of this Indian diaspora, nowadays Hindi is still the official language in Fiji.

Furthermore, *coolitude** produced what Brinda Mehta calls another “turn of the screw for the Caribbean creolisation” (434). For instance, *coolitude** brought Hindi and Muslim credos to the Caribbean, a medley of Hindi and African Caribbean music (*chutney music**) and the incorporation of mango and rice⁴⁴ to the traditional Caribbean diet. Subsequently, the contact was most intense when the previous indentured Caribbean diasporas arrived in the US and the UK. The establishment of *coolitude** in the US and the UK meant, again quoting Brinda Mehta, “the mediation between the Indians and Africans and the incorporation of the Black fight to the concept of *Indianness*” (444, my emphasis). The extraordinary culture mixture would soon merge into a powerful cultural hybridisation that permeated both the place of arrival and the original homelands. The following

⁴⁴ Fields of mango and rice were normally produced by diasporic Indians after indenture system was cancelled.

quotation from Kempadoo, Indian Caribbean poet from Trinidad, in his arrival in the UK, summarises the grandiosity of the concept: “I could see myself as a *chameleon*, with no fixed appearance and no sense of an essential self, yet could enjoy the multiple spaces available due to the simultaneous inhabiting of different cultures” (34, my emphasis). Thence, the Indian indentured diaspora provided a blend of the Indian culture with the peculiarities of the African cultures that were in both the Caribbean and the Pacific as a consequence of previous slavery. In this sense, what Kempadoo calls a “simultaneous inhabiting a different culture” (34) also took place in the African continent, especially in British colonial East and South Africa⁴⁵ the destiny for a large number of indentured labourers from the Subcontinent who undertook the role of the Empire’s officials.

C. THE EMPIRE’S OFFICIALS: INDIAN DIASPORA IN EAST AND SOUTH AFRICA (1848 – 1945)

South Asian *peoples* also worked for the British administration in the colonies held in East Africa and South Africa. The British government assigned them to low rank official posts in the administration to guarantee the social stratification and the racism on which the Empire was based. As Avtar Brah points out: “[British Indians] were the preys of the colonial sandwich for South Asians came to constitute the middle layer below the white colonist but above black Africans” (2004: 44). Similarly, they were rejected by both British officers (to whom they were colonial subalterns) and African population (who regarded Indians as a racist group invading their land).

Beyond, although the British Indian arrival in East Africa can be traced since the Muslim empire, the first Indian indentured labourers arrived at Uganda in the last two

⁴⁵ The East Africa Community (hence EAC) includes, as a current regional intergovernmental organisation, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. Mauritius and South Africa are representatives of British colonies in South Africa which made use of South Asian workforce.

decades of the 19th century to construct the Uganda Railway⁴⁶. The *mindhis* (Swahili for British Indians) afterwards disseminated along Kenya and Tanzania as the construction of the railway advanced. They enjoyed a relatively peaceful life in East Africa until the middle 1960s and the 1970s, where several East African social revolts intended to overtake the work of the Indian traders in East Africa working in the *dukawallas**. East African Indians were granted British passports and migrated mainly to the UK. This story is depicted in Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala* (1990), showing how Indians and all Asians had to leave Uganda after Idi Amin ordered, on 4 August 1972, that all previously indentured Asian workers had ninety days to leave the country (Mutibwa 1992; Patel 1992).

Also, South Africa welcomed the British Indian indentured workers in the 1860s to work in the sugar plantations of Truro and Natal (East of South Africa, in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal). However, South Africa would attend a more important event in 1893, when Gandhi arrived at the country to work as a lawyer just after graduating from University of London. Once in South Africa, the Mahatma suffered racist attacks by the black South Africans but, instead of denouncing them, he undertook the attitude for which he should always be remembered: the active but peaceful revolution (*satyagraha**) In addition, he condemned the indenture system that would reduce the South Asian migrants to a double subaltern position, firstly controlled by the British colonial yoke and later to be rejected by the South African inhabitants. This fact would be the start of Gandhi's legend for his leadership on the path for the anti-colonialist protests on the upcoming Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 and the consequent liberation (or abandonment) of South Asia by and from the British colonisation.

⁴⁶ Theodore Roosevelt, in his 1906 visit to Uganda would enhance the construction of the railway in a rather *Orientalist* speech which followed the differentiating role of Edward Said's previous cited definition. Hence, Roosevelt asserted that "The railroad, the embodiment of the eager, masterful, materialistic civilization of today, was pushed through a region in which nature, both as regards wild man and wild beast, does not differ materially from what it was in Europe in the late Pleistocene" (2).

Likewise, in his diasporic experience in South Africa, Gandhi contributed to the celebration of the Natal Indian Congress in 1894 (which recognised politically the Indian population in South Africa) and the passing of the Transvaal Act of 1906 (which regulated socially the situation of Indians in South Africa). Besides, Gandhi publically emphasised the concept that both the lowest Indian castes and the lowest statements of black South Africans (pejoratively known as *Kaffirs*, although the origin of the term simply denoted black labourers) should work together to dismantle the British empire from within the South African own political dynamics.

Thence, the importance of the Indian presence in East and South Africa transcends the replication of the institutions and sacred places (Hindu temples, Sikh *gurdwaras**, Muslim mosques or Buddhist pagodas) that now enrich the landscapes of cities in East and South African cities like Kampala or Johannesburg. When the East African Indians⁴⁷ were offered the opportunity to go to the UK with a British passport⁴⁸, they enjoyed what Avtar Brah calls, “an urban background condition” (2004: 46) which would cause initial problems of coexistence with the other post-Partition Indian workers who had arrived at British cities straight from rural India. After encountering this situation, some decided to fly to the US, where there was, at that moment, a much more open welcoming policy.

At this stage, the diasporic Indian settlements assembled Hindu, Muslim and Sikhs South Asians, East African Indians and African descendants. Therefore, the notion of *Indianness* had melted into *desi* (the Hindi term for diasporic South Asian). Thus, the first British and American generation-born *desi* shared a triple bond with the Indian, Caribbean and East African India and so started to share broadcasting companies around the world with the establishment of diasporic television South Asian channels such as Zee TV.

⁴⁷ South Africans Indians had more problems to leave the country with the advent of Apartheid.

⁴⁸ This finished with the 1968 *Immigration Act*, which proclaimed that people of Indian Origin would only reside in Britain if at least one of their parents had been born in British territory.

2.2 CONTACT AND CONFLICTS BEYOND TWO CULTURES: POSTCOLONIAL SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORAS TO THE UK AND THE US

The South Asian diaspora in the UK and the US combines the many historical layers of the Indian Palimpsest with the complexity of the cultural and social diasporic constructions of *South Asianness*. In this sense, I believe that the abstract national identities of both the UK and the US nations are still nowadays a consequence of the many cultures and postcolonial stories that write the history of a new hybrid society as based on the connivance and interpollination of all those “scattering and gatherings of people in the diaspora” (1990: 190), as stated by Homi K. Bhabha in the previously quoted essay “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation”. Accordingly, the following pages introduce the historical circumstances that surrounded the arrival and settlement of the Indian postcolonial diaspora in the UK and the US. I hereby will use the general adjective South Asian to address to common features prior to undivided South Asian Subcontinent of as well as to postcolonial Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi diasporas and I would employ the adjective Indian when I refer to specific particularities of postcolonial diaspora⁴⁹.

By so doing, it is my intention to promote an understanding of the general South Asian the British and North American national identity as constructed by means of what Bhabha calls the “liminality of modern society” (1994: 297), an illustration of the formerly cited new hybrid society constantly in the making. In other words, the contemporary British and American national psyche conceptualised as a composite of the many cultures that

⁴⁹ It should be born in mind that many of South Asian migrants left South Asia before Partition and they were British passport holder from the British Indian colonies. The term interference clearly illustrates the artificial division undertaken by Partition of the pre-colonial existent Indian Palimpsest that gathered *South Asianness* without religious or cultural nuances that are now associated to the use of Indian as referring to the contemporary Republic of India.

coalesce in the currently so-called global age. The next pages thence present the postcolonial diasporic background of Gurinder Chadha (postcolonial Indian diaspora to the UK) and Mira Nair (postcolonial Indian diaspora to the US) as the perfect illustration of the intercultural and gender conflicts emerged in the postcolonial Indian diasporas.

A. POSTCOLONIAL SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORAS TO THE UK

The postcolonial Indian diaspora in the UK departed from the newly created nations of India and Pakistan but also from every place where there were Indian-origin workers. The post-Partition diaspora towards the UK encompassed immigrants from rural areas as well as high-middle class college students, and it also gathered people with a different religious and linguistic background. The rural diasporic labourers were segregated outside the British industrial centres (Birmingham, Manchester, Leicester or North London) and suffered the refusal of the British white society which, especially, worsened in the 1960s when England adjusted its economy after post WWII era which produced a strong anti-migration feeling strengthened by the negative political response to immigrants in the UK. Accordingly, Paul Gilroy illustrates this British repudiation towards migrants when he points out how the British “criminalised everything that wasn’t pure British” (134). Likewise, Avtar Brah particularises how people from a South Asian background were considered “undesirable peoples who smelled of curry, were dirty, wore funny clothes, lived packed like sardines in a room and practised strange religions” (2004: 37). At this cultural stage of racism, South Asian migrants were socially condemned in a campaign of hatred and stereotypes through which they were de-humanised and socially prosecuted although, at the same time, Great Britain needed, as in colonial times, their labour force.

Still, the 1980s attended to the settlement of South Asians in the British landscape⁵⁰, hosting the cooperation with the Black struggle in the Handsworth Demonstrations⁵¹ and Notting Hill Carnival Riots. Also, in the late 1980s, the creation of a new South Asian-British hybrid youth⁵² challenged the notions of what it meant to be immigrants in Britain and subverted the idea of diaspora to enhance its crucial part in the making of the Union Jack identity. Together with the link among migrant communities in the space of diaspora, the 1980s recognition of the Indian diasporic people as part of Great Britain led to the realization that the Indian diaspora was there to stay, and that both British and South Asian identities were intermingling together in a British-South Asian collective identity, what Nasreen Ali et al. define as “BrAsian identity” (10).

Thus, BrAsian identity is the result of the contact between the South Asian diaspora in the UK with the UK social, cultural, political and economic reality. Consequently, the term BrAsian defines the cultural and social particularities of the South Asians that live in the *space*⁵³ of the postcolonial South Asian Diaspora in the UK (gathering Indian and West and East Pakistani diasporas, where the latter would become Bangladeshi diaspora in 1971 when East Pakistan becomes Bangladesh) mixing South Asian and British cultural traits. In Ali et al.’s own words:

⁵⁰ There are interesting studies such as Martina Gosh-Schellhorn’s “Bradford Communities in the Move” (2006) which analyses the changes of the urban and rural landscape around Bradford creating an extensive photographic archive. Also, the work of the Singh Twins Sisters, (www.singhtwins.co.uk) in the form of plain mosaics in which many spheres of the BrAsian (a concept that will be expanded in upcoming pages and that agglutinates the British and Asian traditions) daily routines are displayed, is a great depiction of the BrAsian genuine blend. Some instances can be seen in the Image 5 of the *Appendix of Images*.

⁵¹ The movie *Handsworth Songs* (1986), displays the riots, which took place in the Handsworth district of Birmingham during the summers from 1981 to 1985. Directed by the Black Audio Film Collective, the film created a great discussion and posterior controversy between the Indian writer Salman Rushdie (now nationalised as British after the fatwa raised against him due to the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, 1988) and Jamaican scholar Stuart Hall (the founder of the Cultural Studies Centre at University of Birmingham and the author of the previously quoted essay “Cultural Politics and Diaspora”, 1992, and the iconic “The Emergence of Cultural Studies and the Crisis of the Humanities”, 1990).

⁵² First generation postcolonial immigrants born in the UK who started to blend the South Asian culture and British way of life, creating an original cultural composite.

⁵³ As we will see in chapter two, Avtar Brah defines the contact of diasporic cultures with the receiving country as a *space of diaspora*, a “Third Space” (Bhabha 1994) of interchange and mixture where identities are in constant process of creating and re-negotiating themselves.

BrAsian refuses the easy decomposition of the British and Asian dyad into its western and non-western constituents. BrAsian is not merely a conflation of the British and the Asian, it is not a fusion but a confusion . . . BrAsian signifies the impossibility of a hyphenated identity . . . BrAsian is not the correct answer to the question of British Asian subjectivities . . . [But] the line that crosses out and gathers the postcolonial lines of contact . . . the sense of irony of the term arises from a recognition [often tacit rather than explicit] of the distance between the narratives available . . . often caricatures of the 'between two cultures' [we should say beyond], or the [constraining and reducing] terms such as culture clash and identity conflict" (10).

Thenceforth, BrAsian embodies the confusion, contact and recognition shared among the receiving country (the UK), the received South Asian diaspora and the South Asian homelands. At this stage, the resultant mixture, a clear illustration of Bhabha's conception of "the one out of many" (Bhabha 1994), recognises the postcolonial interdependent history of both Indian migrants and the British nation, the definitive melting of what Stuart Hall beautifully calls "The outside history that is inside the history of the English" (48-49). Subsequently, South Asians and British merge together in the notion of BrAsian and, by so doing, they face the challenges (such as racism and gender discrimination) of their existence within a transcultural society.

In this sense, although the postcolonial BrAsian settlement produced a plural religious landscape (especially in industrial cities like London, Birmingham, Leicester or Blackpool – the main migrant's recipients), religion would soon become a source of discrimination. The events that followed the terrorist attacks of July 7th (2005), when the Metropolitan Police shot Brazilian Jean Charles de Menezes on July 12th (2005), because he acted *in a weird way* and *looked Muslim* can prove the still recurrent appliance of the idea. Besides the creation of stereotypes such as the "Religious Asian Fundamentalist Gang" (Miller 267), BrAsians had also to face discrimination in education, employment, housing and health (Ahmad et al. 1997). Muslim Bangladeshi and Pakistani migrants scored the lowest levels in the educational attainment and economic partition rankings developed, for

instance, by the United Nations Development Programme's *Empowered and Equal* (with the publication of "Gender Equality Strategy 2008-2011"⁵⁴), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs's *The Millenium Development Goals Report* (with the yearly Reports from 2006 onwards) or the World Economic Forum's *The Global Gender Gap Report* (2007 onwards till the latest 2014). These variables will later be used to analyse the representation of the gender conflicts in the selected films by Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair.

Consequently, and moving to our contemporary moment, it can be stated that BrAsian women still face what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls the "gender subaltern position" in already referenced articles such as "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1995) or "Teaching for the Times" (1992). In these references, Spivak emphasises the idea that the South Asian migrant woman is both the victim of the British *Orientalist* and racist socio-political dynamics as well as the sufferer of the chauvinist restrictions of the Sub-Continent's inherited patriarchal society. Accordingly, the foundation of the Southall Black Sisters Non Governmental Organisation, the studies of Amrit Wilson and the shooting of films such as Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) or Jag Mundhra's *Provoked*⁵⁵ (2006) show and denounce some of the gender troubles suffered by the BrAsian women such as mistreatment, lack of access to education or the revenge connected with notions of honour (*izzat**).

Likewise, the critical reflection about the postcolonial societies of our times, at both sides of any ocean, should always analyse the artistic representation of diasporic women to

⁵⁴ Full references and link to downloadable versions of documents from the official sites are given in the *Works Cited* section.

⁵⁵ *Provoked* (2006) is an Indian-British production based on the real story of Kiranjit Ahluwalia, who set her husband on fire after being repeatedly mistreated in an arranged marriage. She was imprisoned and was not freed after a strong campaign developed by the Southall Black Sisters. The book *Circle of Life: An Autography* (1997), written by Kiranjit Ahluwalia and Rahul Gupta tells the story with an extremely subtle denouncing voice.

truly understand the overwhelming definition of the intercultural contact that defines our hybrid society. Subsequently, the particularities of postcolonial Indian diaspora in the UK shows the first integration of cultures (South Asian and British) beyond the mere binary restrictive analysis inherited from that previous moment of colonial contact. Here, the postcolonial BrAsian distinctiveness addresses the conflict of the current diversity of cultures in the UK and the social policies that need to be faced and revised in order to guarantee that, in such a transformational global space, there are no racist and gendered schemes of inequality. In this sense, the cinema of Gurinder Chadha (East Indian Kenyan born migrated to UK and so a paradigmatic BrAsian woman) illustrates the possible paradoxes that may arise in the postcolonial negotiation of cultures and its possible following coexistence. Accordingly, Indian scholar Shoba S. Rajgopal (2003) states:

Gurinder Chadha is the first South Asian woman to have made inroads into the mainstream public sphere of the West with her films . . . Starting with *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) and going on to *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002), they demonstrate a feminist perspective in that gender and race are woven together to show complexities and conflicts both within and between minority communities. (51)

Here, the convergent study of Chadha's BrAsiannes peculiarity needs to meet with Mira Nair's cinematographic coetaneous art in order to provide a true and consistent study of all those "complexities and conflicts" (51) Rajgopal mentions. Likewise, Nair's personal postcolonial Indian diaspora to the US proves itself an extraordinary of the intercultural and gender challenges to be faced.

B. POSTCOLONIAL SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORA TO THE US

The largest South Asian diaspora in the US arrived after WWII⁵⁶. South Asian⁵⁷ post-WWII diaspora had the same aspirations as the American population of the times: the promise of a prosper social and economi future in the US. The US needed doctors, lawyers and, after the end of the Cold War (1947-1953), also engineers. In this context, some South Asian immigrants arrived in the US having had a previous access to British middle-high education which made the 1960s' Indian community living in the US became "a model minority" (Maira 139). However, the US categorised all South Asian migrants as Hindu in order to reinforce the North American general rejection against Muslim culture, crucially latent after WWII. As Edward Said states: "Since WWII, and more noticeably after each of the Arab-Israeli wars, the Arab Muslim has become a figure in American popular culture [in the form of] . . . the menace of the Arab to the American Emporium" (1979: 284). At the same time, the Hindu migrant was perceived as a "rigid worker and melancholic" in opposition to the African community who was described as "black, phlegmatic and lax" (Narayana Singh 262-8). Nevertheless, the 1960s Black Freedom Movement would join the second postcolonial wave of Indian American migration during the 1980s and they would work

⁵⁶ Indian American scholar Sunaina Maira identifies two significant phases of South Asian post-Partition arrival in US, "after 1965" and "during the 1980s" (140). Nevertheless, the first South Asian settlement in North America took place in British Columbia, Canada, in 1890, where a Sikh community established itself to escape from the religious simplification of the colonial empire in the Subcontinent. At the same time, many other Sikhs arrived at Seattle and San Francisco for the same reasons. Afterwards, they established hostels, little shops and some agricultural exploitation along the Mexican border. Projects such as Jayasri Majumdar Hart's *Roots in the Sun* (2002-2008) explored the intermixing of both the Mexican and Indian communities. Hart's is an internet page with options to upload familiar pictures, written testimonies or videos. It also provided an option to trace back genealogical origins.

⁵⁷ I decided to use the terms South Asian and Indian American to address the Indian diaspora in the US. Some authors such as Pierre Gottslich (2004) assert that a more restrictive concept like Asian Indian American must be used to avoid defintory clashes with the Native Americans and recognise the South Asian heterogeneous particularity. Nevertheless, I maintain that both South Asian and Indian American recognise, at least within the pages of this dissertation, the cultural Indian diversity of both defining adjectives.

together towards a final social integration and acceptance of the equality of civil rights for any human being within the US society.

Accordingly, if the first wave of Indian diaspora in the US was characterised by a mainstream of middle and high class South Asians, the second wave of Indian diaspora in the US was formed by labourers of scarce formation who came to America following the echoing myth of the Promised Land. They worked as taxi drivers or founded shops at the Indian American ghettos, trying to send money to the family in India, running video stores, gathering around the dinner table for daily rituals (there is an erroneous conception that this is a Hindu custom when it is actually much of a Sikh custom) or starting to invest money in properties back in India. Although this diasporic representation has created the stereotype of the South Asian American Apu in Matt Groening's *The Simpsons*⁵⁸, the truth is that, according to the US Census Bureau, the American Indian population in the United States grew from almost 1,679,000 in 2000 to 2,569,000 in 2007 (Whatley and Batalova 2013) and then it reached 3,034,000 in 2014 (according to *The Economic Times*, 2014). According to the *Indian American Centre for Political Awareness*, almost 40% of all Indians in the US have a Master, Doctorate or Professional degree, five times the US rate. Contrarily, and especially after the terrorist attacks on 9/11th (2001), the rejection against Muslim migrants radicalised progressively.

Bearing this racist polarisation of the heterogeneity of cultures in mind, the US identity should always be defined in terms of the ever-existent coexistence of its many postcolonial peoples (each one with a different origin, a peculiar myth, and a particular recreation of the American Dream). In this sense, Karen Piper points out, in her article "Postcolonialism in the U.S.: Hybridity or Diversity?", that the US has to deter itself from

⁵⁸ The character of Apu in *The Simpsons* has his name taken from the classical *The Apu Trilogy* directed by the Bengali filmmaker Satyajit Rai. The character is stereotypically constructed as a disciplined patron of his family, tremendously religious and an extremely hard-working employee.

the current exotic notions enhanced by *multiculturalism* and move towards the recognition of the cultural *ambivalent* diversity of the notion of *hybridity*. In Piper's own words, "hybridity is the true articulation of the true culture . . . not the exoticism contained in the current articulation of the policies about multiculturalism" (16). In my opinion, only by understanding the current contact of cultures as a socio-cultural hybridity can the re-writing of colonial discourse be disrupted. Here, South Asian migrant characters such as Mina in Mira Nair's *Mississippi Massala* (1990) or Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* (2006)⁵⁹ question the contemporary honesty of the *melting pot*, evaluating if they are mere exotic additions to a multicultural *Orientalised* society or if, on the other hand, they are truly components of the embracing American fluctuating diversity.

In this sense, the Indian American diaspora constantly negotiates its own identity within the American hegemonic sense of miscellany. Accordingly, it is the Indian Diaspora which especially enriches culturally the US and economically the Republic of India, providing an interconnection of cultures which goes beyond the proliferation of Indian take-away restaurants in San Francisco or the cinemas in the New Yorker district of The Village which show Indian films in Hindi. As a result, if as Meenakshi Mukherjee remarks that "*nation* writes diaspora" (41, my emphasis), then diaspora necessarily writes, enriches and questions that concept of *nation*. So, diasporic artists such as Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha illustrate the grandiosity of the current socio-cultural hybrid society while they struggle to subvert and dismantle the previously *Orientalised* Indian historiography. Besides, they evaluate their own personal position as South Asian and Indian women in the

⁵⁹ Mina is an East African Indian who arrives at the US to be addressed as Mexican, black, or Latina, suffering instances of American racism while working at her family's motel. Throughout the movie, and with the help of African American Demetrius, she realises that she is both an African Indian and an American. Ashima, main character in Nair's *The Namesake* (2006), illustrates another step of the process. She is Indian born emigrated to the US as a simple husband's wife. In fact, it is her diasporic experience in the US what makes her come to terms with both notions of being an Indian and a woman, with another decision to be furthermore taken: does she want to live in the US or in India?

diaspora by describing female characters that negotiate the still valid subaltern position of the non-Western women.

3- GURINDER CHADHA AND MIRA NAIR'S PERSONAL HISTORIES AND DIASPORAS

Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair are the perfect representatives of the plurality of the South Asian diaspora and, similarly, their films are inspiring conceptualizations of the hybrid postcolonial societies in both the UK and the US⁶⁰. Both Chadha and Nair's cinematographic stories articulate and recreate their personal experiences of diaspora by constructing characters that establish a dialogue with our current society through the metaphorical location of culture⁶¹ of what I previously called the *many South Asias and Indias of the mind*. Here, both Nair and Chadha's are pioneering filmmakers because their movies firstly introduced the South Asian diasporic character into mainstream cinema. Hence, the following section provides a brief account about the biography and filmography of both Chadha and Nair so as to stimulate the study of their *hybrid cinemas and hybrid narratives* (concepts that I will explain later in Chapter II and Chapter III) as the meeting point where the multiple diasporas that constitute the abstract concept of *South Asianness*,

⁶⁰ This statement is structured to answer Trinh Min-Ha's double question about what a truly cultural filmmaker must represent as, in her essay "No Master Territories", she states that the spectator should always consider the cinema director within a double-fold determination: "How loyal a representative of her people is she? . . . and how authentic is her representation of the culture observed?" (215).

⁶¹ Homi K. Bhabha, in his article "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation" (1990) states that art is "the middle passage, a *metaphor*, that [represents] the current temporal moment . . . the artistic representation therefore fulfils [the] necessity of filling the space left, *nation expressed by a language of metaphors*, transferring the meaning of home and belonging to a middle passage" (191, my emphasis).

Indianness, Britishness and *Americannes* interact with each other. By so doing, the convergence of Chadha and Nair's *shared differences* would enhance a powerful analysis of the socio-cultural structures of inequality that still need to be faced by our current society.

3.1 GURINDER CHADHA. FROM KENYA TO *QUEEN OF THE MULTI*

Gurinder Chadha was born in Nairobi (1960, Kenya) and, as an East African Indian descendant, diaspora has troubled her life in the most enriching ways. The Chadhas emigrated to British Kenya from the Punjab as a Sikh family looking for a better economic prospect: the father as a banker and the mother as a shop tender. Hardly was Gurinder Chadha two years old, when her family moved to Southall, England. In the UK, she would be brought up as a British girl surrounded by the peculiarities of the South Asian cultures from the East African Indian diaspora. During her last two years at high school, Chadha recognised the racism imposed by the British white-normativity when, at the times of her Leaving Certificate Exam, she was appointed "to do [her] best and become a hard working secretary" (Chadha 2006: 2). Nevertheless, her family's historical spirit of struggle encouraged her to prove her teachers wrong and strengthen her own sense of independence.

As she points out:

Experiences like that [referring to the incident with the professor], and seeing my parents struggle, made me think: You don't believe I can do that, so I'm going to prove you're wrong. If you tell me I can't do something, that's the worst thing to tell me. And that's what I tell girls, and what *Beckham's* about: you can do it, you can do it better, and you can do it in the way you want. (2006: 2)

During her first year at East Anglia University she would see a photograph of a black man wounded during the 1980s Brixton riots under the headline “*The Future of Britain*” (Chadha 2006: 1). At that point, she decided to turn herself to cinema and illustrate her own vision for the future of Britain. In these regards, she remarks:

I remember a picture on the front page of the Sun during the Brixton riots: a Rasta guy with a petrol bomb, and a headline saying something like: *The Future of Britain*. And I thought: ‘Wow! Look at the power of that image’, and I wanted to get behind the camera to make these people three-dimensional. (2006: 1)

Later, Chadha would start to work for BBC Radio and she gathered enough artistic and economic support to shoot her first feature, the short film *I’m British but...*(1990) where she researched the emerging importance of the *bhangra** music in the making of the incipient BrAsian identity.

After marrying Paul Mayeda Berges, a Chinese American screenplay writer and cinema director, Chadha founded her own producing company, Umbi Films⁶², in order to direct her two first features: *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) and *What Do You Call an Indian Woman Who Is Funny?* (1994). Both films would soon become cinematographic successes that represented how different generations of BrAsian women faced and survived daily routines of racism and patriarchal domination. Later, she would celebrate the US dynamic diversity of cultures in *What’s Cooking?* (2000) before writing, producing and directing *Bend It like Beckham* (2002). At that moment, not only England but the whole world enthroned Gurinder as *Queen of the Multi*⁶³, *multi* standing both for *multiplex* (referring to the great worldwide economic success of the movie) and *multicultural* (pointing at Chadha’s representation of the cultural variety of suburban London). Afterwards, if

⁶² The company will be renamed as Bend It after the success of *Bend It like Beckham*.

⁶³ Jigna Desai refers to Gurinder Chadha as *Queen of the Multi* in her book *Beyond Bollywood. The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic Film* (2004).

Chadha's *Bend It like Beckham* brought the distinctiveness of BrAsianness to the mainstream cinemas, her following film, *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) followed the same line of representing the transculturality as she did in this re-writing of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813).

Likewise, Gurinder Chadha was awarded Dame of England in 2006 and, instead of refusing the acknowledgement (as Rastafarian London-based poet Benjamin Zephaniah or East African Indian playwright Yasmin Alibhai-Brown did), she celebrated "her many different sides" (2006: 3), praising the cultural miscellany of her diasporic identity and the recognition that the award gave to the still present British domination over the Subcontinent. In relation to this award, she stated:

[My] story is the story of empire. A product of globalisation before the term was properly invented, and I am grateful for the breadth drawn from my richly textured heritage. I think my ancestors would have been thoroughly pleased. One reason I got it, I think, is that I show contemporary Britain to the outside world. I'm only able to do that - my Britain is only like it is - because of the history of the last five hundred years. (2006: 3)

Equally, Gurinder Chadha takes into account the hybridising effects of the people of the diaspora in both the country of departure (South Asian Subcontinent, East Africa) and arrival (UK, the US).

In this sense, Chadha has always focused on presenting the contact of different generations of South Asian diasporic women as an empowering review of the transcultural conflict and so she directed the adaptation of the British teenage blockbusters by Louise Rennison *Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging* (1999) and *It's OK, I'm Wearing Really Big Knickers* (2000) in 2008 as *Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging* (2008). In this sense, *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993), *How Do You Call an Indian Girl Who Is Funny?* (1994), *Bend It like Beckham* (2002), *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) and her latest feature *It's a*

Wonderful Afterlife (2010) show how South Asian diasporic women oppose the racist discrimination while they celebrate the South Asian cultural difference in terms of religion, language or food traditions. By so doing, Chadha proposes a positive and hopeful portrayal of the South Asian woman in the diaspora as a figure who comes to terms with her *South Asianness*, *Indianness* and *femininity* and so rejoices the possibilities the hybrid society in which we all now live.

3.2 MIRA NAIR. FROM DOCUMENTING BOMBAY TO THE NAME OF THE AMERICAN MASALA^{64*}

Mira Nair is a clear example of the Indian cross-pollination of cultures. Nair was born in the Indian Punjab (North West region in the Subcontinent) but soon emigrated to the Orissa Province, then to Delhi and afterwards to the US, Uganda and South Africa. Her life is defined by famous Indian actor Rosham Seth as “the synthesis of the global human being” (3-4) and her work. In Nair’s own words, her films are:

[A] mode of exploration of what happens when you cross the colour line from one community to another . . . I want to create the unpredictability of life, that grey arena that makes us all what we are and not just the black-and-white/good-and-bad that cinema is always relegated, but that very real life we all live. That is my passion . . . to find ourselves for the first time. (qtd. in Redding & Brownworth 170-2)

Furthermore, I consider that it is noteworthy to state that Mira Nair attended an Irish-Catholic missionary school and received a mixed Western-Indian education. After graduating from Delhi University, where she administered her own amateur theatre company of theatre (where she also acted), Nair obtained a scholarship to study Drama at

⁶⁴ The *masala** is a South Asian cooking sauce, made out of many different species to obtain a hot and spicy flavour. Beyond this, and within the Hindi Popular Cinema commercial market, a Masala is a type of commercial film in Hindi which combines long and spectacular action scenes with comedy moments and a love story.

University of Harvard and learned a new way of directing and performing theatre from British director Peter Brook and his disciples (2011: 3'40''). This experience was "an opening of horizons" that let Mira Nair realise that there were two kinds of theatre: one that was kind "too conventional" as opposed to other that gathered "the bustle of the Indian streets stages, so [she] soon turned [herself] to cinema, and it empowered [her]" (Nair 26, 48).

After shooting four documentaries⁶⁵ about social inequalities in India, she co-wrote with Harvard College Indian friend the screenplay writer Sooni Taraporevala⁶⁶ the draft of *Salaam Bombay* (1988). The resultant project met a tremendous international success (Cannes Film festival's 1989 Palme d'Or and nominations for Best Foreign Feature at the 1989 Oscars and BAFTAs). Later, she directed *Mississippi Masala* (1990), a film that illustrated the reality of the South Asians in the diaspora and its intermingling in the 1990s US society. At a personal level, Nair met a South African Indian professor during the shooting, married him and established their home in South Africa.

Following the economic and critical success of *Mississippi Masala*, Nair founded her own producing company, Mirabai Films, a very remarkable fact that, as already explained with Chadha's establishment of Umbi Films, proved that, in the early 1990s, immigrant women were starting to subvert the previous limiting economic and creative structures. Nair's next features continued dealing with the themes of displaced people (*The Perez Family*, 1995, and *My Own Country*, 1998) and the social inequalities applied to race,

⁶⁵ *Jama Masjid Street Journal* (1979), *So Far from India* (1983), *India Cabaret* (1985) and *Children of a Desire Sex* (1987). The Criterion Collection DVD edition of *Monsoon Wedding*, published in October 2009 in the US offers, for the first time, the opportunity to watch these documentaries with an explanatory introduction by Mira Nair.

⁶⁶ Sooni Taraporevala (born in 1957), a Parsi Zoroastrian, is a screenwriter, photographer and cinema director who has written the screenplays for Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay*, *Mississippi Masala*, and *The Namesake* after they both studied together at Harvard. As previously referred she also wrote the screenplay adaptation of Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey*, directed by Sturla Gunnarsson in 1998. Nowadays, Taraporevala has returned to India, from where she leads an active free lance journalist activity, besides having directed the film *Little Zizou* (2007), a story about a Zoroastrian boy in Mumbai.

class and gender (*Kamasutra: A Tale of Love*, 1996, and *The Laughing Club of India*, 1999). In my opinion, these four features are illustrative of Nair's personal commitment to show and understand the individual and social cultural identity of the people of her times. As she states: "[My] cinema is about that constant journey and the involved quests to understand identity, especially people affected my deep imposed insecurity" (Nair qtd. in Nuir 241). After these films, Mira Nair would astonish the world with the diasporic Punjabi⁶⁷ wedding portrayed in *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), the film that won Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 2001. Furthermore, in 2006⁶⁸, she would undertake the cinematographic adaptation of the novel *The Namesake* (2003), written by her Bengali American friend Jhumpa Lahiri and winner of the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for *The Interpreter of Maladies* (2000).

In her personal reading of *The Namesake*, Nair would focus more on the individual process of questioning that, as a consequence of the comings and goings of the Indian diaspora, Ashima faces prior to her coming to terms with her position as an Indian mother in the diaspora and her true name which, translated from Punjabi, means *without borders*. Later, she would take on international productions such as *Vanity Fair* (2004), *Amelia* (2009) and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2012) with which Nair would portray the

⁶⁷ In the Director's Commentary for *Monsoon Wedding* (both Standard and Criterion Collection DVD editions), Nair reinforces the idea that she wants to shoot a Punjabi and not an Indian wedding. She claims that in the Punjab, the marriage ceremonies clearly illustrate that Indian weddings do not merely follow Hindu standards but that, as in the Punjabi regions, they juxtapose all the millenary traditions that have been present in the Subcontinent.

⁶⁸ In between, Mira directed *Hysterical Blindness* (2002), re-took her favourite English novel, *Vanity Fair* (2004) and contributed with the segment "India" (about a Muslim charged of terrorist right after the terrorist attacks at 9/11th) to *11' 09'' 01 September 11* (2002). Also, she would receive the offer to direct *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, although she turned it down because she was gathering the financial support around her screenplay for Athol Fugard's novel *Tsotsi* (2004), something that she failed to do. Nevertheless, the novel which would then become the winner of the Oscar for Best Foreign Feature in the 2006 Awards Gavin Hood's *Tsotsi* (2006).

materialist and hypocritical society if the Victorian times in the former and the chauvinist and racist society of the US in the last two ones⁶⁹.

At the same time, Nair would institute two social projects. On the one hand, she created Maisha (which means *life* in Swahili), based in Kampala (Uganda), an organization that supports visionary screenwriters and directors in East Africa and South Asia under the slogan, coined by Mira Nair, “if we don’t tell our stories, no one will” (Nair 1997). Maisha opened its first laboratory in Kampala (Uganda) in 2004 and it now agglutinates different offices in Rwanda, Kenya and Tanzania, where the organisation promotes courses on screenplay writing, lighting and production. On the other, she started, back in the times of the production of *Salaam Bombay* in 1988, an educational campaign in India, the Salaam Baalak Trust which, under the slogan *Salute the spirit of survival*, aimed at fostering awareness about AIDS and its prevention. She would direct the short film *Migration* (2007) to promote a short movie contest in which cameras would be lent to the homeless people of Mumbai so that they could record their own stories about AIDS. Clearly inspired by her experience shooting *Salaam Bombay* (1988), the project grants education to the street children of both Mumbai and Delhi, focusing on programs for AIDS prevention.

In addition, it can be stated that Mira Nair confronts the still existent subaltern position of women in all her films. For instance, *Kamasutra*’s (1996) main characters Maya and Tara are sketched to challenge their positions as victimised women by both the society and the men around them. In this sense, it can be said that other films directed by Nair like *Mississippi Masala* (1991), *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) or *The Namesake* (2006) also present female characters who undertake an illuminating self-discovery of their femininity and their subaltern position while they recognise the subversive commitment that is granted from

⁶⁹ Besides, she has directed segments in collaborative projects such as 8 (2008) which advocated a fight against poverty and social lack of awareness and *Words with Gods* (2014), about the eight most prominent religious trends (including atheism).

their position as women in the diaspora. As to illustrate this process of social and individual acknowledgement, Ashima, the already mentioned character in *The Namesake*, accepts her life as an Indian immigrant and discovers her womanhood both in America and India while renegotiating herself as a *woman of the world*, a woman without imposed frontiers. In other words, Nair's interest can be summarised as that of telling, presenting and posing the diasporic paradox as both a woman of the world and an Indian woman of the world. Here, I believe that all her films involve a direct confrontation against ignorance, fear and lack of personal questioning.

To sum up, I would like to point out how, as inhabitants of the world, Mira Nair meets Gurinder Chadha and Gurinder Chadha meets Mira Nair in the re-thinking of the social formulation provided by their experiences of diaspora. Chadha and Nair are bound by age and Indian experiences of diaspora in East Africa, the US and the UK. So, their personal cartographies of diaspora juxtapose their different knowledge of *South Asianness* and *Indianness* to their social and cinematographic experiences. As a result, the polyhedral Indian diversity talks back to previously imposed discourses of British Imperialism and colonialism, both placing their true multiple integration and displacing the possible adaptation of ever-existing schemes of oppression, racism and sexism.

Besides, as women of the world, Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair speak from and about the cultural and gender boundaries existent in our current world, recognising the Indian diversity and the complexity of their female experience in the practice of what Gloria Anzaldúa called "the dwelling on the borderlands" (4). Thence, both filmmakers represent the reality and the conflicts of the coexistence of cultures through a cinema that *shows* the possibility of cultural coexistence, while denouncing what African American feminist writer bell hooks calls the "inherent female relation to power and domination . . .

to expand our awareness of sex, race, and class as interlocking systems of domination” (1981: 25).

In this sense, both Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair’s cinema fulfil a double endeavour that challenges those structures that Canadian ecofeminist writer Karen Warren calls the “isms of domination” (1). On the one hand, they gather the peculiarities of the historical diversity of the Indian Palimpsest and its reception and conceptualisation in the diaspora. On the other, Chadha and Nair’s films confront the situation of women in the diaspora in an intercultural society while they enhance a postcolonial and feminist evaluation about our contemporary world⁷⁰. Thence, Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair present their female characters as mediators between the colonial and the postcolonial world, representatives of a process of individual transformation within their social and cultural hybridisation. Accordingly, Chadha and Nair’s female characters are agents who denounce the current inequalities in the global world as well as negotiators of race and gender inequalities beyond any dogmatic cultural representation.

Both Nair and Chadha are illustrators of the social confrontations unveiled by diaspora as well as locators of the surviving subaltern position of women in the present diversity of cultures. It is in this sense that Chapter II of this dissertation aims at promoting the relevance of a convergent study of their diasporic selected filmography as the background analysis from which to evaluate the theoretical concepts of diaspora, hybridity and the recurrence of a particular cinema that I will define as hybrid cinema. So, it is now my intention to define and explain the cultural relevance and theoretical particularities of

⁷⁰ Throughout the whole dissertation, by *feminist* I understand the conscientious fight (artistic, political, social and individual, for I think all four are always intertwined) which aims at establishing equality as the basis for any relationship between men and women. In other words, I agree with the following definition by Celia Varcárcel: “[Feminist] refers to that political tradition that aims at attaining an egalitarian and democratic society where no human being is excluded due to any condition” (123, my translation). Also, in the same line of thought, bell hooks points out that “feminism, as liberation struggle, must exist apart from and as a part of the larger struggle to eradicate domination in all forms.” (1989: 22).

Nair and Chadha's cinematographic representation of the diasporic *South Asias* within those postcolonial and gender challenges that still need to be faced by us all citizens of the world.

CHAPTER II

DIASPORA, HYBRID CINEMAS AND GENDER REPRESENTATIONS

A THEORETICAL APPROACH

You've crossed over.
And all around you space. Alone.
With Nothingness. (Anzaldúa 165)

Beginnings and endings may be the sustaining myths of the middle years, but in the *fin de siècle*, we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce *complex figures of difference and identity*, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion . . . The *beyond* is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving venue of the past; . . . beyond signifies spatial distance, marks progress, promises the future; but our intimations of exceeding the barrier or boundary – the very act of going beyond – are unknowable, unrepresentable, without a return to the “present” which, in the process of repetition, becomes disjunct and displaces. (Bhabha 1994: 1, my emphasis)

We all now live within a far-reaching debate of cultural interplay and, as a result, our identities (both as individual and social entities) become enriched by a process of constant change and transformation, a consequence of the continuous sociological, political and artistic negotiation among cultures. As a result, if as Stuart Hall proclaims that “things are related as much by their differences as through their similarities” (1980: 328), the cultural and social encounter that characterises the twenty-first century reveals that we all cohabit in a heterogeneous world, defined by the postcolonial essence of terms such as *diaspora* or *hybridity*. In this sense, cinema and filmmakers like Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair represent the diversity and complexity implicit in today’s convergence of cultures.

Consequently, this chapter aims at providing a theoretical definition about *diaspora* as an abstract space where the meeting of cultures takes place; *hybrid identities* and *hybrid cinemas* as the subsequent construction of that intercultural contact; and a *feminist evaluation* from which confront the structures and representations of gender discrimination

existent in the two previous contexts of diaspora space¹ and hybrid cinemas. In this sense, the chapter develops a postcolonial theoretical approach which will always try to take into account what Carol Boyce Davies defines as the core of postcolonial art, “that of always being transformational, oppositional and revolutionary” (74). Thence, I intend to apply the contemporary relevance of the former theoretical conceptualisation to the context of the South Asian diaspora in the UK and the US, as portrayed in the selected case-study films by Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair.

I will firstly offer a definition of diaspora as the collective space where the many South Asian diasporas discussed in Chapter I congregate. Here, I will promote Avtar Brah²'s conception of the diaspora space as the abstract space of convergence between “specificities” (economic, political, cultural variables) and “modalities” (such as gender, race, class and religion) where the hybridity of cultures is produced (1996: 24-5). It is from this perspective that I will illustrate how the transcultural contact performed at this diaspora space leads to the construction of a hybrid identity that articulates the contemporary diversity of cultures beyond static discourses such as those of multiculturalism³. The distinctive particularities of the post-Partition (1947-) South Asian diaspora will then prove the relevance of the discourse.

¹Hence, I take this term from Avtar Brah's concept “The Diaspora Space” (1996: 34) that will be explained in the upcoming section. I have got rid of the capital letters as the term has been extensively used in the same sense as *hybridity* or *mestizaje* and they are used without being capitalised.

² Avtar Brah is an East African Indian professor who emigrated from Uganda to London (UK) in her mid-teens. Today she is a professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Birbeck University (London, UK) where she develops different research projects concerned with the Indian diaspora. Her book *Cartographies of Diaspora. Contesting Identities* (1996) is a constant inspiration in both my academic research and personal life.

³ The term multiculturalism unveils a restrictive acknowledgement of the diversity of cultures. Besides, it does not provide a space to study the discriminatory and racist conflicts that emerge in the vertical relationship of cultures promoted by the multicultural speech. Accordingly, Mbye Cham coined the term “postmulticultural” (10) as a counter-concept that recognised the postcolonial heterogeneity of cultures. In this sense, multiculturalism has been criticised since the 1980s by critics such as Stone, Brittan & Maynard, Brah & Mihas and Troyna & Williams for having ignored the recognition of the on-going dynamic cultural cross-fertilisation. The attack continued along the 1990s in the line summarised by Avtar Brah's following statement: “Multiculturalism simply recognised a mere pluralism which ignored the cultural difference” (1996: 124). Nowadays, Indian scholars such as Gayatri Ch. Spivak and Arjun Appadurai believe that multiculturalism enhances, as previously said, structures of vertical racism instead of horizontal connivance.

Secondly, I will propose the definition of *hybrid cinemas* as expressive of the respective trajectories of cinema that, in the diaspora space, depict hybrid cultures and hybrid identities. I therefore will go through the definitions of postcolonial film that have already been coined, pointing at their advantages and disadvantages in order to present hybrid cinemas as the theoretical category with which truly embrace the hybrid identities produced in the diaspora space as well as the subversive discussion inherent to postcolonialism. At this juncture, I will confirm the relevance of hybrid cinemas in the reality of the post-Partition South Asian diaspora, pointing at how Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair's films stand as true expressions of hybrid cinemas and so they describe the transcultural flux of identities ignored by preceding definitions.

Thirdly, I intend to acknowledge the subaltern position of the postcolonial woman in the diaspora space. Therefore, I will provide a general approach to the location of the postcolonial woman as a figure interwoven in what bell hooks called "the interlocking systems of domination—sex, race, class" (1981: 21) as well as in the prejudices and inequalities within the industry of cinema. Thus, it is my purpose to open a reflection on the gender discrimination that still pervades the twenty-first century. With this purpose in mind, I will later analyse, in Chapter IV, Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair's selected films as cinematographic representations of the gender conflicts faced by the South Asian diasporic woman which, within the diaspora space, are extensible to all the different spheres of the transnational world we all live in.

1- DIASPORA: A THEORETICAL CONTEXTUALISATION

The migratory movements of people and the corresponding (dis)location of the themes of belonging, identity and national citizenship in the cultural discourse define our contemporary society. Thence, diasporas or exiles, as broad general terms, are normally interwoven on media communication obviating the recurrent human necessities of the displaced person. Likewise, as the movement of people increases, the feeling of belonging to a place becomes a pressing need. This is especially the case in contemporary society, where we all have the potential to become a migrant.

The coexistence of new and complex identities consequently requires a theoretical definition that helps analyse the contact among the many different cultures in motion, a contact revealed as a multisided composite in the context of the South Asian Subcontinent. It is from this conjectural crossroads that the present section categorises diaspora within a threefold purpose. Firstly, it aims at providing a general notion of diaspora as *diaspora space*, where the union of cultural, political and economic factors is performed as a postcolonial outcome. Secondly, it considers the notion that the contacts and conflicts⁴ produced by the coincidence of diasporic people unleash a hybrid culture which, in the context of identity making, proves that *global* and *globalisation* mean connivance of cultural heterogeneity. Thirdly, it confirms that the post-Partition Indian diaspora in the UK

⁴ Conflict is then understood following David Wilkinson's line of thought. In his article "Central Civilization", he proposes that "conflict should be systematically treated, when found, as associative, . . . conflict as a form of association; internally connected, heterogeneous, divided" (49, 72). Conflict is therefore a consequence of the multiaxial contact enhanced by the diasporic movement of peoples, the interaction of cultures and the resultant diaspora space.

and the US illustrates the convergence of hybrid identities and cultural differences in the diaspora space.

To start with, I believe that diaspora, as a theoretical term, is the top of an iceberg that usually only addresses the arrival and departure of people linked to migration, ignoring the undergoing processes of cultural coexistence and mutual influence. The Greek etymology of the word would therefore denote the peak of the iceberg, since *dia* means “through” and *sperein* “to scatter”. It was in this sense that the first use of the term diaspora referred to the scatterings of people of the first Jewish diaspora (1st century AD). Here, South African Emeritus Professor of Development Studies and former Director of the International Migration Institute at University of Oxford Robin Cohen recognises that the common features shared by any contemporary diaspora with the ancient Jewish diaspora point at ethnographic consequences such as “an expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or the further colonial ambitions”, “a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its locations, history and achievements” or “an idealization of the putative ancestral home, and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity” (26). Nevertheless, Cohen acquaints the submerged part of the iceberg when he points out that “diaspora unveils a hidden possibility of a distinctive creative [*sic*] which enriches life in host countries with, among all cultural grandiosities, a tolerance for pluralism” (26). It is here that the underwater interstice of diaspora is revealed as a powerful process of identity making, determined by cultural contact and enriching conflict.

Therefore, diaspora involves a process of transformation that goes beyond the dispersal of peoples. Diaspora becomes a multiple passage, what Paul Gilroy defines as the collision between “roots and routes” (2000: 34), the dilemma shared between the “locations of residence” and the “locations of the belonging” (2000: 36) which creates a particular

constant reformulation. This space of convergence is what Steven Vertoveck calls “the diasporic mode of cultural production” (2000: 199; 2009: 24). Here, diaspora enhances the creation of a diasporic identity which, as Sujeta Moorti asserts, “is always being reconstituted, always in the making” (372). Diaspora consequently contains a complex system of many variables which, in a permanent relationship of interference, has produced a large body of critical writing since the 1990s⁵. Nevertheless, I believe that it is Avtar Brah’s “The Diaspora Space” (1996: 34) the term which best gathers the particularities of the diasporic intricacy.

In my own words, diaspora space is the abstract space where cultures and identities are situated in the context of border meddling, where cultures share a process of mutual, symbiotic influence. It is in this abstract *space* that *modalities* and *specificities* encounter each other and produce (and reproduce) diasporic identities. Thence, diaspora is a conceptual, agglutinating site of immanence defined by Brah as follows:

[The] concept of diaspora should be understood as an ensemble of investigative technologies for genealogical analysis of the relationality within and between different diasporic formations. The potential usefulness of the concept of the diaspora today rests largely upon the degree to which it can deal with the problematics of the late 20th century transnational movements of people, capital, commodities, technologies, information and cultural forms. I have also suggested that the concept

⁵ The academic scholarship about diaspora is very extensive and interdisciplinary. It involves geographical, anthropological, literary, cinematographic or socio-political analysis. Although this dissertation does not have the space to take into account all the methodological conceptualisations, I think that it is necessary to highlight the theoretical nuances brought out by some critics whose personal background and critical relevance are key points in the emergent field of the South Asian Diaspora Studies. In this sense, Virinider S Kalra et al. state that diaspora plays a decisive role in “the globalizing and transnational ravages of local and contemporary capitalism” (27). In the same line, Samir Dyal remarks that diaspora should embrace the “definitive critical perspective for any transnational and postcolonial debate” (46); Iqbal Mahmood links diaspora with a process of “quest and understanding of the collective identities of any social community” (20); J. T. Shuval states that diaspora is “a social construct founded on feeling, consciousness, memory, mythology, history, narratives, group identity, longing dreams and other virtual elements” (43); and Arjun Appadurai and Carol A. Breckenbridge state that diaspora always reveals a “collective memory in the making, whose archaeology is always fractured” (qtd. in Vertoveck 1999: 454). At this point, Vijay Mishra’s poetical definition is very relevant, as he defines diaspora as a “fossilised fragment of an original nation that seeks a new renewal” (2001: 39). Therefore, definitions about diaspora should always regard a geographical contextualisation, acknowledge the cultural differentiation and recognise new social categorisations. All of these spheres are encompassed by Brah’s concept of diaspora space.

of 'diaspora' articulates with that of 'border'- the latter is concerned with the construction and metaphorisation of territorial, political, cultural, economic and psychic borders. In these various forms, borders are social constructions with everyday effects in real lives. I have argued that the concepts of 'diaspora', 'border' and the 'politics of location' are immanent. I define this site of immanence as *Diaspora Space*. (1996: 241, my emphasis)

Diaspora space thence addresses the distinctiveness of both the top and underwater figurative iceberg. Diaspora also unveils a multiple journey beyond spatial terms, a composite of identities, differences and border-crossings which are reciprocally self-constituting. In this sense, culture in the diaspora space must be understood in reference to what James Clifford defines as "a site of travel" (199), pointing at the constant interconnection Annia Loomba categorises as "the intersection of the multiple histories and stories of postcolonialism and colonialism" (183). For this reason, diaspora space is a collaborative cartography for our contemporary age, the system framing what Bhabha defines as the "moment of transit where space and time produce complex figures . . . reminding us that history is happening" (1994: 1, 25). It is at this place that the cultural intercourse that takes place in the diaspora space unveils the interconnection of the diverse experiences that defines culture as a complex hybridised phenomenon.

Accordingly, diaspora space is a global contact zone⁶ where hybrid identities are produced. And it is global because we all live in a world where globalisation turns to be an

⁶ Mary Louise J. Pratt, in her book *Imperial Eyes*, defines contact zone as follows:

[The] space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict. I borrow the term 'contact' here from its usage in linguistics, where the term contact language refers to improvised languages that develop among speakers of different native languages who need to communicate with each other consistently, usually in the context of trade contact zone is an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal co-presence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctions, and whose trajectories now intersect. (6)

In other words, the concept of contact becomes pretty much illustrative of Bhabha's Third Space, which he defines as "the middle passage of contemporary culture where culture eludes the politics of polarity" (1994: 38).

unstoppable process that articulates the heterogeneity resolved by the contact of cultures. Thence, globalisation is considered far from the homogenising and totalitarian capitalist interpretation. In this view, Indian anthropologist Arjun Appadurai also recognises that globalisation is a unifying force rather than a limiting and simplistic description. In his own words:

[Globalisation] has shrunk the distance between elites, shifted key relations between producers and consumers, broken many links between temporary locales and imaginary national attachments, and such has been seen as a homogenizing force where cultures are subsumed by 'Americanization' or 'McDonaldization'. However, this definition is limiting and simplistic. Rather, it needs to be seen as a series of complex, overlapping, disjunctive, global cultural flows of people, information, finance and ideology. (1996: 9)

It was also in this line of thought that Gayatri Ch. Spivak interpreted the concept of globalisation in her pioneering article "Teaching for the Times" (1992). In this essay, she proclaimed that the teaching of the "multicultural doctrine" (10) was one of the failures of undergraduate academic programs. Instead, she proposed that university academia should promote studies much more based on "the access to universal" (12), later to be followed by postgraduate programs based on "the Global Field" which would assure "a transnational literacy" (14) to which the slogan "think globally, act locally" was not a bad start" (15). In other words, only within the terms of the global coexistence can the hybridity of cultures produced in the diaspora space be addressed.

It is then by the recognition of these resultant hybrid identities that the heterogeneity of the diaspora space embraces its transcultural scope, assuring the intermingling cultural influence created. In this sense, diaspora space is a universal sign that articulates cultural differences beyond a mere restrictive ethnic, multicultural display of isolated idiosyncrasies. In other words, diaspora space is the place at which hybridity is performed,

where hybridity stands back for its biological etymology, indicating “the cross-breeding of variables from different species” (Britannica 716). A hybrid society is subsequently a valid formulation to address our present day civilization, following Ania Loomba’s premise of “[the world] . . . as an amalgam, not a unitary whole” (4). Therefore, it is by acknowledging the hybridity of cultures and the existence of hybrid identities that the contemporary cultural ambivalence can be regarded within the contradictory and instable, yet enriching, *underwater* dynamics of the diaspora.

In this sense, if Brah’s diaspora space is a “composite formation” (1996: 196), hybridity is the composed result. Respectively Ella Shohat remarks: “[Hybridity] assures the negotiation of the multiplicity of identities and subject positioning which result from displacements, immigration and exiles without policing the borders of identity along essentialist and originary lines . . . hybridity guarantees the non-universalising, neo-colonial perspectives” (329). In other words, the identification of hybrid identities definitely displaces homogenising discourses, revealing a subversive recognition of the term which can be traced back up to the 15th century *mestizaje* that made the Spanish Empire in America tremble down.

Similarly, besides challenging preceding social and cultural hierarchical categorisations, hybridity becomes a contesting instrument of contestation against the proliferation of vertical racism structures, such as the previously criticised discourse of multiculturalism or the appearance of the term *clash of civilisations*⁷ in the late 1990s.

⁷ The discourse of the clash of civilisation was firstly coined by Samuel P. Huntington (1936-2008) in his articles for the *Foreign Affairs Magazine* and that would later be gathered by the author in *The Clash of Civilisations and the New World Order* (1998). In this book, Huntington asserts, for instance, that “the world politics is entering a new phase, in which the great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of international conflict will be cultural consequences of lack of dual division First/Third World and Secular/Religious” (33). In a posterior publication, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (2004), Huntington pointed out at the necessity of splitting American society into “pure Americans and Latinos to avoid and canalize the clash of cultures” (45). In my opinion, the discourse of the clash of civilisations is pejoratively essentialist and involves a mere distinction between rich and poor countries based

Avtar Brah corroborates this statement when she remarks that “multiculturalism ignores the intersectional which appears in hybridity and which the concept of diaspora space interrogates” (1996: 214). Hybridity therefore stands as the counter-definition of culture demanded by the diaspora space and its transnational identities.

At this juncture, not only does hybridity ensure the gathering of the contradictions and fragmentations of the contemporary cultural intercourse but also it promotes the creation of a space for cultural, economic and political subversion. In this line of thought, Bhabha recognises hybridity as a space for “transgression, a revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory effects” (1994: 34), which also evokes what Virinder S. Kalra et al. call “the all manners of creative engagements in cultural exchange promoted by hybridisation” (73). Likewise, hybridity is a powerful concept that defies the following accusations made by Paul Gilroy: “I try not to use the word hybrid; . . . cultural production is not like mixing cocktails, because hybridity, in itself, means and challenges all sorts of things to do beyond the combination of cultures in the moment of cultural exchange” (1993: 54-5). Instead, hybridity ensures a political rebellion and a social transgression against imperialistic and discriminatory discourses.

on the traditional colonial schemes of power (illustrated in the trope East versus West). The academic discourse which follows Huntington's line of thought is clearly attacked by Indian Partha Chatterjee in *The Nation and its Fragments* (1993); *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (1986) and *The Politics of the Governed* (2004) as well as by Edward W. Said in his article “The Clash of Ignorance” (2001). Guy Ankerl's *Coexisting Contemporary Civilizations: Arabo-Muslim, Bharati, Chinese, and Western* (2000) also stands on Chatterjee's side, attacking Huntington's discourse point by point. Both authors praise the current necessity of the articulation of a hybrid culture as the only guarantee to assure the coexistence of cultural and social variables. Susan Stanford Friedman in her recent article “The ‘New Migration’: Clashes, Connections, and Diasporic Women's Writings” (2009) summarises this attack against Huntington's discourse and remarks that “[Huntington's discourse] has the purist's paranoia about the pollution of too much mixing, about the invasion of outsiders into home turf to become the threat within the heart of the West – in Europe, from Muslim migrants; in the US primarily from Hispanic immigrants” (7). Moreover, former president of Iran Mohammad Khatami (now banned from media mention in Iran due to his promotion of freedom of expression and international cooperation of Iran) fostered the creation of the year for the *Dialogue Among Civilisations* within the United Nations in 2001 to publically fight against Huntington's ideas. Furthermore, I consider that essentialist dividing discourses (such as Huntington's) impose borders as separating categories are doomed to be derogated because, as Ursula Biemann points out, “in the border areas, everyone is being transformed into a transnational subject; . . . in the border, identities are constantly forming and collapsing, confronting and transgressing (109). I would quote Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*, and praise that we all are creatures of the border, “border dwellers” (79) as she states.

Hybridity responds to what Ashcroft et al. call the “postcolonial process of resistance and reconstruction” (2000: 2), in the same line as Indian anthropologist Akhil Gupta states that “the recognition of cultural hybridity gives voice to the ever-present subaltern struggle” (qtd. in Spivak 1995b: 76). Thus, diaspora space produces hybrid identities that combine identifying traces from the past as well as from the emergent cultural components of the present-future moment. This is the suggestion of a heterogenous negotiation of cultures proposed by Indian American psychologist Sunil Bhati’s in *American Karma: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Indian Diaspora* (2007), a compendium of the problems experienced by the South Asian Diaspora in the US, out of which he concludes observing how “the hybridity perspective helps us understand how immigrants living in postcolonial and diasporic locations are negotiating and reconciling conflicting histories and incompatible subject positions” (233). Accordingly, I believe that only by acknowledging the hybrid identities formed in the South Asian diaspora space can characters like Ashima in Mira Nair’s *The Namesake* (2006) or Asha in Gurinder Chadha’s *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) be understood.

Thereby, the concept of diaspora space perfectly illustrates both the coexistence of many cultural layers and influences shared by the Indian Palimpsest and the South Asian diaspora. It is then by recognising the hybridity of the South Asian Diaspora that the “diasporic Indian plurality” (Raghuram & Kumar Sahoo 1) and the “complex identifications from where the Indian diaspora emerges” (Moorti 358) can be materialised, hence fighting West’s neo-colonial and neo-*Orientalist* discourses as well as Indian totalitarian discourses such as *Hindutva**. Nobel Laureate Indian writer in Bengali language Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) already pointed at the hybridity contained in the Sub-Continent (at his time under British imperial control) and he compared South Asia with a

banyan tree⁸, as its prominent roots expand both horizontally and vertically, reproducing through the dissemination of its seeds by birds. Likewise, he wrote:

[To] study a banyan tree, you must not only know its main item in its own soil, but also must trace the growth of its greatness in the further soil, for then you can know the true nature of its vitality the civilisation of India, like the banyan tree, has shed its beneficent shade away from its birthplace, by spreading abroad. (qtd. in Tinker iii)

Hugh Tinker re-appropriates the image to illustrate the hybrid identity produced in the South Asian diaspora, both South Asian and from overseas, and so he remarks:

The banyan tree has thrust down roots in soil which is stony, sandy, marshy - and has somehow drawn sustenance from diverse unpromising conditions. Yet the banyan tree itself has changed; its similarity to the original growth is still there, but it has changed in response to its different environment. (19)

Thence, the South Asian diaspora produces hybrid identities both as an outcome of the historical South Asian process of *becoming* already explained in Chapter I as well as the contact and articulation of cultural differences found in the diaspora space.

Consequently, only by considering the cultural heterogeneity inherent to living in the border interference of the global diaspora space can the South Asian hybrid identities be comprehended. In accordance, the ambivalence of the South Asian borders constitutes another insuperable metaphor of the existent meddling among territorial and mental boundaries, where the existence of hybrid identities becomes, as Christiane Brosius and Nicolas Yazgi assert, “a contesting experience that requires an *artistic representation*” (356, my emphasis). Here, the experience of filmmaking emerges as a very illustrative

⁸The banyan tree is one of the most typical trees in the Subcontinent. Its Gujarati name (from the Western region of Gujarat) means *merchant* because of its form of reproduction. Tagore India as a banyan tree to illustrate the many vertical roots contained in the Subcontinent and the necessity of recognising their own particularities of difference horizontally spread. There are three reproductions of the banyan tree in the image number 6 and image number 7 enclosed in the *Appendix of Images*.

image of the dynamics interwoven in the creative production, a perfect paradigm from where to study *the artistic representation* produced from and about the diaspora space. It is from this point that next section unveils, bearing in mind Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair's previously studied biographies of diaspora as illustrators of the true nature of the hybridity of cultures and the subsequent subversive nature of their hybrid cinemas.

2- POSTCOLONIAL FILM THEORY AND HYBRID CINEMAS: AN OVERVIEW

Cinema, as well as the experience of filmmaking, is a complex system of at least, cultural, social, political and economic variables. In this sense, US Professor of Cinema and African Literature Kenneth W. Harrow argues that the contemporary discussion of film should always consider “issues of spectatorship, national identity, ethnography, patriarchy, gender roles and the creation of key film industries” (ix). I believe that his words tinge the all-embracing definition provided by Spanish director Carlos Saura, “cinema is a *total* concept” (84, my emphasis). The *totality* of film then does not only refer to the twofold cultural representation provided by the art of filmmaking (the voice and the vision of both the creator and the depicted reality) but to the *modalities* and *specificities*, to continue using Avtar Brah's words, that are inherent to cinema. At this juncture, the role played by film culture in the diaspora space is crucial, as Indian writer Rajinder Kumar Dudrah asserts:

Cinema represents the fostering alliance of the cultural cross-disciplinary dialogue; . . . the interconnection between cultural flows makes that a collectively important in the film-making process . . . [as well as] the audiences around the globe [that] receive and experience a large, constant, complex and interconnected supply of images from around the globe. (25, 215)

Thence, the uniqueness of cinema is that of the diaspora space, a cultural and social practise enhanced by the dynamics of the global world, where the film production and consumption disseminates around the globe⁹.

Thus, if not only does a film represent the encounter of cultures but also speaks about the circumstances in which a movie is shot, the relevance of filmmaking in the dynamics of the diaspora space interweaves factors that influence the film production (with involved aspects such as economic funding, censorship, advertising campaigns or audience reception). It is from this point that imperialist patrons of dominance come into view, for it cannot be forgotten that diaspora space is imminently a postcolonial outcome settled among old and neo colonial discriminatory relations. Bearing this postcolonial outcome in mind, this section unfurls an overview about Postcolonial Film Theory by analysing the pros and cons of the definitions that have been already given by theorists such as Teshome Gabriel, Hamid Naficy or Jigna Desai.

In this respect, it is my purpose to analyse these concepts in terms of the recognition of the previous hybridity of cultures promoted in the diaspora space. By so doing, I intend to propose the term *hybrid cinemas* as expressive of the hybridity's subversive proclaim because, as Senegalese filmmaker Ousmane Sembene points out, the honest film director always seeks to "denounce what he sees wrong in society" (qtd. in Naficy 2001: 304). That is why I will present hybrid cinemas as the theoretical category which truly embraces the postcolonial cinematographic hybrid identities produced in the diaspora space, overcoming the delimitations provided by previous definitions. Hereby, postcolonial cinema responds to "the transformational, oppositional and revolutionary agenda of postcolonial art" (Boyce

⁹ By using dissemination I am echoing Homi K. Bhabha's article "DissemiNation and the Margins of the Modern Nation", a very inspiring account about the identities created out of the "scatterings and meeting of the people around the world" (1990: 291). This concept also articulated the historical approach to the Subcontinent undertook in Chapter I.

Davies 76) and so the study and production of a postcolonial film always involves an analysis of the forms of dominance that have been perpetuated since colonial times.

To start with, it was from the postcolonial traditional attack against colonial dichotomous relationship centre/periphery and West/East that Ethiopian film theorist Thesome Gabriel first pointed at the existence of a postcolonial film which “stands opposed to imperialism and class oppression in all their ramifications and manifestations” (1979: 2) and which he called “Third Cinema in the Third World” (1979: 1). Gabriel defined this “Third Cinema” as opposed to the dominion of Hollywood standards at those times (late 1970s – early 1980s), praising film directors which promoted “Third World’s contestation” (1979: 4), such as Ousmane Sembene or the early short documentaries¹⁰ by Mira Nair. It is in these terms he defined “Third Cinema”:

Third Cinema is built on the rejection of the concepts and propositions of the traditional image as represented by Hollywood . . . [its aim being] to immerse in the lives and struggles of people of the Third World: Africa, Asia and Latin America . . . [and] contain – both as representation and as reference – cultural elements with which people can identify, providing the tools with which it can help change the environment. (1979: vii - 9)

Taking into account the temporal reference, I believe that Gabriel’s categorisation aimed at defining postcolonial cinema as the cinema done in the places that did not correspond with North American and European mainstream productions. His “Third Cinema in Third World” was recognised by 1980 critics such as Paul Willemen (in “The Third Cinema Question: Notes and Reflections”, 1989), Ashish Rajadhyaska (in “Debating the Third Cinema”, 1989) and Andres R. Hernández who praised, in his article “Filmmaking and

¹⁰ Gabriel included Nair’s *Jama Masjid Street Journal* (1979), a documentary about the Great Mosque (Jama Masjid) in New Delhi, a length feature by Nair as an attempt to show that India was not an all Hindi/Hindu Republic. Nevertheless, Gabriel also showed acquaintance of other short films that Nair directed while still studying at Harvard and Delhi and that were part of the assigned coursework. *Monsoon Wedding*’s edition for Criterion DVD (2009) includes documentaries and short films such as *Jama Masjid*, *So Far from India* (1983), *Indian Cabaret* (1993) or *The Laughing Club of India* (1999).

Politics" (1984), "the recognition of the cinema produced from and about the Third World countries" (67). Nevertheless, Gabriel's taxonomy somehow should be strictly used in this temporal context because his "Third World", as enunciated in Gabriel's broad "Africa, Asia and Latin America" (1979: vii), sounds excessively *otherising*, and can be understood under the capitalist restriction of great departments stores' *Other Cinemas*¹¹ or definitions such as Alberto Elena's "peripheral cinemas or cinemas of the periphery: Africa, India and the East" (ii). In this sense, I think that the fact of defining filmmakers like Mira Nair or Iranian Abbas Kioristami (as Gabriel does in the 1992 re-edition of his work) as Third Cinemas restricts and simplifies postcolonial filmmaking to a mere process of counter-telling from the Third World, which clearly ignores that they are not only Third World directors but filmmakers of the world.

Therefore, although Gabriel's proposal was of doubtless relevance in the decade of the nineties, it nowadays presents certain inadequacy to categorise films made in the diaspora space, which are not shot according to what he calls the "Third World's still traditional, artisan art of filmmaking" (1979: vii). Obviously, these films share a postcolonial will to subversion, but are not produced in the Third World per se and so cannot be categorised as Third World Films, as Gabriel attempts to blend in when he rewrites his theory and asserts that the Third Cinemas are more "a matter of the ideology espoused and consciousness displayed" (1992: 205). I thence think that Third Cinema still resounds of exotic structures of economic inferiority. Under these terms Paul Willemen also considers that the term Third Cinema "fails to consider filmmakers in the Third Space, those who occupy both an inside and outsider status" (18). Moreover, Simon Featherstone

¹¹ As I could verify, London's most famous department stores such as Harrods, Harvey Nichols, besides popular multinational franchises like Virgin Megastores included Mira Nair's *Mississippi Massala* (1990), *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) and *The Namesake* (2006), together with Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), under the heading *Other Cinemas*.

writes that “Third Cinema was a very practical ideological project and set of analytical tools but now production explores other *tools*” (104-5, my emphasis). In my opinion, these *tools* should take into account the peculiarity of the hybridity of cultures found in the diaspora space and already represented in cinemas produced in the late 1980s which clearly challenged the particularities, needs and struggles of what Gabriel called “developing nations in the Third World” (1992, 12). Films that illustrate this point are John Akomfrah’s *Handsworth Songs* (1986) produced by Black Audio Film Collective, Maureen Blackwood and Isaac Julien’s *Passion of Remembrance* (1986) produced by Sankofa or Stephen Frears’ *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*¹² (1987).

Furthermore, it is on this restricting sense of marginality implicit in Third Cinema that Iranian Hamid Naficy (UCLA disciple of Teshome Gabriel) settles his definition of “accented cinema” (2001: 2). Naficy gathers films like Israeli Amos Gitai’s *Bayit. The House* (1980); Canadian of Armenian descent and Egyptian birth Atom Egoyan’s *Family Viewing* (1987) and *Exotica* (1994), Nair’s *Mississippi Masala* (1991) and Chadha’s *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) as instances of “accented cinema”. In his own words:

[Accented cinema] expresses a particular national culture defined by accented filmmakers who live in various modes of transnational otherness and inscribe and (re)enact in their films the fears, freedoms and possibilities of split subjectivity and multiple identities. . . . The state of being represented as an ‘all-inclusive’ simultaneity and intertextuality, where original cultures are no longer formed but created astride in the interstices of social formations. . . . Accented cinema offers the transitional journey of transnationality with boundless and timelessness depiction of identities. (2001: 3, 18, 271)

¹² Both *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* screenplays were written by BrAsian Hanif Kureishi (son of British mother and Pakistani father). He is the writer of one of the most paradigmatic postcolonial texts, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1991), adapted into a successful television series that, alongside the two previous referred films, and definitely enhanced the visibility of the BrAsian community to develop in the early 1990s. He is currently working on the cinematographic adaptation of Aravind Adiga’s Booker Prize Winner novel *The White Tiger* (2008), settled in contemporary India. Furthermore, I believe that due to his sarcastic writing it is important to note that he was appointed Commander of the British Empire in 2008 to congratulate his cultural contribution to the British Arts.

It is in this interpellation that accented cinema promises, as a cinematographic paradigm, to illustrate the hybridity of cultures produced in the diaspora space that was ignored in Gabriel's taxonomy. However, Naficy obviates the figurative, cinematographic possibility of a hybridised form of postcolonial language that is recognised by prominent postcolonial critics such as Antiguan Jamaica Kincaid or Kenyan Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. Instead, Naficy perpetuates the isolated marginality of the previously referred filmmakers and he argues that "the *accented* emanates not so much from the accented speech of the diegetic characters but from the displacement of the filmmakers and their artisan production modes" (2001: 4). Thence, the promise of articulating the different cultural accents collapses if films like *Gitai* and *Egoyan's* are categorised as accented films only because they do not come from the West (which, according to their place of residence will be a mistake: *Gitai* lives in Los Angeles, California, and Jerusalem, *Egoyan* in New York and Toronto). In my opinion, there is a huge risk of perpetuating the simplistic notion of accent as exotic in Naficy's contextualisation, for he does not refer to the idea of the interpollination of cultures found in the diaspora space in neither of his two most important books *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media and the Politics of Place* (1998) and *An Accented Cinema. Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (2001).

At this point, the definition "transnational cinemas" (i) provided by Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden also fails. They propose the label of transnational cinema as only significant of the internationality of film production in terms of funding, settings or technical and artistic crew. In their own words:

The category of the transnational cinema allows us to recognize the hybridity of much new Hollywood cinema (Eastern martial arts, European auteur cinema, Indian fables...). . . . Transnational names with international recognition such as Almodóvar, Von Trier, Wenders, Sembene and Nair . . . form the global cine-literacy [which] have been created and made necessary by the degree to which capitalism as

the catalytic agent in the expansion of popular culture has determined the visibility of cultural or national insularity. (2)

Despite these revelatory terms, Ezra and Rowden's definition ignores the cultural and artistic transnational product per se. The diasporic imagination and posterior cultural diversity is completely disregarded by a definition that only evaluates cinema from a capitalist point of view. In this sense, as I have previously said, cinema is a complex artistic system which involves different disciplines, but it also has (and should always have) a much more powerful *raison d'être* than money; especially talking about films coming from and dealing with the diaspora space.

Therefore, previous definitions fail to recognise the intercultural dilemmas and the process of identity transformation regarded in the films produced by filmmakers of the diaspora space. In some kind of way, all the considered terms crumble down because they try to present homogenising visions about the cinematographic creation in geographical, artistic and economic terms, obviating the contemporary encounter of cultures and the coexistence of cultural difference that takes place in the diaspora space and that Avtar Brah eloquently defines as follows:

Difference may be constructed as a social relation constructed within systems of power underlying structures of class, racism, gender and sexuality. . . . [Difference] may also be conceptualised as experiential diversity. Here, the focus is on the mean and different ways in which ideological and institutional practises mark our everyday life. These everyday practices are the matrices enmeshed within which our personal and group histories are made and remade. But we need to make a distinction between difference as the marker of the distinctiveness of our collective histories and difference as personal experience, codified in individual's biography. . . . [Symbols] of cultural difference may also be mobilised by subordinated peoples as a means of consolidating a political challenge. (1996: 88-91)

Only by these means can, for instance, the particularities of the South Asian diaspora be unveiled. Accordingly, how could the postcolonial experiences of diaspora in Gurinder Chadha's filmmaking be simply classified as Third Cinema representations? Is Ashima's

inner quest in Mira Nair's *The Namesake* (2006) to be recognised merely by her accent? Are the stories of *Mississippi Masala* (1991) or *Bend It like Beckham* (2002), as Alberto Elena's asserts in his *Peripheral Cinemas (Los cines periféricos: África, Oriente Medio e India)*, "simple stories of India adjustment" (26)?

It is then at this controversial point that I consider that there should be a new theoretical discourse that would integrate the local peculiarities of a particular postcolonial cinema (as, for example, the case of the South Asian Subcontinent and its post-Partition diasporic context) into the transnational context¹³. Here, I believe that the term *hybrid cinemas*, as it will be later introduced, guarantees the no prevalence of a particular differential discourse but the connivance of the many variable interwoven in the diaspora space. Therefore, as this dissertation is framed in the context of the South Asian diaspora I believe that I should provide a brief account about the arrival and departure of cinema in the Subcontinent, as the paradigm to analyse the emerging particularities of the postcolonial local, yet global importance of a hybrid film in relation to the South Asian diasporic peculiarities.

To begin with, it was the British colonial intervention which first took cinema into British India. Maurice Sestier, a British entrepreneur on a business trip to Australia, formerly brought the cinematographer to the Subcontinent in 1896. He taxed cinema as an object of luxury to warrant his economic retirement. Nevertheless, the arrival of Soviet propagandistic¹⁴ cinema and documentaries in the Subcontinent, alongside the progress of

¹³ Transnational is understood here following Steven Vertoveck's line of thought. He defines transnational as "the multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across borders of nation-states, . . . [therefore sustaining] cross-border relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations and social formations spanning nation states as parallels to the growth of social interest in globalization over the same period" (2009: 2-4).

¹⁴ The Soviet political influence spread, as Herman Kulke (224) and Henry Stein (121) recognise, through the Sub-Continent from 1939 onwards. Its aim was to foster an Indian revolution against the British recruitment/indenture of Indian civilians for the WWII. These films would focus on the teaching of Marxism precepts of social equality (therefore attacking the varnas-based social stratification by British and *Hindutva**)

the Progressive Writer's Association¹⁵ and the Indian People's Theatre Association¹⁶, would make cinema emerge as a very successful enterprise, despite the fact that, as Alberto Elena points out in *Los Cines Periféricos* (1999), the market in the South Asian Subcontinent could barely fight against the influence and low production costs of Hollywood¹⁷.

The British colonial administration then would realise about cinema's indoctrinating power and promoted, through the creation in 1940 of the British Film Advisory Board¹⁸ in India¹⁹, what Srirupa Roy calls "a vertical artistic British dominance which would soon

political power) with the displaying of social documentaries that highlighted the cruelty of the British-American cooperation against the USSR.

¹⁵ The Progressive Writers' Movement, constituted in London in 1936 and in Calcutta in 1937, gathered progressive left writers from the Subcontinent, together with anti-British voices, to attack the Raj and support the equality all through the Subcontinent. They would praise the use of Urdu (attacked by the British Ministry for Foreign Education) and enhance an intellectual alliance with the USSR (Union of Socialist Soviet Republics).

¹⁶ The Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), founded in 1942, right under the influence of the WWII and the upcoming 1943's Bengal Famine. Through the representation of plays such as *Nabana (Harvest)* (1943), based on popular Bengali folklore, the group tried to explain to the Indians the British repression and the Indian inability to respond. The influence of the group in popular dancing, traditional music and cinema of the times is said to be of immense value to the arts scene both in India and its diaspora. Also, the IPTA is said to be the strongest influence on the visual and singing culture of the popular Hindi films (later to be recognised as Bollywood films) and the South Asian performing arts. For instance, Mira Nair joined IPTA during her college years and learned about South Asian performing arts tradition during years (Nair 2007c). For further academic researches in this topic, I would recommend the following works: Farley P. Richmond's *Indian Theatre: Traditions of Performance* (1990), Ralph Yarrow's *Indian Theatre: Theatre of Origins, Theatre of Freedom* (2000), Ananda Lal's *Oxford Companion to Indian Theatre* (2004) and Nandi Bhatia *Acts of Authority/Acts of Resistance: Theatre and Politics in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (2004). The particularities of South Asian performing arts tradition and the use of its techniques of narration and performance are analysed in Chapter III so that these elements can be recognised in the contemporary selected films by Nair and Chadha.

¹⁷ Alberto Elena points out that the average cost of a North American/Hollywood film was, back in the 1930-40s, 2000 Rupees, whereas a production in Mumbai could never be shot for less than 20000 Rupees. As the costs of production were most expensive in other Indian regions (such as Kolkata or Chennai), the Indian-based producers and distributors would soon try to counteract the American numbers of production by locating much of the Indian cinematographic industry around the city of Mumbai. This obviously marks the beginning of the concentration of almost 80% of the Indian cinematographic industry in Mumbai (despite the fact that the region speaks Gujarati and Bengali) and the emergence of the Bollywood label (56).

¹⁸ I strongly recommend the reading of Phillip Wood's article "From Shaw to Shantaram: the Film Advisory Board and the making of British propaganda films in India, 1940-1943" (2001), for his very committed analysis of the British colonisation brought over the Indian minds.

¹⁹ The British Film Board in India would be then transformed, in 1948 and by *Hindutva** nationalism, in the Film Division of India (FDI), adhered to the Indian Ministry of Exterior Politics. The FDI would promote two lines of production: the former still makes it the single producer of documentary in the world (Roy 2003) with propagandistic documentaries dealing with the Indian nationalist movement, the railway system in India, the historical trapping of elephants in colonial India and the accounts of natural disaster (earthquakes in the region of Quetta 1935 and 2008, the 2004 tsunami). The latter was carried as a general concern to strengthen

atomize the many languages in which Indian cinema had been shot to introduce WWII documentaries which tried to convince Indians to enrol the British Army” (235). In other words, cinema was taken as a part of the imperialistic domination, a device still used after Partition by the British, USSR and North American commercial and political enterprises to assure their own economic success and cultural hegemony. Therefore, cinema became an important identifying trait for the postcolonial Indian context because even *Hindutva** emergent political ideals promoted, during the Partition decade (1945-1956), a misleading *escapist*²⁰ cinematographic production motif to found the figure of an ideal Indian who followed the required Hindi/Hindu standardisation (a base for the *Orientalist* Western definition of *Bollywood**).

Films such as Bimal Roy's *Devdas* (1955) or Mehboob Khan's *Mother India* (1957) were produced under this political *Hindutva** patronage although, at the same time, India saw the international acclaim of the Bengali-speaking Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray, director of films like *Pather Panchali* (1955) and *Aparujito* (1956), a figure who is still a source of controversy in the Subcontinent. On the one hand, there were Indian politicians and intellectuals who criticised Ray's masterpieces for reducing India to a mere unappealing poor misery which discouraged the international ideal *Hindutva** image

tourism, and it tried to provide an exotic myriad of feelings on the viewer although most of them were based on an exotic breathtaking vision of India or a victimising account of the lives of the poor Indians. As Srirupa Roy states, both tendencies are synonymous of a stereotypical attempt to sell India to the world by pointing at the still special Indian postcoloniality (242).

²⁰ As Erik Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy point out, *escapist* is not an accurate adjective to refer to traditional popular Hindi films. Nevertheless, I use it in this context because movies of those times such as Bimal Roy's *Devdas* (1955) or Mehboob Khan's *Mother India* (1957) provided a melodramatic possibility (as understood by Peter Brook in *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess*, 1996) for the country's deep tensions, those of being between wealth and poverty, tradition and modernity, hope and fear. Thence the grandiloquence of both music and images provided a character that had sudden access to a hopeful richness. However, the *Hindutva* reading was guaranteed, for those bright values always subscribed to ideals of Hinduism and attacked those of Islam. The Classificatory films provided by the FDI at those times was, as and Srirui Roy in her reading of Jag Mohan's "Documentary Films and National Awakening" describes as "Arts and experimental films, Biography and personality film, Classroom films and children's films, Educational and motivational films, Defence ministry films, Export and tourist promotion films and Visit films" (243).

promoted by the rest of Indian movies. On the other hand, the debate created the term Indian Film (firstly coined in 1981 by Erik Barnouw and Subrahmanyam Krishnaswamy in their book *Indian Film*). Under this Indian Film definition, *Mother India* and *Aparujito* shared intrinsic peculiarities of the “formulaic Indian Film” which, in Rachel Dwyer and Divia Patel’s words, presents “the always-Hindi told victory of Hindu ideals over Muslim or English tyrannies and westernised values” (152). In this sense, I consider that the tradition initiated by *Mother India* (1957) is still followed by films like Ashutosh Gowariker’s *Lagaan* (2001) and other important transnational productions²¹ (with American and British successful box-office) such as Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s *Saawariya* (2007), Farah Khan’s *Om Shanti Om* (2007), Gowariker’s *Jodha Akbar* (2008) or the economic success of Karan Johar’s *My Name Is Khan* (2010).

In this line, both Barnouw and Krishnaswamy defined the Indian Film production as “a homogenous trend caught in a post-colonial momentum and the constant struggle against the surviving British colonial yoke” (24). Hereby, I consider that the term Indian Film is a useless term in this dissertation because it only points at the nationality of the film production, whilst also erroneously conceptualising the language of Indian films only as Hindi or Bengali (when Gujarati and Tamil languages were also used in films included in Barnouw and Krishwamy’s volume).

Moreover, the Indian Film also gathers other mistaken generalisations in the description. For example, the films are categorised as “opulent visual extravaganzas” (Barnouw and Krishnaswamy 32), a remark about which I wonder, how can Ray’s intimate film productions be classified as such? Moreover, they remark that “Indian films are political weapons for the delimitation of Indian boundaries” (33) and include Bangladeshi

²¹ Gurinder Chadha and Mira Mira Nair’s films provide alternatives to this *Hindutva** totalitarian tendency as they always represent Sikh, Muslim and Hindu families in the diaspora cohabiting together as can be seen in Chadha’s *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) or in Nair’s *The Namesake* (2006).

Ritwik Ghatak Rahdack²² within its pages. How can Ghatak be defined as an Indian film director when he holds the Bangladeshi passport and deliberately makes Bangladeshi national film? Nevertheless, the biggest mistake arises when, in the re-edition of Barnouw and Krishnaswamy's work in 1992, films such as Nair's *Mississippi Masala* or Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* were also included under the previous categorisation, restricting them to that propagandistic exotic representation, in this case as related to the "Indianness of the Diaspora" (Barnouw and Krishnaswamy 24). In this sense, the theoretical discourse of Indian Film fails to recognise the settlement of these films in the diaspora space, exactly at the same place where Third Cinema and Accented Cinemas proved erroneous, almost *Orientalist* optics.

It is exactly from that *Orientalism* where colonial fantasies survive with the prominence of labels such as *Bollywood*. Here, although there has been a previous definition for *Bollywood** offered at the *Glossary* of this work, I think that it is necessary to add a few nuances strictly taken from the cinematographic theory this section deals with. In this sense, Edward Johnson, in *Bombay Talkies* (1987), pointed at how "the West thinks of Bollywood films as commercial films which express the ridicule of Indian culture" (2). Asha Kasbekar agrees with him in her article "An Introduction to Indian Cinema" (1996), where she states that "Bollywood seems to be a synonymous of exotic, grandiloquent scenes of music and dance in Indian film, . . . an erroneous conceptualisation of the West

²² The case of the filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak, as he is commonly known, proves very illustrative when dealing with the complexity of the Subcontinent's national identity and labels. Born as a British Indian citizen in 1925 in Dhaka, he then would become resident of East Pakistan (after 1947 Partition) and then a Bangladeshi cultural touchstone (after 1971 Partition, which would recognise West Pakistan as Pakistan and East Pakistan as Bangladesh, the free nation of Bengali people, therefore ignoring the tradition of the then Indian Kolkata). Beyond this, it is remarkable to note that Ghatak was an active member of the IPTA and his films *Nagarik* (*The Citizen*) (1952), *Ajantrik* (*The Unmechanical*, *The Pathetic Fallacy*) (1958), *Titash Ekti Nadir Naam* (*A River Called Titash*) (1973) and *Jukti Takko Aar Gappo* (*Reason, Debate and a Story*) (1974) are intense denunciations placed against British colonialism and *Hindutva** totalitarianism. The book *Rows and Rows of Fences: Ritwik Ghatak on Cinema* (2000), published by Seagull under the patronage of Ghatak's Trust Foundation and under Ghatak's name, is a great account of interviews, reviews, personal motivations and historical analysis of Ghatak's times.

because these sense are the inheritance of the traditional *sangeeta** which, since 2000 years ago, consisted of instrumental music and dance scenes as essential features of dramatic performances” (369, my emphasis). Further into a much more contemporary context, Rachel Dwyer and Diva Patel define, in *Cinema India: The Visual Culture of Hindi Film* (2002), the totalising use of *Bollywood** by Western critics as a neo-colonial strategy that ignores the richness and success of Indian cinemas in the forms of Northern regions or in the area of Tamil Nadu, without mentioning the splendour of the diasporic recreation of the cinema in the Telegu dialect “as well as the discord of tongues and complex kaleidoscope of Indian Cinema” (8). As also stated in the *Glossary*, India’s cinema industry is not all about Bollywood and Hindi songs and dances. Paraphrasing the statement that appeared in Chapter I, “India contains a lot of Indias” (Batalla 3, my translation), it could be said that India’s cinema contains a lot of cinemas and not all of them are followers of Bollywood *Orientalist* normative.

In my opinion, Indian Professor Vijay Mishra’s *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire* (2001) provides one of the most helpful accounts to the topic because he mixes Postcolonial Studies and Film Theory to understand Bollywood cinema in relation to film global industry and the necessity of postcolonial India to gather, recreate and define issues of national identity, epic tradition, culture, history and the implication of diaspora in the process. Although he does not provide a term to approach the films beyond “Bollywood” and “Bombay Cinema” (1), he complies for the inter-influence of Indian culture with the British and US diaspora in the construction and creative language of Indian films and the representation of India by Indians in the diaspora. Lately, Professor Sangita Gopal’s *Conjugations. Marriage and Form in New Bollywood Cinema* (2012) has followed the inclusive trend initiated by Mishra (2001) and has developed and analysed Indian films

addressing for the relevance of diaspora in the remaking of India and its cultural representation in cinema.

Nevertheless, there is still an essentialist, simplifying and stereotyping fashion to categorise films like Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) or Pratibha Parmar's *Nina's Heavenly Delights* (2006) as simple *Bollywood** movies displaying Indian identities, clearly ignoring that both films are articulated within the dynamics of the diaspora space's transcultural flux of cultures²³. It looks as if it is from this perspective of going beyond Bollywood that US citizen and Indian Professor at University of Minnesota Jigna Desai proposes the term "Diasporic Cinema" (i) in her first and very inspiring book *Beyond Bollywood. South Asian Diasporic Cinema* (2004).

In this book, Desai tries to provide a critical and academic space to account for the tensions among the homelands, the diasporic homes and the articulation of the global hybridity of cultures at the diaspora space. It is in this trend that Jigna Desai backgrounds her theory by pointing at how her own experience of diaspora (an Indian woman in the US) made her "began a search for the beyond, . . . for the new cultural processes and flows of cultural products in the South Asian Diaspora" (vii). Her conception of diaspora as a concept as well as a relationship between people and place completely matches with Avtar Brah's conception of diaspora space. Bearing this conception in mind, Desai defines Diasporic Cinema as:

[A] cinema resulting from the migratory processes engendered by capitalism[,] postcoloniality . . . and beyond them; [therefore] posing hybrid possibilities forged out of the shifting sands of Hollywood, Bollywood and other formulas, a global visual culture which engages the *diasporic audience beyond disciplinary rubrics and schemata*. . . . South Asian diasporic cinema *negotiates* and *traffics* among the two largest global cinemas – Hollywood and Bollywood – as well as individual national

²³ In this case, Pratibha Parmar's *Nina's Heavenly Delights* relates the story of a Pakistani family in Scotland, with specific cultural and national variables that are barely related to post-Partition *Hindutva** India

cinemas including British, Canadian, alternative US, and alternative Indian. . . . South Asian diasporic films function significantly as part of the shifting economic, political, and cultural relations between global capitalism and the postcolonial nation-state, raising questions regarding the negotiation of cultural politics of diasporas located within the local, national, and transnational processes of the heteroglossia of these movies. (ix, 35-36, my emphasis)

In other words, Diasporic Cinema, as enunciated by Desai, is a cinema about the confluences of cultures in the diaspora.

However, Desai only confers the essential particularities of Diasporic Cinema to the South Asian diaspora. And here, the definition feels too restrictive, as if she focused too much on the Indian diaspora from India, therefore offering misleading analysis of Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) and the possible exclusion of later films such as Vipul Amrutlal Shah's *Namaste London* (2007)²⁴ that, although produced in India, are a clear reflection about international cultural dilemmas found in the diaspora space. I believe that it is by overanalysing the recurrence of these constructions only in the South Asian Diaspora that Desai fails to look through the diasporic optics per se, especially if we are to understand these diasporic optics as within Sujata Moorti's definition: "[Diasporic optics] offers the possibility of negotiating identities across differences through the use of the many images and discourse of the cinematography" (355). Thence, Diasporic Cinema still produces a definition that accounts more for specificity rather than for the articulation of the differences and identities produced in the diaspora space. I consider this a big

²⁴ *Namaste London* tells the story of Jasmine as a first generation BrAsian born in a very traditional family. Jasmine soon falls in love with Charlie, a white divorcee. When Charlie is proposing, Jasmine's mother phones her to inform that they are all decided that they are embarking on next flight to India, obviously including Jasmine, to find her a suitor and arrange the marriage. Here, Jasmine will face comic and melodramatic situations where she must made her mind whether to stay in India, London... or managed to bring her London to India. The film was a huge hit overseas. It debuted at number nine on the UK charts and within the top twenty in the United States and Australian charts. The film collected 238,841 GBP in its release week. As of July, 2007 (date of the DVD release) the movie had grossed an estimated \$15,273,747 USD (£9,332,044.29 GBP) in five territories which included the US (\$4,149,772 USD - £2,535,452.24 GBP), Australia (\$197,148 - £120,454.65 GBP), India (\$17,267,662 - £10,550,298.28 GBP), Malaysia (\$15,285 - £9,338.92 GBP), and the United Kingdom (\$9,021,900 - £5,512,253.83 GBP) (according to *InternetMovieDataBase.com*).

disadvantage because if new diasporic identities are to be defined as only containing isolated diasporas, the hybridity of cultures is rarely to be fully articulated. In this context, the subversive transformation inherent to the hybrid identity is obviated, as well as the possibility of a new home for the contact of difference. Ghanaian born, British resident Kobena Mercer beautifully let us understand the point in the following quotation, where he states:

I suggest that the emerging culture of hybridity, forged among the overlapping African, Asian and Caribbean diasporas that constitute our common home, must be seen as crucial and vital efforts to answer the possibility and necessity of creating a new culture so that we can live. (3-4)

Once again, the mere statement of hybridity brings back the possibility to reevaluate discriminatory paradigms in the contemporary globalisation of cultures, as well as the possible endorsement of new systems of domination which may surface from the diasporic displacement and the cultural syncretism. It is exactly from this context that I want to propose *hybrid cinemas* as a definition which emerges from the hybridity of cultures in the diaspora space.

Hybrid cinema defines films which address the intersection of cultures from an interdisciplinary perspective. This is a proposal that considers the filmmakers of hybrid films as directors who have a postcolonial background, therefore coming from countries, cultures and diaspora which were either colonised or founded on imperialist, patriarchal and racist structures of domination. Instances of this trend would be Iranian Jafar Panahi's *Offside* (2006), New Zealander Niki Caro's *Whale Rider* (2002), African American Julie Dash's *Daughter in the Dust*²⁵ (1992) or the British-American South Asian selected films

²⁵ *Daughters in the Dust* (1991) was the first African American film distributed in the States. The film tells the story of a Gullah family's struggle in between the North American society. Being the first feature directed

by both Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair. Thus, the term hybrid cinema intends to be constituted as a framework that regards these films as representing the contact/conflict found in the diaspora space. The definition can be used to focus on a determinate scope (as I will do with the South Asian diaspora) although avoiding the restriction shown by Desai, for it is a description that is not restrictive to a particular diaspora or nationality. Instead, hybrid cinema enhances the overall analysis of all the *postcolonial* cultural, social and political variables involved in the diaspora space.

Hybrid cinema, as inherent to the subversive understanding of hybridity, then fosters a postcolonial evaluation of what bell hooks calls “interlocking systems of domination as based on race, class and gender” (1989: 21). It is in this aspect that hybrid cinema is a product of the co-existence of diasporas, where hybridity, as previously said, means the articulation of the definite postcolonial victory over the effects of colonisation on cultures and societies. Bearing this approach in mind, I will define hybrid cinema following a threefold pattern: the *hybridity* represented in the thematic subject-matter of the film, the filmmakers’ personal trajectory(ies) of diaspora, the transnational mode of production and the diversity of the audience.

Therefore, a hybrid film is primarily a depiction of the complex life experience and the overlapping identities of the different postcolonial diasporas that converge in the diaspora space. By representing the hybridity of cultures without using hegemonic discourses, a hybrid film represents the process of identity transformation and so it

by Julie Dash, she gives a very inspiring account of both the process of shooting and writing the film in her book *Daughters of the Dust: The Making of an African American Woman's Film*, where she accounts for what she calls a “fifteen year struggle of being having your true roots denied” (ii). Hers is a beautiful account of the convergence of variables and cultural negotiation in the diaspora space by acknowledging that the connivance of African values and traditions in the concept of African American. In between, Gullah refers to those African American people who, living in the states of South Carolina and Georgia have conserved their African roots very powerfully due to the abrupt location of their region in between the rocky, beach boundary that unites South Carolina and Georgia. Most of them came from Sierra Leone to work at the ice plantation and have perpetuated a form of Creole which can be traced backwards till their arrival of the slave ships through the middle passage.

witnesses the mutation of cultural identities. A hybrid film then delves in the encounter among Western and non-Western cultures and celebrates a hybrid society where specific cultural idiosyncrasies are never subordinated to any other. At this juncture, the hybrid film evaluates society from a plural perspective that was ignored by previous normative Western definitions and, as a consequence, it collects what Deborah Madsen calls “the diversity, resistance, thinking and voices of every people” (7). The term hybrid film accordingly provides the open possibility for a future cultural connivance and, by representing a hybrid society, the hybrid film fosters a place for an equal cultural empowerment among previous colonial and colonised cultures, as Jigna Desai refers to the inherent subversive power contained in the discourse of hybridity:

[Hybridity] obscures the anxiety of the irresolvable representation of the borderline culture and, instead, it articulates its problems of identification and its diasporic aesthetics. If the hybrid world expressed in [Salman Rushdie's] *The Satanic Verses* was considered blaspheme and heresy, then blaspheme is to dream, and that is the empowering condition of hybridity. (226-7)

In other words, a hybrid film allows an all-inclusive redefinition of identity in terms of both “roots and routes” (Gilroy 1993) and, in the present day age, this idea undertakes a strategy of resistance, enabling a new possibility for survival, as Kobena Mercer recognises that “hybridity means the possibility and necessity of creating a new culture so that the postcolonial subaltern can live” (3-4). To sum up, the term hybrid film guarantees the recognition of the many cultural difference found in the diaspora space and the enhancement of an alternative of coexistence where imperialist schemes of domination are finally overcome.

In this sense, only by keeping in mind this prospect of articulating the diverse cultural distinctiveness can the intermingling dynamics of the South Asian Diaspora, what

Makarand Paranjape calls “the plurality of the Indian DestiNation” (101), be represented. This is the cinematographic paradigm from where Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair’s films can be defined as descriptors of the multiplicity, contradiction and instability inherent to their personal and filmic diasporic experience. This is how, for instance, Nair’s *The Namesake* (2006) and Chadha’s *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) display characters like Gogol or Lalita, constantly flying across the Atlantic and the Pacific Ocean, always in transit between India and the US. Similarly, Nair’s *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) represents dinner tables as gathering spaces of existences lived in both India and the US, as well as constructed in the commonality of the BrAsian network, like in Chadha’s *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993). At this stage, their films do not offer a categorising Eastern discourse such as that enunciated by Teshome Gabriel and Hamid Naficy but a description of the interrelation and conflicts found, for example, in the contact between the African and South Asian Diasporas as represented in Chadha’s *Bhaji on the Beach* or Nair’s *Mississippi Masala*.

Gurinder Chadha’s *Bend It like Beckham* (2002) equally proves this point. In this film, Chadha shows the diversity of London’s suburbs while evaluating the gender discrimination suffered by the diasporic South Asian woman, particularly the patriarchal structures defined in the father-daughter relationship in both White British middle-class and first generation BrAsian families. The massive audience success of the film all over the world was not a consequence of what could appeal as the exoticism of the plot (Jessminder Bhamra is a Sikh female secret footballer in love with David Beckham) but an effect of the universal relevance of the thematic arguments in the movie: idolatry (Indian-descendant Jess longs for British David Beckham while British Jules Paxton wishes to enjoy the success of American football female players), operant schemes of patriarchal and heteronormative love-marriage relationship (present in both Bhamra and Paxton families), and the contemporary hybridity of cultures (a Sikh wedding in the middle of London

suburbs, an Irish coach training a female team of African, Asian and Indian descendants...). Mira Nair's *The Namesake* (2006) also illustrates how Gogol and Ashima unveil the quest for identity that is inherent to the ambivalence of the diaspora space. This is perfectly illustrated by the way Gogol finally makes sense of the familiar stories behind his name and Ashima (which translated from Bengali means person without borders) takes the decision to live between the US and India by going back to her personal motivations (singing and sitar playing) as an independent *woman of the world*. In this sense, Chadha and Nair's hybrid films do not only engage with the Indian diasporic audience and the South Asian Subcontinent inhabitants, they interweave us all as active members of the current hybridity of cultures, of our own personal *palimpsestic* experience in the diaspora space.

It is in this context that the filmmaker's trajectory of diaspora arises as another defining trait inherent to hybrid cinemas. In this respect, the *hybrid filmmaker* either lives in the diaspora (meaning that she/he has emigrated at a certain age of conscience) or has been brought up from/within the diaspora context (as respective to being a first/second/third... born generation in the diaspora or having been brought up in a different national culture as that of her/his parents'). In relation to the South Asian diaspora, Mira Nair, Deepa Mehta and M. Night Shyamalan stand as instances of the former trend, while Gurinder Chadha, Pratibha Parmar or Hanif Kureishi of the latter.

From now on I will focus on films by Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair, whose personal cartographies of diaspora have already been studied in Chapter One. Their trajectories as "Queen of the Multi" (Desai 34) and "local storyteller at the heart of global cinema" (Nuir 1) therefore prove that they are perfect representatives of a global cultural heterogeneity. Besides, their films move back and forth across the Subcontinent and around the world showing an exemplary number of cultural and artistic influences such as stereotypical constructions as expected from Hollywood and Hindi popular films, auteur

cinema, documentaries, MTV video-clip, British social drama or American Independent Sundance-oriented features.

The opening scene in *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) exemplifies this composite of cinematographic languages. Chadha situates Asha in her neighbourhood with a travelling take (in Ken Loach's style) showing the street's displaying windows and its Nazi graffiti, the South Asian fruits and spices, alcohol on sale in the British fashion and the door of Asha's husband video-rental shop. At this point, action is chained to a hallucinatory vision in which a Hindu god addresses Asha with all the clichés inherent to Hindi cinematographic popular culture (a theatrical arrangement of space, camp music, Hindi popular dance and exaggerated gestures). After that opening sequence, the camerawork and rhythm of the film (including the acting of Lalita Ahmed in the role of Asha) conform with what the viewer has come to expect from a British film made for Channel Four (witty dialogue, social denunciation and urban suburbia shown with a steady cam) but with all the music, clothing and visual images that are representative of the South Asian diaspora.

It is in this similar context that Simon Featherstone analyses Nair's *Salaam Bombay* (1988) as follows:

[The] narrative of *Salaam Bombay* is also a hybrid of Western realism and Hindi popular conventions. Whilst its spare, fragmentary sequencing recalls the European and American documentary influences that Nair acknowledges—Chris Marker, Jean Rouch, and D. A. Pennebaker—the plot itself is a staple of Hindi cinema: a child separated from his family, and driven, against his will, into criminality. It is a storyline immediately recognisable from a tradition that goes back to pre-Partition classics such as *Kismet* but also to the cinema of Ken Loach and even to that of Martin Scorsese. (110)

In addition, this hybridisation of style can be seen in the final scene of Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) (lasting over twelve minutes), the first time William Darcy meets

Lalita in Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) or the funny visit Mina and her Indian boyfriend pay to the African American Discotheque in Nair's *Mississippi Masala* (1991).

Therefore, Chadha and Nair address their heterogeneous Indias (heterogeneity referring back to the whole Subcontinent), while offering the subversive nature of the hybrid cinema as an assessment of current social challenges that must be faced by all the sides involved in the diaspora space (whether from India, the UK, the US, East Africa or the Caribbean). As further instances of this remark, a social critique informs scenes such as the one portraying the reaction of Mina's family to her relationship with an African American man in *Mississippi Masala* (1991), Hashima's unexpected pregnancy in *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) or the still subaltern position of women in Hindu and Sikh families, who have no right to denounce sexual harassment, as in the case of Alice and Ria in Nair's *Monsoon Wedding*²⁶ (2001). The intersection of diasporas then unveils the third distinctiveness of hybrid cinemas: the transnational form of production and audience.

Correspondingly, hybrid cinemas always involve a transnational form of finances and audience. A film like Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) clearly verifies the point. The South Asian origin population in British or American cities like New York or Birmingham will watch the film for its commercial appeal (acting cast with figures like Aisharwiya Rai and Naveen Andrews) and non Asian-origin British/Americans will buy the ticket based on the advertising campaign and the sophomore success and fame of Chadha's *Bend It like Beckham* (2002). Obviously, Indian audiences in the Subcontinent will also crowd the screens for all previous reasons. This explains the huge economic gross of the

²⁶ Tillotama Shome, the actress who plays Alice in Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding*, should also be mentioned in this study. Apart from her acting career (which also includes roles in Florian Gallenberger's *Shadows of Time*, 2001, and Meneka Das's *Little Box of Sweets*, 2005), she has also pursued teaching activity at the Creative Arts Team at City University of New York (CUNY/CAT). There she uses theatre as the means of promoting the prevention of the spread of the HIV/AIDS, as a way of denouncing domestic violence and promoting the controlled consumption of substances such as cannabis and cocaine. She develops her theories with the active assistance of prison inmates at Rikers Island (New York City) and the users of Domestic Abuse Shelters in New York City.

film and that the producing details included British UK Film Council, Indian Kintop Films and American Miramax, besides worldwide distribution provided by the multinational Pathé. Furthermore, Mira Nair's *The Namesake* (2006) is also descriptive of this tendency. Nair's film enjoyed a parallel release in Los Angeles, London, Delhi and Kolkata as well as a multi production and distribution with the participation of American Fox Searchlight Pictures and Cinema Mosaic, Japanese Entertainment Farm (EF), Indian UTV Motion Pictures, and Nair's own American-Ugandan Mirabai Films.

At this stage, producers cannot ignore the economic power and influence of the transnational market, especially in the context of globalisation and the current proliferation of broadcasting possibilities of the South Asian diaspora (digital TVs such as Zee TV and Sony TV broadcast Indian and diasporic Indian productions 24 hours a day), as well as on-line TVs or streaming webpages²⁷. In this context, the production, distribution and consumption of hybrid films provide the necessary evaluative background to determine, based on the significance of the cultural and artistic representation, the re-visitation of the commercial relations between previous coloniser/colonised in the scenario of globalisation which may reveal new possible structures of discrimination and segregation. Japanese American producing company Sony and Jewish American director Steven Spielberg's Dreamworks are illustrative of this analysis. On the one hand, Sony starting to develop an important interest in producing films from the Subcontinent such as Ashutosh Gowariker's *Lagaan* (2001)²⁸, Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Saawariya* (2007) or Sarah Gavron's *Brick Lane*

²⁷ Judith M. Brown, in her stimulating book *Global South Asians* (2006) highlights, after a very extensive survey among the South Asian Diaspora in the UK and the US, the success of the following websites with streaming and shopping on-line services: www.sulekha.com and www.redhotcurry.com (192). I would also add www.nriol.com (the Indian Government's official website for Non Residents India On Line, aka *nriol*) and www.tkdl.res.in (a data base for Traditional Knowledge Digital Library, aka *tkdl*, provided by Council of Scientific and Research Institute, CSRI, branch in India with the aim of offering the Indian remedies and traditions to all the members of the diaspora).

²⁸ Although *Lagaan* has been cited in previous pages I now consider relevant to pay attention to the transnational entity of the film. *Lagaan* tells the story of a village in Gujarat (North-Western Indian state)

(2007) in order to promote a later transnational release with very important grossing at international box offices²⁹. On the other, Steven Spielberg recently well publicised a new alliance with India's Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Reliance Group (a *holding* of entertainment, health, communications, engineering working infrastructures, natural resources power with cinematographic studios in Mumbai and Kolkata) to resume Dreamworks' relevance in the industry (as independent of David Gaffen and Jeffrey Karzberg) to produce at least six Indian American films per year. Once again, as in colonial times, the Subcontinent receives money-investment with a profit making endeavour³⁰.

Consequently, by studying a hybrid film, there is always a political evaluation and social critique of the true articulation of the hybridity of cultures and the recurrence of imperial schemes of power. I believe that this is a perfect epitome for the representation of

back to the year 1893, where a cricket match is supposed to either condemn the Indian villagers to starve to death due to the pay of land and harvest's taxes (*lagaan* means tax in Gujarati, although the movie is shot in Hindi) to the British governance or to get it solved. The film, produced and starred by Aamir Khan with the economic support of the US division of Japanese Sony, is the most grossing film of the Republic of India and the most profitable Indian film overseas. It won an Oscar Academy Award Nomination for Best Foreign Film in 2002, although it lost it to the Serbian production *No Man's Land*. Nevertheless, I would like to point out that *Lagaan*, which started Sony's production and promotion of Indian films, was released after a very intense advertising campaign in the year that Hollywood congratulated itself for awarding the story of social disadvantages portrayed in Ron Howard's *A Beautiful Mind* and the first year in which there was an award for both African Americans in the categories of Best Leading Actor and Actress for Denzel Washington and Halle Berry (only, Hattie McDaniel in *Gone with the Wind*, 1939, and Whoopi Goldberg with *Ghost*, 1990, the host of that year's ceremony, had previously been awarded, although in the category of Best Supporting Actress, which in the 86th Oscar Ceremony Award celebrated in 2014 awarded Kenyan-Mexican black actress Lupita Nyong'o for *12 Years a Slave*, 2013). Sony could not understand how *Lagaan* lost (as read on *The Sunday Telegraph* on March 25th, 2002). Nevertheless, critics and audience wondered why India selected *Lagaan* and not Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (after the artistic success at Venice and commercial profitable season all over the world) as the contestant. The reasons are clear: no Sony advertising campaign and, specially, a story about the corruption of both West and East, the gender discrimination also in both sides of the *Kala Pani** and a story that, above all, talked about global equality and humanity. No doubt then why Indian politics and Hollywood producers ignored *Monsoon Wedding* in the 74th Academy Award Ceremony celebrated in 2002.

²⁹ If not the whole production, Sony makes sure that it has its economic benefit from the money produced by the international release of a film like Karan Jhar's *My Name Is Khan* (2010). In this case, they produced and distributed the OST, one of the best selling of 2010's first semester. Lately, Ritesh Batra's *The Lunchbox* (2013) enjoyed a huge international release in 2014 that was favoured by the media campaign enhanced by Sony Pictures in the US. Nitin Govil's *Oriental Hollywood: A Century of Film Culture between Los Angeles and Bombay* (2015) is a good account of how this partnership has evolved.

³⁰ I believe that the global setting and understanding of these economic interests on the Subcontinent should keep us all aware of neo-colonial casualties. In my opinion, methodological approaches that reformulate the notion of diaspora and hybridity in the lines proposed by the present dissertation could provide a good lens from where to evaluate following studies about the identities born out of the interaction of cultures.

gender discrimination and, if as Indian critic Chandra Talpade Mohanty points out that the “the study of a female voice always unveils a claiming of her voice and the complex historical and political act that involves understanding the interrelationships of voices” (1990: 89-90), then Chadha and Nair’s hybrid films will lead me to evaluate the position of South Asian diasporic women in the intersection of cultures, revealing the tensions and inconsistencies through which they are discriminated not only in their personal diaspora but in the whole diaspora space. Correspondingly, an analysis of specific form of gender discrimination will be the basis for Chapter III but, before doing so and in order to allocate a whole tradition of feminist contestation, it is necessary to highlight the relevance and ever-present recurrence of postcolonial gender and feminist theory.

3- GENDER AND FEMINIST THEORIES IN POSTCOLONIAL FILM

Colonial strategies of domination are completed through structures of patriarchal, economic, racial and imperialistic control. Therefore, the social composition of both feminine and masculine roles is a factor that strengthens what bell hooks calls the “interlocking system of social domination: sex, race and class” (1989: 21). I hence consider that a gender-based academic analysis should always aim at recognising and derogating these unfair structures of social power, because gender refers to “the social constructions created for feminine and masculine in the social and individual realm” (9), as Judith Butler states. In this context, gender explicitly excludes reference to biological differences, and it only focuses on what Stephanie Garret calls “cultural differences” (vii). As a result, an

analysis of present gender discrimination in the postcolonial context proves the enduring subaltern position of women in the global contact of cultures. The urgency of the feminist response becomes key for, as Carol Boyce Davies points out, although “many women speak, have spoken and are speaking . . . [they] are rarely heard” (21). Accordingly, this part of the dissertation introduces the feminist struggle and its theoretical recognition in the field of Postcolonial Studies to later study how the hybrid film unveils a feminist evaluation of both the plot and the position of women as filmmakers in the context of the border interference of cultures. Hence, South Asian and Indian Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair both review the position of the diasporic woman and the challenges they face in the context of the contemporary transcultural society.

3.1 GENDER AND FEMINISM IN POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES

Diaspora is a gendered space and the main structures of the transnational economic and cultural market remain male-dominated, which generates a discriminatory construction of the female role in society. It is for this reason that the “diasporic optics” (Moorti 362) can be used as a strategy from where to analyse the position of women and theorise the systems of domination that still operate worldwide. Accordingly, Indian American writer Esha Niyogi De states that “the study of diaspora must deal with the ways border-crossers negotiate territorial barriers and otherness, paying special attention to how borders are gendered” (329). Hereby, the coexistence of identities in the diaspora space brings to the academic surface the multiple factors that determine the subordinating role models of the global system which make diaspora a particularly gendered space, as Avtar Brah remarks:

[For] several hundred years now a global economic system has been in the making. It evolved out of the transatlantic trade in human beings, it flourished

during the Industrial Revolution, it has been nurtured by colonialism and imperialism, and now it has achieved a new vitality in this age of microchip technology and multinational corporations. It is a system that has created lasting inequalities, both within nations and between nations. All of our fates are linked on a multiple [*sic*] of factors: such as gender, class, colour, ethnicity, caste, and whether we practise a dominant or subordinate sexuality, and whether we live in a rich, industrially advanced society or a poor country in the Third World. And gender enables all. (1996: 84)

In accordance, the continuous flow of the diasporic experience offers a space for dialogue and a subversive opportunity where women are situated “at the crossroads” (Anzaldúa 187) and can perform a victory over prevailing patriarchal structures of power.

It is then necessary to reassess those situations that keep gendering the diaspora space. In this respect, Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval Davis state that, in order to “un-gender” (Butler 1999) diaspora, two factors need to be reassessed: “the double scheme of diasporic gender relations (host country-travelling community)” and “the boundaries in which women still become the carriers of the cultural symbolism that marks out the boundaries of the diasporic group” (82). Nevertheless, I believe that, in order to overcome gender discrimination in the diaspora space, it is essential to start focusing on specific aspects such as the high unemployment rates in middle-class jobs (as pointed out in Fauzia Ahmad and Tariq Madood’s *South Asian Women & Employment in Britain—The Interaction of Gender and Ethnicity*, 2003; Fauzia Ahmad and Mohammad Siddique Seddon’s *Muslim Youth: Challenges, Opportunities and Expectations*, 2012; or Padma Rangaswamy’s *Namasté America*, 2000); the difficulties found in the access to university education (reflected by Shamita Dasgupta in a *Patchwork Shawl: Chronicles of South Asian Women in America*, 1998; and Amrit Wilson in *Dreams, Questions, Struggles*, 2006) and both religious discrimination and degrading social structures of privilege imposed on women (as studied by Lata Mani in “Contentious Traditions”, 1989, and Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s “‘Under Western Eyes’ Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist

Struggles”, 2003). In these terms, feminist resistance would be committed to the encouragement of the diasporic promise of a *constant becoming*. Also, if as Sara Suleri asserts, “postcolonial feminism eminently lends to a reopening of the continued dialogue of a former parochial and patriarchal discourse” (276), then postcolonial feminism supports the worldwide women’s struggle to fight for an un-gendered social equality. In this context, I think that the feminist *raison d’être* should always be that of fighting together, male and female, towards a fairer world.

So, the postcolonial feminist agenda, now globally repaginated, must reframe enduring schemes of women’s subaltern position in the contemporary context of the hybridity of cultures to finally forget those visions which, in the realm of cultural representation, as Avtar Brah states, have reduced female bodies to “schematic conquered lands” (1996: 48). Moreover, as Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar (“Challenging Imperial Feminism”, 1984) or Chandra Talpade Mohanty (“Under Western Eyes”, 1984, and “Feminism without Borders”, 1988) already recognised in the late 1980s, postcolonial feminism must depart from the study of the particular forms of gender discrimination in the diaspora. By so doing, the diaspora space can be the paradigm upon which foster the rebellion against gender inequality in the diasporic community, as determined by both the receiving space and the homelands. This interdependent and feminist victory is the prevalent point of view in contemporary diasporic and South Asian feminist thinkers such as Vandana Shiva, Amrit Wilson, Meenakshi Mukherjee, Jigna Desai and Parvati Raghuran & Nirmal Puwar. Let me here quote US citizen and Indian Professor Jigna Desai as illustrative of the previous voices: “[Diasporas] maintain and consolidate connections and imaginings of the homeland by performing national identities through gender and sexual normativities” (30). In other words, women stand on the crossroads of the diaspora space and are likely to become the object of patriarchal control in terms of education, marriage or

professional and social-private life expectation. However, they are also participant subjects in this new space and o they hold the power to undermine that recurrent gender inequality.

At this point, the *surfacing* of postcolonial feminism must be contextualised in relation to the Black Freedom Movement in the US (1955-1965) and the emergence of African American feminist theorists and writers such as Barbara Christian or Alice Walker who denounced the submission of the black woman under a double yoke: the imperialist white supremacy and the oppressive black patriarchal hierarchies. It was in this sense that Alice Walker coined the term *womanism*³¹ in her famous essay “In Search of Our Mother Gardens”, stating that black women should gather in order to create self-recognition and sisterhood identification from which to denounce their dreadful situation. By so doing, the Black Feminist movement in the US gave the lead to the urgency of the postcolonial feminist struggle in the 1970s. In my opinion, by standing together³², black women created a language of their own that guaranteed a space for common healing that would empower upcoming feminist movements.

Furthermore, if gender oppression shares a language with colonial structures of power, then women suffer the same experience of coercion that is implicit in racial discriminatory stereotypes for, as Barbara Christian points out “stereotypes are always by-products of racism” (16). In this sense, Sally Westwood’s accounts how Black Feminism would be appropriated in the late 1980s by diasporic South Asian and African Caribbean populations in Britain and came to represent “a unified, though not uncontested,

³¹ With *womanism* and *womanist*, Alice Walker created an inclusive, collaborative space where the experiences of black women could provide the basis for a collective struggle.

³² In Alice Walker’s *The Colour Purple* (1983) there is a beautiful line in which Celie illustrates this abstract female collaboration in the *womanist* space. It is Celie writing about Sophie: “[To] tell you the truth, you remind me of my mama. She under my daddy thumb [*sic*]. Naw, she under my daddy foot. . . . She never stand up for herself [*sic*], . . . more she stands up for us” (Walker 1983: 48, my emphasis). By so doing, Celie situates Sophie as her sister in this womanist space from where they are gathered, with other women, to subvert the unfair patriarchal dominance laid upon them by both the white racist society as well as by the male black patriarchal corporatism.

oppositional identity” (198) to the white normative British supremacy. Correspondingly, postcolonial feminism needs to discern the confrontational difference in the context of the transcultural discourse, and so highlight the differences among African American, South Asian, Chinese, African or Aboriginal women. As Barbara Christian recognises, “there are many black women and their heterogeneity must always be recognised” (17). At this point, the common fight of the postcolonial woman must thence avoid being categorised under tokenistic stereotypes such as *other women* or *women of colour* and promote the recognition of the particular needs specific to a social group.

Subsequently, it is now important to analyse the persisting socio-cultural processes of imperialism in the life-experience of South Asian women in the UK and the US because their religious, linguistic and social differences require to be acknowledged in order to recognise the heterogeneous South Asian plurality. I therefore believe that a feminist assessment of the South Asian diaspora is indispensable because the South Asian particularity plays a very important role in the universal composite of the diaspora space, especially in the UK and the US. Correspondingly, Chapter IV of this dissertation will illustrate, based on the feminist challenges displayed in the selected films by Chadha and Nair, how the hybrid societies depicted in their films provide a myriad of gender complexities which still need to be identified and subverted. In this sense, I will maintain, throughout the following pages, that Chadha and Nair's films convey the “transformational”, “oppositional” and “evaluative” role of postcolonial art that, as previously quoted by Carol Boyce Davies (74), guaranteed the definite insurrection of gender and race discrimination.

3.2 REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN HYBRID CINEMAS: THE CASES OF GURINDER CHADHA AND MIRA NAIR

The film industry is a gendered system. This is evident when looking at the scarce amount of women that appear as directors, producers or screenwriters in the credits of films. Conspicuously, Kathryn Bigelow with *The Hurt Locker* (2008) has been the first woman³³, ever to be awarded an Oscar Award in 82nd Oscar Academy Ceremony Award (2010) in the category of Best Movie as well as Best Director, category in which she was the only third woman in history to be nominated³⁴. Although the situation has as a result changed with a great sense of controversy, the cinematographic panorama has not overcome gender inequality in the previous thirty years (since Lina Wertmüller's nomination for *Pasqualino Settebellezze* in 1976). So, it can be asserted that cinema has a patriarchal structure of organisation and distribution. Twice Winner in Best Actress category actress Jane Fonda has recently argued that "the studios are run by men and they have the bottom line to meet and they give jobs to people like them" (qtd. in Child 2015). In this sense, Indian scholar Hajira Kumar evaluates the position of women in society and their participation in all cultural spheres "as the true index of its cultural, economic and spiritual attainments" (91).

³³ Preceding Nominated Films directed by a woman were Barbra Streisand's *The Prince of Tides* (1991), Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1993) and Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* (2003). After, only Bigelow's *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012) filmed after *The Hurt Locker*, has won a nomination as Best Film directed by a woman. The same reality applies to Best Foreign Film, which has only been awarded to three films directed by women, Dutch Marleen Gorris' *Antonia's Line* (1995), German Caroline Link's *Nowhere in Africa* (2001) and Danish Susanne Bier's *In a Better World* (2010).

³⁴ Preceding female recipients of the Academy Award Nomination in the category of Best Director are Italian Lina Wertmüller' for *Pasqualino Settebellezze* (*Seven Beauties*, 1976), New Zealander Jane Campion for *The Piano* (1993) and US Sofia Coppola for *Lost in Translation* (2003). In 2012, Bigelow was not nominated as Best Director for *Zero Dark Thirty*, which caused uproar in Hollywood because the industry was accused of being chauvinist. From that moment, there has not been another woman nominated despite the fact that new features by female film directors enjoyed a high success in terms of reviews and box office such as Debra Granik's *Winter's Bone* (2010), Lisa Cholodenko's *The Kids Are All Right* (2010) or Angelina Jolie's *Unbroken* (2014).

Thence, although mainstream cinema in English started to offer productions directed by North American female directors such as Nora Ephron (1941-), Katryn Bigelow (1951-) or Mimi Leder (1952-) in the early 1990s, the female director never achieved the status of the star of the film (as happened with Steven Spielberg, Quentin Tarantino or Martin Scorsese, to name a few). Respectively, Supporting Actress Oscar Award Recipient US Patricia Arquette (for Richard Linklater's *Boyhood*, 2014) publically denounced in her acknowledgement speech in the 87th Ceremony (2015) the inequality among women and a man in the cinema industry illustrates the real disparity between men and women. The situation in Europe is the same and it has not been until the first decade of the 2000s that, despite the pioneering efforts made by Spanish Pilar Miró and Italian Lina Wertmüller, women such as Spanish Isabel Coixet or Italian Asia Argento started to find economic support for their production without problems³⁵. Besides, female film directors did not play important roles as members of presidents of international film festivals' juries such as Berlin Film Festival, first jury ever presided by a woman, New Zealander Jane Campion. Unlike the previous North American cases, the female director was, until the late 1990s, only a commercial appeal in the selling point of a film if she had a postcolonial background that could be used to promote the film in a kind of *Orientalism* of the female filmmaker.

This was the case in the exotic background which advertised, in the early-middle 1990s, breakthrough female film directors such as Vietnamese Trinh Min-Ha (1952-), New Zealander Jane Campion (1954-), Indian Mira Nair (1957-) or East African Indian Gurinder Chadha (1960-). Likewise, it should also be taken into account that, for further academic research, it was not until the beginning of the twenty-first century that white European

³⁵ New European female film directors who will be releasing important films in 2015 and 2016 include Danish Pernilla Fisher Christensen, French Claire Denis, English Andrea Arnold, Polish Agnieszka Holland, Italian and French Valeria Bruni Tedeschi, French Swiss Ursula Meier, Spanish Leticia Dolera or Greek Athina Rachel Tsangari.

women filmmakers obtained their own economic freedom of production and direction (such as Scottish Andrea Arnold, Danish Susanne Bier, Spanish Isabel Coixet³⁶ or Italian Asia Argento). At this stage, it must be said that feminist films made before the twenty-first century were directed by female filmmakers with a postcolonial background (and advertised as an exotic product such as the case of Campion's *The Piano*) or by a famous mainstream male director who would guarantee success at the box office (such as Steven Soderbergh's *Erin Brockovich*, 2000, and Ridley Scott's *Thelma & Louise*, 1991)³⁷.

Nevertheless, there were some pioneering exceptions that started to hold positions of control such as producers or filmmakers in the decade of the 1990s. This is the case of female producers in studios of high relevance such as American Laurie MacDonald (with full production credits in Jan de Bondt's *Twister*, 1996; Barry Sonnenfeld's *Men in Black*, 1997 or Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* 2000) or British Jane Scott (with complete production credentials in Scott Hick's *Shine*, 1996 or Ana Kokkinos's *Head On*, 1998). Besides, there were (and still are) those pioneering women founding their own producing companies such as East African Indian origin British Pratibha Parmar's Kali, African American Oprah Winfrey's Harpo and again, the previously mentioned companies established by Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha, Mirabai and Umbi/Bend It Films, respectively. Once again, it is

³⁶ Before Coixet, Pilar Miró (1940-1997), Spanish filmmaker and Spanish National Television director, is an exceptional case in the European and world's context. As a woman of the Spanish *Transición* (1975-1986), Miró trespassed the gender boundary and achieved huge critical and audience success with personal and politically committed films such as *El Crimen de Cuenca* (1979, the only film that was still banned in the Spanish Democracy, until it was released in 1981), *Gary Cooper que estás en los cielos* (1980), *Beltenebros* (1991) or *El Pájaro de la Felicidad* (1992). Miró managed to get financing and creative support in a post-Franco society which still retrieved women from posts of creative importance such as those of filmmaker and producer. Nowadays, female filmmakers, producers and screenwriters who have followed her struggle, and who must be acknowledged for their international relevance, are Iciar Bollaín and Gracia Querejeta. Films like Bollaín's *Flores de otro mundo* (1999), *Te doy mis ojos* (2003) and *Mataharis* (2007) as well as Querejeta's *Siete mesas de billar francés* (2007) should now be essential coursework in Spanish Gender and Film Studies. Previously mentioned Isabel Coixet is also a very important name, with challenging films like *The Secret Life of Words* (2005), *Map of the Sounds of Tokyo* (2009) and the upcoming *Learning to Drive* (2014) which details the relationship between a US student (starred by Patricia Clarkson) and a Sikh Indian driving teacher (performed by Sir Ben Kingsley).

³⁷ The exception to confirm this statement would be North American Barbara Streisand's *Yentl* (1982), an important economic and critical success which deals with the physical and mental subversion of a Jewish woman against a male-dominated oppressive background.

significant that out of these six producers, four of them share a postcolonial background. The conclusion is clear: although facing the double challenge of being a postcolonial voice and a female visionary they empowered a powerful space from and for women to *talk back*³⁸ and become an active cultural representative of the contemporary age.

Therefore, as previously seen in section two of this chapter, the postcolonial feminist vindication must be re-addressed from the perspective of the diaspora space, in order to re-assess the distinctiveness inherent to the flux of cultures and the possibilities of subversion involved in the overlapping of identities. Here, I believe that the cases of female postcolonial filmmakers already mentioned should be considered hybrid cinema filmmakers figures because they and their films subscribe to some of the theoretical traits previously sketched. At this stage, I would like to highlight the names of other prominent female filmmakers who, either in festivals or in box offices have enjoyed certain recognition. This is the case of East African Indian origin Pratibha Parmar in her facet as filmmaker (*Nina's Heavenly Delights*, 2005); BrAsian Sandhya Suri (*I for India*³⁹, 2005), Indian American Shilpa Sunthakar (*Biography of an American Hostess*, 2004) and Sarmistha Parida (*French Fries and Curry*, 2004); Indian Canadian Deepa Mehta (*Videsh*, 2008; *Midnight's Children*, 2012); Peruvian Claudia Llosa (*Madeinusa*, 2006; *La Teta*

³⁸ Here, I am *playing* with bell hooks' inspiring book *Talking Back*, where she talks exactly about the necessity for women to stand up and talk back in order to subvert the submissive position generally occupied by women. hooks talks about her own childhood and interweaves her personal story of submission at her family and her following awakening to this fact as the preface which definitely empowered her change and ulterior progress.

³⁹ As both are concerned with the scope of this dissertation, I believe that it is important to know the story line of both Parmar and Suri's films. *Nina's Heavenly Delights* (1995) tells the story of Nina Shah's return to Glasgow after spending three years in London. The film narrates, with a great sense of comedy, Nina's sexual coming out and the beginning of a relationship with her old school friend Lisa, with who will own the Indian-Pakistani restaurant Nina's Pakistani family established in Glasgow. Furthermore, Suri's *I for India* (2005) gathers the homemade Super 8mm footage shot by her father, a family doctor, from the 60s to the 80s. The film tells how Suri's father bought two cameras and two set of projectors first day in London to send a pair to India and become a video correspondence. The takes shown in *I for India* informs us about how Suri's family felt after arrival and which were the problems faced (there are clips showing the daily situations of racism suffered by all Asian immigrants as well as Margaret Thatcher's patriarchal speeches). *I for India* was distributed by London-based Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA).

Asustada, 2009), Argentinean Lucrecia Martel (*La Ciénaga*, 2001; *La Niña Santa* 2004; *La mujer sin cabeza*, 2008); and Iranian Hana Makhmalbaf (*Buddha Collapsed out of Shame*, 2007) and Shirin Neshat (*Women without Men*, 2009). By recognising all these inspiring women with a common theoretical bond, I believe that the definition hybrid cinema describes the hybridity of cultures as an empowering space from where to denounce interlocking systems of domination while opening a creative open space for pioneering women with a feminist commitment and an agenda of contestation.

Moreover, I believe that, by being acknowledged as filmmakers of hybrid cinemas, these women are defying the double subaltern position of the postcolonial female filmmaker and the prominence of patriarchal and discriminatory discourses. For instance, Judith M. Redding and Victoria A. Briwnwirth's *Film Fatales. Independent Women Directors* include Mira Nair, Jane Campion, Pratibha Parmar or Trinh T. Minh-ha within their anthology, which proposes the term "Fatale Women Directors" (4). The cover of the book illustrates the line of their work: A model poses like Thelma (as starred by Geena Davies in Ridley Scott's *Thelma and Louise*, 1991) with a gun in a rather pin-up pose. In my opinion, although their study may be considered relevant because it brings *female* names to the reading of Film Studies, the authors portray the filmmakers as mere violent denouncers of the margins' inequalities, restricting their analysis only to the radical tone of their films, not regarding the films as primarily dealing with contemporary topics which go beyond the drastic social violence presented and represented from the social and geographical periphery defined by Western normative models. Their approach fails on the same ground as Gabriel's "Third World Cinema" or Naficy's "Accented Cinema" did: they do not analyse the filmmakers as articulators of the diaspora space's distinctiveness. Instead, they reduce the filmmakers to tangential race and sex descriptors, as if they were

not key active parts in the articulation of the diversity of cultural anecdotes and had always to occupy a subaltern position in Culture and Film Studies .

Similarly, Susie Tharu's definition of "Third World Women's cinema" (862) reduces Min-ha and Nair's films to mere "reflections of searching the meaning of living in the Third World" (864). In my opinion, this definition highlights, once again, the hegemonic binary strategies, where the so-called Third World and *its women* are passive occupants of a subaltern position. Min-ha summarizes this point with the always energetic force of her speech: "[Why] do we have to be concerned with the question of Third World Women? After all, only it is one issue among many others. Delete 'Third World' and the sentence immediately unveils its value-loaded *clichés*" (1989: 85, my emphasis). These are the *clichés* that normally tend to represent women as submissive victims, a tokenistic vision set to categorise women as "a unitary category" (Brah 1996: 102). At this juncture, I consider that only by including women as part of the transnational panorama can they finally overcome the social discriminatory burdens that still deny their active-subject role in the global world.

Thence, as filmmakers of hybrid cinemas, directors like Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha weave different cultural communities in their cinematographic representations with one common goal, that of implementing the subversive possibility of living within the hybridity of cultures. By so doing, they offer a place of visual contestation that trespasses old notions of postcolonial *Orientalism* and victimisation that still permeate our society with theoretical definitions such as, for example, Laura Marks' "Multicultural Cinema of the Senses" (2009). As illustrative of Marks' restrictive definition let me quote from her book *The Skin of Film. Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses* (2009), where she defines Nair and Chadha's filmmaking as part of inscriptions of "multicultural women . . . who specially represent the cultural dialectics by means of a particular haptic visuality

[sic] which offers an only female exploration of colonial, postcolonial and neo-colonial fossils and fetishes which maintain women as passive holders of mankind's pain" (91, 124). In other words, Marks perpetuates the reducing analysis of multiculturalism that ignores that women are active subverting subjects of the double submission of diasporic women, a subaltern both within the emigrant and welcoming communities.

A hybrid film then develops a double fold challenge: the articulation of cultural difference alongside a feminist vindication against gender discrimination. In this sense, women filmmakers inhabiting the diaspora space are able to decolonise the artistic gaze while locating their particular subjectivities and denunciation. The hybrid film thence offers an analysis of the multiple differences found among the diasporic communities, where women must compete against race, class and gender terms. Now focusing on the particularity of Chadha and Nair's films, it can be said that there is always a general political, cultural and economic evaluation of the dynamics of the whole diaspora space in their work. Specific situations such as the scene in which insults are hurled at the Sohali-Community bus full of women in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) or the portrayal of Mina's prejudiced family in Nair's *Mississippi Masala* (1991) are emblematic of this trend.

Thus, I believe that the representation of gender discrimination in hybrid cinemas involves a de-territorialisation of surviving bigots in the diaspora space. Firstly, as previously asserted, the postcolonial condition facilitates the evaluation and creation of a place of coexistence. Secondly, this initial conceptualisation enables a horizontal interconnection among diasporas as opposed to a vertical disposition that would determinate the prevalence of a cultural group over the rest. Thirdly, it locates the resultant option of the previous dichotomy homeland/diaspora in the cinematographic product. And, in this sense, home, previously territorialised as the homelands' space in the diaspora,

becomes the *glocal*⁴⁰ modern suburbia where *chapattis** are served at Fish and Chips restaurants or where Thanksgiving is a Latino and African American celebration (as portrayed in Gurinder Chadha's *What's Cooking?*, 2000).

At these *glocal* crossroads, hybrid cinema provides an understanding of the complex position of the South Asian woman in the diaspora space, while it challenges what Chandra Mohanty calls "the monolithic version of the Third World Woman in the context of the globalisation" (1988: 65). In this sense, Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha's commercial and critical success illustrates the double challenge of being *glocal* women and postcolonial directors. By the same token they are essential figures who demystify the diasporic South Asian woman because their personal biographies of diaspora and films illustrate the dynamics of the present-day hybrid societies while they articulate a place of feminist reconsideration and subversion. Accordingly, both Chadha and Nair are pioneering South Asian women in the diaspora, founding their production companies and gaining international respect. As Shoba S. Rajgopal points out: "Chadha is the first woman to have made inroads into the mainstream public sphere of the West with her films" (49) and Jigna Desai states that Mira Nair "was the first South Asian-American woman director to gain access to Hollywood" (47). The subversive nuance of these two remarks also embraces Chadha and Nair's filmmaking commitment, for both challenge structures of inequality which, as experienced by themselves, are still suffered by women. Accordingly, Mira Nair states:

⁴⁰ First coined by Roland Robertson in *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (1992) to define the new social classes (normally middle and high class) who travel and switch place of residence often and thus reinforce the locality of the original homelands while embracing a new global rhythm of life. Thence, *glocality* enjoys a current proliferation of discourses and practices. In this sense, Thomas L. Friedman's *The World Is Flat* (2006), talking about the internet's *glocal* power, can encourage people to make websites in their native languages and maintain their local roots in a context of the global, ever-changing routes. Also, the *Glocal Project* launched on the world-wide-web from Canada (www.glocal.ca) and exhibited at Surrey Art Gallery (Canada) proposes an educative approach to glocalisation by producing a collaborative digital project in which people scattered all over the world could submit their digital photographic material to be attached at the commissioned exhibition in Surrey.

[There is always a] human, political endeavour of change and subversion in all of her filming choices; . . . an attempt to denounce inequality while showing that there is always an option and alternative. This is the triumph of *Mississippi Masala*'s Mina, *Kamasutra*'s Maya and *The Namesake*'s Ashima, a clear reflection of my frustration as a singer and an illustration of what Jhumpa [referring to Bengali American writer Jhumpa Lahiri] and me try to teach to the young generation of first and second born South Asian girls, as well as to any of the true WASP [White Anglo Saxon Protestant] friends of our children. (2007: 24')

Similarly, Gurinder Chadha tells that she went to university just to defy a High School counsellor that told her that she should start practising typing as she was to become a secretary. Then, she attended college and turned to cinema to share her experiences as a migrant because, in her own words,

I loved Britain but the Britain that I lived it was not the same that I watched on TV . . . I started thinking that in a way, "Asian" is not right, and in a way, "Punjabi" is not right either. I'm actually from London; I can't go live in Punjab in India, because I'm not from there and it's not comfortable to me. So in that sense, I have problems with that label. (1996: 158)

It is in this sense that, when invited to participate in the 2008 UK's *Entrepreneurs of the Year Conference*, Chadha stated that her films always prompted women to fight for their rights and realise that their struggle was possible. In her own words:

My purposes of mind as a free woman who wants to change the world to a better one are the following: to have a vision and believe in it, focus on it and be as determinate and stubborn as possible to get it. This is my own story as an East-African Indian successful filmmaker, a position which has cost me a lot of energy, but that I am sure that my twins will always have on their mind. (2009: 14')

Otherwise stated, Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair can be defined a practical exponents of hybrid cinemas filmmakers, inhabitants of the diaspora space and feminist denouncers of gender inequalities.

In this sense, a joint study of both Nair and Chadha brings out the intersection of experiences in the South Asian diaspora space because, despite the differences and particularities of their diasporic trajectories, they share and create a common cultural front that challenges the representation of South Asian women in the diaspora space. Thus, it is my intention to study in Chapter III Chadha and Nair's use of cultural and artistic South Asian tradition and how it affects in a specific way of telling stories. After, this analysis will let me illustrate why, through the use of techniques and genres from South Asian tradition, Chadha and Nair's films assess the unions, divisions and challenges that the South Asian female immigrant faces in today's postcolonial global context. Here, I will confirm in Chapter IV that Chadha and Nair's hybrid films articulate a discourse which shows, inverts and destabilizes the world's inequalities because they allow a new representation of women and its possibilities.

Thus, previous quotations showed both Chadha and Nair's determinacy for change and this is the departing point from where to incorporate the subversive commitment of their films in the global context. Likewise, Gurinder Chadha states: "[What] excites me about the diaspora in terms of filmmaking is the idea of not being easily categorised, not being labelled . . . [because] at the end of the day, living in England and being part of English society has enabled us to find our Indianness in a particular way" (1996: 37-38). So Mira Nair remarks: "I make films of issues that get under my skin, and I made this film [*Kamasutra*] almost directly to counter the perversity with which women are being presented in our screen, not just in India, but in the West as well" (1997: 1). Consequently, I have illustrated in this chapter that we all live in a postcolonial world and that, by so doing, we cohabit within an encounter of cultural differences gathered in the abstract diaspora space. In this sense, I have offered a theoretical contextualisation of diaspora as diaspora space, therefore focusing on the transcultural understanding of the hybridity of

cultures, where cultures are understood as always transforming, pervading and negotiating each other, while still maintaining their intrinsic cultural distinctiveness.

Furthermore, I have focused on the significance of cinema as cultural descriptor and I have briefly introduced the relevance of the postcolonial film to analyse the specificities and modalities of the South Asian post-Partition diaspora in the UK and the US. At this point, I have proposed the term hybrid cinemas to address the particular idiosyncrasy of cinematographic representations by diasporic filmmakers like Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair, acknowledging how a hybrid film is expressive of the respective dynamic definitions of hybrid cultures in the diaspora space.

Afterwards, I have pointed at the subaltern position of women in both postcolonial societies and cinema and, by focusing on the South Asian post-Partition diaspora, I have stated that there are many patriarchal schemes of domination that still need to be subverted. By all these comments, Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair have proved to be contemporary figures who, placed at the necessary theoretical background, confront the gender discrimination suffered in their personal and cinematographic cartographies of diaspora. Thence, through the practical analysis of the selected films which will be provided in Chapter IV and Chapter V, I will confront the particular gender conflicts represented in Chadha and Nair's hybrid cinemas as expressive of the reality of the South Asian diaspora in the UK and the US as well as the peculiarities of our own interwoven hybrid existences in the diaspora space. It is at this point that Chadha and Nair challenge the global patriarchal systems of domination to infuse the empowerment of the South Asian Women in the diaspora as weavers of a promising intercultural space that nurtures us all.

CHAPTER III

HYBRID NARRATIVES IN WOMEN'S CINEMA OF THE SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORA: PERFORMING ARTS TRADITION AND POSTCOLONIAL LANGUAGES OF ARTISTIC CREATION

Get yourself cleansed, be attentive and hear about the origin of the fifth Veda devised by Brahma: . . . Recalling four Vedas, Brahma went into meditation. Taking the text from the *Rig Veda*, music from the *Sama Veda*, acting from the *Yajur Veda* and aesthetic sentiments from the *Atharva Veda* he created the fifth Veda, the *Natya Veda* . . . Thus the mortals got this beautiful and auspicious art of drama, the fifth Veda of Gods. (Varapadpane 1-2)

Defining a character is learning to know the meaning of life. (Imamura qtd. in Jacob 71, my translation)

Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair's hybrid films gather different cultural languages and formats of tradition and modernity that describe a new reality in which diaspora stories emerge as signifiers and denouncers of social and gender inequality both in the homelands and in the diaspora space. Accordingly, it is my purpose to explain in this chapter why Chadha and Nair's selected films produce hybrid narratives that present new possibilities for the South Asian woman in the diaspora space through the combination of contemporary cinematographic postcolonial language and other narrative elements taken from the South Asian performing arts tradition.

In this sense, if Chadha and Nair's postcolonial agenda and feminist commitment were described in Chapter II as subversive tools that picture new postcolonial identities and promote gender equality, I will firstly recognise in this chapter the performing arts elements that Chadha and Nair take from the South Asian tradition to understand both filmmakers as storytellers that look back at their roots to define new empowering routes in the diaspora space. By so doing, I will recognise that Chadha and Nair's hybrid films provide hybrid narratives that use elements from the South Asian performing arts with a subversive

endeavour that challenges the interlocking systems of domination historically based on race and gender. If hybrid films were defined in the previous chapter as subversive movies that interconnect different places of production and different identities in the diaspora space to promote a new representative ethos, this chapter aims at defining the multiple traditions that serve as an inspiration for the stories proposed in those hybrid films.

Therefore, I consider it essential to identify the elements that appear from the South Asian performing arts tradition in Chadha and Nair's films. Here, Trinidadian actor, director and scholar Rawle Gibbons confirms the importance of studying these old elements and narratives because, in his own words, "the relation of art and tradition is a powerful means to decolonise" (179). Accordingly, I will study some South Asian performing arts techniques that appear in Chadha and Nair's hybrid films that I consider very relevant to understand specific nuances through which the female characters are shown in these selected movies.

The beginning of Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) and Mira Nair's *The Namesake* (2006) illustrate how important it is to recognise these elements and understand what they add to characters such as Asha in *Bhaji on the Beach* or Ashima in *The Namesake*. For example, Asha overcomes the gruesome visions that she suffers in the beginning of the feature and where commanding and patronising representations of Hindu gods reprimand her because she can't forget about the notions of "Duty, Honour, Sacrifice" (2'17"). The gods use performing arts traditional elements in their acting techniques, moving their hands with specific gestures while they yell at Asha with a specific pitch of voice. Asha expresses her terror and the inferiority she feels by using performing arts techniques of acting that are communicated through Asha's exaggerated facial gestures as well as the colours of her saris and the background lighting effects. All these elements come

from the South Asian performing arts tradition and add a particular meaning to the evolution of Asha in the film.

It is in this sense that I will detail in this chapter the theoretical background of these elements as well as describe how the survival of some of these South Asian performing languages during the British Empire unfold a combination of narrative elements in the evolution of the postcolonial female characters shown in Nair and Chadha's films. Likewise, I believe that it is important to recognise the South Asian performing arts techniques that are based on hand and facial gestures, colours of clothes and the interconnection of performing arts languages such as dance, music and storytelling because they deviate from the expected portrayal of South Asian women in film during the early 1990s and the 2000s.

It is extremely important to contextualise the origins of these performing arts techniques to understand why, for example, Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* hardly speaks during the first seventeen minutes of the feature. Nevertheless, the character of Ashima shares different emotions of great depth by singing a traditional song on the terrace of her house with a tone that, according to South Asian performing arts tradition, is used to address the longing for the arrival of a man to rescue her. Similarly, Ashima looks at the camera with astonishment when trying Ashok's shoes on and she wears specific colours of saris and pigments on her skin when they reach New York as newlyweds that describe how lost she feels there.

Nevertheless, it is not until her husband Ashok dies that Ashima connects back to the importance of that South Asian language as she has lost the connection with her own self, illustrated by how she quit her singing lessons when she reached the US and how she avoided wearing colourful saris when going to work in a state library. Somehow, it is when Gogol passes away that she is able to express herself with her own South Asian traits, a

language that goes beyond verbal communication and that allows her to discover that she belongs to both the US and India as a woman without borders, as the meaning of her own name refers to a woman without frontiers. Then, I think that the performing and historical particularities of how the Indian actress Tabu portrays Ashima in this film are required to be identified and traced back to their origins so that the spectator wholeheartedly connects with why Ashima is such an important empowering figure for both women in the South Asian diaspora and in the US.

Thus, these examples call attention to the mixture of South Asian performing arts tradition with a Western production in Chadha and Nair's hybrid films. Actually, this heterogeneity of narrative elements make Chadha and Nair detail new opportunities for female characters and filmmakers¹. Here, the cartographies of diaspora of both the filmmakers explained in Chapter I are intertwined in their movies because fictional characters such as Asha and Ashima combine different narrative languages that remind us of the diverse cultural possibilities inherent to the traits of the diaspora space and the possible gender subversion that for them lays open in this space that I have previously regarded in Chapter II.

Accordingly, Chadha and Nair's selected films provide a new cultural possibility for them as female film directors in the diaspora space and for their female characters as new citizens who trespass the interlocking systems of domination that, as explained in Chapter II, are written upon them in terms of gender and race. Thus, Chadha and Nair's subversive and postcolonial aim is that of creating what Australian scholars Helen Gilbert and Barbara Tompkins call "counter narratives and counter contexts" (111) because these stories let

¹ As expressed in the Introduction of the dissertation, Chapters II and Chapter III are theoretical. I will provide in Chapter IV and Chapter V thorough analysis of the situations in Chadha and Nair's hybrid films so that the reader can find a much more complex study of characters and situations than the simple presentation offered in this chapter to contextualise my theoretical discussion.

them create new narratives that obliterate those limiting structures imposed on women in both the homelands and in the diaspora communities. Similarly, Chadha and Nair use elements from the South Asian tradition to challenge old stereotypes and compose new stories where female characters switch pre-established roles of subjugation that had been defined for South Asian women according to gender and race. As a result, I will propose that Chadha and Nair tell narratives that confront reductionist considerations about postcolonial art and the role of female artists in the diaspora space.

Hence, I will explain in this chapter the elements that from the South Asian performing arts tradition appear in Chadha and Nair's selected movies. From my point of view, and as previously seen when dealing with the specific instances taken from Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* and Nair's *The Namesake*, it is essential to recognise the particularities of the South Asian performing arts tradition and then identify them in Chadha and Nair's movies in order to assess the gender subversion undertaken in their films. By so doing, the spectator will be able to recognise why Nair and Chadha's films propose an artistic alternative to other derogatory depictions of South Asian culture in the diaspora space that simply ignore the tradition of the performing arts in the South Asian Subcontinent².

Therefore, it is my aim in this chapter to study the theoretical foundations and understand the theoretical background that defines the narrative elements taken from the South Asian performing arts tradition used by Chadha and Nair in the selected films. After, I will analyse in Chapter IV specific details of how the female characters overcome gender

² Examples of these offending (mis)understandings of the South Asian women in the diaspora in the US and the UK can be seen, for instance, in US Marcho Schnabel's *The Guru of Love* (2008), where South Asian culture is reduced to a mere exotica of juggling and erotic tales. Also, the Hollywood blockbuster *Pink Panther II* (2009), directed by US citizen Harold Wart, presents an Indian girl in the diaspora space starred by Aisharawya Rai and represented as an Indian princess that was not able to think brightly and fulfilled the *Orientalist* and gender depiction of South Asian women as a mere passive and monolithic character in this film. Instead, Chadha and Nair's hybrid films portray characters such as Asha in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* or Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* are active, complex and empowered South Asian women that challenge South Asian and non South Asian restrictions unfairly established on women through race, class and gender discrimination.

conflicts in the diaspora space and then, in Chapter V, how the use of South Asian narrative elements add yet another gender challenge to other derogatory structures imposed on South Asian women in terms of race and gender.

I will firstly present the multidisciplinary nature of the performing arts in the Subcontinent as opposed to those individualised categories found in Western definitions that classify theatre, dance or storytelling as separate media. I will focus on Bharata Muni's *Natyasastra*³ because it is the key performing arts treaty that dates back from the 2nd century BC and compiles the concept of the artistic empathy created among performers and audience (in Sanskrit *rasa*), the importance of gestures and ways of looking of the performers (in Sanskrit *abhinaya*) and other techniques of the South Asian performing arts⁴ that appear in Chadha and Nair's films. This contextualisation will help me present the multidisciplinary nature of the performing arts in the Subcontinent following the trend of twentieth century Western figures such as German playwright, poet and thinker Bertolt Brecht, who defined the South Asian performing arts tradition as "master of delicate sensations" (qtd. in Willett 86). In this sense, these delicate sensations stand for those many techniques that, for instance, embroider the portrayal of Ashima by Tabu in Mira Nair's *The Namesake* through a succession of silences, gestures and looks that follow the performing arts tradition dictated by *Natyasastra*.

³ I will use the translation into English from Sanskrit given by Adya Rangacharya in his version of the *Natyasastra* (2010) as well as the translation and study by Iván González Cruz (2013) in Spanish from English classical translations. There is another important treaty, *Abhinaya Dharpana (The Mirror of Gesture)* (4th c. AD), written by Sanskrit author Kalidasa out of the teachings that Sanskrit author Nandikeshvara had gathered previously (around 2nd c. AD) but that are lost nowadays. Kalidasa's treaty more or less explains the same as Bharata Muni and, for pedagogical reasons, I have decided to focus only on Bharata's text as it is earlier and covers every aspect of a performance.

⁴ The Sanskrit concepts of *rasa* and *abhinaya* will be explained in the second section of this chapter. The terms appear in italics only the first time the reader encounters them because I want to highlight the importance of the original concept because both *rasa* and *abhinaya* are terms highly recognised by twentieth century playwrights such as British director and pedagogue Peter Brook or German dancer and choreographer Pina Bausch. Although I have tried not to use too many Sanskrit concepts so that the reader can follow the description clearly, I have considered it important to use the most relevant ones such as *rasa* and *abhinaya*.

Secondly, I will focus on how the South Asian performing arts tradition has represented the concept of *sacredness* to understand how Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair's storytelling combine different narratives that guarantee that the female characters in their hybrid films encounter a sacred place of their own. I will also illustrate why dance has been a performing arts language used to represent the concept of the sacred and how the evolution of the South Asian regional dance of *bharatanatyam* (a dance form from the South of the Subcontinent) from ancient times till nowadays has been a postcolonial and subversive endeavour. Hereby, I will confirm that the storylines within Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* or Mira Nair's *The Namesake* display women trying to recover their own sacredness using performing arts elements from the South Asian tradition in the early 1990s when, as explained in Chapter II, there were so many limiting structures in terms of making films for women and women of colour. Similarly, the latter study of characters in Chapter III and IV such as Lalita in Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) or Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* who dance, pray and cook their own way in the diaspora space will corroborate that Chadha and Nair express the cultural complexity of these characters by allowing heterogeneous ways of telling stories to take place together.

Thirdly, I will examine the concepts of *hybrid narratives* so as to define the postcolonial artistic practice that mixes heterogeneous languages and genres to destabilise imperial, neo-imperial and patriarchal western artistic practices. I will identify Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair's hybrid films as hybrid narratives that combine ancient tradition with contemporary formats and languages to foster a postcolonial and feminist commitment that confronts the inherited colonial disempowerment of the South Asian woman in the diaspora.

In this sense, this chapter will let me state that both Chadha and Nair use their filmmaking as an artistic and political strategy that, through a creative diversity that

accounts for the diaspora space's own cultural hybridity, promotes a gender contestation of both colonial histories and contemporary stories of gender and social inequality imposed not only over South Asian women but over all citizens of the diaspora space. Thence, I believe that Nair and Chadha's use of narrative techniques and elements from the South Asian tradition to tell stories that take place in the UK and the US awaken new opportunities for the global citizenship of the diaspora space through the composition of pioneering leading South Asian women such as Asha in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* or Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* that inhabit the diaspora space through narrative elements previously ostracised in Western art.

1- SOUTH ASIAN TRADITION IN THE PERFORMING ARTS

The study of the South Asian performing arts tradition⁵ involves an understanding of the many performing arts traditions in and beyond the Subcontinent. Australian scholars Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins refer to this complexity of the South Asian performing arts in

⁵ Tradition is understood in this dissertation within Richmond et al.'s definition of tradition. In their own words,

[Something] connected to genre . . . performance traditions, like religious or literary ones, are best thought of as inherited collections of feeling, thinking, and doing that are passed down through generations and, just as important, consist of the active and often contentious process of transmitting what has been handed down. In other words, a performance tradition is that body of knowledge, including techniques of performance, texts, and aesthetic principles or rules or assumptions, which constitutes and defines what the particular genre is, and it is simultaneously the process of handing that knowledge on from one generation to another . . . even so the term ancient theatre is not that ossified in Indian practice. (4)

In this sense, tradition refers to the collective assembly of different processes and features that have been transmitted from generation to generation together with the changes added by each time and group. Therefore, tradition does not offer a pejorative nuance of immobility or, as Richmond et al. state, ossification.

the beginning of their seminal book *Post-Colonial Drama. Theory, Practice, Politics* (1993). In their own words, “[their] text does not include Indian drama to any great detail Since its history/practice is extremely complex [and] it is impossible to do justice to Indian drama in a broadly comparative study. Moreover, the varieties of drama, dance, languages, and cultures that have influenced Indian theatre are too vast to consider in a text other than one devoted to just India” (7). Here, Indian drama gathers, as a postcolonial geographical construction, the South Asian *interconnecting* and *interconnected* varieties of theatre, dance and cultures that have taken place in the South Asian Subcontinent and that were studied in Chapter I. At this point, I have used the adjectives *interconnecting* and *interconnected* to rescue the concept of the Indian Palimpsest that was used in Chapter I to explain the connivance and influence of cultures along the Hindu Valley for centuries.

Accordingly, South Asian performing arts tradition must be understood as a composite of *interconnecting* and *interconnected* performing arts expressions of music, dance and theatre. US scholars Farley P. Richmond et al. illustrate this concept when they state:

We must remember the many layers of influence that have shaped India's cultural life: the classical roots, preceded by rites and ritual practices belonging to ancient belief systems, some of which have deep roots in the Middle East, the folk cultures, welded to village settings, as much a part of the land as the land is part of them; and finally, the modern urban environment. (3)

Similarly, Indian scholar Utpal Kumar Banerjee exposes that “music, dance and theatre have coexisted for millennia in India and have entered the 21st century in their full glory” (1). Thence, these scholars define South Asian performing arts tradition⁶ as a mosaic of

⁶ I am using performing arts as Richmond et al. who assert:

The words theatre and performance are used interchangeably, because Indian theatre is not confined to neat, narrow categories. In India, despite the English modern theatre, the differences are known by

cultures and traditions that still influences contemporary artistic productions and media. Banerjee reflects on how “cinema has thrived on the interplay of all the performing arts” (1), therefore illustrating how cinema has emerged out from the interplay of the many forms of the performing arts in the South Asian Subcontinent and so cinema will be understood as a performing art form within these pages.

It is in this regard that for a thorough study of South Asian performing arts tradition, one must assemble a syncretistic understanding of the South Asian historical porosity as explained in Chapter I to be able to recognise the interconnection and interdependence of historical influences and variety of artistic forms. This inclusive approach to South Asian performing arts must be done beyond what Indian and Spanish philosopher and theologian Raimon Panikkar⁷ calls “the cultural tourism of the fascination for the Oriental world as a personal getaway” (1999: 7) or what Richmond et al. define as an *Orientalist* (Said 1979) perspective when trying to classify South Asian performing arts. In their own words:

[Like] the culture from which it springs, Indian theatre holds many intriguing mysteries for foreign writers, prompting them to dig for treasures that are seemingly endless . . . Selective, not reductive . . . The reader will also note that we have expanded the boundaries of what is usually called “theatre” in the West, since those boundaries . . . can blind us to the possibility of finding something other than our own reflections when we explore. (xi)

Thence, this section introduces some theoretical notions about the South Asian performing arts tradition in order to understand some of its elements. The aim is to later identify why Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair's hybrid films use these narratives with a subversive aim as

genre-specific names in their local languages and endless stream of names, each with its own history and reasons for having been given that name. . . . There is no theatre versus dance. (3-4)

⁷ It is important to bear in mind that Panikkar's father fought against the British Empire as a member of the Indian army and escaped to Spain to guarantee his own survival. I would like to give importance to the theoretical legacy granted by Raimon Panikkar (1918-2010) to the study of India's multiplicity and recall his importance for future studies that are produced from Spain as his importance around the world has been publically recognised but somehow his importance within Spanish boundaries has been ignored.

opposed to other contemporary artistic representations that use the same elements but with a derogatory *Orientalist* objective. In other words, this section will let us later analyse why the use of dance, music or mudras in Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* or in Chadha's *Pride and Prejudice* is subversive and different to the exotica feeling found in Hollywood productions such as, for instance, US director Daisy von Scherler Mayer's *The Guru of Love* (2002)⁸.

Therefore, I will focus on the cultural and genre plurality that, according to Indian professor Ananda Lal⁹'s pioneering work *Theatres of India* (2009), defines the South Asian performing arts tradition. As read in Lal's study, understanding South Asian tradition implies overcoming the labelling fascination that he calls the "Western scholarship obsession with traditional Asian forms of performance" (3). In view of these words, it is important to gather the common core of the South Asian performing arts practise and then understand the regional differences without forgetting the original source of tradition. Similarly, US scholar Ralph Yarrow follows Lal's remarks when he wonders, "What does a theatre practitioner come to India looking for? . . . What is it that seemed to be lacking in the Western understanding of the nature and function of theatre?" (4, 8). His answer proves itself very enlightening: "Liminality, plurality, physicality and transcendence" (8). These four terms are very important to understand the inclusion of South Asian tradition performing elements in Nair and Chadha's hybrid films with a clear target: that of empowering a new description of female South Asian characters in the diaspora bearing in mind the holistic sense of the South Asian performing experience where dance, music and acting cannot be split. In my opinion, the connivance of these

⁸ Von Scherler Mayer's *The Guru of Love* tells the story of an Indian dance teacher that reaches the US to train in Indian dance but that soon discovers the economic possibilities of stereotyping and reducing its culture to monolithic clichés that would sell him as a mystic guru of sex and love. Thus, he starts to market his own Indianness forgetting his roots for a mere economic objective. The film was a complete economic failure and the reviews complained about the racist approach to South Asian arts carried out in the film.

⁹ Indian director and scholar Ananda Lal oriented my research period in Kolkata in 2011.

South Asian narrative elements in the new possibilities granted in the diaspora space is what makes Nair and Chadha's female characters both pioneering and empowering.

For instance, to understand the evolution of Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* the spectator must recognise the many nuances that Indian actress Tabu embroiders together to play the role of Ashima and expresses the inner struggle of the character to include her South Asian identity with the new reality that she is living as a US citizen. It is then important to recognise Ashima's South Asian ways of communicating through colours, music and ways of looking at the camera as acting elements that guarantee in any performance the liminality, plurality, physicality and transcendence that Yarrow talks about. It is in this sense that when Ashima sings alone on the terrace of her house in Kolkata in the final scene of the movie she recognises that she will be able to live and move from India to the US every six months because she has understood that, if she expresses herself through her own cultural hybridity, she will be able to recognise, encounter and subvert the social and personal burdens that she had imposed on herself for being a South Asian woman. She now can move freely from one place to another place because she can articulate herself through a mixture of performing arts languages that guarantees a holistic performance where narrative elements are not divided but simply allowed to coexist, without limits, on screen.

Therefore, the holistic performance of Indian actress Tabu in the role of Ashima conveys the four features that Yarrow identified within the South Asian performing arts traditions. Firstly, it is liminal because Ashima expresses her emotional inhabitancy of many places at the same time: she lives in the US and works there to feed her family although she is spiritually rooted in India. This is how, in the end of the movie, she recognises that she is a woman free from national boundaries and so she can live without frontiers, just as her name means the one living without frontiers, a limen in itself.

Secondly, Ashima is a plural character because at the end of the movie she recognised that she is one woman made out of many, a mother of children, an Indian woman and a US citizen that can work and feed a family. Also, she is a woman able to live in many places and to express herself through different languages. Thirdly, Tabu's performance is physical because she conveys emotions through the ways she looks at the camera, how she nods her face towards Ashok or how she behaves in her wedding or in her husband's wake. Fourthly, Tabu's performance is transcendent because Ashima discovers herself beyond the limits of the ordinary burdens that were imposed on her due to her race and gender and is able to empower her daughter Sonia and her US co-worker Sally. And Tabu shares all these deep emotions through her body language and use of colours.

Here, the necessity to identify those gestures or colours has been proven necessary to understand which narrative elements and techniques from the South Asian performing arts tradition are included in Chadha and Nair's movies. I consider it very important to trace the origin of the theoretical background of the South Asian techniques used in the movies and so I will now study Bharata Muni's *Natyasastra* because it is the historical compendium of South Asian performing arts that, under the promise of unity in diversity, details the performing arts South Asian techniques. Afterwards, I will detail how these acting elements guarantee empathy and communion between actor/actress and spectator and why this is important to portray South Asian women in the diaspora space. Then, I will identify the importance given in South Asian tradition to the physicality of the performance to convey the character's emotions as the core element through which empowering characters such as Ashima express themselves to awaken the subverting possibilities for South Asian female dwellers of the diaspora space to find a space and an identity that compiles their own heterogeneity.

1.1 A PERFORMING ARTS COMPILATION OF PLURALITY AND UNITY IN DIVERSITY: BHARATA MUNI'S *NATYASAstra*

Twentieth century performing arts Western renovators looked at the South Asian tradition with an assumption that the South Asian performing arts experience was “holy” (Brook 1973; Grotowski 1968), “cruel” (Artaud 1938) and “sacred” (Genet 1942). They claimed that South Asian performing arts allowed the influx of different genres and heterogeneous artistic practices. Likewise, they studied Bharata Muni's *Natyasastra*¹⁰ as the single treaty which gathered the porosity of forms and practices of performing arts in the South Asian Subcontinent. Figures such as Peter Brook or Jerzy Grotowski sought in the *Natyasastra* for new artistic practices that enlarged the interdisciplinary nature of the Western artistic experience of drama from the 1960s onwards through the combination of different genres and artistic practices such as dance, masks or dance on stage.

In this context, I believe that the study of the *Natyasastra* is paradigmatic to learn why elements of South Asian tradition appear in contemporary works of art such as Peter Brook¹¹ or Antonin Artaud¹²'s plays, Pina Bausch's choreographies¹³ or Chadha and Nair's hybrid films. In my opinion, this Western recognition and use of elements from ancient Indian tradition adds a postcolonial commitment that defies previous monolithic and

¹⁰ Bharata Muni, considered a sage in South Asian tradition, receives the name of Bharata whenever he is addressed. Hence, I will use the same reference and will refer to him as Bharata.

¹¹ His rewriting in the form of play (released in the Avignon Theatre Festival in 1985) and film (1989) of the epic *Mahabharata* gathered different styles and genres from different parts of India.

¹² As Rustom Bharucha explains in the greatly researched and empowering *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture*, Artaud was “drawn to and bewildered by (Indian) cultural stimuli, including Yoga, oriental religions, drugs, magic, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, mysticism, acupuncture, astrology. In his eclectic, almost frantic need to absorb non-western cultures, he decontextualised their realities within the incandescence of his vision” (sic 14).

¹³ Pina Bausch's company travelled to Kerala (South of India) to find inspiration for the piece *Bamboo Blues*, released in May 2007. The influence was such that a whole display of bharatanatyam steps (regional dance from the South of India), clothes and gestures modelled the piece.

restrictive Western cultural canons that had previously ridiculed the South Asian performing arts tradition.

I believe that using narrative elements from non-Western performing arts tradition to describe Western realities is a way to fight against existent forms of imperialism because these artistic creations acknowledge the inherent porosity of South Asian tradition. Richmond et al. illustrate this junction of different narrative elements and artistic forms:

[There is in the Indian tradition] *a convergence or synthesis of music, dance, and drama*. As in other traditional forms of Asian performance, the arts are a composite set of skills, practiced by a team of artists who, through the creation of verbal, vocal aural, spatial, and visual patterns, create a total performance. Given this intermingling of the arts, it is not surprising that many forms of Indian performance do not fit into Western Categories [such as] Music and bodily movements . . . actors and dancers. (18, my emphasis)

Accordingly, *Natyasastra* defines music, dance and drama traits as intertwined performing factors. The performing arts experience is therefore understood in South Asian tradition as a holistic participation of different languages and genres. So, Bharata describes in *Natyasastra* how a performing arts act functions on stage and what the aim of the performance itself is. If Brook or Grotowski searched in the pages of the *Natyasastra* for elements in their quest for new theatrical languages (Maillard 14; González Cruz 12), I believe that it is important to understand the elements from South Asian tradition gathered by Bharata Muni and used by filmmakers Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair to implement their own postcolonial contestation in their films throughout a narrative language born out of an innate plurality and hybridity of cultural forms.

Bharata assembled a treaty of thirty six or thirty seven¹⁴ chapters¹⁵ on performing arts issues in Sanskrit around the 2nd century BD¹⁶ (Rangacharya xv; González Cruz 30). His objective was that of collecting the plurality of the performing arts to guarantee some *unity in diversity* for performing arts practitioners. In other words, he compiled the diversity of “a miscellany of techniques, features, instruments and artistic practices for music, dance and acting techniques for the construction and performance of a play” (Rangacharya i) in the unity of a single treaty. The treaty is written as if dictated by God because, as he explains in Chapter I (entitled “The Origin of Natya”), the performing arts form would commemorate the victory of Hindu god Indra over different demons that scared gods and humans alike. After that victory, Indra claimed that the art of performance would declare that the gods will always win over demons and that light would reign over darkness. Similarly, the series of performing techniques that Bharata shared across *Natyasastra*'s pages would enlighten human beings to move towards light to derogate darkness. This is how Bharata explains the purpose of the offering of Indri's teaching to Hindu god Brahman. As he states:

To show good and bad actions and feelings of both the gods and [the performers and audiences]. It is the representation of . . . the ways of the world involving . . . various emotions and different circumstances. It gives you peace, entertainment and happiness, as well as beneficial advice based on the actions of high, low and middle people. It brings rest and peace to persons afflicted by sorrow or fatigue or grief or helplessness. There is no art, no knowledge, no yoga, and no action that is not found in natty. (Rangacharya 5)

¹⁴ Some editions encompass the thirty six original chapters whereas others gather latter additions that did not appear in the original treaty.

¹⁵ The titles of the Chapters are taken from Rangacharya's edition (2010).

¹⁶ *Natyasastra* is likely to have been shared orally since the 7th or 8th century BC (Maillard and Pujol 7; Rangacharya iii) and probably written down not by Bharata but by his disciples, namely, Kohala, Vātsya, Śāṅḍilya and Dattila, who are mentioned also as children of the sage (Rangacharya xvii).

Natyasastra includes different theoretical and practical chapters such as “The Worship of the Stage and of the Gods, The Acting of the Subordinate Parts of the Body” (Chapter VIII), “The Stage Walk of Characters” (Chapter XIII), “The Metrical Patterns” (Chapter XVI), “Rules on the Use of Languages” (Chapters XVIII and Chapter XIX), “The Outward Characterization of Men and Women” (Chapter XXV), “The Success of a Production” (Chapter XXVII), “The Instrumental Music” (XXVII) or “Distribution of Roles” (Chapter XXXV). This list of chapters suggests the different disciplines and techniques compiled by Bharata that will be explained more in detail in Chapter V of this dissertation when identifying them in Nair and Chadha’s selected films.

Thus, *Natyasastra* offers a compendium of technical and artistic tools for performers to enhance communication between performer and audience during the performing arts act. Spanish scholar Iván González Cruz, first translator of the whole *Natyasastra* into Spanish in 2013, states that *Natyasastra* entails the essence of performing arts poetics (1) and Spanish scholars Chantal Maillard and Óscar Pujol contextualise it as the treaty that ensures the composition and performance of a true theatrical experience created by both performers and audience (8). Theatrical experience is understood as encompassing both the audience and the performer together, without distinctions. For that reason, *Natyasastra* groups performing arts practices that relish empathy between performer and audience in order to promise the freedom and participation of both in the experience facilitated by the performance itself.

Beyond this remark, the performance experience in the South Asian tradition follows the recommendations given in the *Natyasastra* on the basis that the performer can liberate him/herself from his/her own artistic ego. Bharata describes the techniques that can help the performer obtain that liberation and so he studies which metrical patterns can be used (Chapter XVI), how a female character can express youthful enjoyment (Chapter

XXV), which gestures represent garlands and visible objects (Chapter XXVI) or which different impersonations of a king may be possible in a performance (Chapter XXXV). The purpose behind is that the performer makes use of certain rules and procedures to connect his/her acting with something beyond his/her own artistic clichés. The recommendations work as a scaffolding that foster a communion between performer and audience facilitated because the performer voids him/herself to create the meaning of the performing arts together with the spectator.

Bharata wrote *Natyasastra* in the form of a series of questions uttered by a sage to Bharata. Bharata responds succinctly to guarantee the understanding that performance and the language of drama should keep a holy nature that did not promote any social division and that encouraged everybody to participate in what was represented on stage. Consequently, the act of the performing arts (Natya in Sanskrit) is a realm that gathered feelings, stories, teachings and, most importantly, a universal process of sharing. *Natyasastra* approaches the performing experience as a ritual practice in order to facilitate empathy between audience and performers because Bharata acknowledges that the inner truth of any performance should be that of facilitating the connection of the performer and the audience with universal truth through different artistic practices that range from singing and dancing to representing an excerpt from the holy scriptures through hand gestures only. *Natyasastra* then provides recommendations in different fields within the performing arts so that audience and performers bind in a universal and divine moment of communion that links many artistic practises such as theatre, dance, music or mime. This interconnection of genres can be seen in Nair and Chadha's hybrid films and therefore I now consider relevant to look at, for instance, the Mehndi scene (ritual when all female relatives and friends of the bride apply henna on the hands) in Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001).

The scene starts when all women invite Aditi, the bride of the wedding who has had her marriage arranged, start singing “oh women of the house, decorate me with henna” (21’). The scene lasts for two minutes and twenty seconds and the women sing and dance combining hand gestures that express the garments that a wife is expected to wear for the ceremony. After, they explain the story behind the song, “Madhorama Penchan”, which tells the story of how a girl can choose the man that she desires to be married with without paying attention to the social imposition of her family. Dance and storytelling are embroidered alongside the song because it is the way all these women around Aditi want to let her know that all of them went through the same experience when they were younger but now she can decide if she accepts him or not.

The women overlook the garden of the house where the marriage will take place and, somehow, it is as if they were on a stage, inviting the audience sitting in the cinema to tap and dance with them. Thus, we see the interconnection of different performing arts genres such as dance, music and mime together to gather a powerful performing experience in which, nevertheless, Aditi does not seem to participate. However, this is not true because Aditi shares her feelings of isolation and incredulity through the ways she looks at the women and the faded colours that she has chosen to be dressed in for the henna ceremony. At the same time, the ritual practice of the Mehndi ceremony echoes and illustrates the history of Hinduism where the bride is accompanied to the wedding by all her female friends and relatives alongside all the Hindu gods and goddesses that will guarantee the fulfilment of the wedding arrangement. The fact that the bride is sheltered by her beloved ones singing and dancing songs and religious chants guarantees, according to *Natyasastra* (Chapter XXII) that the wife is in full high spirits and so she will connect with the divine power around her and bring good luck to the ceremony. However, Aditi will make use of this festive atmosphere and the feeling of being backed by her family and friends to talk to

and split up with her lover (a liar and corrupted man) and get to know the man with whom her family has arranged her marriage (and that would prove to be an honest man).

Moreover, according to the origin of the performing arts transcribed in the *Natyasastra*, performance is a communion of divine nature among gods, performers and audience that grants light and so it is also an activity without social divisions where everybody connects beyond his/her own reality. Connection here relates to that moment of communion among performers, audience and also the different gods and goddesses. This idea has been discussed in relation to Aristotle's concept of catharsis but elevated in a further step¹⁷ because the revelation or recognition does not happen within oneself but beyond him/herself agglutinating it as an experience shared by performers and audience. Likely, Bharata envisaged *Natyasastra* as a way to encode the *Natya Veda* (the Fifth of the Holy Scriptures). Gonzalez Cruz develops this idea when he states that "Bharata understood his own work not only as the Treaty of the Performing Arts but also as the way to teach in a systematically encoded manner the *Natya Veda* that had been revealed by the Gods and Goddesses to Himself" (25, my translation). Etymologically, *Veda* means scripture and *natya* refers to "the theatrical dance art of India originating in the temple and still devoted largely to the enactment of divine epics and embracing an elaborate system of body postures, hand gestures, and foot movements" (*Merriam-Webster Online*) and "the union of drama, dance and music" (Rangacharya 1).

It is in this holistic sense of the performing experience that dance, music and acting cannot be split. As Bharata explains in *Natyasastra*: "[It] is impossible . . . to know all about natya since there is no limit to bhava-s (emotions) and no end to the arts involved (in natya)" (Rangacharya 53). Other forms of communication such as hand gestures (mudras in

¹⁷ R. L. Singal (1977), Rama Nand Rai (1992) and Sergio Armando Rentería Alejandre (2012) explain with great detail the interconnection and differences between Aristotle and Bharata.

Sanskrit) or rhythmic patterns (thalas in Sanskrit) cannot be obviated either and so they are granted with a full explanation in different chapters of the *Natyasastra*. All these means of expression are also found in the previously explained Mehndi ritual that appears in Nair's *Monsoon Wedding*.

In fact, Western authors started to look at *Natyasastra* in the early 20th century to look for the South Asian ways of expression that facilitated new expressive possibilities through hand gestures and musical patterns. For instance, French actor Benoît-Constant Coquelin (1841-1909); Russian actor, director and theatrical technician Vsévolod Meyerhold (1874-1940); German playwright, poet and director Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956); US citizen, Ukrainian born, director, producer and actor Israel "Lee" Strasberg (1901-1982); Polish director and writer Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999); British director Peter Brook (1925-) or Italian director Eugenio Barba (1936-) studied *Natyasastra* to find new ways of expression in their works. Chantal Maillard beautifully illustrates why these performing arts theorists looked at South Asian tradition. In her own words,

The concept of beauty was obsolete in the Western World after the avant-garde [movements]. The arts critics had started to focus on efficacy rather than the artistic purpose per se . . . something that in India never happened [because] the aims or art are linked to the values of tradition that can be linked to the Latin word *religare* (re-join) . . . for Natya is a reunion, a Yoga (from the Sanskrit root *Yug-*) meaning communion among body, soul and spirit. (14, my translation)

Thus, performance is, according to Bharata, innately homeopathic, as it gives "courage to cowards, firmness to sad persons, relief to grieving" (Rangacharya 35). So it is seen in the Mehndi ceremony that takes place in *Monsoon Wedding*, because the ritual makes Aditi react and start talking to her fiancée and, most importantly, end the affair that she has with her lover because, through the inspiration of art, she feels the support of her family and friends together with her own power to choose, as the lines in the song "Madhorama Penchan" says that she would only find what she truly wants merely if she looks for it. In

this case, Aditi would decide to know more about her fiancée to see if the arrangement will be adequate or not. In fact, this is an act of courage if we look at the traditional background of the Verma family that, after this scene, would soon start to crack down unveiling secrets that had been oppressing the women within the house as the uncle who had abused Ria and that Ria finally denounces when she sees how Aditi has decided to move ahead and decide for herself if she would accept her fiancée.

Therefore, performing arts can be seen as a healing and nurturing experience, as Maillard and Pujol, Gilbert and Tompkins, Brook or Barrios (2010) point out. Maillard beautifully summarises it when she states that “performance (as experience of *Natya*: drama, music and dance) is something that promotes to know, feel and apprehend knowledge about different worlds and the many people within those many worlds” (48, my translation). It is in this sense that, quoting González Cruz, *Natyasastra* teaches how the practice of the performing arts “improves and facilitates life” (58, my translation), fostering a “process of self-knowledge . . . where the different parts of one human being reunite in the experience of totality granted by the performing arts act” (15, 57, my translation). This is clearly the case in the Mehndi Ritual scene as it combines different genres (music, dance and drama) and narrative techniques (hand gestures, musical rhythms or different ways of looking) under the same cinematographic format. Also, the ritual interconnects the different women of the Verma together (whether they are living in India or in the diaspora) granting them a common ground of collaboration that would show support, for the first time in the history of the family, both Aditi and Ria’s rebellions against the patriarchal order of the family.

Consequently, I consider that *Natyasastra* is relevant for postcolonial studies because it allows many narratives to coexist together and it creates a communion among performers and audience. In this sense, the previous scene of the Mehndi ritual is

representative of the use of different performing arts languages on screen that otherwise would have been defined as instances of, as explained in Chapter II, "Indian cinema" (Kasbekar 1996) or "Third World cinema" (Elena 1999). In my opinion, these two categories were derogatory when they took Chadha and Nair's films into consideration because they only focused on analysing the Indian otherness in movies that try to integrate different cultural traits of characters who live in a diaspora space where cultural hybridity is defined by the connivance of both western and South Asian elements without privileging one another. Here, Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* and the Mehndi scene express the cultural hybridity in which characters such as Ria and Aditi live. Thus, we see that Chadha and Nair's selected films are hybrid movies that interconnect different cultures and several performing arts languages with the subversive aim of offering new cultural descriptions where South Asian women are active denouncers of patriarchal structures of domination in the diaspora space and the homelands.

It is in this inclusive understanding of arts that Bharata states that performance is not based on a relation of power where actors/actresses stand over the audience. Instead, the experience of art is a shared event based on the notion of equality and *Natyastra* promotes this sense of fairness by making the performers aware of how to improve their acting techniques to facilitate interaction with the audience. Likewise, Nair and Chadha use elements from the daily life of these women to tell their stories and so they guarantee that the real inhabitants of the diaspora space can relate to the pioneering decisions of Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* or Asha in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach*. Here, the narrative elements taken from South Asian tradition (such as inclusion of songs, dance, storytelling or acting techniques based on colours or ways of looking) guarantee that any South Asian woman can relate and experience empathy towards the revolutionary decisions made by these characters. It is here important to recall that Chapter IV will detail how Nair and Chadha's

hybrid films challenge gender structures imposed on South Asian women in, for instance, access to academic education or freedom to choose one's partner.

Thence, having described the importance and relevance of the *Natyasastra*, it is essential to describe what exactly is defined as empathy in Bharata's work to understand another nuance of why it is so important for South Asian postcolonial artists such as Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha to include elements from the South Asian performing arts tradition. In order to do so, I will now define *rasa*, the Sanskrit concept of empathy in South Asian performing arts, and later I will detail how *rasa* is created through the repetition of different gestures and emotions on stage.

1.2 PERFORMING ARTS AS EMPATHY AND COMMUNION: THE EXPERIENCE OF RASA¹⁸

Reality, as conceived in the Vedic tradition, is nothing manifested but a representation of the Universe. Then, a performance is a representation of the universal realm through a transformation that takes place on earth and occurs by combining different elements that are embroidered in the performance itself. That transformation is shared by performers, audience and gods and it is based on the empathy that is fostered through the agglutination of different emotions. In Bharata's words, "there is no *natya* without *rasa*" (Rangacharya 54). Then, *rasa* is the reaction and the communion of the spectator with the emotion shared

¹⁸ The approach to *rasa* taken by this dissertation is informative and so I have tried to move beyond Sanskrit concepts that did not clarify the term *rasa* in relation to the common experience of performers and audience but described the intricacy of *rasa* only in aesthetic principles. I believe that that would be the source of a purely Indological work. It needs to be remembered that this dissertation is rooted in Cultural and Postcolonial Studies and so it aims at transferring meaning in the clearest language as possible. This is the reason why terms such as *nispati*, *samyoga*, *anubhava*, *vyabhicaribhava*, *karika*, *nirukta* or *viabhicari* (Sancari) are not referred to in the following pages.

by the performer. In this sense, the real message of the play emerges as an act of empathy among the performers and audience. Likewise, Bharata states: "The moment when the actor, by his detailed acting, makes us feel that he is in such and such a condition is recognised as the [acting of emotions] and our reaction to his condition in the next moment is called *rasa*. Because of this *extreme contiguity* of [acting of emotions] and *rasa*, one is equated to the other" (62, my emphasis). Here, the notion of extreme contiguity that Bharata Muni illustrates situates the performing arts as a shared practice that unveils a spiritual, mystical and intuitive experience.

Rasa is understood as the result of the unity that emerges out of the performing arts experience. Therefore, *rasa* enhances a close association between actors and the audience in a spiritual union that it is defined in the *Rig Veda*¹⁹ as "cow's milk, water and amrit [spiritual nectar granted by gods and goddesses after meditation]" (Pujol 72, my translation). Similarly, in *Ayurveda**, *rasa* is "the result of the chemical reduction of metals, minerals and natural remedies as they are healing essences" (Maillard 19, my translation). Here, *rasa* gathers a healing nuance that reminds us of the primitive homeopathic and holy nature of drama that is also described in *Natyasastra* and that was explained in the previous section of this chapter.

It is in this sense that Bharata compares *rasa* with the combination of spices and food, an effect achieved when "various condiments and sauces and herbs and other materials are mixed [as] a taste is felt" (55). In Bharata's own words:

This enjoyment, this taste appears as when people eat prepared food mixed with different condiments and sauces. If they are sensitive, they enjoy the different tastes and then feel pleasure or satisfaction. Likewise, sensitive spectators, after enjoying the various expressions expressed by the actors through words, gestures

¹⁹ One of the four classic *Vedas** before *Natya Veda* was given to Bharata.

and feelings feel pleasure or satisfaction. This final feeling is here explained as (various) *rasa*-s of *natya*. (55)

In my own words, *rasa* is the act of communion that happens in the experience of performance, a transformation of all the factors that take place in the performance (and that are various, from technical to divine, as detailed in the *Natyasastra*) into a common experience enjoyed by performers and audience alike²⁰. As Indian dancer Sohini Roychowdhury Dasgupta asserts: “*Rasa* is a process shared by audience and performer and based on empathy and emotion shared by performer and spectator beyond personal egos or intelligence because *rasa* means tasting and not thinking” (2014). Likewise, *rasa* refers to the notion of experiencing without mental activity, feeling performance without a proscenium distance.

This interaction between performer and audience is what struck the attention of Western theatre scholars in the second half of the twentieth century. For instance, Jerzy Grotowski found in the South Asian tradition and the concept of *rasa* the source to justify and explain that “theatre is an encounter, the possibility to recreate” and so “the strength of great works really consists in their catalytic effect” because, in Grotowsky’s own words, “[these works] open doors for us, set in motion the machinery of our self-awareness” (55, 57). As Grotowski studied the limitations inherent to the Western proscenium innate to the nineteenth century drama, he focused on the “gradual elimination of everything superfluous [which may be everything but] the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, ‘live’ communion” (19). He explained this idea when referring to his version of the South Asian classic *Shakuntala* (4th c. AD), by Indian writer Kalidasa, that he staged as a way to confront the myth to share “an experience of common human truth [that is based on] the

²⁰ There have been different approaches to *rasa* that have also been discussed traditionally departing from Bharata’s conception of *rasa*. Scholars such as Bhat (1984), Maillard (2003) or Muller-Ortega (1997) have made comprehensive studies about this topic for further studies.

equation of personal, individual truth with universal truth" (23). I believe that these remarks established the theoretical and practical start of Grotowski's concept of *Poor Theatre*, where performance is an act of transgression only based on the *rasa* that emerges during the performance.

In this sense, and with the interconnection of different performing practices such as dance, mime, live music and acting in plays like *Dr Faustus* (1971), Grotowski ensured "the theatre's new testament" as the means to "recreate, research [and perform], an infiltration into human nature itself" (27). As Spanish scholar Olga Barrios points out, "Jerzy Grotowski's theories [meant] the break with the realist tradition: emphasising improvisation, storytelling, music, songs, dance and the participation of the audience" (2002: 258, my translation), an idea that will be furthermore explained in more detail to illustrate why the practice of postcolonial performing arts is an artistic exercise that disestablishes the colonial, racial and gender imposed structures of domination (Gilbert and Tompkins; Spivak 1995a). I believe that Nair and Chadha embrace this challenging and healing essence of the performing arts as both of them were practitioners of performing arts as previously explained in Chapter I and so I also think that both use and foster this notion of *rasa* in their films. Besides, I recognise that these theatrical elements from South Asia appear in their movies to illustrate that the subverting changes proposed by these characters are feasible and can be weaved by the whole community of women in the diaspora space.

Consequently, the recognition of *rasa* in Chadha and Nair's films will explain the change of roles for South Asian women in the diaspora empowered in their movies. Thus, the empathy created with the audience and the whole South Asian community by characters such Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* or Lalita in Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* through hand gestures, use of colours or songs will be representative of the healing nature that, as will be described in Chapter IV, allows a collaborative network where women can nurture

each other and, by so doing, they can emerge as examples for mutual citizenship in the diaspora space.

Here, it is important to describe and identify the eight rasas as they are mentioned in *Natyasastra* to furthermore analyse its representation in Chadha and Nair's films. The eight classical rasas²¹ are identified with eight colours and deities that correspond to eight basic inherent states of the soul. According to *Natyasastra*, these basic states are:

Srngaram: Love. Expressed in light green. Presiding deity: Vishnu.
 Raudram: Fury. Expressed in red. Presiding deity: Rudra.
 Bibhatsam: Disgust. Expressed in blue. Presiding deity: Shiva.
 Viram: Heroic mood. Expressed in gold. Presiding deity: Indra.
 Hasyam: Laughter. Expressed in white. Presiding deity: Pramata.
 Karunyam: Compassion. Expressed in grey. Presiding deity: Yama.
 Bhayanakam: Horror. Expressed in black. Presiding deity: Kala.
 Adbhutam: Wonder. Expressed in yellow. Presiding deity: Brahma.
 (Rangacharya 54)

The four latter categories emerge from the first set of four and refer to the feelings created by the impact that the representation has both on the performer and on the audience. The spectator participates in the performance and enhances the feeling that is being shared by the actors and actresses through a series of looks, hand gestures and rhythms that the performer may use to stimulate a particular rasa. A visual description of the different eight rasas as performed by Bharatanatyam Indian classical dancer Sohini Roychowdhury can be seen in Image 12 in the *Appendix of Images*.

Chantal Maillard points out that “these eight rasas are produced by connecting to the performance strategies used by the performer as well as by the active participation of the audience” (77, my translation). For instance, laughter (Hasyam rasa) is expressed by “expanded or blown lips, nose, cheeks and wide-staring and contracted eyes. It may

²¹ Other sources identify eleven rasas, adding Santam (Peace), Vatsalya (Parental Love) and Bhakti (devotion).

involved a disfiguration of dress and may use gestures referring to tears flowing from eyes, sleep, laziness or awakening, as these states normally involve some kind of humorous condition” (Rangacharya 58-9). Therefore, the teachings within *Natyasastra* are very useful to foster this communion that produces rasa and which is, according to South Asian tradition, the final objective of the artistic experience. Here, the way Mina looks at the camera in the beginning of Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala* (1991) and the colours she chooses to be dressed in during different scenes of the movie convey a meaning that aims to awaken a reaction in the audience (connected with Srngaram, Raudram and Viram rasa). Similarly, Asha in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* places her hands in different positions when talking to the British man in Brighton with a clear intention that reinforces the specific rasa that illustrates the love and laughter (Srngaran and Hasya rasa) that she feels towards the British gentleman that carefully ushers her around the gardens of the town as opposed to the violent treatment that she has always received from her husband and children.

At this point, the reader may wonder if the transmission of rasa changes regionally and if a spectator with no knowledge of the eight rasas can participate in the performing arts experience. *Natyasastra* describes that there are “four languages/dialects²² of style for the performance” (Rangacharya 54) and that the actor must be able to “know and express these variations according to the region of [the] audience” (62). Likewise, the fact of not being familiarised with the eight rasas or the meaning of the colours, mudras, ways of looking or other specific techniques does not interfere in the communion of the spectator with the performer. It may happen that, resuming the metaphor used by Bharata related to cooking, the spectator may not be able to name the condiment in the sauce. However, he or

²² Avanti (from the state of Madhya Pradesh), Orissi (from Orissa and some areas in West Bengal), Daksinatya (from Deccan) and Magadhi (from Bengal and Bihar).

she should not be deterred from the pleasure of tasting the performance because, as Indian sage Abhinavagupta (900 AD) states, “tasting rasa is like going through one’s self” (qtd. in Panikkar 7, my translation). The important thing is not to review colours or feelings but to connect and become a part of what Maillard identifies as “the performance as an interconnected web of factors” (45, my translation). Thence, the performing experience is not about judging but about feeling and tasting. It is not about a cultural identification but about what Maillard calls “a progressive loss of personification” (86, my translation) to connect with the emotion shared by the performance.

Rasa and the performing arts experience can be interpreted in the South Asian tradition as the common pleasure of tasting a universal truth (understanding universal truth as a common experience) through a myriad of techniques and performing arts languages (referring to the whole set of cultural and hybrid diversity of dance, storytelling and theatre or music forms). Accordingly, this universal experience is portrayed in scenes like the end of Nair’s *The Namesake*, where Ashima enjoys her freedom by playing sitar and singing alongside a group of performers on her return to Kolkata. Also, the wedding celebration in Chadha’s *Bend It like Beckham* (2002) is paradigmatic of this trend as Pinky fulfils her dream of getting married into a love marriage and sings and dances to a song that is a medley of Bollywood and pop rhythms. Both characters portrayals allow the coalescence of different genres and narrative elements that make the spectator participant in the scenes by connecting and tapping along with the songs and dances of the characters. The audience, therefore, tastes, enjoys and gets together with the message shared by Chadha and Nair through their female characters.

In a nutshell, fostering empathy enhances a deeper meaning of the artistic experience as it searches an experience that unites instead of a divide. So, I believe that it is important to review the strategies that are inherent to the South Asian tradition and that

convey fixed meanings to better understand what characters such as Pinky and Ashima want to share with the audience.

1.3 THE ART OF CONNECTING WITH EMOTIONS: CARRYING BHAVA THROUGH ABHINAYA

In South Asian tradition, a performance tells a story that produces emotions in both the performer and the spectator so as to enhance *rasa*. These emotions receive the name of *bhava* and they are produced, according to *Natyasastra*, “by the words, physical gestures and facial changes of the [performer²³]” (Rangacharya 64). *Bhavas*, Bharata points out, lead to “the emotional meaning of a [performance] which includes words, physical gestures and movements” (64). There are forty-nine *bhavas* that become “the source of expression of the *rasa*-s of poetry” and that are described in Chapter VII of the *Natyasastra* (Rangacharya 66). Eight of the *bhavas* include emotions that correspond to the eight *rasas* but that also embrace a much more detailed catalogue of expressive nuances than that of the *rasas*. For instance, and as found in *Natyasastra*, some of these extra emotions may be languor, (68), fortitude (70), joy (71), forgetfulness (73), dread (75), argumentation (75), stupefaction (76) or feeling thrilled (76).

The production and reception of *bhava* is a universal task available to everyone. In Bharata's own words, “[people] should be able to understand [bhava-s] in everyday life” (65). *Bhava* is the emotion shared by the performer prior to *rasa*, which is the state of the communion that emerges between performer and spectator. The effect of *bhavas* to produce *rasa* is poetically summarized by Bharata when he states: “*Rasa*-s are produced when [bhava-s] are the source of expression of the *rasa*-s . . . and this meaning which touches the

²³ Rangacharya translates it as *poet*.

heart creates rasa; the entire body feels the rasa like fire consuming a drum stick” (65). Then, bhavas are performed by the actors and actresses to start the communication with the audience so that rasa can be articulated. Nevertheless, the question remains, how are bhavas created?

Bhavas are shaped by performers through physical gestures, words and facial expressions. These acting techniques receive the name of abhinaya, etymologically referring to “those which carry toward, abhi referring ‘to carry’ and ni ‘toward’” (Lal 2004: 1). *Natyasastra* provides a systematised guideline to produce these performing techniques (abhinaya) so that actors, as Indian scholar Ananda Lal points out, can “picture through their bodies the emotive states of the characters” (2004: 2). The study of the body and the associated possibilities of expression form at least one fifth of *Natyasastra*: from chapters VIII to XIV, from XVII to XXVII and chapter XXIV. These chapters study the characters’ hand gestures, ways of looking and ways of walking.

The first set of chapters as encompassed in *Natyasastra* (VIII-XIV) refers to the facial, body and whole organism movements that can be performed by the actor/actress, classifying them taking into account whether the performers use major physical parts of the body (head, chest, sides, waist and legs) or minor physical parts of the body (eyes, eyebrows, nose, lower lip, cheeks and chins). They also point at the graceful movements which, based on martial arts and rituals, produce emotions, improvise representations or suggest ways of evoking objects and emotions. A review of movements below the hips is compiled in Chapter XI, as these arrangements of the body are used to illustrate whether the character is on earth or in heaven. Stylised positions of the body (asanas) and gestures of the hands (mudras) are detailed from Chapters XII to XIV.

Chapters XVII to XXVII refer to how body language can be used to recite and render dialogue. For instance, chapter XVII describes how to provide three types of pitch in

relation to the use of chest, throat or head to convey a particular feeling and reaction in the audience. Furthermore, Chapter XXII compares the performer to a perfume maker that little by little adds flowers and nuances to create an engaging fragrance. Besides, the chapter focuses on the garments that a performer may wear to implement a particular meaning within a character such as, for example, a presumptuous character. Here, the metaphor of *rasa* as taste is once again created and so it resonates through the work of current South Asian performers who follow and study the art of *abhinaya* as the basis for their performing careers (Lal 2004: 1-3). For example, contemporary famous Indian dancer Alarmé Valli together with artists and dance companies in the diaspora such as Indian born US resident Ananya Chatterjea and her company Ananyadancetheatre or British from Bangladeshi origin Akram Khan and his company Akram Khan Dance Company explore the possibilities of *abhinaya* and *bhava*, teaching these techniques to the dancers in their companies in search of a deep connection with audiences all over the world.

Thus, the possibilities of producing an illusion of reality through certain *abhinaya* are various and are still explored by performing arts figures such as Peter Brook²⁴, who looks at South Asian tradition to find new performing language that guarantees what, as previously quoted, US scholar Ralph Yarrow recognised as the “liminality, plurality, physicality and transcendence” (8) of the South Asian performance. The use of the physical body to produce specific gestures that convey a particular meaning clearly illustrates the physical importance of the performance of actors and actresses. For instance, Brooks’ adaptation of South Asian epic *Mahabharata* (anonymous, 2nd c.) in the Festival of Avignon in 1985 included a South Asian traditional dancer and a singer who played their

²⁴ He did not only focus on South Asian tradition of *abhinaya* because he soon realised about the similarities of the South Asian performing arts tradition with Kabuki Theatre, Popular Chinese opera or Balinese and Javanese dance techniques. In the end, he used all together in the both cinematographic and theatrical production of *Mahabharata*.

parts through a South Asian classical rendering of gestures. The aim was that of creating an extemporal representation of the *Mahabharata* gathering different performing arts traditions so that the spectator could connect to the universal truth inherent to the play and enjoy the performance assuming that something had changed within him/herself while watching the play.

Similarly, this production of emotions through gestures and positions of the body can also be found in Nair and Chadha's selected films with a postcolonial commitment that mixes genres and narrative elements from different cultures to perform a gender subversion that permeates and empowers socially and artistically all the inhabitants of the diaspora space because they illustrate that the connivance of cultures is possible and enriching. As expressed in Chapter I, it is a fact that both Nair and Chadha were trained in South Asian performing arts tradition. Mira Nair received training in abhinaya as she was a member of the Indian People's Theatre Association during her undergraduate years (Nair 2007c) and then studied a MA on performing arts with Brook disciples at Columbia University in New York. Moreover, Gurinder Chadha has recognised her training in performing arts tradition during her childhood in Kampala and London (Chadha 2005). It is in this sense that I will study in Chapter V how bhavas and abhinayas appear in Chadha and Nair's hybrid films as a language that female characters use to denounce the racial and gender inequalities they live in. I will choose and analyse three bhavas (Laughter, Fear and Wonder) that are performed by the characters in Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair's movies. For instance, I will recognise how Lalita in Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) or Ria in Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) communicate for the first time their anguish and awe through these gestures and how they use it as the initial expressive means to later gather strength and denounce the racist and gendered limitations that, in terms of love, freedom and access

to academic education, were imposed on them by both the homelands and the diaspora welcoming communities.

Thus, this section has illustrated how the South Asian performing arts are not a homogenous genre but a heterogeneous set of performing arts practises that are still used in today's drama, dance and film production. Here, *Natyasastra* has been studied as a common treaty that facilitates the connection between performer and spectator through specific techniques that use the performer's body to connect with the audience. In this sense, connection has been understood in a holistic way as linking mind, body and soul because, if mind connects with heart through *rasa*, then the body enhances with the performer through *abhinaya*. Now, it is time to detail how the soul becomes universalised during the South Asian performing arts experience. In order to understand this statement, the next section will contextualise the notion of soul and the concept of the sacred in South Asian tradition to latter recognise the relevance of the fact that, in Chadha and Nair's selected films, women are the ones leading social and gender changes when they reconnect with their own sacredness.

2- REPRESENTATIONS OF THE SACRED IN SOUTH ASIAN PERFORMING ARTS

In the South Asian tradition there is no such a thing as a separated realm for *the sacred* and a disconnected dominion for *the profane*. In fact, as I stated in Chapter I, there are many religions and spiritual practices in the South Asian Subcontinent and this religious diversity may be, in my opinion, the source of a philosophic multiplicity that is neither sacred nor

profane but universal. Here, I will relate the concept of universal to the collective communion among performer, spectator and the so called sacred realm facilitated through *rasa*. Also, this communion is, for South Asian performing arts tradition, a sacred relation that lets human beings be bound with a sense of totality where all beings are interconnected among themselves and with the supreme entities that are but an expression of every being. In this sense, the present section aims at explaining what sacred means in South Asian Vedanta²⁵ tradition, why the performing arts can connect with the sacred and why Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha use this concept of sacredness in their hybrid films to foster political, social, racial and gender subversion in the diaspora space.

I will acknowledge that although this art aims at making the universal transcendence of all human beings surface as a powerful postcolonial tool that subverts not only old colonial narratives, that the stereotypes are also reinforced by simplistic ways of telling stories. Thence, the study of the how South Asian tradition defines sacredness will allow us to understand how Nair and Chadha empower their characters to reconnect with their own sacredness so that characters such as Hashida in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) or Mina in Nair's *Mississippi Masala* challenge racial and gender limitations that had been imposed on women of the South Asian diaspora when they awaken to their own potentials as inhabitants of the diaspora space.

2.1 THE SACRED IN THE SOUTH ASIAN SUB CONTINENT: A VEDANTA APPROACH

Understanding the concept of sacredness in the South Asian tradition involves contextualising the concept within and outside the South Asian Subcontinent.

²⁵ The *Vedas* are compilations of spiritual wisdom that are considered never to be finished as every age adds its comments and practices.

Academically, the Western interest for the sacred in the twentieth century dates back to German theologian Rudolf Otto's book *The Idea of the Holy (Das Heilige, 1917)* and Romanian philosopher and professor at the University of Chicago Mircea Eliade's seminal study *The Sacred and the Profane (1957)*. Otto and Eliade reconceived the concept of sacredness as something completely detached from the real world, which is only inhabited by objects and human beings that they called natural realities. Nevertheless, this section unveils a different approach to the notion of sacredness. Departing from the South Asian philosophical and religious tradition of Vedanta, I will illustrate sacredness as an inclusive term that will draw a distinction between the spiritual and the real world. By so doing, I will reflect on how the notion of sacredness is understood in South Asian performing arts tradition and the South Asian diaspora as a way of surviving and challenging colonising attempts that tried to destroy or stereotype features about South Asia.

Etymologically, sacredness derives from *sacren* (Middle English), which refers to the act of consecrating and, earlier, from *sancire* (Latin), which denotes the act of making something sacred from a rite. Likewise, the adjective *sacred* is defined on *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* as “worthy of religious worship, set apart for the service or worship of a deity and relating to religion (not secular or profane)”. Accordingly, and as previously stated by Otto and Eliade, the notion of sacred might be reduced to religious concepts that would link its sense only to whatever is considered worthy of religious worship. Under these defining terms, anything that is not subject to be considered worthy of religious worship would be left out of the category and such is not the case in the heterogeneous consideration of the South Asian philosophical tradition and in the hybrid films by Nair and Chadha, where pop music singers, Carnatic classical songs, Bollywood groovy dances and classical steps are interwoven following classical South Asian tradition.

Hence, sacredness needs to be reconceptualised within South Asian traditional terms of Vedanta, where Vedanta refers to the wisdom contained in the *Vedas** as an amalgam of philosophical trends rather than religious practices. According to Vedanta, sacredness refers to the communion among the natural world, a deity/the deities and the human being (Mohandas K. Gandhi xvi-xvii). The resultant inclusive Vedanta understanding considers sacredness as an all-encompassing and innate state for all the three previous categories: the world, god/goddesses/gods/the universe and the human being (Vivekananda). This definition avoids the double categorization proposed by Otto and Eliade that only took into account the existence of a superior religious realm that defined the human being as a mere dependant entity. Actually, this binary approach based on the opposition of worthy or unworthy religious worship proposed by Otto and Eliade is the source of *Orientalist* and exotic representation of the South Asian sacredness in Hollywood films such as already cited Daisy von Scherler Mayer's *The Guru of Love* (2002).

In this film, devotion and respect are only to be granted to superior Hindu deities, never to people or other forms of life on Earth. Likewise, the film illustrates hierarchical offerings of people to different gods and goddesses where women as Sharonna, the character portrayed by US actress Heather Graham, are but mere servants that seem to assume that they have to accept the limiting structures of social domination imposed on them by male superiors for the mere fact of having been born a woman. Sharonna's attitude of conformism because of her lack of self-esteem leads her to think that she cannot change anything in her daily life. Contrarily, I will explain in Chapters IV and V how characters such as Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* or Asha in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* realise that, according to Vedanta terms, they are also sacred creatures that need to learn to esteem themselves and, from then onwards, fight to be recognised and respected equally to men and white Western women as beings that cannot be split into a separate inferior realm.

Thus, Ashima and Asha will be able to understand their inner power, cultivate it and awaken the same in other women of their community so that women can create a collaborative network of self support and diligence that returns to them the sacredness that was concealed from women so that they could be dominated by racial and social structures of discrimination.

It is under these Vedanta notions of sacred unity that I recognise sacredness as the space within each individual that connects with the universal essence of the world, a space where body, mind and soul connect beyond one's limits into a unity that may receive the name of, according to different philosophical trends, God, Universe or Nature. The defining approach holds a holistic theoretical scope that was granted since *Natyasastra* times. Similarly, going into a sacred place or reaching the inner sacred within one's self or the Universe relates to the possibility to connect with Universe, God or Nature that is inherent to every human being. At this juncture, following traditional Vedanta concepts in *The Upanishads*²⁶, religion, temple and divinity need to be understood as within oneself rather than the normal western approach that considers it to be outside oneself.

So, I recognise that the characters of Ashima and Asha in Nair's *The Namesake* and Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* see themselves as part of a reality that they had been previously deprived of for the cultural impositions and restrictions that had been imposed on them and that, respectively, did not allow them to continue with their South Asian traditional singing and dancing hobbies in the diaspora. In this sense, it is through the holistic expression granted by the South Asian performing arts possibility to include song and dance as means of expression that Nair and Chadha illustrate how these characters finally connect with their own sacred power. It will be this reconnection with their innate

²⁶ The version of *The Upanishads* that will be referenced in the dissertation is Félix Llárez and Óscar Puyol's *La sabiduría del bosque. Antología de las principales Upanisads* (2003).

power that will allow them to heal the gender wounds inflicted by both their families and welcoming communities in the diaspora. For example, Ashima is not able to play music in New York with the tight timetables of her job at the library and the education of their children and Asha cannot dance in London because she is expected to take care of the video club and the cooking of the family without leaving home unless it is to pray in the gurudwara (Sikh temple). It is when they break this illusion of separation to what they truly are and love doing that they reconnect with the sacred space within themselves, understanding their own sacredness anew as being within oneself rather than imposed from religious impositions. It is in this sense that religion and temple need to be redefined following Vedanta terms to clarify these concepts.

Religion, deriving from the Latin verb re-ligar (re-join), must be conceptualised as referring to the practice of “binding oneself together to God” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*). As noted before, re-ligar and Yoga (from Sanskrit root Yug-, to link) share the meaning of binding oneself with god and nature towards the Universal, the union of the classic triad of Vedanta (mind, body and soul) to reach the connection with the Supreme beyond sacrifices and empirical ascetic service that, as Llora and Pujol (2003) define, reduce sacredness to religious doctrines. Accordingly, it is only when Asha and Ashima connect their mind, body and soul together that they awaken a collaborative network for all the women around them. When they do so, they are able to create a sacred relationship among the women in their community through which they nurture each other because they recognise the inner power within themselves in social and professional terms within the diaspora space's new offer of possibilities. It is then that South Asian women interweave a collaborative sacred space where they nurture and help each other as, for instance, Asha assists Hashida and Ginger in the last part of Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* and Ashima comforts Sonia and Gogol throughout the last part of Nair's *The Namesake*. Asha and

Ashima undertake this new attitude in the last part of the features because their characters have recognised their inner strengths and decide to contest for their own rights and those of their female counterparts.

It is in this sense that temple needs to be redefined as a sacred space that shelters a Sanctus. Here, Sanctus derives from sancire which refers to the act of establishing and enclosing a sacred area. Temple derives from the Latin roots *templum*, which refers to “the space or circle that Etruscan peoples fenced in the sky with their stick to observe the birds flying” (Varrón VII). Etruscans used this space to forecast good luck as well as to establish a space in the forest which was reserved to connect with gods and the flight of the birds. Thence, temple truly denotes a place of connection with the universal and, as related to the previous appreciation about sacredness, a space to perform a communion among body, mind and soul.

Likewise, the notion of temple according to South Asian philosophical tradition is, as Spanish writer and professor Marifé de Bolaños showed in her seminar “*Procesos Creativos en India y su Lectura Occidental*” (“Creative Processes in India and its Western Envision”)²⁷, a place, object or situation that allows a human being to reconnect with his/her innate power unveiling all the limiting structures that had been imposed on him/herself by society, family or him/herself. Similarly, Vedanta defines temple as a place or experience that facilitates that one person recognises the limiting structures that constrain their personal inner power. Likewise, Vedanta describes temple as “the place where one can unknot the ties around the heart” (Llárez and Pujol 145, my translation). Therefore, a temple may be a church, a Hindu or Jain temple, a Buddhist pagoda, a Muslim mosque, a Sikh gurudwara, a moment on the Tube, a kiss by your beloved, a conversation with a good

²⁷ The seminar was held at Casa Asia Madrid (Spain) from October to December 2012 and attended by the author of this dissertation.

friend or a performing arts show where *rasa* is enacted. Thus, a temple is any space that enables human beings to decipher the limiting structures placed upon them by society or themselves. This innate power is defined in Vedanta as the divinity within oneself (Vivekananda).

Consequently, divinity should be understood as the participation of the human being from the universal that is inherent to every person. Under Vedanta terms, divinity is defined as “a sugar cube that dissolves in water and cannot be picked up by the hands although can be felt if it is not intended to be separated from the water. Thus is the infinite and limitless being” (Llárez and Pujol 123, my translation). Equally, from Latin *divines*, divinity is “relative to God or to whatever that is extraordinarily primorous” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*). Consequently, unveiling divinity means to discover the divinity “within oneself and the universal” (Llárez and Pujol 212, my translation). Thence, finding one’s inner divinity is the ultimate target of rejoining (from Latin root *re-ligar*) with one’s own possibility to reconnect with one’s own sacred divinity, and so this is the path depicted by Nair and Chadha in the evolution of Ashima in Nair’s *The Namesake* and Asha in Chadha’s *Bhaji on the Beach*. When Asha and Ashima recognise the divinity within themselves they become pioneering women who fight for more opportunities for themselves and their communities in terms of access to a proper job, a possibility to express themselves through South Asian elements and, most important, a place of their own within diaspora space.

In my opinion, and remembering the postcolonial *raison d’être* of this dissertation and the theory explained in Chapter II, this notion of reconnecting to one’s own power acts as a subversive tool that can be used to challenge interlocking systems of gender and racial domination that, historically, have been imposed on women. It is in this sense that Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair empower their female characters to reconnect with their own sacredness in the possibilities opened in the diaspora space so that they subvert pre-

established patterns of domination and control that had been imposed on them by Western receiving society and the inherited patriarchal structures in the homelands. It is in this sense that Chadha and Nair recognise the Vedanta understanding of sacredness to show how women can awaken to their own strength in the diaspora space. Accordingly, I will explain in Chapter IV how these female characters overcome the imposed gender burdens that do not allow them to access academic education or choose their husbands. After, I will detail in Chapter V how Chadha and Nair use elements and concepts from the South Asian performing arts tradition to tell the subversive stories of these female characters.

Besides, it is important to remember that performing arts have always been associated with the sacred. On the one hand, because drama originally took place in temples and, on the other, because performing arts use tools and languages to express the sacred within one self, as it has been stated in the second part of this chapter. It is at this point that I consider it necessary to explain in more detail how performing arts in South Asian tradition describe the relation to the sacred as to enhance the inner power of the human being.

So as to illustrate this point and how this discussion also takes place in the diaspora space, I have decided to detail how dance, as a performing arts means of expression, has been used in the South Asian tradition to connect with the divinity within oneself and how the British Empire stereotyped the language of South Asian dance as a tool to deprive the human beings from their own sacredness and so their own innate freedom. In order to do so, I will analyse South Asian dance bharatanatyam because it is a regional dance form that illustrates the history of the evolution of the South Asian performing arts. In this sense, I will further detail how bharatanatyam language holds a postcolonial commitment because, as I will later illustrate in Chapter V, it is used to subvert the gender, racial and socio-cultural limiting structures imposed by Western cultures on the people living in diaspora.

This study will therefore explain why Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha bring to their films dance elements and techniques to illustrate the important moments when their female characters' awaken to their own divinity.

2.2 DANCE IN SOUTH ASIAN TRADITION: FEATURES OF A POSTCOLONIAL HOLISTIC LANGUAGE

According to South Asian tradition, dance is the purest representation of the primitive essence of the human being (Sarabhai 1-43; Winton-Henry 160). Vedanta tradition describes how the world is originated, maintained and destroyed to initiate itself once again through dance by the god Shiva in *Shiva's Tandav* (*The Dance of Shiva Nataraj*, represented in image 13 in the Appendix of Images). Tandav is a powerful and energetic dance where Shiva spins around himself to illustrate the creation, evolution, conservation and destruction as the necessary means that set anew a further evolution for mankind (Massey 8). Bharata retells this episode in Chapter IV in *Natyasastra* and he states that *Shiva's Tandav* should be played "as a total experience, beyond being a mere ornament on stage" (Rangacharya 35). The importance given to dance is therefore clear and so Bharata details which gestures can be used to play this dance as an act that conveys a powerful and energetic rasa because *Tandav* "truly engages the communion between spectator and performer" (Rangacharya 36).

This representation of the origin of the world through dance leads us to study dance in this section as an instance of how South Asian performance combines different narrative elements and genres that include dance, storytelling and music. This is the point of departure that will let me focus on the holistic nature of the performing languages of South Asian performing arts where dance, music and acting cannot be split. It is in this sense that

Natyasastra defined the heterogeneity of languages that can be used when a story is told in order to enact *rasa* in its purest form. Likewise, I will analyse the practice of the regional dance *bharatanatyam* to illustrate why dance has often been used to represent the concept of sacredness in South Asian tradition and how the dance language of *bharatanatyam* includes elements from other disciplines such as music and storytelling. Accordingly, I will later highlight how Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha's selected films add elements from *bharatanatyam* techniques as a proof of the continued existence of South Asian traits that survived the total deprivation imposed by the British Empire in the South Asian Subcontinent. Then, this historical contextualisation of *bharatanatyam* will guide me to illustrate how postcolonial art, such as Nair and Chadha's hybrid films, appropriate different genres and narrative elements from different cultures to perform a gender subversion that empowers characters who, like Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* (2006) or Asha in *Bhaji on the Beach*, dwell in the diaspora space.

In this chapter, I will highlight how Nair and Chadha exploit performing techniques from *bharatanatyam* such as hand gestures and other *abhinaya*, as main narrative language in their movies to characterise the most relevant parts of the movies such as, for example, Jessminder's final and the wedding of Pinky in Chadha's *Bend It like Beckham* or the dance performed by Ria in the last part of Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001). Firstly, Jessminder in Chadha's feature makes a decision when wondering whether to abandon the familiar Sikh celebration to join her British football team or to dance together with her sister because this participation of languages and music awakens in her the self-awareness that she can do both as she is both a British and Indian woman. Secondly, Ria, in Nair's *The Namesake*, after having stood in front of her whole family to announce that she was sexually abused by her uncle, starts dancing together with Aditi to recognise that all the effort that she gathered to denounce her uncle will let her move freely as she does in the dance and, eventually, she

will head to college to study Creative Writing and be able to tell the stories that women like her need to listen to understand sexual harassment. Therefore, Chadha and Nair's new stories and roles for their characters in the diaspora space bring attention to the possibilities of connivance among different cultures in the diaspora.

It is under these terms of inclusion that dance should be understood, never in opposition to any of the other performing arts. As Helen Gilbert states: "[Western] critical drama has frequently defined dance and dramatic dialogue in opposition to each other through epistemologies which emphasize the Renaissance mind/body dichotomy" (1992: 133). As a consequence, and as Gilbert mentions, dance has occupied a "subordinate" position as a "universal sign" having been denied to its own "historical, geographical, and socio-cultural specificity of dance" (133). Accordingly, Gilbert recognises, together with dance practitioners and choreographers such as German Pina Bausch (qtd. in Lawson 2002) or Indian-born, US citizen, Ananya Chatterjea (2011b) as well as US dance pedagogues such as Gayle Kassing and Danielle M. Jay (2003), how dance has mainly been theoretically ostracised by Western performing arts critics.

For instance, a study about dance that departs from a binary opposition theatre versus dance ignores that, as Gilbert points out, dance is "a way of representation, . . . a site of cultural negotiation, . . . a loci of resistance to hegemonic, . . . [a] counter-discourse of the body and its signifying practices and dance abilities to spatialize" (135). In other words, Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin defined dance as able to adapt "[the performer's] own semantic and expressive intention to exist in other people's contexts and other people's intentions (293)". Consequently, the interconnected nature of dance and theatre can be seen as fact and as Italian playwright Eugenio Barba states: "a rigid distinction between dance and drama risks drawing the actor towards a denial of the body" (1989: 12). Similarly, Indian dancer and choreographer Uday Shankar (1900-1977) insisted on the bound role of

dance and theatre and so he showed the interdependence of both forms to the Western critics (Savarese 46). Accordingly, I believe that twentieth century performing arts theorists such as British author and theorist Peter Brook, German dancer and pedagogue Pina Bausch or Eugenio Barba can be identified with Shankar's remarks as they included South Asian dance in their theatrical languages in the search for a holistic performance that could engage audiences with the message in the play.

It is in this sense that, as Indian theorist Mohan Khokar writes, Shankar was pioneering, because he inscribed South Asian dance practice within European languages of performance such as Russian classical dance, French pianists like Simon Barbiere or Swiss sculptress Alice Bonner (1983: 1). For instance, Shankar's dance compositions *Radha/Krishna* with Russian dancer Anna Pavlova (1923) or his performance at the Champs-Elysees Theatre in Paris in 1931 together with Alice Bonner where they mixed Indian architecture, music and dance with European theatrical forms (Venkatachalam 64). Shankar's performances in Europe and in the United States created a new artistic form that added elements from South Asian tradition for the first time to Western performing expressions beyond the image of South Asian performing arts as folk or corrupt forms that, as German critic on Indian dance in Europe Diana Brenschidt states, "the British Empire imposed" (12).

Similarly, Shankar recognised that there was no such a thing as Western or Indian theatre or dance but, as Ashoke Kumar Mukhopadhyay states, "a different tradition that expressed the same" (2012: 1). Bharata had already understood the same when he noted that the different gestures (abhinaya) detailed in Chapters VIII-XIV of the *Natyasastra* might be used whether by a dancer, a musician or a storyteller, clearly indicating that the performing arts performer should not make a separation among acting, dancing, storytelling or playing music.

This collaborative trend initiated by Shankar in Europe in the early twentieth century²⁸ announced that the South Asian tradition was a mixture of artistic languages that could be embroidered to Western forms to recreate classics and meaningful nuances to existing stories. For example, his creation of the *Radha/Krishna* myth²⁹ (1923) with Russian dancer Anna Pavlova talked about the universal message of the power of love and was included as a segment within Pavlova's ballet *Oriental Sessions*, which premiered in Covent Garden (London, UK) in 1923. Pavlova, as British writer Judith Mackrel recognises in his article "When Anna Pavlova met Uday Shankar" published in *The Guardian*, was absorbed by the performing language of Shankar when he was a student at the Royal College of Art in London and soon he joined Pavlova's company to co-choreograph with her until the 1930s. Mackrel states that: "The West might conceivably never have known about these exceptional Shankar [Uday's younger brother was Ravi Shankar, the famous sitarist, father of current musical celebrities Nora Jones and Anoushka Shankar] brothers had it not been for the whim of one curious and very demanding ballerina". After, Shankar toured the world with his unique classical style, making international audiences aware of the intermingling possibilities of the South Asian performing arts languages, he finally returned to India in 1948 to shoot his first film, *Kalpana* (1948). The movie fostered the birth of a new kind of cinema that Mackrel defines as the forerunner of the Bollywood style because it links South Asian

²⁸ Before Shankar, one could argue that Indian Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore was the first to theorise and state to Western critics and artists such as French Nobel Laureate Romain Rolland, French banker and philanthropist Albert Kahn Spanish Nobel Laureate Juan Ramón Jiménez, Argentinean philanthropist Victoria Ocampo, Irish writer W. B. Yeats or British Thomas Sturge Moore that the South Asian tradition had based its core on the interdisciplinary nature of performing languages and so his traditional dance dramas *Natir Puja*, *The Court Dancer* (1932) or *Chandalika* (1935) somehow proposed that the South Asian performing arts techniques were open to add elements of representation from other traditions such as the those of the bauls (nomads tribes of India) or the Western proscenium that he had seen in the representation of Aristotle's Greek tragedies.

²⁹ In Hindu philosophy, Radha was the consort of Krishna, one of the eight avatars of god Vishnu, and such was their mutual love that they decided to merge into one form to gather the best out of their masculine and feminine traits. Images from Pavlova and Shankar's *Radha/Krishna* can be seen in Appendix of Images, Image 13.

tradition with the Western sense of cinema as a mass media show. A restored edition of the movie was produced by US director Martin Scorsese who released the feature at the 65th Cannes Festival (2012) talking about how important it was to rescue Shankar's imaginaries and his attempts to connect civilisations (qtd. in Bhattacharya).

After Shankar's breakthrough, Indian dance figures Ram Gopal (1912-2003) or Mrinalini Sarabhai (1954) continued showing South Asian performing dance elements to the Western world and, beyond, French and Swiss revolutionary dancer and choreographer Maurice Béjart (1927-2007) interconnected the South Asian performing language of Uday Shankar's dance with Japanese and Kenyan dance languages in, for instance, his choreographies of Stravinsky's *Consecration of Spring* (1959) or Ravel's *Bolero* (1961). Nowadays, Indian born, US resident, dancer, choreographer and Professor Ananya Chatterjea (1965-) and Bangladeshi born, UK resident, dancer and choreographer Akram Khan (1974-) add another turn of the screw through their companies Ananyadancetheatre and Akram Khan Company. In this sense, Chatterjea's creations³⁰ strive against the subaltern position given to dance and women of colour in the academic history of the United States. In order to denounce this situation, Chatterjea's choreographies use dance techniques from South Asian performing arts tradition juxtaposing them with contemporary western dance (2011b) to contest structures of cultural and gender discrimination. Furthermore, Akram Khan studies the common performing language shared by, Taiwanese performing arts or flamenco with classical dances such as khatak (traditional dance form from Northern India) and bharatanatyam (South East Indian regional dance form)³¹.

³⁰ It is important to highlight Chatterjea *Four Quartet on Women and Violence* (2010-2013), where Chatterjea links racial and female empowerment with the natural elements of land-gold-oil and water.

³¹ It is worthwhile to mention how *Gnosis* (2009) combined Indian classical dance with Taiwanese music performed by Taiwanese acclaimed musician and dancer Fang-Yi Sheu, how his choreographies for his *In the*

Consequently, the artistic opportunities opened by the performing possibilities that are inherent to the South Asian tradition enhance, as the agglutinating message of Chatterjea and Kahn's creations could show, hybridity as a creative leitmotif through which the interconnection of performing arts languages is illustrated. Here, it is important to detail the position that dance and the concept of sacredness have occupied within South Asian tradition as well as in the diaspora to understand why South Asian dance has been a challenging language that has defied the attempt of the British Empire to colonise India during English occupation. In order to illustrate and contextualise better this relationship between dance and the sacred, I will illustrate how bharatanatyam gathers a subversive history against the British Empire in relation with the notion of sacredness previously explained. Moreover, this challenging description of the history of bharatanatyam will let me contextualise better why the use of South Asian dance by Nair and Chadha involves a postcolonial subversive power. Hence, this definition will let us comprehend why the character of Asha in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* recognises her inner power as a woman of Indian descent in the UK when she is able to dance freely using South Asian hand gestures and movements to communicate with the British man she meets in Brighton. The fact that Asha does not worry about what her Indian community is going to think when she dances with this man gives us a hint of the historically liberating power inherent to dance. Actually, it can be argued that the attitude of Asha in the movie changes after this moment because, from that scene onwards, Asha realizes that she can be independent and so she embraces her own divinity to make other women in the trip to Brighton interweave together to find Ginger's daughter and save her from the ill-treatment that her husband is inflicting

Mind of Igor (2013) (a rewriting of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, 1913) mixed African rhythms, contemporary Street dance movements and traditional South Asian dance steps from khatak and bharatanatyam and how the show *Torobaka* (2014) illustrated a dialogue between his South Asian performing arts language repertoire and the flamenco roots of Spanish dancer Israel Galván.

upon her. Therefore, Asha contests both Indian and British limitations imposed by her husband and relatives subverting the expected gender roles for South Asian women in the diaspora when she expresses herself through dance. It is under these same terms of contestation that bharatanatyam has evolved in history and so, whenever a technique from this language appears on screen, there is a whole history of resistance and survival that needs to be unveiled.

2.3 BHARATANATYAM DANCE: AN EXAMPLE OF THE HISTORY OF A SOUTH ASIAN PERFORMING ARTS LANGUAGE

In colonial times, South Asian female dancers were said to inhabit temples as courtesans and priests' prostitutes. Their dance form was reduced to a mere decorative effect and they were invited to dance at colonial officers' events in an exotic fashion that can be illustrated in, for instance, the *Orientalist* paintings by colonial Indian painter Raja Ravi Varma³² (1848-1906), who used Western painting techniques to detail Indian life. Ananya Chatterjea highlights how these colonial stereotypes still apply nowadays because, in her own words, "conceptualisations for classical Indian female dancers define them as either hieratic classical pieces of ethnic museum or mere exotic Bollywood dancers" (2011b).

Furthermore, dance was reduced, also during colonial times, to a simplistic and gendered activity that deprived an ancient art of its true meaning. So, as British ethno musician at Royal Holloway University of London Anna Morcom states: "until the 1930s no woman could perform in public and retain respectability in India" (1). As far as regional

³² In *Appendix of Images*, Image number 15.

Indian dance bharatanatyam³³ is concerned, during colonial times professional female performers were publically seen as courtesans and dancing girls who would never marry, a fact that pushed the dancers to the last stage of social respectability and independence. Nevertheless, bharatanatyam developed out of the colonial constraint and facilitated its own re-birth in the Subcontinent and its diaspora in the 1950s, subverting and facilitating the telling of stories that had started at least twenty centuries before Partition (1947). It is in this sense that when bharatanatyam performing techniques are portrayed in Nair and Chadha's films there is a whole history of cultural subversion that otherwise could be obviated.

Dancers of bharatanatyam were trained at temples in Tamil Nadu, in the South of India since old times 3rd century BC (Morcom 12; Soneji 3)³⁴. The etymology of the word, bha-ra-tha and natyam, explains the distinguishing pillars of this dance form. Natyam refers to performing arts as previously stated in this chapter. Moreover, bha-ra-tha shows how dancers learn the art of expressing and connecting to the divine through the study of the gestures of performance through abhinaya (*bha-* for bhava), the rhythm and the emotional empathic connection with the audience (*ra-* for raga as the musical illustration that enables rasa, the already defined empathy between performer and spectator) and a particular pattern of rhythm (*th-* for thala, rhythm). Therefore, bharatanatyam is a performing language that condenses different performing strategies that, all being detailed in the *Natyasastra*, tell

³³ In the beginning of this dissertation, I aimed at studying both bharatanatyam and kathakali to illustrate how dance is but a part of the languages that are used in the South Asian performing arts tradition but the length and focus of these pages would have gone beyond its own scope. Initially I had decided to analyse kathakali instead of other regional dances such as odissi (from the region of Orissa), khathak (North of India, Moghul influence) or mohiniyattam (from Kerala) because kathakali is focused on apparel and make up that reinforce the mudras and abhinaya as expressed in the *Natyasastra*. However, due to the omnipresence of male actors and the syncretistic forms and development as in bharatanatyam, I decided to focus on the second because of its historical contestation and its presence in the diaspora.

³⁴ Bharatanatyam did not exist as such until eighteenth century as I will later explain but to ease the understanding of the section I will use the term throughout.

stories and foster a connection of those stories with the audience through *rasa*. In other words, *bharatanatyam* illustrates the holistic nature of the South Asian performing arts.

Back in the third century BC, dance was a sacred language because it allowed the connection of the performer and audience to their own sacredness. Dance was performed in a sacred place, the temple, because these spaces hosted the stories of gods and goddesses and were, as Indian dance scholars Davesh Soneji (1) and Pratibha Prahlad (3) point out, the places to socialise. Dancers stayed at temples to learn the art of gestures (*abhinaya*), how to produce *rasa* and how to follow the rhythm (*thala*) because temples were the place around which artists would meet and study the teachings of the performing arts explained in *Natyasastra*. In those times, dancers were acknowledged to have a good social status (Morcom 3). So, dancers told mythical stories and enacted the communion of performers and audience with their own sacredness, where sacredness is understood as the innate power and freedom that are inherent to every human being.

In this sense, Indian famous dancer Tanjore Balasaraswati (1918-1984) refers to how the ancient and current performers of *bharatanatyam* still connected with that notion of the sacred. In her own words, “tradition itself has so much depth and complexity that it allows a dance’s wings to soar to the very skies of freedom . . . It is freedom through discipline, not freedom from discipline” (11, 15). Nevertheless, the South Asian Subcontinent soon started to disconnect among different social status and kingdoms in the Medieval Ages (11th-15th c. AD) with the establishment of dynasties that ruled indoors for the sake of military defence stopping patronising dance art forms. It was, as detailed in Chapter I, a period of geographical separation when certain areas gained power over others. The previously normal dialogue and understanding among different philosophies, religions and art forms that had defined the Subcontinent hybridisation was halted. It was in this sense that *bharatanatyam* became simplified and a dance form to be loathed and

disrespected by non-Hindus because it started to be regarded as a performing language that only told “stories of Hindu gods that were performed not by performers but courtesans of low caste and social status” (Morcom 5). This discourse clearly defines how dance started to be deprived from its natural holistic nature within the performing arts and it was classified as a mere adornment that did not tell any story but only enhanced “a movement of the different limbs of the body as opposite to the much more complex system that it gathered” (Vatsyayan 3). A previously free art such as bharatanatyam became categorised as a merely religious form.

Bharatanatyam performers would soon be invited to be in temple service as simple entertainers. Female performers would be reduced to women of the temple who could never leave it and the stereotype of female dancers as courtesans took form. This is the moment where the term *devadasis* (literally servants of God) was used as a synonym for priests' prostitutes (Morcom 44; Vatsyayan 5; Roychowdhury 2014) the ones living in the temple with gods and goddesses) and Bharatanatyam was somehow ostracised and almost forgotten as a performing art that simply provided a meagre form of shallow entertainment within temples. With the segmentation of the Subcontinent in different kingdoms during the 16th and 17th centuries, bharatanatyam was used to decorate dramas in intervals which only strengthened this perception. Bharatanatyam was at those times, as Morcom recognises, “a mere succession of decorating mudras that kept little from its originality” (74).

Nevertheless, Maratha King Saraboji II (1798–1832) in Tamil Nadu would rescue the importance of bharatanatyam by programming performances at his court (Dinesh and Ramanathan 12). So, the dance form recovered the sacred respect that it had had in previous centuries³⁵. Classical movements and techniques were resituated as told in *Natyasastra* as

³⁵ US theorist Faubion Bowers covers these events in his pioneering academic approach to Indian dance *The Dance in India*. Bowers, a reputed professor in the field of Asian arts studies, applied his extensive study of

well as carved on the Tanjore temples built in Tamil Nadu, the so-called famous South Indian Temples³⁶ which displayed on their carvings the classical postures of devadasis to teach how they were servants of God. Bharatanatyam performances wanted to lecture the people about the importance of good practices and feelings, as bharatanatyam performer Sohini Roychowdhury recognises (2014), and its teachings were now sculpted on the walls of the temples which had been their first stage. Bharatanatyam recovered its own true holistic performing practice because it moved, according to US dance ethnographer Deidre Sklar, “toward all aspects of life . . . in the contextual web of social relationships, environment, religion, aesthetics, politics, economics, and history” (6). Dance was consequently brought back to its own holistic form in an act of recreation through sculpture, patronage of arts and service to one’s own sacredness. Therefore, the fact that Ria in Nair’s *Monsoon Wedding* or Lalita in Chadha’s *Bride and Prejudice* repeat bharatanatyam facial gestures (abhinaya), share emotions through those techniques (bhavas), tap rhythm patterns (thalas) and foster empathy with the audience (rasa) in some of the dance scenes in the movies in the twenty-first century proves how useful it is to understand the evolution of this dance form. Besides, there is a story of postcolonial contestation in the survival of this dance form that I am now going to explain and that matches the subverting attitude of the inclusion of bharatanatyam language in the dance scenes that can be seen here in the selected movies.

The arrival of the East India Company in Indian coasts in the eighteenth century and the following British rule soon neglected the practice of the South Asian regional arts. Anna Morcom expresses how, for instance, bharatanatyam “was excluded in an absolute

the Japanese interconnection of the performing arts in this book that gave a historical background that positioned Indian dance and bharatanatyam as a performing language that included and challenged the history of the Subcontinent.

³⁶ Instances can be seen on Image 16 in Appendix of Images.

sense in modern colonial India” (3). Nevertheless, Maratha King Saraboji II's former efforts were important for the anticolonial fight lately played by Indian theosophist, dancer, actress and writer Rukmini Devi Arundale (1904-1986) who fostered, in 1936 and in Madras, the school of regional dance and music Kalakshetra. Arundale's school was an effort to teach and promote regional studies to fight against the devastating influence of the British Empire's attempt to make South Asia's own tradition disappear (Morcom 25; Roychowdhury 2014). Arundale's commitment was very important because she enhanced the performance of bharatanatyam's own bhavas, ragas and thalas as told in *Natyasastra* as well as her positioning male bharatanatyam performers back on stage, because they had been put off the stage since the Medieval Ages (Balaswarati 5). Later, Arundale, together with Indian freedom fighter and cultural activist E. Krishna Iyer (1897-1968), discarded those postures included in bharatanatyam during Medieval Ages that mostly added certain gestures only to reduce bharatanatyam as a dance practice that was simply aimed at creating an erotic rasa (Sringara in Sanskrit). The British Empire, contrarily, kept reducing bharatanatyam as the practice of merely erotic gestures. US Associate professor at UCLA's Department of World Arts and Cultures Janet O'Shea states how bharatanatyam was reduced to “a static piece of museum, an exotic form of art” (ix). It was then at this moment that Arundale's foundation of a parallel school contested British colonising cultural hegemony to recover and maintain the true expression of bharatanatyam as a resisting, artistic and cultural practice in the Subcontinent during the British occupation.

Under Arundale and Iyer's protection, bharatanatyam survived colonisation as well as the following *Hindutva** radicalisation that came after the declaration of the Republic of India in 1947³⁷. This radical uptake on bharatanatyam as India's Hindu national dance form

³⁷ For a further study of these historical remarks one should take into account the works by Ann Morcom and Janet O'Shea referenced in the section *Works Cited*.

reclaimed previous misunderstanding of its form as simple Hindu temple dance. Nevertheless, bharatanatyam became what Indian dancer and scholar Ketu Katrak calls “one of the multiple idioms of Contemporary Dance” (xix) and nowadays it is understood as a holistic artistic practice because, as Katrak states:

Change . . . entails not simply changing an arm movement, or adding video, or wearing black . . . Hybrid work involves a reworking from within the traditional dance forms – most commonly bharatanatyam (origins in South India) and khathak North India with their shared vocabularies of nrta [movements in dance forms] and abhinaya . . . Multiple movements may flow or be referenced with sharp disjuncture in innovative choreography. (xix)

Moreover, the existence of bharatanatyam and fusion dance schools in the Subcontinent and its diaspora (places like London, New York or Toronto have an extensive offer of bharatanatyam training schools) confirms the recurrent strength of this millenary dance form. Also, bharatanatyam has been a language used by Western theorists and artists such as Peter Brook in his version of *Mahabharata* staged at Avignon Festival in 1985 or Pina Bausch's *Bamboo Blues* (2008) as a way to, in my opinion, propose an artistic language to break with the artistic tyranny of classical, canonical and Western forms of performing arts languages which had previously ignored the holistic nature of the performing arts. Thus, I believe that bharatanatyam's history of change and survival is relevant because whenever a bharatanatyam step is nowadays performed on stage or on screen, the whole history of the South Asian performing arts tradition makes a contesting statement to prove that arts' tradition can coexist and evolve with contemporary cultural forms and languages.

Also, dance, in this case bharatanatyam, is a perfect narrative contribution to represent the notion of the sacred, as dance encourages the union of the dancer with him/herself and the audience to express and transmit a different experience of the world. Accordingly, the dancer renders *rasa* and so the spectator connects with his/her own sacred space, where there is no separation of body, mind and soul. Similarly, the audience

connects with his/her own heterogeneous experience of being part of the whole without cultural, social, racial or gender segmentations. In other words, the dancer and the spectator create a sense of freedom to feel a universal connection that embroiders dancer and audience with their own inner strength and infinite power. It is because of this encounter between performer and audience with their own innate power that I believe that Nair and Chadha decide to illustrate through dance the moment when Ria decides to confess that her uncle sexually abused her and that she has decided to take on Creative Writing studies in Nair's *Monsoon Wedding*. This also takes place when Lalita confesses that she is in love with Darcy and she would love to live both in the United States and in India in Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice*.

Therefore, the evolution and survival of bharatanatyam has proved the survival of historical, geographical and socio-cultural importance of the South Asian tradition. Firstly, because the survival of bharatanatyam in its traditional form contested the colonial British influence and, secondly, because it did it as a language that normally, and in Australian professor Helen Gilbert's view, has had its own historical and geographical importance denied (133). Bharatanatyam's sustained existence illustrates the holistic *raison d'être* of the South Asian performing arts language. This astounding trait currently keeps growing and growing as bharatanatyam dance schools and figures continue appearing and reinventing tradition into a contemporary global agenda, developing an art that can be seen as therapeutic and healing because it reconnects the spectator and the performer not only with different traditions and roots but with his/her/their own sacredness.³⁸ Thus, dance is a

³⁸ These figures include Indian born, US citizen, dancer, choreographer, director and professor Ananya Chatterjea; Bangladeshi, UK citizen, dancer and choreographer Akram Khan; Gujarati dancer of kuchipudi and bharatanatyam and dance activist Mallika Sarabhai; US citizen, bharatanatyam dancer and founder of Post-Natyam-Collective Shyamala Moorty; Indian, Spain resident, bharatanatyam dancer and choreographer, director and founder of Sohinimoksha Sohini Roychowdhury; or Indian born, UK-based doctor, khathak dancer, playwright and film director Amit Ranjan Biswas.

language that is used in the South Asian tradition to connect and reconnect with the divine essence inherent to each human being.

It is in this fashion that Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair's use of bharatanatyam elements lets characters such as Asha in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* or Ria in Nair's *Monsoon Wedding*, recognise their roots, denounce the wrongdoings of society and gather together to overcome and challenge the interlocking systems imposed upon them in terms of gender and race. Hence, the holistic nature of performing arts, as illustrated by the interconnection of music, dance and storytelling described in the section devoted to *Natyasastra*, explains how the inclusion of dance in their selected films is the narrative language that allows them to show how their characters move from one space to another and from one tradition to another. Accordingly, it is important to remember that I defined hybrid films in Chapter II as films that depict hybrid cultures and hybrid identities without giving pre-eminence to a specific culture or identity. By so doing, they depict the dilemmas and possibilities found by the inhabitants of diaspora space as citizens that share a cultural hybridity that, in the same subversive meaning, is a defining category that allows the interconnection of different cultures to coexist together without privileges granted to a particular race or gender.

Thus, characters such as Asha or Ria express themselves through Nair and Chadha's eclectic and juxtaposed languages that include dance, story-telling and music. In this sense, both characters recognize and illustrate their struggle to use and combine all the South Asian and Western narrative elements in their roots and current existence in the diaspora space, a recognition that truly leads them to express how they feel and to show the possibilities that can be found in the diaspora space. When they are able to use South Asian performing arts elements they allow the coexistence of different languages and they start an individual and group rebellion so as to empower all the women of their communities to

speaking accordingly to the hybridity guaranteed in the diaspora space. It is so that Asha and Ria become pioneering figures in both films that, respectively, make other women such as Ginger and Hashida in Chadha's film denounce the wrongdoings that British society and the South Asian community in it are inflicting upon them in terms of lack of equal access to job and education opportunities. Also, Ria's empowering voice in Nair's feature does not only help Aditi recognise that she can choose the man she loves or, better, that she does not have to be married to develop herself. Besides, Ria promises to awaken the sensibility of all the girls that suffered sexual abuse both in India and in the diaspora space. Therefore, both figures lead the rest of their female friends to be woven together into a healing space that provides an opportunity for women to reconnect with their own freedom and innate sacredness.

So, I believe that there is an inherent subversive power within the use of dance in Nair and Chadha's selected movies. Firstly, because it has been explained that *bharatanatyam* has a history of contestation in its evolution against the British Empire. Secondly, because the South Asian women in Chadha and Nair's selected films finally denounce in their own language what the British, Northern American and South Asian homelands communities have been imposing on them. Therefore, the use of dance offers a rewriting of both history and stories of colonial looting, patriarchal ruling, racial superiority and feminist obscuration that had constrained the South Asian forms of performance and expression in both the homelands and in the diaspora. In my view, the use of dance elements from the South Asian tradition in Nair and Chadha's selected movies adds a postcolonial and feminist meaning to these films because we see women reconnect with their own sacred existence using their own language and the opportunities of this new space opened in the diaspora for them.

In consequence, the study of bharatanatyam has been exemplary to see how this dance form was historically relegated to a dance for courtesans and a piece of adornment and how it then reestablished itself as a new artistic form that currently links tradition and modernity. Accordingly, I will focus in the next section on how the mixture of the different genres within the South Asian performing arts tradition and its holistic nature is used in postcolonial art to produce narratives that, defined as hybrid narratives, rewrite history and the assumed roles of South Asian women both in the Subcontinent and in the diaspora space in the UK and the US. This will be the last step in the theoretical contextualisation of why Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha offer new artistic representations that are able to enhance a new form of cinema and an innovative representation of women from the South Asian diaspora that offer social and cultural possibilities of change to all inhabitants of the diaspora space.

3- CONTEMPORARY USE OF SOUTH ASIAN PERFORMING ARTS: POSTCOLONIAL ACTS OF HISTORICAL AND GENDER SUBVERSION THROUGH HYBRID NARRATIVES

Postcolonial theory provides a contestation, analysis and subversion of the history and stories that take place after the empires' colonisation. As it has been discussed in Chapter II and throughout this chapter, adjectives such as postcolonial or hybrid entail a cultural rebellion, interlocking systems of domination that are based on race and gender discrimination. Here, postcolonial stories use art and tradition to destabilise the colonial order. In Gibbons' own words, "art and tradition are the tools to decolonise" (36). It was in this sense that the previous explanations about *Natyasastra* and bharatanatyam confirmed

how tradition and art, if mixed together beyond monolithically hegemonic discourses, provide new languages of representation that describe novel situations such as the identities created in the diaspora space.

Likewise, it is the aim of this section to show how Chadha and Nair's selected films are new narratives that mix stories and languages from the past to create counter-discourses that challenge old established narratives that portrayed derogatory representations about South Asian people and migrants. These counter-discourses act as "counter-narratives and counter-contexts" (Gilbert and Tompkins 111) that offer a possibility for colonised cultures to talk back and criticise the colonial wrongdoings. In their opinion, these narratives "become textual/cultural expressions of resistance to colonisation [that] dismantle the hegemonic boundaries and the determinants that create unequal relations of power based on binary oppositions such as 'us and them', 'first world and third world', 'white and black', 'coloniser and colonised'" (2-3). Here, Chadha and Nair's selected films emerge as examples of the postcolonial capacity to denounce and restructure old narratives through new languages and stories that use narrative elements from South Asian performing arts tradition such as gestures or dance. Chadha and Nair facilitate new stories through the use of the South Asian performing arts elements that allow a different performing language to describe the social and racial burdens found by South Asian women in the homelands and in the diaspora space.

I have come to understand the term hybrid narratives as a tapestry of many genres, languages, histories and stories that describe and shape reality as a living story of change and cultural interaction. Gilbert and Tompkins refer to this "hybridity" as a subverting word that "reinforces the fact that hegemonic processes require continual deconstruction" (293). Accordingly, I will firstly analyse the subversive commitment of postcolonial performing arts narratives in their attempt to define diaspora communities anew by using and enacting a

multi-language cultural definition of the diaspora space. In this sense, this representation would obviate previous Western-based visions about the South Asian community that monopolised the cinematographic representation of the South Asian diaspora until the appearance of Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha. Secondly, it is my objective to underline how Chadha and Nair's hybrid narratives shift colonial consciousness to open up a new space where history can be rewritten by fostering a change, both in the Subcontinent and in the diaspora space. Likewise, I believe that the term hybrid narratives will emerge as a very useful term to understand Chadha's and Nair selected films as composites of different styles of music, dance and languages that coexist, for instance, in the weddings shown in Chadha's *Bend It like Beckham* or Nair's *Monsoon Wedding*. Moreover, Chadha and Nair use elements from South Asian performing arts tradition to portray how South Asian migrants speak about the new lives they live in the diaspora space while they relate to cultural and historical elements from the homelands and the diaspora space that were defined in Chapter I and Chapter II.

Hence, time and space are factors that are postcolonially remapped by embroidering new artistic narratives that combine various forms of tradition, contemporary formats and current social challenges. These new narratives are in themselves hybrid compounds of stories and narrative elements that subvert both time and space as they tell innovative stories and offer a new-fangled reading of history. Then, the resultant narratives are hybrid narratives told through a kaleidoscopic myriad of perspectives that gather artistic and traditional elements both from different backgrounds and modern formats that somehow transform the previous cultural space that was simply defined by Western portrayals. These new stories such as Nair and Chadha's have a postcolonial agenda that empowers and denounces interlocking systems of domination based on history, class, race and gender. Furthermore, these hybrid narratives describe reality as a changing place where many

cultures and traditions influence each other while constantly constructing cultures that negotiate traditions anew.

Performing arts in the South Asian context (both within the Subcontinent and its diaspora space) illustrate this postcolonial statement as suggested when Gilbert and Tompkins talk about the ways in which South Asian performing arts have, in many cases, “maintained an extremely strong sense of diversity and autonomy of space, form, language, spirituality, and ancient historicity” (295). In my opinion, Chadha and Nair’s selected films confirm this statement as their films make use of South Asian narrative elements from the performing arts such as dance and acting techniques to portray different contemporary stories and new possibilities for women in the homelands and in the diaspora.

This contemporary subversive use of tradition was started by Uday Shankar and was strengthened, as Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins (21-22, 112) or Ananya Chatterjea (2011a) confirm, by pioneering postcolonial Indian playwright, director, critic and actor in Bengali, English, and Hindi cinema and theatre Utpal Dutt. In fact, it can be argued that his play *The Great Rebellion 1857 (Mahavodroha, 1973)* illustrates the concept of hybrid narratives because Dutt’s play mixed modern and traditional performing arts elements such as hand gestures, dance and meaning of colours in costumes from South Asian tradition. The play tells the story of various generations of an Indian family in their battle against British domination. Actually, Gilbert and Tompkins state: “*The Great Rebellion 1857* is a narrative of resistance [that dispels] the myth that British power was absolute in nineteenth-century India [because the description of the coloniser in the place] has less agency than is generally assumed” (112). The play talks about the origin, resistance and outcome of the Bengali Rebellion that, in 1857, rose against the East Indian Company and that began as a mutiny of sepoys (private soldiers of the Company) in Bengal and moved towards the centre of the Subcontinent. Indian professor Nandia Bhatia refers to the staging of *The*

Great Rebellion in 1973 as “one of the most important anticolonial movements in India” (1999: 167) because it materialised a new writing of historical events that had been previously only told by the British Raj.

Besides, I believe that the play can be used as a postcolonial token because it allows history to be retold beyond the colonising descriptions of the Raj. In addition, the play is subversive because it is based on the juxtaposition of people's own testimonies and in different genres. Dutt staged and showed to large audiences the different colonial and postcolonial stories of British dominance and the lack of Bengali-Indian cultural response. In order to illustrate this miscellany of voices and testimonies, Dutt penned characters that had different accents and gathered different relevance. He also allowed historical Indian and internationally famous personalities who denounced the British Empire to appear in his play. As Bhatia (1999) acknowledges, Dutt even attached Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels's response to the mutiny in the play as he gathered and reproduced in the play excerpts from the articles that both wrote for the *New York Daily Tribune* between 1857 and 1859 condemning the British colonisation in Bengal (North of India). Therefore, as Bhatia states, Dutt's play “engages a dialectic that examines history in all its complexities and contradictions and demands to explore its implications for official narratives of nationalism in post-colonial India” (162). In other words, Dutt allowed the (re)telling of events on behalf of those who suffered the wrongdoings of history (Bengali people who starved to death during the 1860s) and that portrayed the official British Empire's version of history that ignored Bengali voices in the explanation of historical events.

On the other hand, Dutt chose a Bengali regional style of performing arts that recreated the performance as if it were a journey or procession (the genre is called *yatra* in Bengali), where people meet different persons along a path introducing themselves and

sharing the experience as a rite of passage³⁹ that lets them explore other realities and desires (Juergensmeyer 22). Likely, Dutt conveyed a group performing experience that told Bengali history through many different vernacular forms. Dutt's telling of the events through a regional language form is opposed to that of Mukherjee (1982: viii) and Yajnik (1970: 86) who recognise, the grandiloquence of the English texts conveyed by the British Empire about British colonisation that consciously ignored the oppression and savage depletion of Indian natural and cultural resources carried out by the Empire. For that reason, the form of *yatra* enabled a polyphony of voices that, in Dutt's play, allowed every speaker to express him/herself freely and so characters dance, tell stories, use different accents (such as Hindi, Bengali or Chinese) while speaking English and some even play music on stage.

Subsequently, *The Great Rebellion* is a hybrid narrative that combines various performing genres such as dance, music, storytelling and different points of view corresponding to three different generations of a Bengali family. By using these devices, Dutt's play subverts history, gives voice to the oppressed Bengali citizens and *counter-speakers* on behalf of a new postcolonial identity that contests the previous British colonial order. After Dutt, the influence of South Asian tradition in Western productions such as Peter Brook's staging of the Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata* (3rd c. BC)⁴⁰ managed to revisit the

³⁹ A rite of passage is a creative symbol that shows how a person or group of characters explore their own lives through a series of experiences that take place along a journey.). Ridley Scott's *Thelma & Louise* (1991) or Niki Caro's *Whale Rider* (2002) are examples of feminist rites of passage as they describe the journey of a character and their coming to terms with their own reality, fears and desires.

⁴⁰ The play toured for three years across the world and later became a film in 1989. The script of the theatrical version was written by Peter Brook and Jean-Claude Carrière, a collaborator of Brook, and summarised a period of study of the text and the South Asian tradition that lasted for eight years (Croyden). Brook's version of *Mahabharata* lasted nine hours and gathered a troupe of performers from different nationalities (British, French, Indian, and Japanese) that were artisans of storytelling, make up, dance, acting or mask-performance. Brook built a circular theatre in the South Asian tradition (circled space according to the disposition of Bharata in Chapter II in *Natyasastra*) and invited spectators to engage in the performance since entrance to the stage, which consisted of a long path invited participation through the playing of traditional Carnatic music and burning of incenses. Brook's aim was that of telling an ancient story that would appeal to the

South Asian tradition by creating hybrid narratives that enhanced new routes to consider other historical voices through narrative elements taken from different cultural traditions. Here, the study of the combination of South Asian performing arts elements with other artistic languages define hybrid narratives as a powerful tool that decolonises and denounces the colonial misconducts in terms of cultural, racial and gender repression.

Similarly, rewriting history through hybrid narratives allows the postcolonial adaptation of old stories from colonial times to “respond to the experience of imperialism [and] perform [a] continuation and/or regeneration of the colonised . . . and interrogate the hegemony that underlies imperial representation” (Gilbert and Tompkins, 11). Accordingly, postcolonial artists such as Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair use different artistic languages and strategies to highlight the particularities of the South Asian performing arts tradition that had been somehow ostracised under colonial rule and that nowadays emerge together with other contemporary genres and cultural practices such as jazz music or video clip-style editing in their films.

Consequently, and as previously defined in Chapter II, if postcolonial theory refers to the subversion of colonial strategies of domination, Nair and Chadha's hybrid narratives are postcolonial because they analyse the interlocking systems of control that colonisation established over society in socio-cultural, racial and gender terms. Chadha and Nair propose postcolonial stories such as the change of role proposed for Jessminder Bhangra from a submissive young daughter to an independent working footballer in the US in Gurinder Chadha's *Bend It like Beckham*, an opportunity through which Jessminder contests the colonial supremacy that had previously imposed a hegemonic and patriarchal structure on her for the fact of being of a female of Indian descent. In this sense, Jessminder

is able to change the opinion of her family that initially did not allowed her to play football and earn a living out of it and so she shows how her family's Sikh Indian roots can coexist with the British way of life in their neighbourhood in Luton (Northern London) and the opportunities granted in this new space. Likewise, Gurinder Chadha narrates this change undertaken by Jessminder through many different narrative elements that equally date from the twenty-first century (such as the song by ex-Spice Girl Mel C that Jessminder dances to at the party in Germany after her team's victory or the professional new opportunities granted for female footballers in the US) or the second century BC (such as the traditional ways Mrs Bhangra and Pinky organise the makeup and rituals of Pinky's wedding). This intermingling of narratives fosters a hybridity of form and narrative elements that advance a much more complex representation of the current cultural heterogeneity of the South Asian women in the diaspora that had been previously without voice.

Similarly, it can be stated that postcolonial performing arts texts have a tradition of breaking with Western canons by setting up an encounter between local and received traditions to enhance what Gilbert and Tompkins call "[the] recuperation of a postcolonial subjectivity which is not simply inscribed in written discourse but embodied through performance" (109). Thus, postcolonial languages of artistic creation can be used to illustrate the ongoing socio-cultural heterogeneity that is taking place in diaspora space and that empowers a full decolonisation of the minds of both diaspora and receiving communities. And Chadha and Nair's selected films clearly offer and participate in this decolonisation.

For instance, the way their female characters unveil their feelings, dilemmas and aspirations mixing performing classical hand gestures and ways of looking at the audience (such as Mina in Nair's *Mississippi Masala*), South Asian legends (such as Asha does in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* when she confronts her nightmares), South Asian classical

dance (as the classical dance scene performed by Ria in Nair's *Monsoon Wedding*), South Asian classical music (as the sitar melody played by Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake*) with modern British pop music (as the style Jessminder likes in Chadha's *Bend It like Beckham*) or choreographies in the Indian Bollywood style (such as Lalita and her sisters' choreography to the song "Show me the love" in Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice*) allow Chadha and Nair to define their characters by enhancing *rasa* with the spectators. As a consequence, the possibilities for these characters to understand the plurality of their identities is guaranteed by the option of using different genres and narrative elements that let them dismantle the gender, racial and narrative burdens that otherwise would have been always imposed on them and on the descriptions about them by other artists who, probably, would have been male and Western.

So as to prove this definition of hybrid narratives, I will now study the different genres and narrative traditions that are intertwined in, Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* and Mira Nair's *The Namesake*⁴¹. To start with, Gurinder Chadha employs the conventions of the South Asian traditional dramatic monologues as explained in Chapter III of the *Natyasastra* when Asha suffers from a dreary vision at the beginning of the feature and talks to a Hindu deity about how she sticks to what is expected of her. Beyond, the film gathers a line of plot that reminds of what US cultural studies critic Paul Julian Smith (2010) calls "the typical 1990s British TV-film love story, where two races star in a Romeo and Juliet kind of love story that underlines the division of post WWII British society" that highlights the possibility of new interracial love relationships as the one sketched for Hashida and Oliver who come from, respectively, South Asian and African rival communities in London. Also, Hindi popular songs are sung on the bus journey towards Brighton together with the critical speech pronounced by Rekha, which follows the

⁴¹ I will study instances of *hybrid narratives* more in depth in Chapter V.

cinematographic documentary conventions as it is relevant to the postcolonial and feminist role given to the NGO Saheli Women (which represents real Southall Sisters) in the movie and as explained in Chapter II. Furthermore, the characters of Asha and Pushpa act using different gestures and ways of looking (hateful glances and distrustful gazes that follow gesture techniques in the *Natyasastra*) to display their emotions, which also illustrates the coalescence of different techniques from South Asian tradition.

In my opinion, by juxtaposing these many genres and languages Chadha provides hybrid narratives and so she is able to outline new possibilities that are essential to understand the characters' cultural hybridity as a subversive tool within diaspora space. Furthermore, the interconnection of narrative elements from different traditions lets Chadha address the complexity of South Asian women in the diaspora and contest the limitations imposed by both British society and South Asian community on the many generations of the women depicted in the movie. Nevertheless, all of these women, from Pushpa (starred by legendary Indian actress Zohra Segal) who are eighty years old to Ladhu and Madhu in their twenties and Ginder's daughter in her teens enjoy together the striptease act in Brighton as a way to break away to the limitations that had been imposed on them and did not allow them to be free dwellers of the diaspora space.

Similarly, Mira Nair mixes South Asian tradition of performing arts with Western cinematographic language in *The Namesake*. As far as South Asian tradition is concerned, the film includes: a Bengali procession and elevation of the goddess Saraswati in the fashion of the yatra that Utpal Dutt used in *The Great Rebellion, 1857* in the beginning and end of the film, a Carnatic song sung by Ashima in the last scene of the film and a slow cinematographic rhythm that focuses in every detail at Ashima's house during Gogol's first

visit in the fashion of pioneering Indian director Satyajit Ray⁴², an acting based on the looks (abhinaya) given to the camera by actors and actresses. Also, relevance is given to the colours of Ashima's saris throughout the entire movie so as to enhance a particular rasa with the audience as the saris Ashima wears after the death of Ashok are all in pale and nude tones. Similarly, the OST mixes pop music and fast rhythm tracks that, alongside the film's editing, reminds the audience of a TV ad as in Gogol's wedding night scene with Moushumi or in the arrival of the Ganguli family at Kolkata.

Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* and Nair's *The Namesake* then show that Nair and Chadha's hybrid narratives interconnect different artistic genres and a miscellany of both Western and South Asian narrative elements. So, I believe that the fact that a hybrid narrative is produced involves a postcolonial subversion of expected racial and gender roles because there is a collaborative interconnection of new narrative elements on screen that emerge when the two worlds converge and articulate a diaspora space where cultures interact together and a new option for characters is displayed. The evolutions and introduction of Hashida in *Bhaji on the Beach* and Ashima in *The Namesake* clearly illustrate this point, as I will explore further in Chapter V.

It is in this sense that Chadha and Nair's hybrid narratives challenge old descriptions because their movies are British and US productions that did not portray a static representation of the South Asian migrants in both the UK and the US as it could have been expected under *Orientalist* considerations of their films as instances of "Third Cinema" (Gabriel 1979) or "Accented Cinema" (Naficy 2001) that, as studied in Chapter II, simplified their films to identify Indian gestures instead of analysing what they were used

⁴² Satyajit Ray (1921-1992) was an Indian film director who received international prizes at Cannes Film Festival (Best Director for *Pather Panchali*, 1956), Venice Film Festival (Golden Lion for Best film with *Aparajito*, 1956), and Berlin Film Festival (Silver Bear for Best Director with *Charulata*, 1965, and Golden Bear for *Ashani Sanket*, 1973). His great vision consisted of mixing South Asian slow narratives with the obsession for the detail that European coetaneous directors such as French Jean Renoir and Italian Vittorio De Sica used. Mira Nair has always acknowledged the influence of Ray in her movies (2007c).

for. Instead, Chadha and Nair create hybrid films that do not fit in any of the previous restrictive categories and so they narrate stories in their own way: using narrative, film and editing techniques from different styles and parts of the world.

Consequently, Chadha and Nair's selected films help confront racial stereotypes about the South Asian migrant because their new creative form places specific dilemmas for the South Asian community such as intercultural love relationship or access to academic education. Here, Chadha and Nair's own cartographies of diaspora explained in the last section of Chapter I emerge as the first challenge to racial and gender discrimination by the confluence of different narrative elements that allow South Asian, African and Western narratives to interact together on screen. The scene in Nair's *Mississippi Masala* where Mina's family leaves Uganda or the African poetry shared between Hashida and Oliver in the exhibition in Brighton in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* are examples of this statement.

In summary, hybrid narratives allow new stories and definitions for South Asian women in the diaspora. Thence, Chadha and Nair's hybrid films subvert narrative, racial and cultural preconceptions and artistic limitations by showing female characters that defied the double burden that, in terms of culture and race, had been imposed on them as South Asian citizens of the diaspora in the UK and the US. So, I have detailed in this chapter the particularities of South Asian performing arts tradition to provide an understanding of its eclectic nature and, by studying Bharata Muni's *Natyasastra*, I have explained how the gathering of performing techniques is illustration of the holistic nature of the different ways of expression within South Asian performing arts. Accordingly, I have commented on the techniques and the concept of *rasa* as the empathy that joins performers and audience together to make sense of the artistic experience.

Likewise, I have illustrated how Chadha and Nair's selected films follow South Asian performing arts conventions to let both the performer and audience recover their own

sacredness. Here, sacredness has been defined in Advaita Vedanta terms to link the cultural and spiritual heterogeneity of the South Asian Subcontinent and its diaspora with the extemporal relevance of its traditional conventions. In this sense, I have portrayed the interconnection of narrative genres in the study of bharatanatyam, a specific dance form from the South Asian Subcontinent as well as this I have studied the evolution of bharatanatyam as an example of how an art form evolves to avoid the artistic simplification and colonial attempt to ostracise the form.

Thence, I have been able to state that Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair include elements from the South Asian performing arts tradition together with Western cinematographic languages to address the life of South Asian migrants and portray the limitations suffered by them in terms of race and gender. At this juncture, I have proposed the term hybrid narratives to address the diversity of languages and genres used by Chadha and Nair to show the cultural hybridity that is inherent to the diaspora space. Hybridity has been defined as a subversive adjective because it identifies how different cultures mix together without one suppressing the other. Equally, hybrid narratives have been described as guaranteeing that different traditions live together to make new cultures emerge because they propose new languages and artistic formats that enable that all characters and audience can detail and relate to the stories that are show on screen.

Thus, I will now analyse in Chapter IV how Chadha and Nair's hybrid films enhance new roles for female main characters in the diaspora within the selected movies in terms of educational attainment, arranged marriages and interracial relationships. Similarly, it will be confirmed that through these hybrid narratives the female characters in Chadha and Nair's films create webs of collaboration that subvert those interlocking systems of domination embroidered upon them in cultural, racial and gender terms. In other words, it is now time to exemplify how Chadha and Nair illustrate how we can all subvert those

interlocking systems of domination by looking at the artistic communion that in their films embroider us all together as hybrid citizens of a heterogeneous world.

CHAPTER IV

GENDER CONFLICTS IN WOMEN'S CINEMA OF THE SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORA

'The women say that you look very mannish.' 'Mannish?' said I, 'What do they mean by that?' 'They mean that you are shy and timid like men.' 'Shy and timid like men?' It was really a joke. I became very nervous. . . . 'What is the matter, dear?' [Sister Sara] said affectionately. 'I feel somewhat awkward,' I said in a rather apologizing tone, . . . 'I am not accustomed to walking about unveiled.' 'You need not be afraid of coming across a man here.' (Hossain¹ 12)

[We should] acknowledge the diversity and complexity of female experience, of our relation to power and dominance . . . work together to confront differences and to expand our awareness. (hooks 1987, 25)

Diaspora is a space in constant transformation where cultures are in contact and where art offers a possibility to illustrate the centripetal and centrifugal forces of the movements of peoples, the "modalities and specificities" (Brah 1996: 36) that determine the experience of migration. It is in this sense that I pointed up in Chapter II the theoretical delimitations about diaspora space" (Brah 1996: 86) from a postcolonial approach and presented Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair's as clear exponents of the dynamics of the diaspora space and the subaltern "interlocking systems domination" (hooks 1987: 25) imprint on the migrant woman's cartography of diaspora. Then, I explained in Chapter III the cultural relevance and development of narrative genres and techniques that, from South Asian performing arts tradition, are used in Chadha and Nair's films. At this point, the present chapter aims at recognising the *gender conflicts* found by the women of the South Asian diaspora in the UK and the US as depicted in Chadha and Nair's selected films.

¹ Rokeya S. Hossain was a pioneering Muslim female writer in both English and Bengali in Kolkata during the early 20th century. She wrote *Sultana's Dream: A Feminist Utopia* (1905) in English as a feminist utopia that imagines how society would work if, for one day, women would occupy the positions of political control.

By *conflicts*, I refer to those situations that emerge in the diaspora space as determined by the contact among cultures; conflict thence understood as the result of the cultural questioning, representational evaluation and the promotion of the socio-political transformation inherent to the artistic illustration of the hybridity of cultures. In this sense, by attributing *gender* conflicts, I intend to review the educational, socio-economic, political and relational patrons of power and dominance imposed upon the migrant women as based on the conclusions of recent studies like those promoted by the World Economic Forum², The Joseph Rowntree Foundation³, The United Nations Development Programme's *Empowered and Equal*⁴ and The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs' *Millennium Development Goals to End Poverty in 2015*⁵. According to the data displayed in these four references, it will be concluded that the migrant woman suffers unequal access to academic education, lacks economic participation and job opportunity as

²Klaus Schwab, founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum (WEF) asserts that the organisation's hope is that of "[leading] society, women and men, to greater awareness of the challenges and opportunities, in addition to serving as a catalyst for change in both high- and low- ranking countries" (v). Founded as an independent international organization committed to improving the state of the world by engaging leaders in partnerships to shape global, regional and industry agendas, the WEF has been publishing the yearly Global Gender Gap Report since 2006 until 2014. This report follows the framework sketched by Augusto López-Claros and Saadia Zahidi in *Women's Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap*, 2005.

³ The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) is an independent charity organisation based in the UK under the slogan "search a place to debate, demonstrate a place to innovate and influence a place to learn". The organization's main target for the year 2009-10 is that of empowering the figure of the migrant woman as a way to subvert the results shown in the study *Contemporary Slavery in the UK. Overview and Key Issues*, written by Gary Craig et al. in 2007 under the JRF's patronage, which showed the position of inequality and suffering occupied by the migrant woman in both the UK and the world.

⁴ The United Nations' Development Programme is, as stated in the document "Gender Equality Strategy 2008-2011", "committed to supporting the capacity development of The United Nations partners to adopt approaches that advance women's rights and take account the full range of their contributions to develop strong operations and institutional arrangements for gender equality" (1). The cited document embodies the programme's aim to promote the specific actions that, in the fields of education and economic opportunity, must still be undertaken to guarantee the gender equality and the women's empowerment.

⁵ Department of Economic and Social Affairs' *Millennium Development Goals to End Poverty in 2015* is a campaign launched in 2000 to eliminate all structures of poverty, racism and gender discrimination that are still present in our contemporary world. With the yearly publication of "The Millennium Development Goals Report", The United Nations evaluates world's poverty, achievement of primary education, promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, reduction of children's mortality, improvement of maternal health, struggle against HIV and malaria, sustainability of the environment and enhancement of a global partnership for development.

opposed to the male rates and displays a subaltern position in terms of political empowerment and role in the family patriarchal organisation.

Similarly, I believe that the same gender conflicts articulate the plot lines of Chadha and Nair's filmmaking and so this chapter analyses how both filmmakers denounce this inequality by offering the representation of the South Asian woman in the diaspora not as a mere victim but as the promoter of social transformation and consciousness-raising about the unequal access to academic education and the lack of freedom imposed by the migrant community in love relationships. The following words by Indian Nobel Laureate economist Amartya Sen⁶ prove the point:

[The] compelling case for the notion that societies need to see women less as a passive recipients of help, and more as dynamic promoters of social transformation, a view strongly buttressed by a body of evidence suggesting that the education, employment and ownership rights of women have a powerful influence on their ability to control their environment and contribute to economic development. (Qtd. in Lopez-Claros and Zahidi, 3)

Likewise, it is in this sense that I believe that both Chadha and Nair propose a cinematographic description that differ from *Orientalising* representations that may reduce the migrant woman to "tokenistic representations, . . . bodies to be contested [or] lowest exponents of difference as a gendered phenomenon" (Brah 1996: 14-5), "abstract identities" (Min-ha & Chen 320), "silent victims and disenfranchised speakers" (Spivak 1995b: 68) or "carriers of the cultural symbolism that marks out the boundaries of the diasporic group" (Anthias & Yuval Davies 36). Instead, and as filmmakers of hybrid films,

⁶Amartya Sen (1933-), holder of 1998 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics, belongs to the School of Developmental Economics, which proclaims that the only way to help underdeveloped countries with foreign aid is that of directly investing the money in projects that implement the education and economic impulse of the recipient country. Sen and Hungarian professor of Economics Peter Bauer wrote together the first canonical text of the School: *The Development Frontier: Essays in Applied Economics*; where they urged in the necessity to pay special attention to the gender inequality in terms of educational attainment and political participation in both developed and underdeveloped countries.

Chadha and Nair empower a description of the diasporic women not as “abstract identities” but as active subjects in the abstract diaspora space.

Subsequently, the definitions *hybrid films* and *hybrid narratives* appear as powerful systems of “disseminating ideas, opportunities and other images” (22), paraphrasing the words that for cinema were offered by first critic of feminist cinema, US citizen Claire Johnston. The hybrid film then enables what Claire Johnston’s disciple US citizen Mary Ann Doane calls “another body of representation” (88), a subversive space of struggle where cinema challenges hegemonic and reducing visions of the migrant woman. Here, Chadha and Nair’s selected films not only emerge as benchmarks that recognise the contemporary gendered construction of the diaspora space but as alternatives that subvert the dominant stereotypical portrayals with “metaphorical mirrors” that, as Indian filmmaker Pratibha Parmar states, “interrupt the discourses of dominant media with a strong counter discourse and corrective denouncement of gender inequality” (2000: 378). Similarly, the description of hybrid narratives let the characters in their movies represent their culture and express their feelings throughout their own multiple language of performance.

Therefore, this chapter will focus on three emblematic situations repeated in the films by Chadha and Nair that are representatives of a gender conflict and its subversion in the diaspora space. The chosen conflicts will describe how the migrant woman occupies a subaltern position, both under the dominant yoke of the receiving country (the UK or the US) and the patriarchal organisation of the South Asian community. Correspondingly, I will firstly start evaluating the gender conflicts that South Asian women find as a consequence of the refusal and lack of access to academic education in the selected films as an illustrator of the initial lack of economic and political participation of the these female characters. Secondly, I will analyse how the South Asian, British and US communities impose arranged marriages and oppose interracial relationships, therefore confirming their

reluctance to cultural hybridity. Thirdly, I will examine how both directors represent the creation of an all-women collaborative space (a *nurturing* space) from where women create a stronger bond to the subversive hope of their final empowerment in the diaspora⁷.

As a result, let me recall the relevance of film as a paradigmatic field of representation with feminist E. Ann Kaplan's anthological quotation: "[Film] offers a meta-terrain where questions about women, the unconscious, the social imaginary and women's discursive construction show the different cultural and social valences . . . and, in so doing, feminist film study may change cultural attitudes towards women, and may even deepen our understanding of meanings have traditionally born in patriarchal cultures" (2). This is the analytical recurrence of the present chapter as entailed from the postcolonial, feminist and subversive reading of the *hybrid films* and *hybrid narratives* previously reviewed. I believe that it this is the representational academic path from where to take inspiration for the reversal of the gender inequality that still rules our lives.

1- EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN THE DIASPORA

Educational attainment is a gender conflict and so Augusto López-Claros and Saadia Zahidi's *Women's Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap* (2005) defines it as "the main framework for capturing the magnitude and scope of the gender-based disparities" (3). In the same sense, The United Nations document "Taking Action

⁷ The same situational conflicts are described by other filmmakers of the South Asian Diaspora such as Indian Canadian Deepa Mehta, BrAsian Pratibha Parmar and Sandhya Suri or Indian American Sarmistha Parida and Shilpa Sunthakar.

Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women” states that “education guarantees the vision of a world in which men and women work together as equal partners to secure better lives for themselves and their families” (29). Equally, The United Nations’ *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2009* recognised the “urgency” and “commitment” (18) that was required to guarantee the equal access to academic education by 2015. Correspondingly, touchstone studies on the South Asian Diaspora⁸ also reflect how the access, refusal and imposition of an academic education acts as an artistic and creative evaluator of the contact among cultures and the subaltern position of the migrant woman.

Hence, I will be evaluating in this section the characters of Mina and Kinnu in Mira Nair’s *Mississippi Masala* (1991), Asha and Hashida in Gurinder Chadha’s *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993), Ria in Nair’s *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), Jess in Chadha’s *Bend It like Beckham* (2002) and Ashima in Nair’s *The Namesake* (2006) because they are clear exponents of the gendered nature of the referred academic conflict found by South Asian Women in the diaspora space. Hereby, it is my intention to show the complex experience of Nair and Chadha’s characters (no matter their economic or educational background because they are all under the same structures of patriarchal control) as alternatives to the contemporary stereotypes of the high skilled Punjabi IT worker at Manhattan, the Muslim Bangladeshi woman dressed with a hijab or the Hindu wife cooking *chapattis** and daily visiting the Mandir⁹ in the North of London.

So, let me start by analysing the character of Mina in Mira Nair’s *Mississippi Masala* (1991). Mina was born in Uganda but, as the beginning of the movie shows, her family firstly moves to the UK and latter to Mississippi (US). Mina is the daughter of Jay,

⁸ Works of reference include Parvati Raghuram et al.’s *Tracing an Indian Diaspora*; Nasreen Ali et al.’s *A Postcolonial People. South Asians in Britain*; Sunil Bhati’s *American Karma*; or Padma Rangaswamy’s *Namasté America*.

⁹ The Mandir (Mandir means Hindu Temple) is the name given to the Hindu Temple in the London district of Wembley, a traditional South Asian area in the North of the British metropolis. See Image number 8 in the *Appendix of Images*.

an Indian barrister who feels Ugandan at his heart, where he was employed as a British officer following the Indenture system already explained in Chapter I. Nevertheless, the whole South Asian Community must leave after Ugandan new president Idi Amin's *Indictment against Indians* (1972) and her father Jay, reluctant to abandon his "home" and "the country he was born in" (2'24''-2'29'', 17'43''), must cope with the idea that his Law education might be of no use beyond the Ugandan frontiers for, as Anil mentions, Jay was "the champion defendant in Uganda" (37'15'')¹⁰. For that reason, and after having enjoyed a privileged socioeconomic background in East Africa, the family moves to the UK and then to Mississippi in the US. In Mississippi, Mina and Jay work as clerks for a cousin's motel business. Here, Jay's academic formation is useless and Mina must be employed as receptionist until she can afford an upper academic education, as she explains to Jay in the lunch scene at the Chinese Restaurant (44'11''-44'57''). Thence, in the US it is only Kinnu, Mina's mother, who has a work of her own: she runs a *Likker Legger*, a sort of traditional *dukawalla** (a shop selling South Asian products) and off-License which, ironically, advertises the cheapness of American alcohol as opposed to the excellence of expensive British spirits (1h05'09'').

The paradox of the situation trespasses this description because Jay represents the paradigm of a highly skilled migrant in the US who does not get an appropriate job, unlike Kinnu, who is academically uneducated but, in the diaspora, feeds her family while she is subdued to her family and Jay's will. Accordingly, Mina is expected to marry an Indian migrant as her friend Namita will do in the movie, as she is about to marry Anil (Mina's cousin). However, Mina will afterwards defy this burden imposed by her family and community by falling in love with African American Demetrius (starred by Denzel

¹⁰ From here on, I will use the symbol (h) to refer to the hour, (') to denote to the minute and (') to point to the second of the movie from where the quotation is taken.

Washington in his first role on screen), illustrating that there is another possibility beyond the endogenous limitations imposed by the South Asian community. The community's reaction to Mina's affair can be summarised in the scene where Mira Nair and Sooni Taraporevala (screenplay writer of *Salaam Bombay* and *Mississippi Masala*) themselves star as the two gossipers talking on the phone about Mina dating Demetrius: "[Can] you imagine dumping Harry Patel for a black? . . . These modern ideas spread like a disease. Better send her back to India, get some ideas and be back to find a decent suitor" (1h17'21''-1h18'18''). Moreover, Mina suffers from a white-normative yoke because, for instance, she is insulted by two white policemen who scream at her "you bitch" and she answer with "you motherfucker" (1h14'36'') when she is discovered by the police and her Indian cousins in the hotel room with Demetrius. It is straight after this scene when Mina tells her father that she needs to "pursue an academic education" (44'11'') to be free because, in Jay's own words: "They [referring to US white men] can take everything out of you but they can't take your education" (44'12''-44'16''). At this moment, I consider that she is denouncing the double submission she suffers both as a migrant and as a woman.

Mina is, as Sinijita Bhatia¹¹ remarks, an "emigrant twice displaced" (qtd. in Binita Mehta 187) who challenges the limitations that, in terms of educational attainment, are imposed on her for, and as previously said, being both migrant and woman. Illustrative of the first statement is Tyrone's lines (Demetrius' brother) at Demetrius' grandfather's birthday party: "You cannot be dark and have money, no matter whether you are black, brown or yellow, we are not white" (41'31''). Likewise, Kinnu's words to Mina that "you

¹¹ I consider that Bhatia's essay is an essentialist reading of the stimulating essay by Parvinder Bachu's "Twice-Born Migrants". On the one hand, Bhatia only acknowledges "the particular idiosyncrasy of the twice, thrice, and quadrant migrant experiences of the South Asian diasporas around the Asian, African, Caribbean and British/American shores" (183) and defines *Mississippi Masala* as a mere "story of emigrants twice displaced by issues of race, colour and identity which never trespasses the idea of integrating Mina and Demetrius' families within the prospects of a common future beyond [Mina's] motel and [Demetrius'] cleaning enterprise" (187). On the other hand, Bhachu recognised the connivance of the four cultures (South Asian, African American, Latino and WASPs) and the possible formation of a hybrid identity.

are a girl and so must accept your responsibility [with the family]" (1h16'51'') are representative of the second.

Bearing in mind this subaltern context, it is also noteworthy that none of the female characters portrayed in the film have access to a university education, probably under the dictation that they must stick together around the family's motel and keep the good Indian customs, as I previously quoted the characters of the gossipers. Nonetheless, this statement is subverted by Mina, who fights against her imposed fate in order to challenge that unequal traditional system, as represented by her call at the end of the movie, when she tells her parents that she is running away with Demetrius to pursue a future of herself. In her own words: "If I don't leave now I will never leave" (1h40'49'). In my opinion, this is Mina's opposition against the double gender burden imposed on her as, and paraphrasing the previously referred scene, she does not want to "spend [her] whole life working at a liquor store . . . [because she thinks that she] can change the world" (1h41'58'). This beautiful image (alongside the whole interracial relationship that will be analysed in next section) clearly represents Mina's desire to break the gender norm imposed on her educational future. Furthermore, Mina's economic unfeasibility to access university education may be subverted if she realises about the professional possibilities within the diaspora space beyond the limits placed by her community. Here, the fact that the US occupies the thirty ninth position (out of) on the previously referred World Economic Forum's *Gender Gap global Report of 2014*¹² in terms of educational attainment and the sixty ninth (out of one hundred forty two) in terms of equality of wage proves that *Mississippi Masala* (1991) is still nowadays very relevant. If Mina represents a change towards progressive subversion as

¹² An earlier version of this research was gathered in my MPhil dissertation. There, I worked with figures from 2009 and, in terms of educational attainment, they were better as they positioned the US in the twenty-seventh position. For the full PhD Dissertation I have compared these figures with the 2014 edition.

compared to Kinnu, so do Asha and Hashida in Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993).

Bhaji on the Beach opens showing the displaying windows of a street in Southall with Nazi graffiti, hybrid supermarkets (as the baskets of a grocery store exhibit "coriander and mangoes from India" alongside British pomegranates and French apples, 20'-23') and the typical South Asian video rental shop with formulaic Hindi Popular cinema (*Bollywood**) billboards. The camera vision enters into the shop and the action switches to display Asha's nightmares. Asha, a woman in her forties and the assistant at the video rental shop, is scolded by Rama, the Hindu god who killed Sita, the paradigm of the good-wife to be followed by Hindu female believers. In these nightmares that are repeated throughout the whole movie and that BrAsian feminist critic Geetha Ramanathan refers as "Asha's extradiegetic visions" (67), Hindu god Rama always reminds Asha that she "must be a proper Indian wife and follow [her] traditional education, what it is expected from [her]" (6'). It is here that the film will later inform that Asha's true aspirations were not those of working at her husband's video shop but being a *Bollywood** actress, as Asha herself tells the English gentleman in Blackpool: "I wanted to become a *Bollywood** actress but, after getting married, I quitted my singing and acting" (78'). It is at this moment that Asha realises that, as Kinnu in Nair's *Mississippi Masala*, she is the one feeding her family because her husband is never over the counter at the video-rental shop, as it is hinted in the third nightmare (58'), where her husband gives orders about how to work at the shop and cook warm *chapattis** while he socialises at the bar. When she says goodbye to Ambrose Waddington, the English man she meets in Blackpool, she grumbles: "Maybe I should resume my singing lessons" (43'59').

It is at this moment that Asha comes to terms with the gender restriction that she herself, as one of the community's aunties, is also imposing on characters like Hashida, a

character who faces a triple yoke. Firstly, Hashida cannot study an Arts degree because her family and her community have already decided that she must become a doctor. Secondly, she has a secret interracial relationship with Oliver, a black man who studies Arts and that, obviously, will not be welcomed by her South Asian family. And, thirdly, she has found out that she is pregnant scarcely before starting the trip to Blackpool, something that will be discovered by the rest of the women in the trip, who will refuse Hashida after they discover that she is pregnant, as they call her “besharam” (41’34’’), which means prostitute or woman without honour. I hereby consider that the parallel created by both Gurinder Chadha and her screenplay writer Meera Syal in the character of Hashida is very important to understand how education is interwoven in the triple axis of Hashida’s discrimination as illustrative of the unequal position of the migrant woman in terms of economic participation, social opportunity and political empowerment.

In this sense, it is remarkable that out of all the women in the trip to Blackpool, it is only Manjit, who is in charge of the Non Governmental Organisation that organises the trip, and Hashida, who has certain prospects of education attainment¹³, who have a prospect future in terms of professional freedom. At this juncture, it is proven that the choice of academic education done by the South Asian woman in the diaspora is very much dependent on her family’s hopes, especially her father’s, as Hashida will study because her father has determined her to do so and go to university to study Medicine despite the fact that she wants to study Arts (9’58’’)¹⁴. In this regard, Gurinder Chadha recognises the

¹³ It is very important to note that both Manjit and Hashida are the only women in the trip who support Ginder who, having left her husband because he abused her, is rejected by the rest of the South Asian community.

¹⁴ The following academic references illustrate this statement referring both the UK and the US: Jonathan Beaverstock’s “Rethinking Skilled Labour Migration: World Cities and Baking Organisations” (1994), Fauzia Ahmad et al.’s *South Asian Women and Employment in Britain: The Interaction of Gender and Ethnicity* (2003), Ernst Spaan et. al’s *Asian Migrants and European Labour Market* (2005), Tariq Modood et al.’s *Ethnicity, Social Mobility, and Public Policy: Comparing the USA and UK* (2005), Joel Kuortti’s *Writing Imagined Diasporas: South Asian Women Reshaping North American Identity* (2007) or Yasmin Hossain’s *Moving on Up: South Asian Women and Higher Education* (2007).

gender-designed barriers in both education and subsequent access to employment to promote the integration of Hashida within the possibilities of the diaspora space, where both women and men, migrant or not, can be economically active and politically participative. It is now important to remember this challenge because the United Kingdom is placed the thirty second country in equal wage in the World Economic Forum's *Gender Gap global Report of 2014* in terms of Educational Attainment and forty eighth.

Also, it is under the subversive terms of the film that, after the final scene at the male striptease club (when they all discover that Ginder has been mistreated by her husband and so the aunties had all been wrong accusing her of just leaving her husband), Asha changes her mind and enhances the construction of a collaborative space with the rest of the women so that Hashida and Ginder can find empathy and spiritual comfort. It is in this so-called *nurturing* space that will be analysed in the third section of this chapter that Asha states to Ginder's husband: "Put that boy down [referring to Ginder and his son] and leave her alone" (1h29'51). The scene is very moving because the rest of the women smile with a knowing smile first at Ginder and then to Hashida when they see her from the bus with Olivier when the bus resumes its journey back to their daily routines in Birmingham (1h32'39"). And at this point, once they are back on the bus to return home, they talk about how Hashida is a modern woman that will help the rest of the women of the community, either becoming a doctor or an artist. They all trust the subversive opportunities that Hashida has ahead of herself in the diaspora space, a space from where the South Asian women on the trip have constructed a parallel mutual alliance against patriarchal and social limitations. Now, Hashida has a future of her own by being able to choose the Arts Degree she longs for and so Ginder or Asha recognise themselves as common inhabitants of the subversive hope inherent to the diaspora space. Hope here defined following Henry A. Giroux's article "When Hope Is Subversive", where he defines *hope* as follows:

[Hope] is more than a politics, it is also a pedagogical and performative practice that provides the foundation for enabling human beings to learn about their potential as moral and civic agents . . . Hope is anticipatory and mobilizing[,] is a subversive force [that] pluralizes politics by opening up a space for dissent, making authority accountable, and becoming an activating presence in promoting social transformation. . . . Hope [is] a subversive force, a defiant practice that provides a link, however transient, provisional and contextual, between vision and critique on the one hand, and engagement and transformation on the other. (38-39)

Accordingly, the character of Ria in Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) is a further illustration of this confrontation that, in terms of educational choice, appears between what it is expected from a woman and what she truly desires.

In *Monsoon Wedding*, Ria is the only female character in the Verma family that decides to undertake an academic education and so she challenges the schemes dictated by her aunt-mother (Ria is an orphan), who constantly tells Ria and her cousin-sister Aditi that "there will be a time when all of you will fly out when your wedding is arranged" (12'). Nevertheless, Ria decides to oppose this fixed idea in between the preparations for Aditi's arranged wedding. At this stage, and considering how Aditi must choose between the affair she is having with a married man and her arranged own marriage, Ria decides to speak out and inform all the family that she wants to study Creative Writing in the US "to make sense of all her life" (44'). Soon all the men in the family gather to decide what to do. The choice taken is that Ria can go to the US under the patronage of her uncle Tej, the economic successful man of the family who has flown to Delhi from the US for Aditi's wedding.

However, Ria's expression of disgust is clear. She keeps silent until right before the ceremony, when she decides to *talk back* and denounce that her uncle Tej abused of her when she was a teenager, something that he is probably doing now to the little cousin Aliya (1h33'11"). Ria asserts that, at a moment when she has decided to fight "for a future of her own, she needed to take all her conflicts out and break all the decisions that for her future

have been laid upon her (1h33'22''). At this moment, all the family members grumble back at her and complain about how being a spinster has definitely troubled her mind (1h34'24''). Right afterwards, when they are settled to take the family snapshot before the wedding's ceremony, Lalit Verma (Aditi's father and Ria's uncle-father) decides to reject uncle Tej in the photograph arguing that "Ria is [his] daughter . . . [he] support her and [he believes] in her. You [to uncle Tej] go out" (1h42'26''). It is then that, under the prospects of starting academic education, Ria subverts the assigned gender-expectations sketched by her family by being the first woman in the family to follow an academic education, as compared to the interest that Lalit has always posed on his son Varum's educational expectations for the fact of being a man because he is supposed to be the man of the family (1h12'10''). Consequently, Ria's educational attainment would subvert what was expected from her as an orphan and economically dependent woman because she will finally manage to gather the necessary money that she needs to start her studies in Creative Writing. So, she will become a writer of the world who will be able to show the path to freedom and equality to other women.

This situation matches with the opening of Mira Nair's *The Namesake* (2006) when Ashima first encounters, on the threshold of her Kolkata's home, a pair of sparkling shoes made in the US while she listens to her own mother stating: "[Ashima] loves to cook. She knits very well. Kids are crazy about her. She has been learning classical music since she was a kid. She goes to college and her best subject at is English poetry" (9'12''). Ashima tries Ashok's shoes on and listens to Ashok's mother stating: "My son has been living abroad for the last two years. He is in New York. He is doing his PhD in the field of Fibre Optics" (9'26''). Ashima ushers into the room, meets Ashok and recites a poem by Tennyson. Immediately, Ashok's mother asks Ashima: "My child, have you ever flown in a plane? Will you be able to live in the other half of the world? Live in a cold city with

freezing winters? Leave your house, far from your parents?" (9'30''). Ashima answers: "But he'll be with me, no?" (9'31''), therefore illustrating her expectations about an Indian arranged marriage of staying at home subduing her life to the man's. However, as the action moves to New York, Ashima gives birth to her son Gogol and realises that she is to wait every afternoon for Ashok to come back from work, taking into account the fact that she is not able to do anything in the US because Ashok is used to doing everything by himself.

It is in this context that Ashima realises how she gave up her education and how she lost her possibility to become an active part in the economic dynamics of the diaspora space. Nevertheless, once her children Gogol and Sonia leave for college, she starts to work at a local library and enriches her private life talking with American women, recovering the idea of resuming her education as a singer¹⁵, as she herself claims to her US friend Sally and later to her family" (1h38'23'', 1h49'27''). This space that both Ashima and Alison have created at the library soon emerges as an alternative place to the assumed family and social expectations previously sketched for Ashima, who now shares confidences and personal stories with Sally. It is out of the strength of this collaborative friendship that Ashima recognises to Sally that she has been thinking about leaving the US (1h38'23''). Mira Nair's "Director's Commentary" in the British and Spanish DVD edition for *The Namesake* illustrates this remark. In Nair's own words: "This is the first moment where Ashima clearly has an opportunity to express and act as herself" (12'). Thus, the next decision taken by Ashima would be that of selling her American house and live between India and the US. In India, she will go back to her family home in Kolkata, where she will

¹⁵ It is interesting to point out that the characters of Ashima, Asha, Ria and Hashida all want to become artists despite their husband's or the family's opposition. Further academic studies could prove how these four women struggle to become free women who fully participate in the dynamics of the diaspora space by opening new creative spaces that empower other women.

start back her music lessons. In the US, she will live with her children and keep on with her singing (1h41'10'').

The scene clearly illustrates the cycle Ashima unveils to embrace the nature of her own name (Ashima means “without borders, limitless”) and her own existence, as she explains to her children: “I want to go back to where I belong [that’s why] . . . I have decided to sell the house. I am going to do what your father and I had always planned. Six months in India and six months in the US. Then I can go and sing in Calcutta. That is if any guru wants a forty-five year old student. I want to be free” (1h40'37''-1h40'55''). At this moment, I consider that Ashima embraces the transformative dynamics of the diaspora space and a corresponding life dependant only on her own choices¹⁶. Once Ashima is able to be part of the economic system, she resumes her education and enjoys a much wider social opportunity that grants her with the possibility of living as she truly desires.

Similarly, the character of Jess in Gurinder Chadha’s *Bend It like Beckham* (2002) serves as the perfect corollary to illustrate and summarise the interconnection among educational attainment, economic participation and social opportunity opened by the theoretical recognition of the diaspora space. Gurinder Chadha herself asserts: “*Bend It like Beckham* illustrates how women need to acknowledge their own role in the dynamics of the world, bend the world to them, as we wanted to transmit by the title of the feature” (2006: 2). Chadha’s words clearly connect with Amartya Sen’s previously referred statement,

¹⁶ In this sense, I consider significant to point out that the film starts and finishes with an image of Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of the Arts who, as explained in the *Upanishads*, destroys Vritasura, the God who had stolen all the water and knowledge of the world. Here, Saraswati is represented with four attributes, a dish with holy water (as exponent of the power to purify and give life), a *mala* (a necklace representative of the meditative power), a book (which is an anachronism explained by the fact that print books only arrived at the Subcontinent under British Empire occupancy) and the Sitar (illustrative of the search for perfection and the constant transformation of every artist in the quest for freedom-*nirvana**). Consequently, it is not a matter of coincidence that Nair chose that Ashima trains as a sitar singer and that her name means without frontiers. Ashima is then the exponent of a woman in constant transformation who benefits from the power of art along her path towards the *nirvana**. Image 9 in the *Appendix of Images* represents Saraswati with the four attributes previously described.

where Sen proclaims: “[Societies] need to see women less as passive recipients of help, and more as dynamic promoters of social transformation . . . suggesting that the education, employment and ownership rights of women have a powerful influence on their ability to control their environment and contribute to economic development” (qtd. in Lopez-Claros and Zahidi, 3). Here, the fact that Jess, together with white British Jules, finally accomplishes the same opportunity of education and economic participation as that given to male football players clearly proves the necessary commitment that must be taken towards the performance of gender equality. Once again, the subversive hope of the role of the migrant woman in the diaspora space is implicit, since the opening scene of the film when, in Jess dream, Mrs Bhamra is interviewed on TV and asked: “Could Jess be the answer for England’s pressing needs?” (1’23’’). And, in fact, Jess establishes herself as the paradigmatic figure from where to review the cultural and racist reasons that generate the gender inequality of women in the diaspora space.

Jess is a first generation Sikh Punjabi, seventeen-year-old girl who dreams about becoming Beckham, the paradigmatic anti-macho footballer born in a low-class family of the North of London. Jess daily sneaks out to play football with some of the male South Asians in her neighbourhood and then works hard to pass her A Levels (equivalent to the High School Leaving Certificate necessary to enrol a university degree) to fulfil the family hopes. In this sense, Jess will be probably go to college as her father exclaims when she gets the A Levels results (1h12’) she will illustrate a certain progress for the Bhamra family because her father works at Heathrow Airport and her sister Pinky at Luton (probably as members of the crew and the handling company respectively), meanwhile her mother is always, as she herself exclaims, “too busy trying to keep the Indian values over my girls” (8’40’’). This objective is partly fulfilled by Pinky’s marriage because, although it is a love marriage, the groom’s family is decent (8’40’’), However, Jess’ feelings towards her

sister's wedding stand on the opposite: "I am sick of this wedding and it hasn't started" (8'54").

After this remark, it is significant to point out how the action changes to show Jess running to the park to meet Jules, who invites Jess to join her all-girls football team. Jess answers: "I didn't even know that there were girls' teams" to which Jules replies by exclaiming that her dream is, in her own words, "[to] play professional in America. You know, they have got a pro-league, stadiums, money, respect and they provide an academic education at the same time [*sic*]" (18'08"). Jess accepts the invitation and tells her parents.

Mrs Bhamra's reaction unveils as it follows:

Jessminder, I don't want shame on my family . . . You have to start behaving as a proper woman, ok? I don't want you running around people half-naked in front of men, look how dark you have become playing under the sun. No family will want a daughter in law who plays football non-stop. You can go and play round football but you can't make round chapattis. Once your exams are over you are starting to learn how to cook a proper Punjabi dinner. (21'14"-21'49")

In this sense, Jess's educational attainment is corroborated as a family expectation, something that she cannot choose for herself as already explained when describing the character of Hashida in Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993). Afterwards, Jess tells Jules that she is "ready to surrender to her culture and quit football" to which Jules reacts: "That's bollocks; my mother does neither want me to play [*sic*]. You can't take a no for an answer. There is an American scout coming over to see us playing Jess, you can't turn an opportunity for a future of your own. Tell your mum you are working at" (22'54"-23'08"). At this moment, Jess decides to embrace a fate of her own and defy all those patriarchal, cultural and racial expectations placed on her. Chadha paradigmatically decides to underscore the moment when they travel to Germany and British singer Mel C's song "This is my Independence Day" is played. The song, from which I have quoted the chorus,

clearly illustrates how Jess challenges the gender limitations imposed on them by her family: "I know I make mistakes/I will have to live and learn/Sometimes you play with fire and sometimes you get burned . . . I've got to find my way and my independence day" (31'20''-31'50''). By so doing, Jess has decided to reject the family expectations placed on her as the means to choose what she really wants.

Further in the film, and by finally being selected by the American scout alongside Jules, Jess performs a social transformation. She will be the first South Asian woman in a Professional League, as opposed to her father, who had to quit playing cricket once he arrived in England because, in her own words, "I did not want to challenge my racist mates and my conservative father so I just did what my father told me to do . . . There were no visible Indians boys out there in the limelight" (1h35'4''). Jess suffered the same problem when insulted "Paki bitch" in the middle of a match (1h03'h04''50') in one of the matches, but she will act in response and, although overreacting, spit back at her rival. This is what she also does at the end of the film, when she talks back to her community and family to inform them that she is going to America to study and play football. In Jess's own words:

I played the best and I was happy because I wasn't lying to you. . . . I didn't ask to be good at football, Nanak would have blessed me. . . . There was a scout from America and he has offered me a place at a top university with a full scholarship and a chance to play football professionally. And I really want to go. If I can't tell you what I will like to do now I won't ever be happy. (1h34'56'')

Thus, Jess opens an opportunity for herself and, by so doing, she challenges the whole interlocking systems that were placed on her as both being a woman and a migrant. Accordingly, Jess is a character that promotes awareness and fosters the challenge inherent to the transformative power of the diaspora space.

The previous pages have illustrated how both Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair offer a representation of the subaltern position of the migrant woman by focusing on the topic of access and choice of academic education and so I have analysed the characters of Mina, Asha, Hashida, Ria, Ashima and Jess as illustrators of Chadha and Nair's denouncement on the gender limitations that are still placed on the migrant woman. Here, the previous study has proved how Chadha and Nair recognise the subversive possibility inherent to the diaspora space as a true impulse from where to contest gender discrimination inherent both to the South Asian community and to the UK and the US normative expectations. Therefore, and strictly derived from the previous point, both Nair and Chadha portray characters who share a collaborative space where migrant women meet together so as to finally negotiate the subversive power of their hybrid, diasporic identities. This is the point of departure for next section, where I will study the gender conflicts associated to the arranged marriages and the interracial love relationships described by Chadha and Nair as a way to show the transcultural possibilities of the South Asian women in the diaspora space.

2- ARRANGED MARRIAGES AND INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE DIASPORA

There is no doubt that the imagery surrounding the South Asian wedding has been one of the most popular icons of the Noughties decade (2000-2010). Taking into account Nicole Kidman Hindi bride's apparel in Baz Lhurman's *Moulin Rouge* (2001), London based Department Stores Harvey Nichols's displaying windows in the summer of 2002 (decorated following the arrangements of a Punjabi wedding) or the world-coverage of the British

model and actress Liz Hurley's transnational marriage with Indian entrepreneur Arun Nayar (April 2007), there has been an *Orientalising* representation of the Hindu and Sikh wedding as promoting the "fastuosity of an exotic tradition" (12), as British scholar Reina Lewis mentions when referring to the treatment given by fashion and gossip magazines to the photographs of South Asian women in her excellent *Gendering Orientalism-Race, Feminity and Representation* (1996). Nevertheless, this discourse of exotic sparkle is counteracted by another *Orientalisation* of marriage: that of identifying the South Asian woman as the victim of arranged matrimonies or crimes of honour (*izzat** crimes) based on, among many sensationalist portrayals, the portrayal of an alcoholic husband throwing acid on his young bride. In my opinion, although these terrible crimes must have their cinematographic representation (as portrayed in noteworthy films like Jag Mundhra's *Provoked*, 2006, or Shekhar Kapur's *Bandit Queen*, 1994), there is a danger of creating a whole tendency of gender-based essentialist and racist descriptions about the South Asian women that only promote the victimization of the collective, as also sketched in the previously referenced visual work by Indian American artist Annu Palakunnathu Matthew¹⁷.

It is then remarkable that Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair's diasporic films (but for *Bhaji on the Beach*) all portray a South Asian wedding in the diaspora. The statement is extensive to other films like those by BrAsian Pratibha Parmar and Indian Canadian Deepa Mehta, as well as to literature (Indian American Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* or BrAsian Bali Rai's *(Un)Arranged Marriage*) and the visual arts of, for instance, the BrAsian Singh Twins¹⁸. Accordingly, my research has shown (as confirmed by the references above mentioned), how the weddings and the love relationships in the diaspora are alliterative representational tropes of the cultural negotiation between the diaspora

¹⁷ See Image 10 in the *Appendix of Images* for some instances of Annu Palakunnathu Matthew's visual work.

¹⁸ Image 5 in *Appendix of Images*.

space's resultant hybridity and the consequent conflicts that are inherent to the South Asian diasporic distinctiveness. It is also remarkable that the depiction of the rituals always underlies a gender conflict where the South Asian female migrant occupies a subaltern position, both under the domination of the white and the South Asian male yoke. Here, it is my intention to analyse these similar representational situations in the selected films by Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair with the aim of examining much more explicitly these conflicts of gender inequality.

At this juncture, let me anticipate that Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair offer an idiosyncratic South Asian illustration of the conflict, relating not only the cultural problems associated to the wedding ceremony but also to the interracial love relationship, taken as an example of the *hybrid narratives* they use to describe the diaspora space intermingling of cultures previously described in Chapter III. Therefore, it is in this interracial encounter of cultures where both Chadha and Nair circumscribe their different and subversive hybrid films by using the representational tropes of the wedding and the love interracial relationship as evaluators of the encounter between racial differences and the subaltern position that, both individually and socially, is occupied by South Asian woman in the diaspora.

So, I will firstly analyse the representational situations of arranged/love marriages by focusing on the characters of Namita in Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala* (1991), Aditi in Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) and Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* (2006). Secondly, I will evaluate the gender inequality associated to the interracial relationships between Mina and Demetrius in Nair's *Mississippi Masala* and Hashida and Oliver in Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993), with the purpose of unveiling the hybrid possibility that is granted by the performance of the diaspora space's transcultural coexistence.

To start with, there is no doubt that the traditional notion of marriage in the many South Asian cultures (whereas following Hindu, Muslim Sikh or Jain rituals) is a social scheme controlled by men, as expressed by French feminist Luce Irigaray's definition of marriage as "a system of exchange organized by patriarchal societies . . . modalities of productive work that are recognised, valued and rewarded in these societies as men's business" (174). In this regard, the notion is that *a man can choose* among a variety of potential options, meaning that *a woman must wait to be chosen* for she has no possibility to arrange a future for herself. Nazneen, the main character in Monica Ali's novel *Brick Lane* (2002) illustrates the trend when she asserts: "[My] fate does not belong to myself. It is [my husband's], it is my family's and it is God's" (4). Similarly, US anthropologist Lewis Hyde¹⁹ defines the general submissive position sketched for the wife as he points out in his thought-provoking *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*: "[The] woman who is given in marriage similarly takes on typical functions of the gift. She also establishes a bond (between clans or families), and as a part of an ongoing system of kinship, she, like any gift, becomes an agent of the community's cohesion and stability" (99). The role of the wife is then sketched, paraphrasing Monica Ali's words, as a mere passive role *to be fulfilled*.

The figure of a married South Asian woman thence becomes *Orientalised* as a silent and powerless victim, pretty much like in those caricatures offered by British officers in India which, during colonial times, represented all Indian women as Hindu widows eager to jump into a pyre²⁰. The contemporary readings of such a stereotypical representation are

¹⁹ Lewis Hyde is one of the founders of the *Gift Economy Discipline*, a socioeconomic school of thought that proclaims that more anti-capitalist measures should be developed by contemporary democratic governments. The Gift Economy grounds its lobbying campaigns in boasting that collaborative economies such as those of the Kula Ring (Papua Guinea), the Native Americans or on-line free encyclopaedia Wikipedia are the most advanced socio-political organisations in the contemporary world.

²⁰ Indian scholar Santosh Singh describes why the Hindu widow had to undertake *sati* (the jumping of the widow into the pyre as following her husband's death) as told by the *Upanishads* (sacred texts of early

extensive to the women in the South Asian diaspora, where the migrant wife is portrayed as “only a subject to suffer an *izzat** crime or a crime of honour” (26, my emphasis), as recognised by BrAsian feminist Amrit Wilson. In this sense, let me keep referring to Wilson as she continues: “I have argued that the State [and media] . . . interventions have in general strengthened South Asian patriarchal relations” (95). Wilson’s remark clearly summarises the essentialist representation normally sketched for the South Asian diasporic woman also as a passive victim. It is exactly from this point that I want to introduce the depiction provided by Chadha and Nair about arranged marriages as based on the possibility of subverting the presupposed submissive role of the bride and the limiting Western evaluation given to the Eastern cultural tradition.

Respectively, the selected films show arranged marriages that make a possible subversive choice for characters like Namita in Nair’s *Mississippi Masala* (1991), Aditi in Nair’s *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) and Ashima in Nair’s *The Namesake* (2006). Subversion here means transformation towards the recognition of the idea that a woman’s fate should be only of her own as well as the acknowledgement that the diaspora space empowers the option that another reality is always achievable.

Likewise, Namita (the Indian woman whose marriage is arranged to provide some company to Anil, Mina’s cousin and the owner of the motel business) refuses to Anil insistence on having sex with her because she realises that he is using her to obtain personal pleasure from where to counteract the stress caused by the litigation started by Demetrius (1h29’03’’). Here, and reversing the fact that I believe that in the beginning of the film Namita blamed herself for Anil’s own sexual impotence, she will turn to laugh at him and

Hinduism, written in Sanskrit and already references in Chapter I). In his own words: “[A] woman, unable to bear the pangs of separating from her deceased husband, considers her life futile without him, ends her life . . . to perform every form of penance and atonement for the sins committed by her which had caused her husband’s death and made her a widow” (12).

reject having sex with him, something that she did not dare to do before. Namita, therefore, subverts her initial description as the submissive wife brought all the way from Jaipur (India) to provide some company and calm to Anil). Now, Namita knows that she is not to be blamed for Anil's sexual incapability. Actually, she is a clear representative of the transformative power that the diaspora space opens for marriage and love relationships, because Namita will later challenge the social and family expectations that had been placed on her as a reaction against the general opinion of the aunties in the South Asian community in Mississippi, as the same gossipers assert in another part of the film: "[All] these proper Indian women are getting too many radical ideas from American women like Mina. We'd better send them back to India" (71'). Consequently, not only does Namita awake to the gender restrictions that have been laid upon her but she also embraces a possibility to live for herself through her arranged marriage, as inspired by the path already opened by the much more subversive relationship of Mina with African American Demetrius. Similarly, Aditi in Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* turns her arranged marriage into a possibility of weaving a future of her own.

Aditi is trapped in a secret affair with Vikram Mehta, one of the most famous TV presenters in India. Aditi continues to see Vikram the days before her arranged marriage ceremony with Hemant Rai, an Indian doctor resident in Houston Texas (US) where they are supposed to settle down after the wedding. Nevertheless, on the day before the ceremonies, Aditi and Vikram are discovered by the Police in Vikram's car in a rather indecent pose (1h02'05''). The Police soon recognise Vikram's face and Aditi's hands, painted in henna as a symbol of the incipient wedding. Alarmed by the great offence they are committing (no sexual intercourse is allowed before the Hindu marriage is performed), Vikram leaves Aditi out of the car because his wife has phoned him and he needs to make up an alibi. In the meantime, Aditi gets insulted by some of the officers. Vikram keeps

talking to his wife and pays no attention whatsoever to the assault they are infringing on Aditi. Aditi looks at Vikram, and kicking the policemen, understands that Vikram has been using her as a mere mistress. After such a paradigmatic incident, she steals Vikram's car and she arrives back at her home with the firm intention of confessing the love affair to her fiancée Hemant. So, she tells him all about her secret affair (1h14'37''-1h15'10''). At that point, Aditi chooses to speak for herself and so she reconciles with her inner self, her sacredness as expressed in Chapter III. This is the moment where she thinks about the arranged marriage in terms of a "suggested date" (58'), as she will afterwards tell Ria, adding that the marriage will open a new possibility where she will be herself (1h14'59'').

Subsequently, Mira Nair sketches the concept of arranged marriage far from victimising and *Orientalising* representations of the South Asian woman. Instead, Nair depicts the arranged marriages as a tradition that does not have to be derogative as compared to the West's traditional notions. Accordingly, Nair depicts how Aditi accepts the arranged marriage as a completely valid option that is part of their traditional culture. The same happens with Moushumi (in Nair's *The Namesake*) who, as a successful independent woman, accepts the arranged dates with Gogol and ends up marrying him to later get the divorce. For this reason, Nair dismantles the stereotypical Western discourse laid upon arranged marriages as a prison for the South Asian woman and reinforces the idea that, depending on the way the marriage proposal is designed, the woman has an option to decide for herself. In this sense, Namita and Aditi recognise the gender burdens imposed on them and come to terms with the possibility of subversion inherent to the acknowledgement of their socio-economic possibilities as women of the world, the woman without borders that the paradigmatic character of Ashima represents in Nair's *The Namesake*. Thence, by demystifying the notions circumscribed to the arranged marriage, Mira Nair succeeds in

representing these three women as performers of a new path that opens up from the diaspora space.

It is at this point that the convergent study of both Chadha and Nair's diasporic films provides a much more insightful analysis of the South Asian distinctiveness²¹ because, besides proposing the possibility of an active role for South Asian female characters, they also enhance a stronger reading of the current transnational dynamics by means of presenting interracial love relationships that evaluate the transcultural environment and the diversity of us all citizens of the contemporary world. Here, let me start by stating that Chadha and Nair offer two kinds of interracial relationships in the selected movies. On the one hand, there is the usual dichotomy that defines the relationship between a white man and a South Asian woman with a two-fold representation. Firstly, a successful, rich white man appreciated by the South Asian family as a good match and a South Asian woman who is rejected by the white family considering it that is not a proper option in terms of economic status (as in the case of Lalita and Mr Darcy in Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice*). Secondly, a white man of low social status rejected by the South Asian family, as the relationship between Punjabi Jess and Irish Joe shown in Chadha's *Bend It like Beckham*²². On the other hand, the paradigmatic affair between a black man and a South Asian girl, an interracial breakthrough cinematographic portrayal opened up by both Nair's *Mississippi Masala* and Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* in the early 1990s. However, the different prospects for a love relationship describe a gender burden placed on the South

²¹ Both Chadha and Nair portray South Asian love marriages where differences of class and religion are obviated, as represented by *Bend It like Beckham*'s Pinky and Sonny (Pinky from a middle-class family and Sonny from an upper-class economic position) or Maya and Balraj in *Bride and Prejudice* (their story similarly interwoven from Jane Austen classical story in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) of the middle/low class girl in love with the wealthy man of the province).

²² A third option could be subject of study in a further academic research, that of the rich white family that finds exotic to meet other cultures and so approves of their children having a relationship with a migrant, although always under that *Orientalist raison d'être*, as seen in the affair between Gogol-Maxine in Nair's *The Namesake*.

Asian woman: she is either to submit to family expectations and cultural prospects or to subvert them according to her own will. Thus, Chadha and Nair propose female characters that choose the second option and, by so doing, I believe that they empower the transformation of the South Asian woman and her possibilities within the context of the hybridity of cultures, as illustrated by Mina and her interracial relationship with Demetrius in Nair's *Mississippi Masala* (1991).

Significantly enough, this was the plot line from which bell hooks and Anuradha Dingaway addressed *Mississippi Masala* as a film that offered "only stereotypical portraits of Southern whites and blacks" (42). In my opinion, this was a truly essentialist analysis that clearly ignored the interplay of interracial mediations suggested by Nair and screenplay writer Sooni Taraporevala at the moment the film was released. Actually, I think that hooks and Dingaway's review obviates the interracial alternative proposed by Mina and Demetrius' relationship, as the unconventional model that, in the US and in the early 1990s, Nair proposed to represent the existent problematic of race, colour and identity. In fact, I consider that this interracial relationship between a woman of an Indian background and an African American self-made man (Demetrius runs his own Cleaning Services business) works as a common space both built and shared by Mina and Demetrius to undertake a double-fold evaluation: the negotiation of postcolonial identities in the diaspora and the subaltern position held by the migrant woman, as Mina must cope with the social and family expectations that are imposed upon her.

In this sense, Mina, as an Indian woman who has never been to India, thinks about her hybrid identity as a *masala** experience (masala is a combination of different species without following any specific amount) and realises that she shares a common history with African Americans, as both Tyron and Williben explain to Demetrius' grandfather at his birthday lunch:

[Mina] is just like us. We are from Africa but we have never been there, although there is where our loyalty and love is. Well, although she was born in Africa. . . . [Well], black, brown, yellow, at least you are no white. (53'47''-53'51'')

After the pleasant meal, both Mina and Demetrius go for a walk along the beach and they talk about how race has undetermined their opportunities. Mina complains about how “many people come to the motel, look at us and say to us, ugh, another damn Indian” (1h06'02'') and Demetrius assumes that “being black, I have achieved all I could ever long for: my own cleaning service enterprise, although all dependant on a white's loyalty loan” (1h06'29''). Nevertheless, as they stroll together in this emblematic liminal space, race is not a burden for them, as Demetrius tells Mina: “Well, Miss Masala, race, or as they say now, tradition, is passed down like recipes. The trick is to know what to eat and to leave on the plate”, to which Mina answers: “[Otherwise], we will be hungry for ever” (1h06'33''-1h06'52''). However, race is a burden for Mina's family, as they still believe that they do not belong to the same social strata as Demetrius because, for them, Indians are *above* African Americans, an idea inherited from the Indentures system already explained in Chapter I.

It is here that the interracial relationship between Demetrius and Mina embraces the possibilities of the diaspora space, because they can enjoy a life only dependant on themselves and so Mina will be able to have an education of her own far from the Motel business ran by Mina's family. Together, both Mina and Demetrius illustrate the transformative possibilities of the cultural *hybrid identity*, as Mina recognises her roots and the new possible routes that lay ahead of her by acknowledging that she is “a mixed masala . . . a bunch of different spiced mixed up together” (47'43''). Then, Mina would say to her family after she has been arrested for insulting a white policeman back: “This is America.

[Now] I am in America and no one cares" (1h17''). Moreover, she has in mind this idea when she informs her parents that she is running away with Demetrius because they are going to start a business together, somehow stating that she cannot go to Uganda with her family because she now lives in the US and Jay and the South Asian community keep stuck to the recipe of racism that previously constrained Mina's life because Jay is reluctant to see beyond the opposition of races (1h40'42''-1h41'58'').

It is only after Mina's runs away with Demetrius to start their subversively interracial relationship that her father Jay feels the necessity to go back to Uganda and question what his roots and routes are. It is at that moment that his wife Kinnu enlightens him: "Mina is like you, Jay. She can't grow up [in the motel] anymore. You must go now, you think of Uganda all the time. Go and see for yourself what is like" (1h42'42''). In my view, this is the new juncture opened by both Mina and Mira Nair's hybrid cinema, as both refuse presupposed descriptions of a powerlessness woman but they congratulate the possibilities of the *masala** identity, of the mixture of different spices without a fixed recipe. It is so that Mira Nair presents Mina as a subversive performance and performer of the diaspora space, because she is both an active agent and a result of the new cultural interplay of cultures. In other word the character of Mina acts a point of departure to break away with previous clichéd descriptions sketched for the South Asian migrant woman, a new character constructed beyond static racial distinctions. It is from this challenging portrayal that the final words uttered by Mina to her family reinforce her as a woman without boundaries in an interracial world, as she answers to both Kinnu and Jay when asked to return to the Motel: "I am not going back, I am with Demetrius. I can't. If I don't leave now I never will" (1h40'42''). In my opinion, this is the moment when Mina has finally challenged both the racist and gender burdens imposed on her. She is creating a new route that is to be followed by other women of her community like Namita or her own

mother, as well as to any other member of the South Asian social group, as represented with Jay's last decision to go back to Uganda. Furthermore, this is the same path previously referred to when talking about Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* (2006) as well as the decisions made by Hashida in Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993), where both Chadha and screenwriter Meera Syal also describe an interracial love relationship as the means to evaluate the patriarchal and imperial burdens that keep the subaltern position of the South Asian migrant woman in the diaspora.

Let me start recalling that, as stated in the previous section, Hashida feels imprisoned between her family and community's expectations of becoming a "triumphant doctor" (9'56'') although what Hashida truly wants to study is Arts. Alongside her creative aspirations, Hashida has an interracial relationship with Oliver, an African Caribbean man born in Jamaica who already studies Art at college in Birmingham. Only Manjit (the head of the Saheli Group, the Non Governmental Organisation for the welfare of the South Asian Women in the Diaspora that organises the trip to Blackpool) knows about Hashida's true educational interests and love affair and so Hashida turns to her seeking comfort when, early that morning, she phones Oliver and ends up arguing because, as Oliver tells her: "[You] depend too much on your community, for fuck's sake, do what you want with your life. . . . You are gonna [*sic*] give up Art like you've given up everything else. Look at you. You are always playing the perfect bloody daughter, . . . you don't want hassle" (9'). What Oliver ignores is that Hashida has just discovered that she is pregnant and that if she cannot tell her family what she truly wants to study, it is very difficult that they will understand that her son will be the child of a black man.

This is the feeling that makes Hashida run to meet Manjit and join the day-trip to Blackpool "to have a little bit of free atmosphere, far from that family of yours" (15'46''), as told by Manjit. On the bus, Hashida receives the good looks from the South Asian

women who all say about her (16'). Within the South Asian community, Hashida holds the role of the good and obedient Indian woman as opposed to Ginder who, as previously said, left her husband and his family because he hit her, a fact ignored by all the *aunties** who blame Ginder for "breaking the peace and honour of the family" (19'21"). Ginder is accompanied during the trip by her son Amrik, and it is significant that Hashida decides to sit with them as opposed to the rest of the aunties, who are only gossiping and criticising Ginder's lack of honour. It is in this sense that when all are sat waiting for Manjit to start the journey to Blackpool, Auntie Pushpa, the oldest of the group, states in a loud voice:

[At] least some of our girls we can be proud of, yes Dr Hashida, she is a credit . . . Shall we warn Hashida not to talk too much to her [pointing at Ginder]? She might teach her bad habits. You know? She ran off, left her family, took her son, even though she had chosen the husband herself. And she has brought the British courts in. (19'22")

She had been earlier interrupted by Manjit who greets them in their different South Asian languages, therefore acknowledging the diversity of the group, and defines what the true meaning for this day out in Blackpool means:

Hello sisters, namaste [Hindi], *sat sri akal* [Punjabi], *salaam a lekum* [Arabic]. It's not often that we women get away from the patriarchal demands made on us in our daily lives, struggling between the double yoke of racism and sexism that we bear. This is your day. (16'01"-16'24", my emphasis)

After these welcoming words, it is noteworthy that Ginder says to Hashida, as if she was echoing Manjit's message: "So they say you are going to be a doctor. I gave up college to get married. You are not going to be that stupid" (19'23"). Hashida looks absent-minded at Amrik and asks Ginder, clearly wondering about herself and her recently discovered pregnancy: "How are you gonna [*sic*] manage, bringing him up on your own", to what

Ginder answers: "I've done so far . . . supposing I'd put up and shut up I'll be more popular though". And Hashida adds: "Yeah, it's so hard knowing what's right any more [*sic*]. Look, you'll never please everyone, so please yourself" (19'25"). After these words, Hashida is depicted as lost in thought, probably wondering about her pregnancy and getting herself ready to later phone Oliver to inform him that she cannot cope with the reaction that her family and community will bear against her when, besides the pregnancy, she tells that she expects the baby of a black man. Ladhu and Madhu, two women on the trip, listen to Hashida's conversation and they soon tell the aunties who, above all, mostly despise the idea of Hashida seeing a black man and the impossibility of becoming a South Asian doctor if she bears "the child of a black man", as Bina and Pushpa exclaim (41'50").

It is at this moment that Gurinder Chadha explores the double subaltern position occupied by Hashida who, on the one hand, is dominated by the British society that spits and insults the Saheli bus when they stop at the gas-station and, on the other, by the South Asian community that imposes her with an education and a possibility of future only within the South Asian community. Hashida recognises the subaltern position she occupies by means of her repressed desire to be with Oliver, have the child and study Arts. So, she decides to have a coffee to make up her mind, as she informs both Manjit and Ginder (44'35"). A few minutes later, and now within the coffee shop, Hashida listens to the aunties talking about herself:

[These] modern girls can't adapt. Those with jobs are worst. My own daughter, I was telling her it's the woman who makes the family. I was teaching morals back from home. . . . Want progress? Like Hashida? She comes from a decent family, still ends up pregnant. Shameless, disrespectful, whore. . . . Wait nine months then you see how many aunties you have left. Black? Hai Ram²³, now chaos has come! That will kill your family. (44'37")

²³ Hindi for "Oh God".

At that moment, Hashida *stands up* for herself, both in action and in metaphor, and throws the boiling coffee to the aunties saying: “You are not my fucking sisters” (44’37’’). In other words, she speaks aloud that she is not part of the old static traditions of the South Asian community that constrain the role of women and that she is to lead a life where she can choose what she truly desires. She then runs to the Blackpool Museum and Academy of Arts (which significantly displays an exhibition entitled *Race and Britain*), sits down and mumbles to herself: “I’m on my own now. I’m in control” (44’52’’). It is at this significant moment that I consider that Hashida definitely resolves her subaltern position, discerning both the British and South Asian structures that impose her to reject the man she is in love with. Hashida then makes sense of those gender and racial norms both Ginder and Manjit, respectively, have been talking about during the trip. She looks at the portrait she drew of Oliver and, correspondingly, Oliver enters the room. He states: “I am here with you, we will do what you want” (1h17’40’’). At this stage, Hashida recognises that she is a woman set only to live her life for herself, as Ginder told her on the bus journey (19’25’’).

It is so that Hashida realises about the subverting possibilities inherent to the diaspora space as illustrated by the fact that, on the one hand, Hashida can do in the United Kingdom what she truly wants, without any cultural domination and, on the other, Blackpool is celebrating the hybridity of cultures in diaspora through the lighting of the Hindu, Buddhist, Jainist and Sikh festival of Dwivali²⁴, and the city looks like any other South Asian or British city. Therefore, Hashida has come to terms with her hybrid identity and, embracing the dynamics of the diaspora space, repossesses her own future where she

²⁴ Originally Dwivali (taking place depending on the lunar calendar from October 21st to November 18th) commemorated the entry of a new year as told by the story of the victory of Lakshmi (Goddess of Prosperity) in the *Upanishads* and so it was integrated within the Hindu faith and later in the Buddhist (Divali), Jainist (Deepawali) and Sikh (Deepawali) tradition with different nuances, all celebrating Lakshmi’s final attainment of the illuminating/illuminated knowledge (*dharma**).

will live, paraphrasing Mina from *Mississippi Masala* (1991), as a mixed *masala** (47'31'').

Meanwhile, and parallel to the climax to the story of Hashida and Oliver, the South Asian aunties discover, at the scene in the striptease club, that Ginder was mistreated in her connivance with her husband Ranjit, who threatens her at the door of the pub. At this moment, all of them help Ginder and so Ranjit literally has to run away to escape from the violent and powerful reaction of the all-female group. After this climax and with a feeling of victory, all the women on the trip get on the bus to see the Dwivali lightings along Blackpool's main street as the same time as they discover Hashida and Oliver hugging each other while admiring the lightings. It is at this moment that all of them wave to Hashida and smile. They all have definitely performed the recognition of their subaltern position and the possibility of interweaving a new collaborative space for women from where to promote their final empowerment as equal participants of the world.

By means of recognising the empathy shared in this new space, these characters are empowered and so they become empowering women of the world because both Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair's selected films unveil the patriarchal control imposed by the South Asian community together with the racist attitude showed by the UK and the US structure. By so doing, characters like Mina, Hashida, Aditi, Ashima or Namita *challenge* these interlocking systems of domination from the possibilities opened by the connivance of cultures that define the diaspora space.

Up to this point, I have therefore illustrated how both Chadha and Nair use the image of the South Asian wedding and the interracial relationship as an original discourse that subverts the South Asian limitation for women to choose their husbands and the Western tokenistic interpretation of, for instance, the notion of the South Asian arranged marriage. Accordingly, I have explained how both Chadha and Nair depict the diaspora

space as still ruled by racist and sexist principles but with an intrinsic possibility of subversion. And here, and as it will be developed in next section, is where I believe that both Nair and Chadha's selected films offer a different cinematographic representation because they describe their female characters as *weavers* of a new common all-female space where they identify their common possibilities and understand each other's roots and routes. Thence, the resultant collaborative space is born out of the transformative role inherent to the diaspora space where women nurture each other towards the empowerment of the South Asian women in the diaspora that departs from a mutual subversive hope that allows them to definitely *talk back*.

3- WEAVERS OF A NURTURING SPACE: THE EMPOWERMENT OF SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN IN THE DIASPORA

As seen throughout this dissertation, diaspora is a space continually woven by different human, cultural, religious, socio-political and economic variables. Similarly, it has also been expressed that South Asian women in the diaspora suffer a double yoke of racist and patriarchal discrimination. Bearing in mind these previous remarks, the present section describes how Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair portray women that create a new alternative space out of the transformative possibilities enhanced by the dynamics of the diaspora space. This new space is the consequence of the encounter of the gender inequality experiences that the South Asian women share in the diaspora and it materialises in a nurturing collaboration and a mutual understanding based on the bonds of empathy created among these women. I believe that it is out of this shared recognition that these women empower themselves to embrace the hybrid possibilities inherent to the diaspora space that,

for instance and as related in the two previous sections, are granted in terms of equal access to educational attainment and free love relationships.

At this juncture, and before analysing four examples of these nurturing spaces taken from Chadha and Nair's selected films, I consider very relevant to define empowerment as following The United Nations Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality's document *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women* (2005):

The core of empowerment lies in the ability of a woman *to control her own destiny*. This implies that to be empowered women, they must not only have equal capabilities (such as education and health) and equal access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment), they must also have *the agency* to use those rights, capabilities, resources and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions (such as are provided through leadership opportunities and participation in political institutions). (63, my emphasis)

In other words, empowerment entails a process of transforming gender relations by means of promoting a necessary process of awareness that will challenge the existent gender inequality. In this regard, African American women can be considered pioneers in their feminist struggle towards empowerment, as Alice Walker coined the term *womanism* formerly referred in Chapter II and defined within the lines of the previous explanation. Similarly, but more recently, The United Nations' "Programme of Guidelines on Women's Empowerment" (2008) has defined empowerment as a social force that encompasses "[women's] sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a fairer social and economic order, nationally and internationally" (qtd. in *United Nations Development Programme* 71). Consequently, it is my purpose to

describe how Chadha and Nair's selected films represent the achievement of women's empowerment as dependant on the creation of these alternative nurturing spaces that, as defined by Spanish scholar Olga Barrios, are "healing spaces" (2008: 294, my translation) from where the migrant women recognise the power that lies within themselves to control their own destiny.

These new spaces represented by Chadha and Nair do not only subvert the racist and sexist previous existing structures but also enhance the possibilities to come to terms with their hybrid identities and their transcultural options. Therefore, Chadha and Nair's female characters portray the alliance of women in the diaspora as an illustration of their commitment to eradicate the contemporary gender conflicts, as it has already been explained in the common contestation against Ginder's husband in Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) or in the collaborative strength of the all-female team in Chadha's *Bend It like Beckham* (2002). In this sense, Chadha and Nair describe empowered characters and empowering alliances that provide a global identification of all those alternatives that make women stronger towards their own empowerment.

The present section then intends to illustrate *how* and *what for* Chadha and Nair weave these nurturing spaces of healing and contesting action. So, it analyses the correspondence laid between the diaspora space and this new space of collaboration created by the South Asian migrant as the means to control their own lives. In order to illustrate these points, I will focus on four²⁵ scenes chosen from the selected films that are case of

²⁵ Other referenced scenes that portray the subversive power of this new collaborative space interwoven by the South Asian women are the end of Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach*, where all women defend together Ginder from her husband or the relationship established by Ashima and Sally in Nair's *The Namesake*, a liaison that allows Ashima to see that she is a free woman in a free world, as unveiled by the possibilities that Alison shows to her. There are other examples of this new transformative space created by the subversive union of women in the diaspora but I will leave it for further and more extensive studies. These examples would include the beautifully shop scene of the shopping of Aditi's wedding dress in Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (where Aditi, Ria, Pimmi Verma and Ayesha share confidences and memories while choosing colour and fabric) or the same situation in Chadha's *Bend It like Beckham*, where Pinky and Jess choose the most suitable

study in this dissertation and that are expressive of the *nurturing* quality of this *womanist* space created in the diaspora space: Mina and Kinnu talking by the swimming pool in Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala*; the journey undertaken by Lalita, Maya and Lakhi from India to the US, with a stopover in London, to attend Mr Kholi's wedding in Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice*; the all female *sangeeta** in Nair's *Monsoon Wedding*; and the last scene in the changing room in Chadha's *Bend It like Beckham*. The conclusion to be sketched out of these scenes will prove that the new collaborative space created by these female characters gathers and encourages the subversive notions of hybrid identity and guarantees the definite empowerment of the South Asian women by means a common struggle that corresponds to what Avtar Brah defines as "the feminization of the diaspora" (1996: 179).

Let me then start by referring to the scene in Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala* where Mina and Kinnu stand talking by the swimming pool at night time. Kinnu oils Mina's hair, a tradition from the Subcontinent, with a tonic made out of Bhinjarag's oil²⁶. Kinnu and Mina chat after Mina's incident with the Police and Kinnu's argument with Jay due to his "inadaptation [*sic*] to the fact that [he is] no longer in Uganda but in the United States of America" (66'). They comfort each other by the liminal place of the swimming pool (37'48''-39'2'') using the Indian oils while laughing at the fact that they do not really know what the fact of being holders of a Green Card entitle them to. This recreated space of healing, where both Kinnu and Mina occupy a multi-location crossroads that integrates both their cartographies as Indian and US citizens, resounds throughout the rest of the movie as a way of challenging the restrictive attitude imposed by the rest of the South

sari for Pinky's wedding while they criticise the isolating attitude of the rest of the South Asian women in their neighbourhood. They all get stronger by sharing secrets and worries, gathering together to subvert their imposed subaltern position in the dynamics of the diaspora space.

²⁶ The main quality of Bhinjarag's oil is, according to the *Ayurveda**, that of providing shiny looks that revitalise women's internal and external complexion.

Asian women, who concentrate more on the division and prosecution of each other. As an instance of this division, the two gossipers propose sending Namita and Mina back to India so that they can remember “the honesty of the traditional values” (1h17’21’’-1h17’39’’).

It is at this point that the connection established between Kinnu and Mina deliberately opposes that sense of confrontation promoted by the gossipers. Despite the fact that Kinnu is trying to arrange a new date between Mina and Harry Patel, as she suggests by asking her when she will be seeing him again (39’), both Mina and Kinnu have established a connection based on the empathy²⁷ created by their personal stories of feeling displaced in the US and discriminated by both the US white citizens and the South Asian men. Furthermore, Mina had previously asked Kinnu about their “history in Africa” and about her relationship with Okello²⁸ back in Uganda (38’33’’), as illustrating her desire to integrate her African roots into her hybrid identity. It is then that Kinnu calms her daughter by oiling her hair and tells her: “We are here now and we are together, we are much more free in the US [*sic*]” (70’). This beautiful image resounds of the classic scene in Steven Spielberg’s adaptation of Alice Walker’s *The Colour Purple* (1982), where Celie comforts Shug by singing her a melody that Shug also ends up humming.

At that moment, Shug is calmed by Celie’s voice when she was experiencing a deep solitude because she could feel that she had no support in her community. It is in correspondence with this scene that later in the film Shug will sing back to Celie the self-composed “Miss Celie’s Blues” as a way of thanking the strength given by Celie in the intimate alliance created in the previously referred scene. Hitherto, same as Shug

²⁷ US scholar Carol S. Jeffers, in her article “On Empathy: The Mirror Neuron System and Art Education” (2009), gathers scientific results about how the creation of bonds of empathy enhances an amplification of the perception about the “world of objects” (1) and the “world of others”(1) at any age and by any social group. Hers is an interesting point of analysis that, settled on the theoretical grounds of the Art Therapy, can be linked to the subversive notions I have used when defining the concept of diaspora space, hybridity, hybrid films and hybrid narratives.

²⁸ Okello is the Ugandan black man who teaches Swahili to Mina and who rescues Jay when he is imprisoned after denouncing Idi Amin to the BBC.

recognises her own power, Mina discovers that she is not alone in this diaspora space and that, in spite of her sometimes dominating position as a mother, Kinnu shares with her the same subaltern position and the same option to subvert it now that they both are in the US. Here, the new prospects ahead interweave not only Mina and Kinnu as individuals, but Mina plus Kinnu as illustrative exponents of the collaborative gathering of female experiences that defines the new reinforcement created in the diaspora, an alternative all-women space from where to cure and empower the personal and spiritual mutual possibilities as citizens of the US.

Similarly, this nurturing alliance created by the swimming pool corresponds to the collaborative coalition represented in the referenced scene in Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* where the three sisters (Lalita, Maya and Lakhi) travel all the way to the US from Amritsar (North of India and the sacred city in Sikhism). In this transoceanic journey, they overcome old familiar squabbles that had been caused by love misunderstandings and jealousy in order to build up an alternative space of collaboration from where to respectively counteract their mother's insistence on an arranged marriage with Indian American Kholi (an hypocritical chauvinist), Catherine Darcy's neo-colonial impulse to create a hotel business in Goa (that would ruin a sacred area) and Wickham's deceiving intentions on both Lakhi and Lalita.

In this sense, the moments shared in the plane correspond to the liminal space by the swimming pool depicted in Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala*. In the case of Chadha's film, the journey itself acts as a multi-location alternative space that, both in and out India, the UK and the US, allows the three sisters to share confidences and weave a space of collaboration from where they reinstitute their familiar and spiritual bond. Same as Mina and Kinnu create a similar place of personal communication where they speak their inner

selves aloud and renegotiate the possibilities opened by the diaspora space, the three sisters assemble together to create this alternative space of mutual understanding.

By so doing, Maya, Lakhi and Lalita empower each other to face the limits that had been placed on them. Thus, Maya discovers that Balraj is in love with her since their first meeting in the wedding celebrations that open the film, something that she could have not done but for that collaboration created among her sisters (40'27''-45'56''). Furthermore, it is from the association established by the sisters that they will be able to rescue Lakhi from Wickham's attempt to kidnap her when they meet in London (1h10'30''-1h12'27'').

It is thence very clear that the relationship created by the sisters impulse a personal and spiritual tie, besides the obvious familiar bond, that makes them stronger in the challenges ahead them, as the dilemma placed upon Lalita and her affair with Mr Darcy, a relationship that must challenge against the neo-colonial schemes depicted by Mr Darcy's mother attempt to construct the hotel in Goa, Mr Darcy's ignorance about Indian and Sikh cultures and Lalita's refusal towards anything coming from the US. The dilemma resolves itself when Mr Darcy appears in the same flight (1h09') and Lalita, as encouraged by her sisters, start talking to Mr Darcy about the three previous explained burdens. They reconcile with each other and confess their love symbolically in the air while they travel among continents. And they do so after Lalita gets the necessary force to resolve the conflicts from the strengthening impulse she gets from their sisters' support (1h12'27'').

Moreover, it is from this sense of reciprocal comprehension and solidarity that the four sisters weave this space of cooperation, feeling closer and more connected than ever. Actually, they had recognised through Lalita's own struggle to attain freedom and do not give in to South Asian customs. Here, the Bakshi sisters had stated to her: "None can bear pressure as you do. Better single than unhappy, right?"(1h04'44''). The sisters will keep nurturing each other in their trip to London, where they all me to terms with their different

problematic love relationships as Lakhi discovers Wickham real intentions, Jaya understands that Balraj may be getting married to another girl and Maya recognises that she is to wait for her parents' choice to get married. Nevertheless, the sisters create a common space during their time in London and they come back to India strongly bound to each other (1h26'48'') after they have gained confidence of knowing themselves as a part of a common emotional shelter built through their own love to each other. Consequently, it is from the previously defined space of friendship and comfort created in the journey that Lalita, Jaya, Maya and Lakhi finally gather the necessary power to challenge and subvert Mr and Mrs Bakshi's patriarchal reluctance to let them choose a life of their own.

This collaboration among women is also the background for the all-women *sangeeta** ritual²⁹ performed in Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (49'26''-52'12''). In the visual arrangement of the scene, Ria stands next to her cousin-sister Aditi while they are both surrounded by the rest of the women who "support the bride in her last moments of freedom" (51'12''), as asserted by Aditi's mother. The scene is an exponent of the joint space woven by Aditi and Ria as they both have just spoken their secrets aloud: Ria has told the rest of the family that Uncle Tej had abused her when she was a child and Aditi has told Hemant all about her previous affair with the TV presenter (1h14'37''-1h15'10''). It is before this moment point that, while celebrating the *sangeeta** formed by women from all different parts of India and the world (there are guests from the US, the UK, different regions of the Subcontinent and Australia), all women unite together around Aditi and Ria and so they construct an alternative space where they feel stronger throughout the comforting and therapeutic power of the singing, clapping and dancing ritual that

²⁹ The *sangeeta* is a part of the wedding ceremony where women dance and sing together to honour both the bride and themselves as companions of the bride, following the *sangeeta** artistic particularities already explained in terms of the recurrence of South Asian tradition in the diaspora space in Chapter II and Chapter and in the *Glossary of Terms*.

accompanies one the *sangeeta**'s song "Mehndi / Madhorama Pencha"³⁰. I believe that he *sangeeta** scene had given strength to Aditi to confess her affair to Hemant therefore the illustration of the all-female alternative space, an abstract sphere from where women talk back and contest those structures of inequality that, as illustrated by the asymmetrical possibilities in the access of academic education and love relationships described in the previous two sections, have been placed upon them as merely based on gender reasons.

Similarly, Aditi listens to the dirty jokes told by her aunts Pimmi and Shashi (50'59'') and so there is a comforting net where women share anecdotes and can laugh to discover that, for instance, in the case of Aditi, she is not the only one experiencing the uncertainty of not knowing what her life is going to be once she is married. At this point and by means of the therapeutic power of her aunties's storytelling, Aditi feels that she is not alone but held up by all those bustling women.

In this sense, the *sangeeta** clearly opens a new space for all the women attending the ceremony, an alternative outlook to the previous family disposition that always placed them in the background, as earlier related while talking about the wedding photograph. Consequently, this different space reconciles the women in the family as a united collective, integrating their different geographical origins and heterogeneous cultural, religious and socioeconomic distinctiveness into the common alliance formed during, for instance, the performance of the song "Mehndi / Madhorama Pencha". It is consequently this union that portrays how all women nurture each other while opening the possibilities to empower

³⁰ The song's title means 'we ask Madhorama while we paint our hands with henna'. *Mehdi* refers to the ritual of applying henna to the bride and *Madhorama* is the affectionate name to refer to Punjabi elders. *Pencha* means 'to ask' in Punjabi from Hindi 'poonch. In Bengali, *pencha* means owl, which means prosperity as an owl is the vehicle of Hindu Goddess of Prosperity Lakshmi. The song is one of the most famous folk chants of the Punjab Province where the main singer asks the audience who they are to marry to receive comic and burlesques answers. In the scene in Nair's film, the women sing as if they were men and so they make fun of the typical men's choices. For instance, they sing: "Whom shall I marry? /The Fat One/But the Fat One is always too fat for the bed. . . . Whom shall I marry? / The Fair one, like butter, so she can sleep on the roof" (49'51''). The subversion provided by the ritual is finally accomplished when Lalit Varma and C.L. Chadha try to enter, in their own words and they are literally expelled by all the women (51'39'').

themselves as active members of the family and, by so doing, with full prospects of becoming free women of the world, as exemplified by Ria and Aditi's upcoming academic career and experiences in the US.

It is at this point that the scene in the changing room at the end of Gurinder Chadha's *Bend It like Beckham* (2002) can be sketched as the corollary of the nurturing association interwoven by the South Asian women in the diaspora. I believe that the scene is very important because it illustrates how this alternative space constructed by the gathering of women in the diaspora can integrate any woman no matter her religious, social, education or economic distinctiveness. This is relevant because it could be argued that the three previous descriptions of nurturing spaces were all formed by family members. It is not the case in the scene that closes *Bend It like Beckham* as well as other previously related scenes where women stand together regardless of their cultural or religious background as already explained in the ending of Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* and the interracial friendship circumscribed by Ashima and Sally in Mira Nair's *The Namesake*.

Then, let me go back to *Bend It like Beckham*'s referred segment. The scene starts when Pinky (Jess's sister) is about to celebrate her love wedding's ceremony at the same time as the final of the football championship where Jess is supposed to play and be spotted by a US citizen scout who is tentative to offer her a scholarship to study at an American college together with Jules. The scholarship would allow Jess and Jules to study the degree they desire while they play football in a professional league with, as Jules recognises, "so much attention and money as the Premier League³¹" (1h09'). Nevertheless, Jess has submitted to her family's will and she opts to attend the wedding despite the fact that she knows that, on the one hand, she is dumping her group of female friends (the football team)

³¹ The Premier League is British male most important football competition.

and, on the other, she is definitely rejecting the possibility of doing what she really wants: to study at college and to earn a life playing football. By choosing the first option, Jess performs the traditional role assigned by Sikhism to the bride's sister: that of comforting all the guests, while her team gets ready for the final.

However, it is remarkable to note that, the previous night, Jess had informed her coach Joe that she would not play in the final because she has chosen to surrender, in her own words, to her "family's traditional Indian values" because she cannot "turn them all down the day of her sister's wedding" (1h07'07"). And she is interrupted by her father, who barges in when Joe states to Jess that "at least [she] should try to do what [she] really feels like" (1h07'09"). And this is recurrent because the day after, during the wedding dance, Mr Bhamra tells Jess that if "[she is] not going to be smiling at [her] sister's wedding at least [she] should be playing football, providing that at least [she is] back for Pinky's farewell" (1h18'52"). Here, Jess subverts the previous designated schemes of control over her, as her father had to abandon a promising career as a cricket player for England because the white British players bullied him (34'19"). It is after this change of mind that Jess arrives at the second half of the match and scores the goal that gives victory to her team. At these moments, the camera pauses on Mr Bhamra, astonished when he sees how her daughter is cheered and supported by the British audience (1h25'49").

This is the hopeful atmosphere that surrounds the next moment, when all the female players help Jess in getting dressed with the sari and arrive back to her sister's wedding on time (1h27"). Jules frays the lowest seam, Mel (African descendant) clutches the top and so every member of the team takes part in such an inspiring scene. This is the epitomising creation of the alternative space that these women interweave together to comfort each other when they are injured because, in this case in a literal sense, if someone is wounded or absent there is always another girl to help and replace her, to encourage her to go on, to

keep the group's working towards their own empowerment as a female team. In this sense, if both Jess and Jules have been reclaiming equal conditions for a female professional league as well as the same economic and educational opportunities as those granted for men during the whole film, their team's final victory represents how, by feeling and working as parts of a larger group, they are stronger and so they are able to trespasses the gender and cultural burdens that had been placed upon them.

Therefore, it can be claimed that the all-female football team, as a parallel to that alternative space created only by women, defeats both British and South Asian, patriarchal and cultural, misconceptions and so all the players' families, with different roots and cartographies of diaspora, celebrate together the new route opened by the victory at the Championship. Likewise, the following scene at Heathrow airport (1h'37'58''-1h40'55'') is a further example, as the Bhamras and the Paxtons joke together before Jules and Jess leave for the US, despite their previous reluctance. Moreover, in the next scene, Mr Bhamra and Irish coach Joe play cricket in the same team against a white British squad in an image that can be considered a direct consequence of the cultural negotiation opened in the diaspora space by the new collaboration opened by the bond established by the female players (1h41'07'', 1h41'23''-1h41'57'').

However, the most important achievement of the team is that all female players have recognised the patriarchal limitations that had been laid upon them. It is then that, as previously asserted, the team feels *empowered* because they have discovered that by means of a common contestation, they have the same capabilities and rights as those granted to men and so *they can overcome* the gender difference that had been formerly imposed. The team is also *empowering* because now they have acknowledged that they have the opportunity of playing professionally, that *they can subvert* the previous familiar and cultural limitations and that *they can choose* and decide only for themselves. At this stage,

the fact that Jules and Jess are awarded with the American scholarship sketches the final illustration of the *empowerment* that lies ahead of them as inhabitants of that new shared space, the performance of “the ability of a woman to control her own destiny” and “the agency of the group of women to use those rights, capabilities, resources and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions” (63), as paraphrasing the previous definition given by “The United Nations Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality”.

Similarly, and as a conclusion for this section, it can be stated that Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair depict characters like Hashida, Asha, Mina or Ashima as weavers of an alternative space that emerges from the collaboration of the South Asian women in the diaspora. This association enhances an experience of empathy and collective consciousness that empowers the subversive possibilities previously granted by the definition of diaspora space as a space of “confluence” and “subversion” (Brah 1996), where the diasporic dynamics illustrates the constant “transformation” and “possibilities” of the diasporic identities (Hall 1992). Here, and after having described the previous four instances of women’s association, I have explained that this new alliance opened by the South Asian women strengthens their challenge and their contestation against the patriarchal and racist limitations that created specific gender conflicts as those analysed in previous sections in relation to academic education and love relationships.

Thus, it is in this sense of gathering and empathy that the resultant new space corresponds to the nurturing power of the intrapersonal relation created by the South Asian female experience in the diaspora. Accordingly, and as weavers of this comforting mutual space, these women feel stronger when they recognise each other’s problems and limitations and, by so doing, they embrace the sense of shared and mutual understanding as seen in, for instance, the all female *sangeeta** in Mira Nair’s *Monsoon Wedding* or the

scene in Gurinder Chadha's *Bend It like Beckham* when the female team dresses Jess with the sari.

Furthermore, it can also be stated that Nair and Chadha apprehend the contemporary position of the South Asian women and their gender conflicts by recognising that there is an inherent subversive hope to be undertaken from those transformative possibilities intrinsic to the definition of the diaspora space. In order to illustrate this concept, both Chadha and Nair represent situations as the scene by the swimming pool in Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala* or the transoceanic journey in Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* with the aim of promoting the consciousness-raising about the prevailing gender inequality that defines our society while they also foster the importance of being aware about the possible contestation to be developed by the South Asian women. Subsequently, as they represent other alternative spaces of collaboration as those in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* or Nair's *The Namesake* from where women share and talk back together, both Chadha and Nair propose that another reality is possible when they come to terms with the idea that, still nowadays, "woman is not born but rather becomes a woman" (de Beauvoir 269).

CHAPTER V

HYBRID NARRATIVES: TOWARDS A NEW DEFINITION OF WOMEN IN THE CINEMA OF THE SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORA

I am a woman! I carve my
Own path.
Termites of Idu,
A female leads you in
The new dance step. Up!
Lift your hands to the horizon.
A woman leads.
The future is in our hands. (Onwueme 121)

Music, dance and theatre have coexisted for millennia in India and have entered the 21st century in their full glory. Now, over the past one century, cinema has elevated itself to a distinctive art form. (Bannerjee 1)

Telling hybrid narratives performs a subversive artistic act that contests limitations based on gender, race and the assumed superiority of a specific artistic tradition. Accordingly, I defined the term hybrid narratives in Chapter III to refer to those narratives which mix different artistic languages such as dance, storytelling or mime as well as different performing techniques like South Asian hand and facial gestures. I conceptualised the resultant artistic experience as a healing venture through which the sacred within the individual (both performer and audience) becomes bound to the universal essence of human beings. This statement was based on concepts from South Asian performing arts tradition such as empathy (*rasa* in Sanskrit) and the Advaita concept of Sacredness as the union of body, mind and soul in all beings. This cultural and artistic experience was then explained in Chapter IV as an artistic bridge that let South Asian women recognise, denounce and subvert the gender burdens that, in terms of free access to academic education and interracial relationships, were imposed on them by both their own South Asian community and the welcoming atmosphere of the US and the UK. Here, I illustrated how Mira Nair and

Gurinder Chadha resolved the gender conflicts in the diaspora space in their movies and, by so doing, they promoted the creation of a nourishing network for women where they could share their stories.

Now, I want to show how Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha provide a new cultural and social representation of South Asian women through their hybrid narratives that promote reconciliation between South Asian roots and the new diaspora space. Accordingly, I believe that Nair and Chadha describe the current reality and dilemmas faced by female characters in the diaspora space such as Ria or Aditi in Nair's *The Namesake*¹ to unveil the possibilities that lie ahead for them if they decide to talk back, look at the present and struggle for a better future. Here, we see Chadha and Nair display the pioneering subversion captured by Hashida in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* or Mina in Nair's *Mississippi Masala* as the first South Asian female characters ever to challenge and change the passive roles that had been previously designed for South Asian women by not ignoring what they truly wanted to do and being granted that in the diaspora space. Thus, Chair and Nair foster a new cultural, social and professional representation of South Asian women in the diaspora space.

Consequently, cinema, as represented by Chadha and Nair's hybrid narratives, performs an act of reconciliation between the centre and the peripheral colonies as well as a dialogue between South Asian tradition and South Asian modernity. On the one hand, because, as Indian scholar Utpal Kumar Bannerjee states, cinema gathers "the coexistence that, in India, music, dance and theatre had until the 21st century" (1). On the other, because cinema, as explained in Chapter II, lets us look at the world through the cultural, artistic and economic established systems that coexist in the diaspora space. Thus, the hybrid

¹ They also describe new male characters who, like Mr Bhamra in Chadha's *Bend It like Beckham*, denounce the colonial order when he recognises the wrong-doings of the British Empire in Punjab in terms of shortage of basic products and enrolment to fight for WWII.

narratives told by Chadha and Nair foster a collaborative experience of intercultural communication that assesses, contests and offers alternatives to the unfair systems created in terms of gender and race on South Asian women in the diaspora.

Similarly, I have detailed in this dissertation that the adjective hybrid challenges those gender and cultural traditions that ostracise the presence of South Asian women, and that Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair use elements from the South Asian performing arts tradition to describe new roles for South Asian women in the diaspora and in the homelands. Now, I will detail in this chapter those elements that Chadha and Nair take from the South Asian tradition and examine the revolutionary nuances that they aim to include within their movies to define new female characters. These characters emerge as pioneering women who fight against gender and race inequality both in the Subcontinent and in the diaspora through performing elements taken from South Asian performing arts tradition. Thus, I will now detail how they define these new roles for South Asian women in the diaspora space through their use of South Asian performing techniques, dance and British literary classics.

Firstly, I will illustrate how the main characters in Chadha and Nair's selected films turn their initial fear into wonder and empowerment. In order to confirm this statement, I will focus on the concept of *rasa* and how it is shared by the main characters to display an evolution of their true emotions (*bhava* in Sanskrit) from Fear and Grief into Laughter, Love and Wonder². Here, I will analyse how these specific *bhavas* which are created through expressive performance techniques that display how characters such as Lalita in Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) or Ria in Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) connect with the audience and give more details about their lives through these acting

² I will capitalise the name of these *bhavas* to illustrate that they refer to the concepts in Bharata's *Natyasastra*. Bharata does capitalise them all over the treatise.

elements than through spoken dialogues. By so doing, I will illustrate how these female characters raise empathetic relations (*rasa*) with the audience so as to make other women realise how Lalita or Ria trespass the gender and race limitations that had been imposed on them in terms of a patriarchal dominance or sexual abuse by a family member that otherwise would have been silenced forever.

Secondly, I will focus on scenes in Nair and Chadha's selected films to show how both directors use dance so that female characters overcome expected gender roles of submission and become active dwellers of the social, cultural, artistic and professional opportunities granted in the diaspora space. At this point, I will present how characters such as Pinky and Jessminder Bhamra in Chadha's *Bend It like Beckham* or Aditi and Ria in Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* reconnect with their own sacredness through a dance scene. At this juncture, I will describe how this scene and performing arts language acts as a healing experience that let them reconnect with their own inner power that had been constrained by the patriarchal atmosphere around them. By so doing, I will show how the presence of dance in the selected films reconciles different generations of mothers and daughters that had previously rejected each other's styles. Also, I will point out how the inclusion of South Asian dance in the diaspora space disproves the British Empire's discourse about South Asian dance as a genre solely for prostitutes (as previously stated in Chapter III when analysing the southern South Asian classical dance of *bharatanatyam*).

Thirdly, I will focus on how Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha rewrite British literary classics as postcolonial hybrid narratives that recognise cultural hybridity and cultural transformation in diaspora space. In order to confirm this statement, I will retell how Chadha's adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and Nair's adaptation of William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848) are constructed as hybrid narratives that use elements from South Asian tradition to tell these British stories anew.

Therefore, Chadha's Elizabeth Bennet (called Lalita Bakshi) and Nair's Becky Sharp recognise their gender constraints, contradict and denounce the British colonial abuse suffered in the South Asian Subcontinent so that contemporary women in the new history can embrace the latest possibilities inherent to diaspora space. In this sense, I will study how Nair and Chadha modify some scenes through the composite form of hybrid narratives in order to facilitate that these two characters can have an alternative representation that facilitates a rewriting for South Asian culture that breaks the traditionally patriarchal design of characters as well as the British colonial representation of South Asian culture and people as voiceless. Thus, I will highlight how they foster the empowerment of a collaborative network of women where they can be interwoven together and nurture each other to finally subvert those interlocking systems of domination that traditionally have been imposed upon them.

1- RASA IN THE DIASPORA AND THE HOMELANDS: DEFINING A NEW IDENTITY THROUGH SOUTH ASIAN EXPRESSIVE PERFORMING TECHNIQUES

Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha propose a new representation and a new identity for South Asian women in the diaspora space. Firstly, as seen in Chapter IV, their characters resolve gender conflicts in the diaspora and subvert the initial inequality imposed upon them in terms of access to academic education, freedom to choose relationships and to create communities of women in which to share stories and nurture each other. For example, Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* or Asha and Hashida in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) challenge the role as submissive daughters and wives imposed by their South Asian

communities South Asian society. By emerging as active women who make their own decision, they perform a subversion of their roles and so they can have access to a proper job and then they are able to denounce the unfair patriarchal order within their communities. Secondly, Nair and Chadha narrate this subversion of gender roles in their films using acting elements such as specific facial and hand gestures from the South Asian performing arts repertoire. Subsequently, I think that they propose a new cultural identity for South Asian women in the diaspora that exemplifies their own hybrid culture because they combine elements taken from the South Asian performing arts tradition together with contemporary cultural features that they use to compose the gender subversion previously detailed in Chapter IV.

In this sense, I will study in this section how Nair and Chadha express the social change of characters such as Asha in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* and Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* through an evolution of the emotions (bhavas) felt by the characters and illustrated in their films through acting techniques (abhinaya) that allow an emphatic and collaborative interaction of performers and audience (rasa). Thence, it is important to remember that the meaning of a performing arts experience in South Asian tradition is constructed through the combination of, as stated in Bharata's *Natyasastra*, "words, physical gestures and facial changes (abhinaya) that intends to portray an emotion (bhava) so that the ever-changing experience of the performance enhances a collaborative empathy (rasa) that is shared and constructed by both performers and audience" (Rangacharya 64; González Cruz 138-139, my translation). As expressed in Chapter III, the interconnection of these elements as well as the use of different performing arts genres (such as music, storytelling, or dance) allow the South Asian performing arts tradition to present characters and stories that illustrate that unity in diversity is possible in the performing arts and that culture is always changing and reinventing itself anew. At this point, I have defined Mira

Nair and Gurinder Chadha's films as hybrid narratives to underline how Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha use elements from South Asian tradition to portray the hybrid culture of their female characters and narrate the opportunities that, as citizens of the diaspora space, lie ahead of them.

It is now important to focus on bhavas because, as expressed by Bharata, "they lead to the meaning of the poem" and "convey rasa when they come into contact with the qualities common (to the human mind)" (Rangacharya 64). Although Bharata identified forty-nine bhavas, I have decided to focus on those that he calls "The Eight Dominating Bhavas" (64) because they are "the qualities of the human heart that can be enforced by learning and developing the innate features and skills" (González Cruz 139, my translation). These emotions are, respecting the order in which Bharata describes them: Love, Laughter, Anger, Energy, Fear, Grief, Disgust and Wonder (Rangacharya 65-67; González Cruz 139-143). Out of these eight Dominating Bhavas, I have selected Fear, Grief, Laughter, Love and Wonder because I have identified that characters such as Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* or Chadha in *Bend It like Beckham* are described as evolving from Fear to Wonder meanwhile they subvert the gender conflicts analysed in Chapter IV. Moreover, these female characters are created by Nair and Chadha through a combination of South Asian performing arts techniques that enable the audience to connect with the characters' emotions while they come to terms with their own roots and the future possibilities in the diaspora.

Likewise, I believe that the representation of bhavas on screen embody the subversive struggle of Nair and Chadha's characters. Australian scholars Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins also refer to the importance of showing emotions in a performance so that a powerful meaning is shared. In their own words:

Each action conveys an emotion; similarly, emotions lead to deeds. Actions are individual, emotions are universal. No two men express their anger in the same manner, but every man is susceptible to anger . . . The moment when the actor, by his detailed acting, makes us feel that he is in such and such a condition is recognised as the [acting of emotions] and our reaction to his condition next moment is called *rasa*. [It is] because of this extreme contiguity of [acting of emotions] one is equated to the other. (55, 62)

Similarly, Bharata defined *bhavas* as “the source of feeling that . . . can dominate the body to fire up dry woods” (González Cruz 139, my translation). In my opinion, and as it was expressed in Chapter III, using elements from the South Asian performing arts is a subversive act undertaken by Chadha and Nair because, as Gilbert and Tompkins state, “the choice of a language (or languages) in which to express one’s dramatic art is, in itself, a political act that determines not only the linguistic medium of a play but, in many cases, its (implied) audience” (168). Consequently, the selected films undertake a political and artistic declaration towards the respect and importance of the South Asian tradition and the emotional state of characters such as Ria Verma in Nair’s *Monsoon Wedding* or Jessminder Bhamra in Chadha’s *Bend It like Beckham*.

South Asian performing arts elements aim at making performers and spectators merge together in the artistic experience. As previously discussed, the spectator is likely to connect with the emotional evolution of the characters in Nair and Chadha’s movies and she or he will be able to identify the gender and race discrimination that they suffer. After seeing such a performance, the audience might stand up and denounce those social wrongdoings and, most important, they will be able to connect with their own sacredness as human beings and subvert those structures of race and gender inequality that are unveiled in Chadha and Nair’s films. Here, I think that a spectator that has watched Chadha’s *Bhaji on the Beach* will feel empowered by the final gathering of all the women to challenge Amrik and Balbir (Ginder’s husband and brother in law who want to take her and her son back to

Amrik's family house against her will); or, at least, he/she will feel concerned about the problem and the necessity to fight against any form of discrimination against women. The evolution of Asha in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* is very representative to understand the previous remark.

Asha is firstly described by Chadha as a woman dominated by the emotions of Fear and Grief in the first thirty minutes of the film. Nevertheless, she challenges the chauvinist remarks of her South Asian community during the middle part of the feature to finally celebrate with Laughter, Love and Wonder her own sacredness. So, Asha renegotiates the gender cultural burden imposed on her and described through the film by Madhu and Ladhu, who point to how a middle-aged South Asian woman like Asha is supposed to carry on with South Asian tradition in the diaspora and educate young girls to do the same (40'38''-40'54'', 42'31'').

Likewise, Asha is presented in the beginning of the movie as a woman in Fear who suffers from nightmares. In the first nightmare, Asha receives orders from a Hindu Idol who tells her to respect "her Duty, Honour and Sacrifice" (1'16''). Asha responds by performing different ways of looking that in the *Natyasastra* are described to embody the bhava of Fear. For example, Bharata details in Chapter VIII ("Acting of Subordinate Parts of the Body and The Meaning of Abhinaya") how an actor should communicate the emotion of Fear through the following description: "Eyeballs sparkle and look upwards. It is a Fear feeling and indicates a great panic . . . Eyes are broadly open, eyeballs move violently with fear from one corner to the other corner of the eyes as if they were afraid. This feeling is used to display Fear". (González Crus 541, my translation). It is so that Lalita Ahmed, the actress playing Asha, acts with eyes wide open, always looking upwards as the idol statue emerges high. In fact, she moves her eyeballs violently from one corner of her eyes to the other to show her fear that she may receive other threat by other God. After,

Asha wakes up from her vision and adopts the same expression of dread when her husband and children start demanding that she cook and iron their clothes (2'05''). It is then clear that Asha is depicted as a woman in Fear so that the audience can identify these emotions in the first part of the movie before she mentions her feelings later on.

Moreover, Asha appears with her hands holding a plate of offerings (2'07'') as if claiming piety and so this gesture represents the devotion and submission that, according to *Natyasastra*, a "woman must show to represent devotion and obedience to a god or a superior" (González Cruz 137, my translation). Actually, any time that Asha daydreams she faints, something that illustrates that she cannot cope with the pressure inflicted by both their religion and her family. Bharata gives an explanation for this act in Chapter VII. In his own words: "Fainting and change of voice is a consequence of fear . . . rage, temperature, sickness and hyper, fainting, astonishing, hyper, sleep, wound and things like those" (González Cruz 160, my translation). Therefore, Asha clearly faints because she cannot handle the religious pressure and her family's demands to prepare meals, wash clothes and take care of the family business (2'56'').

Thus, Asha is presented in the start of the movie as a character full of Fear that will soon turn into Grief as the trip to Blackpool makes her family and personal sorrows surface because Ginder has left her husband (and she has been suffering ill-treatment) and Hashida is pregnant (and she is dating a black man). As far as the family worries are concerned, Asha sighs and hits her chest when she sits on the bus with the Saheli Group (16'24'') and dreams a nightmare where Ginder is insulted "shameless woman" (17'') after she throws water on her in-laws instead of serving them, which would have been her duty. Afterwards, Asha would listen to Hashida confessing that she is pregnant at the stop on their way to Blackpool (19'32''). When Asha listens to this news, she knocks her chest and opens her eyes widely. These performing techniques indicate female Grief as Bharata

writes that a woman who “cries, sighs, hits her chest [...] or falls over the flow wants to enhance a feeling of Female Grief” (González Cruz 425,445; my translation).

Similarly, it is at this moment that Asha falls asleep again on the bus when the journey is resumed and she suffers from her third vision (30’20’’-32’40’’). This time, Hashida sits in a temple and she is dressed with a red mini skirt and she wears a blonde wig. Asha looks at the scene wearing a white sari inhabiting a deep decorum. Asha shows devotion to the priest by holding the devotional hand gesture (*mudra*), where both palms face each other over the chest of a person. Hashida starts insulting the priests and Asha cannot handle the language and her eyes appear swollen while her lower eyelids fall down (31’02’’). This way of looking expresses, according to *Natyasastra*, a deep sense of grief that is created when “the lower eyelid falls slightly, the eyeballs are slightly swollen” (González Cruz 541, my translation). Accordingly, Asha is a character whose Fear becomes Grief because she starts crying on the bus. This clearly captures Bharata’s description of a performer’s display of Grief as this *bhava* is portrayed by “a repeated lower [*sic*] of the head, tears and crying. [The performers] detail that the character has gone through a calamity (or discomfort)” (Rangachadhya 66).

However, Asha laughs for the first time when all the women enjoy a picnic (*bhaji* in Punjabi language) on the beach. The women tell jokes together and some women such as Rekha (wearing Western clothes and smoking a puff) talk about their different experiences of being a modern woman in Mumbai (Bombay) (40’54’’-41’30’’). It is the character of Rekha who somehow makes the women in the trip think that things are changing in the Subcontinent and that they should change some of their old habits while living in the diaspora space (41’32’’). It is at this moment that Asha confesses that she knows that Hashida is pregnant (41’34’’) and gives her opinion, something that she had not done before in the film. In my view, it is as if somehow she had gotten rid of the cultural burden

that has been imposed on hers, the role of being the silent and submissive carrier of culture and the family. After an initial fight criticising Hashida, the women resume their picnic and start running along the beach. Asha smiles for the first time in the film and her gestures start to become softer. She gets into the sea and becomes drenched when Ambrose Waddington (the British man who would later give Asha a touristic tour around Blackpool) saves her (42'31"). Asha moves her right hand from the left to her head and the image stops there. This is a performing technique that indicates that Asha is abandoning her past because, in Bharata's own words, "when from the left the Arala hand goes on top of the head to cease past, mean cease, destruction or end up with words that have been listened" (González Cruz 428, my translation). Asha is tired of her community and she goes with Ambrose when he tells her that she might join him in a walk around Blackpool.

It is at this moment that Asha starts smiling as if leaving Fear and Grief behind. In fact, when Ambrose takes her to the gardens and the theatre of Blackpool (1h 7'-1h 14'11"), Asha smiles and looks at Ambrose and the camera while her eyelids blink and she laughs. Her eyeballs cannot be clearly visible as she covers her face with hair or her hands and so she is following the acting techniques that are described in the *Natyasastra* to convey the emotion of Laughter (González Cruz 541; Rangachadhya 66).

Later in the theatre, Asha suffers from another vision and this time she sees herself as a princess wearing a red sari and lots of jewellery (1h 13' 52"). Asha frowns, she looks pleasant and then she starts uttering words that are incomprehensible. These are the techniques detailed in *Natyasastra* to show Love (González Cruz, 541, my translation). Asha recognises Ambrose's tender Love and she defiantly leaves Fear and Grief and experiences Laughter and Love while she visits Blackpool as a free woman. It is at this moment that Asha breaks free from those burdens placed upon her by her community when Ambrose reminds her of her roots. It is at this instant that he tells her: "You represent a

tradition. You have kept hold of your traditions. You are exotic, fascinating, gentle, exquisite and beautiful” (1h14’ 22’’-1h14’34’’). At this juncture, on the stage of Blackpool theatre, Asha remembers that she went to college and was about to become a singer before she got married to her husband (1h15’12’’). Instead of being quiet, Asha rebels against Ambrose’s questions because she recognises in him the same gender limitations imposed by her community. Although in the beginning she feels displeased, she then emerges stronger and responds: “I haven’t done anything wrong” (1h15’13’’). In my opinion, when Asha feels and shares the emotions of Laughter and Love she overcomes the initial imposed emotions of Fear and Grief and she connects to her inner power, in this case as a woman who had gone to college and had a dream, that of being a singer.

Here, the important fact is that Asha rediscovers her dream and her own potential beyond interlocking systems of domination built upon her by gender and racial assumptions of superiority. In other words, she reconnects with her own sacredness and so she recovers her own potential and connection with soul, mind and body. For the first time in the film, she realises that she can do whatever she wants to. It is at this time that the expressions of Asha change and she resolves to go back with the rest of the women. Asha now becomes a character who shows Wonder, a bhava described by Bharata as an emotion that is similar to the feeling when “a job excellently done pleases one; and the pleasure produces amazement at the fulfilment. This should be expressed by extreme joy and hair standing on ends.” (Rangachadhya 67). Asha runs to meet her friends and sisters and, also for the first time, she sincerely hugs them and starts leading the reaction against Amrik, Ginder’s husband who is about to find them.

At this moment, Asha recognises her change and, through the holistic performing languages of the South Asian tradition, she looks at the camera with strength, firmness and resolution because her eyelashes are much curved in the outside part of the eye and the

eyeballs are open as if they show surprise. These are the exact expressions described by Bharata to refer to the techniques that an actor or an actress should use to represent that a character feels Wonder understood as a heroic feeling (González Cruz 541, my translation). Correspondingly, Asha stands up alone against the patriarchal order symbolised by Amrik's attempt to convince Ginder to return to his house. The whole group of women gather together despite their different clothes, social backgrounds and age to defeat a historical order that had been imposed upon all of them (1h27'30''). It is when Ginder looks at Asha's strength and determination to stop Amrik that she stares back at him adopting the same acting techniques that Asha had used and she connects with the bhava of Wonder. In my opinion, this feeling and recognition of her own strength lets her feel the love and support of the other women who now stand around her. Therefore, Ginder exclaims to Amrik: "No, I'm not coming back" (1h'27'39''). Subsequently, Asha leads all the women walking back to the bus and, once inside, sits by Ginder. By so doing, Asha shows that she has left behind the Fear and Grief.

Also, it is important to note that Asha wears a yellow sari throughout the movie because yellow is the colour which connects with the rasa of the heroic mood (Rangacharya 54), an emotion that she had suppressed but that finally she is able to reconnect with. Thus, the character of Asha experiences an emotional change that is shown on screen not by dialogue but through South Asian performing techniques that are based on looks, gestures and colours. Here, the fact that Gurinder Chadha gives much more significance to the South Asian performing arts tradition is very relevant because, as it was said before, it is a political statement through which she can illustrate how women like Asha do not need to break with all South Asian traditions but only with those which weaken them. In this sense, the character of Asha symbolises how a South Asian woman can act South Asian and feel South Asian but also embrace the social, personal and professional possibilities that the

diaspora space offers for her and her community. Chadha makes use of South Asian performing techniques to exemplify the dialogue among cultures and the resultant cultural hybridity as a source of nurturing possibilities for South Asian women if they reconnect with their own sacredness.

The character of Jessminder Bhamra (hence Jess) in Chadha's *Bend It Like Beckham* is descriptive of this empowerment of women because Chadha describes her using elements from South Asian performing arts tradition in order to facilitate another subversive nuance, that of coming to terms with her own roots so that she can triumph in life. Actually, *Bend It like Beckham* tells the story of how Jessminder becomes a famous footballer despite the initial opposition of her family and it starts with a British journalist wondering: "Is Jess Bhamra the answer that England needs . . . in its missing jigsaw?" (1'23''). Although the reporter refers to the lack of a strong national football team, we can draw a parallel with the lack of cohesion among cultures within England that is clearly implied throughout as a central premise of the movie. Therefore, Jessminder illustrates that the understanding of cultures could make England recognise its own hybridity. In this sense, the character of Jessminder Bhamra shows that the British society needs to move from looking at South Asian culture with fear and grief into a much more inclusive recognition of the wonderful possibility of living together, celebrating difference and its possibilities.

Here, if Jessminder played for the national football team then the squad would be likely to improve its results, as illustrated when Jess helps Jules and her team reach the finals of a local tournament. It is in this sense that, as previously stated when analysing the character of Asha in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach*, Jessminder evolves throughout the film from a girl overcome by the emotions of Fear and Grief to a free woman who experiences Wonder to embrace the professional opportunities that the diaspora space grants her.

Gurinder Chadha portrays this change within Jess to finally recognise Jess' inner power through acting techniques from South Asian performing arts tradition that the Indian-British actress Parminder Nagra masters in the film.

Jess shares in the first twenty minutes of the movie an emotion of Fear. Her eyes are always looking downwards as illustrative of an emotion that Bharata describes as “a Fear that also indicates a great sense of panic” (González Cruz 541, my translation). Jess sneaks out to play football with the South Asian boys in her local park and then she plays truants to join the training sessions with the local female team Jules introduces her to. Jess is always afraid when she is at home because if her family or her sister's bridegroom's family discovered her passion she could bring shame on the family and the marriage of her sister might be cancelled. Her mother constantly reminds her of this fact saying to her that she is “bringing shame” (1'38'') because she learns that Jess has been playing with the boys in the park.

Jess sparkles when playing football but when she is at home she is all the time quiet and sad. For instance, when Pinky announces her first engagement (8'40''-54''), Jess looks with eyes broadly open and her eyeballs move violently with Fear from one corner to the other corner of the eyes. This expression is shown again when Jess' mother discovers that she has bought a pair of football trainers instead of a fancy pair of shoes to her sister's wedding (14'14''). These acting techniques are detailed by Bharata in *Natyasastra* to describe the way a character feeling Fear looks (González Cruz 541, my translation).

Further to this scene, Mrs Bhamra starts reprimanding Jess with a portrait of Guru Nanak³ behind her (20'20''-35'') while punishing her to teach her “how to make full

³ Guru Nanak (1469-1539) is the first of the ten Gurus of *Sikhism**. He is supposed to be the founder of the Sikh religion. His teachings can be found in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, written in Gurmukhi (an old language and alphabet in the region of Punjab, northeast of India), and considered the sacred book for Sikhism. Gurinder Chadha was brought up a Sikh (Chadha 2009) and references to Sikhism can also be found in *Bride and Prejudice*, as the film starts in Amritsar and the Golden Temple, the holy places for Sikhism.

Punjabi dinner” because Jess has “brought Shame” upon the family because, apparently, her sister’s future in-laws have seen her kissing a white boy and that is a sin for them. Here, Jess was simply giving two kisses on Jules’ cheek but the whole South Asian community had misunderstood this gesture. Jess’s mum is very angry (21’16’’-49’’), and she uses the gestures that express, according to *Natyasastra*, “disgust” because her “eyelids are contracted but not wholly together and eyeballs are covered and outside focus” (González Cruz 541, my translation). In addition, Mrs Bhamra is portrayed wearing a pale brown sari that is described in Chapter XXIII of *Natyasastra* as symbol of “people who are insane or have been struck by a disaster” (González Cruz 341, my translation). Consequently, the whole scene suggests that all the blame for the cancellation of Pinky’s wedding is to be put on Jess’s behaviour and, although nobody in her family asks her how she feels, Jess demonstrates that she is now a character in full Grief.

Jess turns her Fear into Grief when she knows that she will not be able to go to the tournament in Germany because her family is all depressed and keeping an eye on her after Pinky’s wedding has been cancelled (21’54’’). She seems to be on the point of crying all the time and her eyes are always cast downwards. Her eyeballs are swollen and so she is communicating a grieving disgust, as Bharata exclaims that a performer communicates Grief when his/her “upper eyelid goes down a consequence of a mental anguish while the eyes are fixed on the tip of the nose” (González Cruz 541, my translation). Moreover, Jess starts to be shown on screen wearing pale and greyish blue colour clothes that are representative of the “rasa of compassion” (Rangacharya 54). I believe that Gurinder Chadha is deliberately pushing the audience to recognise and pity the gender burden imposed by the South Asian culture on Jess.

Nevertheless, the opportunity to play a tournament in Germany might change this situation because it has been announced that there will be a US scouter present and Jess and

Jules may be selected to play professionally in the US while starting a degree in any university they want for free as part of a grant given to both. Here we see that Jess' Grief will turn into Laughter because, with the help of Pinky, she sneaks out and goes to play in the tournament.

Jess changes completely when she is with her team. She smiles, shows the burns on her skin (a consequence of a domestic incident when she was a small girl) and can say and do what she pleases. When Jess is in Germany something changes within her and is depicted by Gurinder Chadha as embodying the bhava of Laughter. Jess's eyes move from one side to another exploring the city of Hamburg and she is described in high spirits because she appears with her eyelids contracted by turns and her eyeballs are visible and move gently, a performing expression that matches Bharata's instructions to represent Laughter (González Crus 541). It is then that Jess feels independent for the first time and she is now described as a character who blinks and laughs non-stop as in the scenes on the boat, where she hugs her teammates (44'06'') and in the matches celebrated in Germany (44' - 45'34''). This description is representative of Bharata's lines when he describes how a performer can illustrate Laughter. In his own words: "Hugs, Smile and caring attitude . . . the sight moves and the eyeballs cannot be completely visible. Eyelids blink because this shows a state of happiness that goes along Laughter" (González Cruz 341, 541, my translation). In a nutshell, and despite the argument that Jess has with Jules over Joe (both of them like him although Joe favours Jess), it is from this moment onwards that Jess recognises herself as part of a community where she can play football and enjoy life without being judged about whether she is following the expected cultural standards or not.

It is clear that Jess changes after the experience in Germany. She is no longer a girl subdued by Fear and Grief and she wants to enjoy the Laughter of life. She has recognised her own independence and now she wants to love with freedom for the first time in her life.

So, she shows the emotion of Love when she recognises that she has definitely fallen in love with Joe. Jess never verbally acknowledges the fact in the first half of the movie but her ways of looking at him clearly show it. For example, when Jess asks Pinky: “How do you know when you are in love?” (51’10’’) she half opens her eyes and displays a gentle gesture that Bharata recognises as symbol of Love where Love is “defined as a feeling of pleasure . . . produced on achievement of desire; to be acted sweetly and gracefully” (Rangacharya 66). Besides, Jess is shown remembering the moments spent with Joe while she perspires and dries her tears off (51’10’’, 59’), an acting technique that shows that Jess feels a remembrance kind of love because, as Bharata pointed out when defining the ten stages of love in women: “Remembrance. ‘There is no one like him’ she keeps on saying with (sad) smiles and graceful movements. In this stage, love is expressed by wiping off tears and drops of perspiration, etc.” (Rangacharya 194). Also, when Jess starts talking to her South Asian friend Tony about the fact that she may have fallen in love, Tony soon recognises her gestures and the kind of love Jess feels and he states: “You can’t plan who you love” (58’10’’). At this moment, and for the first time in the movie, Jess can share her feelings of love with someone who supports her, as she does with Tony (58’49’’).

This support allows Jess to state in front of her whole family that her inner struggle has shown to her that she cannot delude herself and so she needs to share with them what she really wants to do in life and who she really loves (1h31’33’’). At this juncture, Jess recognises that she has to be honest to herself because, as she acknowledges, Guru Nanak must have blessed her with great football skills (1h 34’’) as she has played the final of another tournament in England and the US American scouter was there to confirm that Jules and her have been granted a full scholarship to study at a US university and play football professionally in one of the best national teams (1h34’’55). When Jess hears about

this piece of news, she goes back to her sister's wedding with a newfound joy and love that had never been seen on her face.

It is this act of individual victory what makes Jess derogate those familiar, cultural and gender limitations that had been imposed upon her by the South Asian and the British community as well as by her own lack of self-confidence. Her decision is finally accepted by her father and Jess stands up as a free woman in the diaspora space that has come to terms with her South Asian roots, with her family and with the professional prospects in the UK and the US. By so doing, Jess is portrayed as a character full of the emotion of Love and Wonder and she is able to celebrate her familiar roots and the diaspora new routes without being paralysed by Fear or Grief. Jess' eyes sparkle and are broadened, showing, as Asha in *Bhaji on the Beach*, Wonder through the acting techniques that are explained by Bharata in the *Natyasastra*. In his own words: “[The performer's] eyes shine and appear extremely huge to share the emotion that the character is amazed and feels Wonder when living” (González Cruz 541-542, my translation).

This emotion of Wonder is then shared not only by Jess and the audience but also by the character of Mr Bhamra who exclaims: “Nobody has got the right to stop her as they did with me” (1h36'10”). Therefore, he is happy knowing that Jess will go to the US and, more important, that she has reconnected with her own sacredness because, unlike himself, she has been able to gather the necessary courage that has subverted the social, gender and racial limitations that had been imposed on her and that he never rebelled against. In this sense, Jess finally aligns her South Asian roots with her new British routes so that she does what she truly wants (playing football), with her true friend (Jules, a white British footballer) and the boy she loves (Joe, a white Irish man).

It is in this moment that Jess stands as a heroine who, as Asha in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* did, is able to lead future generations of South Asian women. She is such a

heroine because she proves to other women that they can subvert the gender limitations imposed historically upon them if they move from the emotions of Fear and Grief towards Love and Wonder, a process that Chadha illustrates through the South Asian performing arts acting elements that I have analysed. Accordingly, this language of performance is also understood in the South Asian Subcontinent and has the potential to make women feel empowered. Hence, the emotional evolution of the character of Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* clearly illustrates that the experience of women in the diaspora space can definitely challenge those interlocking systems of gender domination established also upon women in the South Asian Subcontinent.

Nair's *The Namesake* shows how Ashima migrates to the US when she is married although she decides to return to India and live between India and the US after her husband dies. The film starts with a Carnatic chant and the Goddess Saraswati (Hindu goddess of Wisdom and the arts) descending from a balcony (4'10''-4'15''). A female voice is heard. It is Ashima's voice, and she moves her right hand to the left indicating the tempo of the song while her eyeballs are half open and she shares a true smile. She hugs her classmates when the lesson ends and she smiles at all of them tenderly. Ashima is therefore presented by Mira Nair as a happy woman using the performing techniques that, according to *Natyaśāstra*, portray a "proliferation of hugs, smile and caring attitude that show the happiness of a woman" (González Cruz 431, my translation). The strong red hue in her clothing reinforces the idea that Ashima is gifted musically not only because her voice is very refined but also because, as Bharata explains, "women will wear dark and strong reds when they gather an outstanding skill [as well as when they are brides or relatives of the bride in a wedding]" (González Cruz 342, my translation). Nevertheless, the Aralar mudra that Ashima shows (her index finger bent along with the thumb while the rest are straight

and she moves her hand over her head) that something is soon going to change in her life (González Cruz 428).

The evolution of Ashima in the movie will prove this transformation as she will later be a woman who must struggle against Fear and Grief to find a place of her own as a South Asian woman in the diaspora space who subverts the gender burden imposed on her so that, eventually, she finally can choose and do whatever her heart says her to. Mira Nair conveys this progression through acting techniques taken from the South Asian performing arts tradition, which adds new nuances in the study of why Ashima decides to live between the US and India as a woman without imposed borders.

As already explained, Ashima is described as a happy woman in the first twelve minutes of the film. She looks surprised at Ashok's shoes before she meets him, as they are left before the room where their families wait for her. Ashima looks amazed at the label "made in the US" (9') written on the shoes. Ashok is Ashima's groom and she is about to meet him for the first time before their wedding is celebrated and they move to the US, where Ashok works as a professor in New York. Ashima tries Ashok's shoes on and she looks at the camera expressing, under Bharata's description, Surprise and Love. Surprise because her eyelids are still and she suddenly opens her eyeballs widely as if they were to jump out of their beds and Love because she expresses a sweet look through quiet eyelids (9'12''-9'36''). This description matches up with what Bharata describes as a look that expresses "the dominating state of Love and Happiness that it is used to express love, . . . born out of love" (González Cruz 491, my translation).

The following scene shows Ashima and Ashok's wedding where Ashima's grandmother corroborates this expression of Ashima when she mentions: "You are starting a new life. But don't forget about us. Your life will be full of joy and happiness" (9'26''-9'31''). However, after Ashima and Ashok exchange flower necklaces, rings and laddhus

(sweets) to certify the Hindu marriage, Ashima looks down to the floor as expected in a bride (González Cruz 491) and her eyes illustrate the bhava of Fear. This emotion continues when the next scene shows the farewell of Ashima and Ashok at Kolkata airport. In this scene, Ashima's eyeballs sparkle and look upwards, a gesture that indicates, according to Bharata, "a great panic" (González Cruz 491, my translation) that is reinforced in the next scene, when Ashima wakes up alone in the US (10'52'').

In the first scene that shows Ashima in the US, the camera displays her face in a close-up and then her room in New York (10'52''-11'21''). Ashima still wears vermilion pigment on her forehead symbolising that she is a married woman. She is sad as she cries and runs to take a shawl. It is winter in New York while it was Indian summer back in the homelands. She looks lost and afraid, especially when Ashok comes back from grocery shopping announcing that he has to go out again, this time to work. Ashima asks: "Are you going out?" (12'10''). Then, she looks at him and at the emptiness of their flat and the freezing cold weather outside. Ashima's looks soon inform Ashok of how she feels while Ashok tries to tell her that she cannot do anything until he comes back and explains how to get to places. Ashok recognises the bhava of Fear and tells her: "How are you feeling? It is normal. You have just flown half way the world" (12'11''). Ashima shows Fear because she communicated her internal anguish and the solitude that she feels when she holds her sight on the tip of her nose and her upper eyelid looks below, a gesture that Bharata links with "the display of mental anguish that is represented when eyes are fixed on the tip of the nose and there is a tear" (González Cruz 591, my translation). When Ashok leaves the house at the end of the scene, Ashima stays in the shade of the window and frowns while looking at him heading to work. It is a look that expresses pity because Ashima's lower eyelid falls slightly and her eyeballs are slightly swollen a description that corresponds to the abhinaya that is expected when an actress portrays Pity (González Cruz 591).

Besides, Ashima is afraid of not being able to do what is expected from her as a newlywed wife and her emotion turns from Fear into Grief. In the beginning of her life in the US, she feels clueless, scared and anxious as all the tasks that she was taught to do as a wife she cannot complete in the US because, according to Ashok, she will not be able to find the groceries shop. In fact, Ashok asks her not to leave the house and, especially, not to do the laundry because the launderette is far. Nevertheless, Ashima tries to find her own way to a close launderette and the result is that she uses the wrong programme and all Ashok's pullovers shrink. The rage of Ashok is terrible (15'16'') and Ashima locks herself in a room, crying desperately. She yelps nonstop tears of pain and shakes her body while Ashok tries to comfort her from the other side of the door. Although he changes his attitude and apologises, Ashima's body shakes and she continues crying abundantly. Her bhava is definitely Grief because, as Bharata informs, a character whose tears "are copious, loud and accompanied by uncomfortable body movement" and who collapses to the ground" with "repeated lamentations" is clearly led by the bhava of Grief (Rangacharya 66).

Despite the fact that the relationship with Ashok improves from this moment onwards, Ashima only shows Grief. She feels alone and lost in the US. When she gives birth to Gogol she is alone at the hospital and she frowns and shares her grief (20'09'') according to *Natyasastra's* notion of how to convey Fear and Disgust through "frowning and looking downwards while sighing" (González Cruz 541, my translation). Also, and when she is informed of her father's death she basically collapses emotionally (30'10''), which clearly illustrates her anguish because, as pointed out by Bharata, "heavy grief will be explained by the character frowning and collapsing on stage" (González Cruz 541, my translation). Actually, it is when they reach New Delhi airport to catch their connection flight to Kolkata for the first time after moving to the US that Ashima stops and exclaims that she cannot see her family (30'11''). She is completely lost and she reinforces the looks

that described her Grief. It is from this moment onwards that Ashima loses importance in the film to her son Gogol who, at the same time, starts refusing everything that connects him to his family, the epitome of his South Asian roots.

When Gogol is dating Maxime and does not want to visit Ashima and Ashok's house, Ashima tells her colleague Allison: "I lost my parents when I first came here. Now I feel I am losing my family" (55'11"). This fact saddens Ashima even more for she recognises that Gogol prefers spending time with his in-laws than with his own family (55'16"). Nevertheless, the death of Ashok will make both identify that a change is needed in their lives. On the one hand, Ashima needs to start taking care of her own dreams and, on the other, Gogol needs to recognise that his South Asian roots are a part of him that he would ostracise to his own detriment.

Ashima leaves Fear and Anguish and shows Laughter and Love after Ashok's wake ceremonies in India and the US (55'58", 1h19'25"). She feels the affection of the South Asian community that accompanies her and her family, the strong friendship that she shares with Allison and, specially, the love of her children because Gogol has decided to reconcile with what he has really been his whole life, his own South Asian namesake. At the same time, Ashima laughs with Allison at the library (1h37') as well as when she blinks and giggles with her daughter Sonia at a dinner with friends (1h 40'37"). In this dinner, Ashima hugs, smiles and shows a caring attitude to all her guests and so she is portrayed as a woman who feels Laughter and Love as Bharata describes that these three ways of a character to connect with others illustrate Happiness (González Cruz 431). Also, Ashima feels the Love of others and not her initial isolation as she holds a long half widened look when she talks about how she remembers Ashok and believes that he is with them all (1h 48'05"), a performing technique that Bharata links with Love (González Cruz 591). After these expressions, Ashima informs her family that she is going to live six months in India

and six months in the US, something that she always wanted to do so that she could resume her singing lessons in Kolkata (1h38'21''-1h40'37'').

Ashima undertakes this decision after the Love she feels as a consequence of recognising the support and love of friends and family but also because of a conversation she has with Allison at work. In this dialogue, Allison explains to Ashima that she has been reading a book by Joseph Campbell⁴ which says "when you feel lost, think about when you were most happy. It's called 'following your bliss'" (1h37'51''). Afterwards, I believe that, safeguarded by the incipient emotions of Laughter and Love, Ashima feels empowered by Allison and gathers the necessary inner strength to communicate her plan to her family. Thence, as Moushumi remarks, Ashima comes to terms with her own identity as "woman without borders" (1h40'39''). In my opinion, it is by *following her bliss*, representative of her own sacredness, that Ashima rejects all those borders that had culturally been imposed upon her in terms of gender as well as her initial assumptions that she had to take care of her family forgetting her own dreams.

It is after confessing her decision to her family that Ashima appears singing on a terrace overlooking the Ganges River in Kolkata. She wears a blue and orange sari and tunes her voice to a tempura (South Asian string instrument used by South Asian classical singers to tune in their voices). She smiles and she hardly opens her eyes (1h51'21''). Now that she is a free woman and she has reconnected with her inner sacredness, she shares the bhava of Wonder and the actress Tabu produces a look for Ashima based on Bharata's

⁴ Joseph Campbell (1904-1987) was a professor and writer from the US who specialised in books about comparative mythology and religion. His writings could be summarised into the concept *Follow your bliss* which he explains in his book *The Power of Myth* (1988) with the following lines:

Campbell: Have you ever read Sinclair's Lewis' *Babbitt*?

Moyers: Not in a long time.

Campbell: Remember the last line? 'I have never done a thing that I wanted to do in all my life.'

That is a man who never followed his bliss. (117)

Thus, the idea of *Follow your bliss* can be linked with the Advaita and Vedanta concept of sacredness as explained in Chapter III of this dissertation and that aims at giving back to the human being the certainty that he/she can do whatever that he/she truly desires to do whenever he or she connects body, mind and soul in a state of intimate honesty with his/her true dreams.

notion of Wonder that is portrayed with an expression of “amazement at the fulfilment . . . and hair standing on ends” (Rangacharya 67). Prior to this moment, the scene had begun with the new descending of the goddess Saraswati because this is auspicious for a film if shown in the beginning and end of Indian movies (Nair 2014). Now, Ashima feels plenitude and is finally at peace after she has been able to stand up for her own identity and dreams.

Ashima’s emotional journey from Happiness and Grief to Laughter and Wonder clearly illustrates a new route for the character granted by the possibilities of cultural interaction inherent to the diaspora space. Therefore, as explained about Asha in Chadha’s *Bhaji on the Beach* and Jessminder in Chadha’s *Bend It like Beckham*, these women can illustrate a change in their vital attitude through the emotions they produce using acting techniques from the South Asian performing arts tradition. Here, the fact they use a language that is understood by the South Asian homelands let both Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha change and denounce not only the situations of gender inequality experienced by these women in the diaspora space but also in the homelands.

Thus, it is by the interconnection of performers and audience through emotions that the whole meaning of these hybrid narratives produces empathy (*rasa* in Sanskrit) in order to portray pioneering female South Asian characters that express themselves through both western and eastern artistic techniques to change and subvert situations of gender inequality in the diaspora space and also in the homelands. In this sense, Ashima has illustrated how she is about to change her homelands with her example and her decision to resume her artistic training back in Kolkata. This narrative path can also be seen in Nair’s *Monsoon Wedding*, as Aditi and Ria move from Fear to Wonder to finally stand up for their own dreams so that they are able to recognise their own power and reconnect with that

collaborative space for women from where they had been isolated or they had distanced themselves from.

Monsoon Wedding tells the story of the forty-eight hours before Aditi Verma's wedding. Aditi first appears on screen looking downwards and smiling. She is part of the audience of a TV talk-show which discusses the changes that India might go through after having joined globalisation (6'32''). Aditi does not talk and the next time she comes on screen she wears a white salwar kameez⁵, together with her cousin-sisters Ria and Aliya. According to *Natyasastra*, white represents Laughter (Rangacharya 54) which should be the feeling defining the three cousins as Aditi is going to marry. Nevertheless, the gestures on Aditi's face, informs the spectator that, as previously described, something is bothering her.

Aditi is about to welcome Hemant, her fiancée (hers is an arranged marriage), as well as some of her relatives, who have travelled from Dubai, Canada and the US to attend her wedding. Aditi looks out of the corner of her eyes looking for Ria and then looks down. The proposal is staged at the Verma's house courtyard and Aditi is extremely sad and she does not smile whatsoever if it is not because a photograph is going to be shot (20'29'). Consequently, the performing techniques used by Vasundhara Das, the actress starring as Aditi, display a character that has a sort of dry mouth and whose body and eyes tremble displaying haste and confusion. This description matches the definition given by Bharata of the bhava of Fear (Rangacharya 67) but the spectators somehow feel misplaced because they cannot discern what the source of Aditi's terror is. She looks at her fiancée Hemant with distant eyes and sighs in a superficial manner. According to Bharata's Chapter in *Natyasastra* "Ten Stages of Love in Women", Aditi is showing "restlessness" because she

⁵ The salwar kameez is a South Asian outfit mainly consisting of a long blouse and pants. It is worn by women and it used to be only worn by single, independent or urban women. Married women in rural areas in India still do not use it as a consequence of the idea that it is a piece of garment only worn by single women. However, it is normal to see married women in cities such as Kolkata or Delhi wearing salwar kameezes because of its comfort.

is not at ease and so she acts “by anxiety, sighs, lassitude and heart-burning – all in exaggerated manner . . . because she may be lying” (Rangacharya 194).

The truth is that Aditi has a lover, Vikram, the conductor of the talk-show that the film opens with. She constantly phones his house to find his wife answering the phone. Such is Aditi’s obsession that she even sneaks out from the shop where she and her family buy saris, a part of the dowry to be given to Hemant’s family (43’08’’) the day before the wedding. Her cousin Ria takes her back to the shop and Ria asks her: “What would Hemant think about this?”. Aditi answers succinctly: “I just want to settle down” (43’08’’). She looks in distress and feels confused before the Mehndi ceremony⁶ starts (47’31’’). Even when the henna song begins and all her relatives are wearing orange and red gaudy saris to congratulate, as expressed in *Natyasastra*, the grandiosity of the occasion (Rangacharya 54), Aditi keeps looking up and down which is a signal of Fear (González Cruz 541).

After the ceremony, Aditi leaves the house to meet Vikram. While they are cuddling inside Vikram’s car (1h 01’), police discover them and Vikram abandons Aditi alone with the police officers while he answers a phone call from his wife. The officers verbally abuse Aditi, who implores Vikram not to leave her alone (1h02’26’’). He ignores her as he is trying to invent an alibi to explain to his wife why he is late. Aditi starts bawling and her gestures clearly indicate the Fear she is experiencing being surrounded by the police and understanding that she is not a priority for Vikram. Aditi’s eyeballs move, vibrate and shake, rolling to the corners of her eyes (1’02’27’’-1’02’38’’) clearly matching the performing techniques that Bharata described to describe “Fear and Anguish” (González Cruz 432, my translation).

⁶ The Mehndi Ritual is the henna ceremony where the women attending the wedding have their hands tattooed.

Aditi fears that her whole family will discover that she is having an affair as the police notice that she has a henna design that indicates that she is a bride and, mostly, she feels devastated because she sees how Vikram is only worried about lying to his wife to save his marriage instead of protecting her. It is in this sense that *Natyasastra* describes those gestures as indicator of a character who looks “for someone to save them, crying heavily and trying to hold and hug the man who is around them” (González Cruz 432, my translation). Eventually, her Fear then turns into Grief as she starts shaking, sighing and throwing herself on the floor, an acting technique that Bharata linked with the expression of Grief (Rangacharya 66).

However, this Grief makes her more connected to herself and she decides to tell all about her affair to Hemant because, as she says to Ria, she has realised that she cannot “live in a lie” (1h 05’ 12’’). Hemant becomes speechless when she confesses and he yells at her, although he quickly calms down and apologises (1h14’37’’-1h15’11’’). He then sighs and looks at Aditi to exclaim that “marriages are a risk anyhow” (1h15’31’’) followed by a long silence that he breaks when he points out: “We can put this behind . . . As for the question whether we should marry or not, is for you to answer” (1h 15’48’, 1h16’18’’). It is at this point that Aditi’s expressions reveal a smile and she starts blinking. She is clearly portraying the emotion of Love following the indications in *Natyasastra* when Laughter and Happiness are to be performed through “eyes that move and eyeballs that cannot be completely visible. Eyelids blink because this shows a state of Happiness that goes along Laughter” (González Cruz 541, my translation). Through these expressions, Aditi shows that she has overcome the Fear and Grief she felt because of the expectation of her family and she is now taking time to think for herself.

It is after this moment that the preparation for the sangeet ceremony (singing ceremony the night before the wedding ceremony is celebrated) begins to get rushed. At the

same time, Aditi's cousin's mother says to Rahul "You have to fight your own battle" (1h22'24'') as if saying that to exemplify how Aditi has struggled to get rid of Vikram and the false hopes he represented. In this sense, Ayesha starts the sangeet dancing the song "Chunari Chunari" (1h23'12''-1h27'40'') and Aditi starts smiling and looking at Hemant, who soon takes her to the back garden of the house. Aditi laughs freely for the first time in the movie (1h28'02'') and starts showing expressions that reveal that she is feeling Love not only for Hemant but also for her family and for herself.

Aditi shows the emotion of Love through widened lowered eyes and half looks that she addresses to Hemant. It is an expression of Love that follows Bharata's instructions: "Love should be communicated by a performer with half looks, quiet eyelids and sweet look . . . used to express love . . . born out of love" (González Cruz 541, my translation). Aditi keeps making these gestures until the wedding service starts, exactly when the monsoon breaches and drenches all the guests in an explosion of happiness and love which clearly replicates Aditi's feelings (1h 45'). Actually, the explosion of a monsoon represents, for South Asian performing arts tradition, the celebration of people, gods and goddesses of something of great importance (Purohit 204). This fact clearly explains why Mira Nair decided to join the wedding celebrations with a monsoon after all the characters' empowerment and awakening.

Similarly, it is at this moment that Aditi is accompanied by all the women in the family to meet Hemant in the shrine so that the exchange of flowers, rings and laddhus (Indian sweets) can take place and this will finally symbolise the fulfilment of the marriage (1h 48'01''). The facial gestures of Aditi have now moved from Love to Wonder, as she looks at ease and with a sparkling happiness that irradiates all her relatives. She clearly embodies the bhava of Wonder because her character is portrayed following Bharata's explanations to do so. In his own words, the actress shows "pleasure [that] produces

amazement at the fulfilment. This should be expressed by extreme joy and hair standing on ends” (Rangacharya 67). So, Aditi’s future stands open with no burdens imposed in terms of social and familiar expectations of her as a woman, for now she looks with Wonder to whatever the future may bring for her now that she is going to the US and has resolved to start a new life and never to lie again.

Thus, Aditi’s emotional evolution in the film goes from Fear to Wonder and it is shown through the use of South Asian performing arts techniques. Her emotional evolution takes place because she has learned to love herself beyond social limitations imposed on her for being a woman. By so doing, she has realised that certain men such as Vikram did not respect her dignity. Now, Aditi is an autonomous woman in the homelands who is able to recognise that Hemant may or may not be a good husband but, at least, she has decided to marry him because he respects her. In other words, Aditi has overcome her own fears and the resultant inner Grief to finally stand up for her own self-sufficiency as a woman who, now that she will establish herself with Hemant in the US, is able to travel or stay wherever she wants to. At the same time, the audience is able to recognise Aditi’s progress towards self-reliance and so empathy rises and illustrates that truth and self-confidence are therefore tokens that cannot be forgotten.

Moreover, it can be said that the character of Ria in Mira Nair’s *Monsoon Wedding* adds another nuance to Aditi’s emotional change: the ability to stand against her whole family and denounce that the relative with the main income of the family had abused her when she was a child. In this sense, Nair describes how the character of Ria changes from the emotions of Laughter to Fear and Grief and then to Wonder to raise a heroic rasa with the audience and illustrate the gender limitations that she had experienced as an orphan woman.

Ria is firstly described on screen as a radiant girl. She appears together with Aditi when Hemant's family and the Verma relatives reach the Verma house. She wears a dark red salwar kameez and her happiness contrasts with Aditi's manifest fear. Wearing red in the beginning of a performance means that a character has an extraordinary gift (González Cruz 342, my translation) and so the spectator will later know about Ria's creative writing abilities. Ria's eyes move gently and are visible when relatives arrive, a way of looking that Bharata identifies with "the happiness shared by storytellers . . . [showing] a state of happiness that goes along laughter" (González Cruz 541, my translation). However, Ria's expression changes when Uncle Tej reaches the Verma house (20'58''). Ria becomes perplexed and her eyes denote a mixture of Hate and Fear. Ria shows Hate because her eyelids cover the corner of her eyes and her eyelashes become still when she gets into the house (21'40''), a depiction that matches with Bharata's description of the looks that a character must show if he/she wants to convey hate (Rangacharya 79-83; González Cruz 541).

Similarly, she displays Fear when Uncle Tej is inside the house and he has welcomed the whole family and only Ria is left to be greeted (22'29''). At this moment, Uncle Tej gets closer to Ria, who starts looking to the ground and then upwards, staring at him while her eyes are broadly open, moving violently so as to express the Fear she feels when Uncle Tej gets closer to her, kisses her and touches her chin to salute her (22'36''-22'49''). The previous set of looks detail, according to *Natyasastra*, the intense Fear of a character (Rangacharya 81; González Cruz 541). Besides, Ria also displays sadness, especially when Uncle Tej announces to the whole family that if Ria wants to go to America to study Creative Writing he will fund her entire education (27'40''-27'45''). Ria's eyes look to their own corners and she stands in abrupt stillness while she holds her

hands quiet, a performing technique that Bharata describes as the way a woman expresses sadness, anguish and fear (Rangacharya 208-213; González Cruz 431-432).

After that moment, Ria is either off-screen or appears as Aditi's counsellor after she discovers that her lover Vikram is not worthy and that she is going to tell her fiancé Hemant all about her affair. Actually, both Aditi and Ria share looks that describe that they are overwhelmed by a Fear that paralyses them as in the previously described scene when the women of the whole family buy saris for Hemant's family (42'10''). Nevertheless, Ria takes part in the following celebration of the Mehndi ritual with her family because she seems at ease when there are only women around her (52'12'').

However, in the middle of the Mehndi, Ria leaves for the kitchen and she finds Uncle Tej with Aliya, Ria's young cousin. Uncle Tej is telling her to open her mouth while he introduces a biscuit (53'8''). The scene may look quite innocent but there is something in Uncle Tej's expressions that appears as sexually sleazy. Ria storms in and asks Uncle Tej to leave (53'10''). Although Uncle Tej explains that Aliya was hungry (something that Aliya herself confirms), Ria's expression denote fury because, according to *Natyasastra*, Ria's eyebrows frown and her eyeballs are raised upwards as if showing cruelty (González Cruz 541). Uncle Tej leaves and Aliya hugs Ria stating: "I love you didi [which means sister in Hindi and Bengali]" (53'48''). Ria's eyes return to the expression of Fear and she appears back onscreen during the sangeet choreographed and organised by Ayesha (1h19'21'').

Somehow, Ria feels relaxed in the sangeet and her expressions are softened. She starts joking with the guests as the atmosphere is so festive and she knows that Aditi has spoken the truth to Hemant (1h 21'27''). The girls start joking with a Punjabi man about how men are so bad at kissing and so this man asks advice (1h 30'45''). After the initial shame and giggles, every girl indicates that it is so difficult and they all laugh together until

Aliya states, looking very sad: “What’s so difficult? You just have to open the mouth and then the old man sticks his tongue in” (1h30’51’’). The explanation and gesture of Aliya reminds Ria of the scene in the kitchen between her and Uncle Tej (53’08’’) and, although the rest of women ignore the comment, she starts producing gestures that indicate an emotion of deep Grief.

The audience soon connects with Ria’s emotions as her lower eyelid falls slightly and her face is overtaken by a rough expression, a gesture that shows “Grief and weakness” (González Cruz 437, my translation). Aliya leaves and heads towards her mother, although on the way she meets Uncle Tej, who promises her to buy her an ice-cream and take her home. It is at this moment that Ria stands up and overcomes her Grief to defend her cousin and her own integrity because she denounces, in the middle of the *sangeet*, that Uncle Tej cannot take Aliya home because it is obvious that he will abuse her as he did to Ria when she was a young girl (1h32’14’’-1h32’14’’). Ria gathers enough strength to yell at him in front of her whole family: “It wasn’t enough that you touched me when I was a girl. That wasn’t enough? You had to teach Aliya how older people kiss?” (1h 33’11). Her whole family is shocked as Uncle Tej is the economic benefactor of the family and especially of Ria, who is an orphan of father meaning, in traditional India, that the girl is hopeless if she wants to pursue an academic education as Ria does.

Here, Uncle Tej sighs and asks Ria to stop “this nonsense” because she “cannot get any good thing out of it” (1h33’19). But Ria is determined and does not falter under Uncle Tej’s threat and she tells how he abused her in front of her whole family: “I didn’t even have breasts, you sick man... he took off my clothes” (1h33’21). Although Ria’s mother stands up and slaps her (1h33’21’’), Ria gathers back her courage to challenge the family patriarchal order and so she tells the truth: “If you don’t want to believe me. I’m not a part of this. I’m not a part of you . . . You know that I don’t lie” (1h33’32’’-1h 33’59’’). Ria

starts bawling when Lalit Verma (Aditi's father and Ria's tutor) asks her to calm down. Meanwhile, a member of the family starts whispering that "unmarried girls like Ria make up all these fantasies" (1h 34'08'') and "she is mad. That girl is crazy" (1h 34'24''). Ria leaves the celebration showing how the patriarchal order of her family is not listening to her and may be letting Uncle Tej abuse Aliya if she does not protect her.

The wedding ceremony is going to take place the following morning and Lalit finds Ria hidden in a room and begs her to join the wedding. However, he seems to appreciate the effort made by Ria in front of the whole family and he mumbles: "Ria, I don't know how to console you. What you have gone through, I can't even imagine it. I don't understand. What can I do?... Without you this wedding won't happen... You are my child" (1h38'05'', 1h38'17'', 1h39'06''). Ria feels the love and support of Lalit and so she decides to attend the ceremony.

Later, all the Verma relatives take a picture together and the photographer makes Ria sit between Uncle Tej's legs. Her looks are those of Grief although she forges a smile when the camera shoots. Next, the family heads to honour the dead members of the family to be blessed by their elders (1h41'). There, they all must kneel in front of a picture of Ria's father and so Ria starts mumbling how she misses him (1h41'14). At this point, Hemant's family announces its arrival and Uncle Tej states, with a gruesome smile, that he will be the one receiving them while they keep honouring the family as he thinks that Lalit is ignoring Ria's accusations (1h42'09''). It is at this moment that Lalit asks him to leave the wedding because he needs to protect his family. Uncle Tej asks him to calm down but Lalit is determined (1h42'26''). Uncle Tej and his wife leave. Ria receives a kiss by Lalit (1h42'50'') and her expression turns into what Bharata calls "the emotion of Love", produced "on achievement of desire [and] to be acted sweetly and gracefully to reveal a pleasant look" (Rangacharya 66). So, Ria's eyes show pleasure and calm and her eyeballs

emerge very visible while they move gently, an expressive technique described in *Natyasastra* to express Love (González Cruz 541).

It is at this moment that the monsoon breaks and the wedding ceremony starts. Ria adds a performing nuance of Wonder because she feels free, recognises her effort and how she has got rid of a burden that she thought that she could not leave behind. Also, because Umang arrives at the Verma's house from the US to take part in Aditi's wedding celebration. Umang is a boy that every member of the family presumes Ria would like because of their common interests. When Umang gets into the garden, he looks at her and both share an expression of having fallen in love that Ria recognises when, after looking at him for a long time, she uses South Asian performing techniques to indicate that she feels Love. Ria looks down with half-open eyes, a smile and a drop of perspiration that expresses that she has fallen in love and is happily corresponded. In Bharata's own words:

A woman falls in love . . . her desire may be seen in her eyes which are tearfully smiling, eyelids drooping and eyes slightly closed, When a woman is looking with half-closed eyes, there is a grace and an invitation in her eyes. When the cheeks are slightly reddening, with drops of perspiration glistening, and the body thrilled, it is a sign of Kama (sexual desire). (Rangacharyaa 193-194)

Therefore, Ria shows an expression of fulfilment and freedom that guarantees that she has trespassed and subverted the patriarchal burdens that in terms of family ties had been imposed upon her.

Thence, Ria joins Aditi as a character who recovers her freedom enacting a heroic experience because they have been able to challenge and subvert all those structures that had constrained their autonomy. In this sense, they are symbols of heroic women who have evolved from the emotions of Fear and Grief into Love and Wonder as a metaphor for the new possibilities that lie ahead of them both in the homelands and in the diaspora. Firstly,

because they now feel as free women in India and within their family and, secondly, because they are about to fulfil their dreams in the diaspora as Ria may study Creative Writing in the US because Lalit says to her that he will pay for education and Aditi will be able to lead the life and *possibilities* that she dreams about when she moves to the US with Hemant, who lives there. Besides, Ria and Aditi's development and struggle to break with Fear illustrate that gender constraints can be subverted and that they can be challenged more effectively if women work together and defend each other's interests, as Ria did for both Aditi and Aleya.

Consequently, the study of how Asha in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach*, Jessminder in Chadha's *Bend It like Beckham*, Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* and Aditi and Ria in Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* have confirmed that both Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha present female characters who evolve towards freedom because they challenge gender restrictions that had been imposed upon them by the patriarchal order of families in the homelands and in the diaspora. Likewise, I have illustrated how all these characters are presented in the beginning of the selected films as women in Fear and Grief but, after making themselves aware of the patriarchal burdens and the possibilities to subvert it, they become autonomous and enjoy the freedom of knowing themselves free in the diaspora space and its social, economic and professional possibilities. Thus, I will now take a closer look at how Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha use South Asian dance to portray and proclaim these characters as empowering figures who have a commitment to contest structures of gender and racial discrimination and, most important, weave a community where women are interwoven together in the fight for a fairer world.

2- SACREDNESS IN THE DIASPORA AND THE HOMELANDS: THE SUBVERSIVE AND FEMINIST ROLE OF DANCE

Dance is subversive because it entails a communion and transformation among performers, audience and the space where the artistic experience takes place. It is in this sense that I explained in Chapter III the importance of empathy for South Asian performing arts tradition and how dance, as part of the holistic performing languages used in the hybrid narratives from South Asian tradition, facilitates an encounter with the divine power that every human being has within. Here, I clarified how the history of the South Asia Southern dance style bharatanatyam challenges the British colonial history that somehow tried to ostracise and stereotype the form. Accordingly, dance enables a revolution of politics, race and gender because, as Gilbert and Tompkins assert, “dance is particularly important, not only as a celebration of the physical (as in much western theatre) but also as a performed statement of transformation or possession” (62). It is therefore this possibility of change which confirms that dance has a transformative power to facilitate a new definition and opportunities for characters and, so, for performers and audience.

Consequently, this section studies how Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair’s female characters come to terms with the cultural hybridity of the diaspora space through dance. Here, dance would be the artistic genre used to share the characters’ transformation and recognise that this change of identity allows female characters to struggle against the male domination they suffer. It is under this token that the women in the Verma family in Nair’s *Monsoon Wedding* and Lalita Bakshi in Chadha’s *Bride and Prejudice* denounce and

subvert the chauvinist supremacy previously imposed on them. By so doing, I will identify the feminist message with which Chadha and Nair describe how their female characters reconnect with their own sacredness and become aware of their own power through dance

It is in this sense that dance can help dwellers of the diaspora space in their process to construct a postcolonial identity and a spatial recognition. The formation of a postcolonial identity then, as explained in Chapter II, deals with the fact that the inhabitants and the socio-political structures of the diaspora space need to understand the hybridity and porosity of cultures. Likewise, the following recognition of a common space unveils new personal, social and professional possibilities that are inherent to this diaspora space as well as facilitating the connivance of old cultural roots with new idiosyncratic routes. Tompkins and Gilbert recognise in dance the ability to negotiate and explain both. In their own words:

As a culturally coded activity, dance has a number of important functions in drama: not only does it concentrate the audience's gaze on the performing body/bodies, but it also draws attention to proxemic [*sic*] relations between characters, spectators, and features of the set. Splitting the focus from other sorts of proxemic [*sic*] and kinesic – and potentially, linguistic – codes, dance renegotiates dramatic action and dramatic activity, reinforcing the actor's corporeality, particularly when it is culturally laden. Dance is a form of spatial inscription and thus a productive way of illustrating – and countering – the territorial aspects of western imperialism. (239)

Accordingly, and as Helen Gilbert recognises, a postcolonial study of dance must focus on “resistance politics [as well as] on movement as part of identity formation/recuperation and spatial re-orientation” (138). Therefore, postcolonial dance illustrates a change of identity that shifts the consciousness of both the performer and the audience because both distinguish the existence of a new hybrid cultural identity and so they are aware of a new possible and equal political space within the diaspora space.

Nair and Chadha's postcolonial commitment finds in this narrative of dance a combative and ecstatic attitude to foster a new identity and its representation for South

Asian women on screen. As explained in Chapter III, South Asian performing arts tradition recognises the origin of the world through Shiva's dancing in the piece "Taandav". In this dance, representative of the nature of Shiva⁷, the world decays and is deconstructed to emerge itself afresh with new possibilities for all the beings. Therefore, dance means transformation and the sprouting of new possibilities. French Indologist, dancer and historian Alain Daniélou⁸ (1907-1994) described the possibilities exemplified by dance in the South Asian performing arts tradition as illustrative of an attitude towards life based on a "combative and *ecstatic* [*sic*, my emphasis] attitude towards life grounded on a combative struggle for freedom and happiness that opposed a contracted, restrictive and business-oriented *static* [my emphasis] attitude towards life" (qtd. in Godwin 14, my translation). From my point of view, Daniélou's definition of dance and his distinction between an *ecstatic* and static way of life clearly define the transformative power inherent to dance. Here, I recognise that Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair make use of Daniélou's understanding of dance as a combative and *ecstatic* possibility to transform the existences of South Asian women in diaspora into a celebration of their hybrid identities and the associated professional and vital possibilities. In other words, Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha, as postcolonial artists, use dance as representative of the new identity formation and spatial recognition in the diaspora space but they also display South Asian classical dance routines so that characters can reconnect with their roots ecstatically and not statically.

For instance, in *Monsoon Wedding*, Mira Nair decides to make the whole Verma confront its cultural, economic, social and moral differences through the dance scene choreographed by Ayesha to the song "Chunari, Chunari" (1h 23'12''-1h 27'40''). Ayesha

⁷ Shiva is a Hindu god archetypal of the destruction that precedes the new origin illustrated by Brahman and the balance symbolised by Vishnu.

⁸ He was recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship in 1991 (the most important award granted by the Indian National Academy for Music, Dance and Drama).

is Aditi's cousin and she is shown as a combative woman throughout the whole movie. Previously, she has led the Mehndi sangeet (49'14''-52'12''). Nevertheless, it is in the dance that she choreographs for the song "Chunari, Chunari" that she decides to perform alone a type of dance that is designed for a couple because she has been bumped by Rahul (who says to her that he cannot dance Indian songs because he can only dance as if he was in a pub in Melbourne, 1h22'24'') and Varun (who is overreacting against her because his father has threatened him with having to go to boarding school if he continues dancing, 1h12'10''). Here, Ayesha takes up a combative and ecstatic attitude instead of adopting the role of mourning lady that could have been expected by the South Asian community as she has been rejected twice. She starts performing alone with great strength while trying to make the guests enjoy the festive message of the song which talks about how a girl wants to use her chunari (veil or end part of a dress used by women to cover their faces) to flirt and tie her lovers instead of covering her face with it.

While Ayesha dances alone, she is defying the social conventions imposed on her and on South Asian women in general because her attitude of ecstasy promotes Love and Happiness instead of the gloom and suffering that would have been assumed in a girl who has been declined twice and left to dance alone. Ayesha performs with great splendour while she subverts the old message attached to the song, which had already appeared in Indian David Dhawan's movie *Biwi No1* to illustrate how a man could be dating three different girls and the three of them should be waiting for him. As an alternative, Ayesha proves that a woman can stand alone and defy social norms, and doing what she wants, she dances with three different men during the song with a sexy attitude.

In this festive atmosphere, we see Sikh, Muslim and Hindu members of the family joining Ayesha in a celebration that ignores religious differences (1h25'). Besides, Aditi feels empowered to leave with her bridegroom Hemant (1h25'59'') to spend the night alone

as now they have defied their families' expectations and Aditi has confessed her affair with Vikram and Hemant has forgiven her. Moreover, eleven-year old Varun stands up and resumes his impressive dance skills in front of his father (1h29'), despite the fact that his father had threatened to send him to a boarding school if he only plans his future as a dancer and entertainer (1h12'10''-1h13'29''). Furthermore, I believe that this dance empowers Ria to accuse Uncle Tej in front of the whole family as the dance has made her stand up to go and save her young cousin Aliya from him in the previously detailed scene (1h30'51'').

Later, Indian-Australian Rahul jumps on stage to dance with Ayesha into a new hybrid dance style (classical South Asian and Melbourne pop-rock style) because his mother has mumbled to him that if he wants to be with Ayesha, he will have to show "a combative attitude in life" (1h26'54''). Furthermore, Alice (the servant of the family) has dressed up for the occasion and has been invited by Dubey, the wedding planner, to dance with him. Consequently, the dance scene illustrates the subversion of different religions and economic class backgrounds as we see different religious groups and social classes dancing together, the overcoming of fear by both Aditi and Ria (as explained in the previous section) and the illustration of an effort to struggle for the person who one truly loves as in the case of Ayesha, Rahul, Alice and Dubey.

Thus, this dance scene allows a transformation in the Verma family because they are able to embrace the hybridity opened in the diaspora space for them by celebrating together this ecstatic dance without deferring to the different cultural and economic backgrounds of the guests. Accordingly, Argentinian dance therapist María Fux recognises that "dance can neither be far from the society it dwells nor from the daily problems of the people because dance cannot be a privilege but a tool to comprehend and educate" (9, my translation). So, the scene starts with the challenging decision of Ayesha to dance and it ends with the whole

family embracing the new possibilities that are open for women in the diaspora space, because Aditi and Ria will be going to the US and Ayesha, if she marries Rahul, Australia. Nevertheless, these characters will not run away from the homelands and their South Asian roots but, as Ria illustrates, will follow new possibilities abroad while bearing in mind their South Asian roots and that her experience can awaken people back in India.

At this juncture, dance is an artistic language through which characters have understood their identities and the new paths that can be open for them and by them in the diaspora space if they decide to subvert old ideas imposed by both the empire and themselves. Therefore, dance illustrates the connivance of different cultures and recognises an updated artistic identity born out of that intermingling of different attitudes and values. Now, if hybrid narratives gather different genres and artistic languages using the holistic nature of South Asian performing arts tradition, Nair and Chadha exemplify the cultural transformation of identities in the diaspora space through the transformative power that lies within dance. It is in this sense that the dance scene performed by Lalita Bakshi and Darcy to the song "Show me the way, take me to love" (1h20'56''-1h24'29'') in Chadha's *Pride and Prejudice* is representative of both this new cultural hybridity and the subversion of the identity of South Asian migrants from subaltern subjects to active members of society.

It is through dance in "Show me the way, take me to love" that Lalita transforms her negative opinion about the US. Lalita had identified the US and Darcy with a mere capitalist meaning partly because of the wrong influence of Wickham and a set of assumptions she had formed ignoring how Darcy had changed his opinion about India since they first met in the beginning of the movie. On the one hand, Wickham had lied to her about Darcy because of his envy towards him (32'17''). On the other, Lalita still imagined that Darcy had gone to India only to expand his family hotel (23'57'') despite the fact that he had changed his mind. Actually, he had finally dropped the expansion of the business

after Lalita showed to him the real India, (29'05) notwithstanding his mother's insistence towards the enlargement of business in India for the possible economic profits for their own company (1h18'15'').

At this stage of the movie, this is the first song that does not follow South Asian rhythms but a combination of Mexican mariachis, a Californian folk rhythm and a gospel choir. This fact is very important for Lalita because it is the first time that Lalita truly interacts with US culture and it is so that Darcy takes Lalita to dinner in LA as the last chance that he has to show the real US to Lalita as she has shown the real India to him. Darcy takes her to a mariachi restaurant where there is a show by mariachis singing about love and here they start dancing (1h20'56''). Lalita relaxes and Darcy takes her all around California so that she can see the amazing long beaches (that remind Lalita and the audience of the previous shorelines in Goa), the Colorado Canyon, Los Angeles skyscrapers and the amazing rural areas around the state. Lalita lessens her expression while she dances to the mariachi's groove and she is able to enjoy the places of California. Darcy takes her to because she dances and her steps make her move away from her initial attitude of despair she had towards everything from the US.

As Lalita dances with Darcy, she deliberately shows a joyous expression towards the US culture that Darcy introduces her to. She interacts with people from the US and enjoys the mixture of different cultures because, beyond the mariachi restaurant, she sees that in the US there are many cultures and all of them can continue with their roots no matter whether they work in high skyscrapers or the astounding nature of Colorado Canyon. The corollary of their dance is the appearance of a Gospel choir at the end of the song, while they walk along a long virgin beach (1h24'25''). The intermingling of cultures in the US is clear and, for the first time in the movie, it has not been US people changing their stereotypical visions about India (as Darcy himself) but an Indian woman shifting her

opinions about the US. Lalita whirlwinds and her dance illustrates that she feels free after having discovered the cultural hybridity that lies within the diaspora space.

Therefore, the transformative power of dance lets Lalita interact with US culture and its Latino and African American culture while she understands that her postcolonial identity should be based on the acceptance of the new possibilities that wait for her in the diaspora space instead of a constant refusal towards everything that is not Indian. Somehow, Lalita's transformation through the song "Show me the way, take me to love" highlights that it is not only about a love relationship with Darcy but also about a personal conversion towards a balance between her South Asian roots and the new diaspora space. Here, Lalita's dance conducts an interconnection of cultures as a pioneering act that rewrites a future for herself and her family because she empowers, through dancing in different places and styles, a new cultural presence that is not historically static but a new narrative that revises imperial and patriarchal discourse. Her dance during the song connects ecstatically different spatial, temporal and cultural locations towards a plural understanding hosted by diaspora space's inherent hybridity.

Consequently, we see how dance is not only being used by the women in Chadha and Nair's films to subvert race and gender inequality but also to empower women to rise up and collaborate together against the patriarchal order that exists. In this sense, I believe that the dance scene starred by Ayesha in Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* and Lalita in Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* connect with the anticolonial struggle that, for instance, bharatanatyam dancers embodied to defy the Empire's attempt to stereotype the dance form (as explained in the third section of Chapter III) but also with the pioneering feminist fight started in the twentieth century by Western female dancers such as US dancer and pedagogue Louis Fuller (1862-1928); US dancer and choreographer Isadora Duncan (1877-1927); US pedagogue, choreographer and dancer Ruth St. Denis (1879-1968); German dance and

choreographer Mary Wigman (1886-1973); US dancer and choreographer Martha Graham (1894-1991) or German dancer and choreographer Pina Bausch (1940-2009)⁹ who played key roles in the renovation of dance taking into account feminist ideals within their own dance, choreographies and most important, their own companies.

Bearing this feminist commitment in mind, dance allows women to create a web of collaboration and community identification on the way to gender equality. Accordingly, US dance professor Ann Daly states that dance is a perfect feminist language because it allows “the empowerment of women through their own body” (2). Furthermore, I would add that dance, as seen when analysing Ayesha’s dance in Nair’s *Monsoon Wedding*, can be the creative power through which, as Indian-origin US citizen Ananya Chatterjea states, associate women of colour to break the double white and patriarchal burden imposed on their art (2014a, 2011a, 2010). Therefore, if dance has a transformative power for characters and dance enhances a change of consciousness for both the performer and the audience, then women can connect with their own sacredness through dance and defy the structures of gender inequality imposed on them.

Subsequently, women can lead through dance a gender revolution that, in the diaspora space, lets them occupy and establish new places and roles from which they had been previously marginalised. Thence, I will now analyse how the Bakshi sisters in Chadha’s *Bride and Prejudice*, Jessminder Bhamra in Chadha’s *Bend It like Beckham* and the women in Chadha’s *Bhaji on the Beach* make use of South Asian dance as a performing language that makes women interact and weave nurturing spaces of collaboration where they can shelter each other and from where they can subvert political structures of domination.

⁹ Other figures that should be taken into account for further studies around the feminist commitment are dancers, choreographers and entrepreneurs such as Swedish María Taglioni (1804-1884), Austrian Grete Wiesenthal (1885-1970), US Doris Humphrey (1895-1958) or US Helen Becker (1905-1966).

To start with, Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* opens with Lalita Bakshi leading the group of girls in the celebration of her friend's engagement party in the beginning of the feature (5'46''-10'48''). If Balraj, who will later become Jaya Bakshi's husband (Lalita's sister), guides the men to usher the groom to meet his bride, it is Lalita who stands in front of the girls to slow down the parade of the boys and let them be sure that they are going to respect the bride as she deserves (7'56''). Lalita organises all the girls as if they were an army (6'52'') to reply to all the chauvinist messages that appear in the lyrics of the songs the men sing. For instance, while men dance bhangra¹⁰ dance steps they recite "Oh, these girls are like kites", a very sexist image that suggests that women are but mere puppets to be controlled by the hands of their male family members and husbands. At this moment, Lalita leads the women to move away from the men (6'53'') although, after this step, the men resume their dancing and state: "Although they are as sharp as knives. They move too far for us to grab" (6'55''). After this line, Lalita encourages the girls to dance back and use the boy's bhangra style steps adding facial gestures that are representative of women (and that were analysed in Chapter III) to underline their lack of Fear (7'12-7'20''). This is the moment when Lalita steps forward and the girls dance together with a violent succession of bhangra steps when Lalita, infused with the ecstasy of dance sings: "These girls are free as kites without rope" (7'21'').

It is at this moment that the whole group of girls start dancing forward, joining Lalita's movement to defy the men when all the women together ask: "See, you want to dance, let's see what you can do" (7'37''). Afterwards, the men start walking backwards while the girls advance and corner them (7'38-9'56''). The scene ends with the image of Lalita leading the group, therefore illustrating how she has empowered all the women to

¹⁰ Bhangra was originally a Sikh dance performed by Sikhs that has now become very popular in the diaspora because of the interest of the Sikh community to define themselves as strong and joyous.

change the social roles expected for women as she has stated that they are kites without ropes that can move freely (10'48''). In this sense, Lalita will inspire the female characters in the movie to live freely and enjoy their lives in this way. In other words, Lalita boosts women through dance so that they can transform the social role that they are expected to perform because, as in the previously detailed sequence, women reverse the roles in the dance scene and become the forerunners of the dance and so the reduce the patriarchal proclaims of all the men (not only Indian as there are also British and US citizens) in the wedding.

Later, Lalita will again lead a group of women, in this case herself and her three sisters, to reject her mother's obsession with marrying them to rich men without respecting if they love him. This new dance scene and Lalita's initiative happens because the Bakshi family has received the visit of Mr Koli, an Indian resident in the US, who wants to marry an Indian girl and take her to the US so that he does not feel lonely in the US. Lalita soon discovers Mr Koli's only interest in her and so she explains to her sisters that some men only want women as objects and servants (40'25''). Verbal communication among the sisters is not good at that point (secretly Lakhi is chatting online with Peckham, Jaya is depressed because Balraj does not propose and Maya only wants to portray static bharatanatyam dances) and so Lalita decides to start dancing.

The music follows the lyrics "No life, without a wife" (40'27''-45'56'') and the song parodies the fact that Mr Koli, as with most of Indian men, only want women to iron and prepare lunch for them. Accordingly, Lalita wakes her sisters up so that dancing lets them leave the emotional separation that the sisters are experiencing. Lalita encourages them to dance and they soon join her in a liberating dance that makes them discover that it is false that women can only be wives. Similarly, Lalita tells them that they can move away from that kind of men if they only question whatever that is imposed by their family,

especially her mother, Mrs Bakshi, a caricaturised version of the patriarchal South Asian order. Lalita sings the following lines “I don’t want a house who ties me down” (41’29’’), “I don’t want a man who gets the best sit” (41’51’’),” I don’t want a man who likes to drink” (42’03’’) because “I want a man who wants equality and no control” (43’31’’). It is under these lines that Lalita changes the belief that her sisters have had imposed on them which proclaims that, if they do not marry, they would never have a life of their own.

Likewise, Lalita elucidates through the dancing she proposes that they can substitute their Fear and Grief and turn them into Laughter and Wonder if they discover themselves together as a group. Thence, it is very important to highlight how Lalita makes the sisters join together in the dance, to have fun together and move away from the gender burden that they have had imposed on them by their families and also by themselves, because they were getting nervous about the fact that they did not have any marriage proposal and so they would only do what their family expected. Nevertheless, while they dance, they stand together and they become aware of the fact that they can break from their mother’s possessive interest in marrying rich men (42’38’’).

Therefore, the experience of dancing together let them interweave a net of comfort and love among them. They are able to recognise that they are not alone in life if they do not marry, as there is a community of women to safeguard them (43’15’’). It is through this ecstatic experience of dancing together late at night that the Bakshi sisters discover their own group strength and their identities as South Asian women who can travel and explore the world without having to marry anyone (44’). Consequently, the Bakshi sisters abandon their self-consideration as submissive and isolated girls to form a contesting group that, while dancing, makes them aware of their inner power, their own sacredness.

This is the combative spirit that interweaves women together once again in the garbha dance organised for the wedding of Mr Kohli, who will finally marry Lalita’s best

friend (49'50''-54'46''). The Garbha dance, a folk dance originated in the state of Gujarat (Hingorani 105), represents a dance that celebrates the power of women as illustrated by the movements of the performers who dance in circles to shape a womb (garbha means womb in Sanskrit). Men and women both wear a sort of drumstick that they use to hit each other while dancing to celebrate the uproar and power of Shakti (which, according to Vedanta, is the divine female power of creation).

In this scene, Lalita once again leads the girls and they all celebrate their power while Jaya dances with Balraj and they confess their true love to each other. Meanwhile, Lalita argues with Darcy because she asks from him that he shows respect to her and that he does not lie to her (53'01''). It is at this point that Lalita once again loses herself to the rhythm of the dance and she sings and angles both Darcy and Koli with the stick then she leaves them alone to join and have fun with her sisters. Lalita clearly connects with her own inner power, her sacredness as expressed by the Shakti celebration of the dance, because she expresses through dance her strong determination to transform the submissive role that is expected from her and her sisters.

Thenceforth, Lalita is able to communicate through dance her feminist ideals and so she empowers her sisters to create a collaborative network among women that had previously been disrupted by the patriarchal order of her family. It is then that all the Bakshi sisters start fighting for what they truly want in life (education as in the case of Maya and Jaya, free love for Lakhi and individual freedom for Lalita) throughout the movie and Gurinder Chadha subverts the original story in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) so that the four Bakshi sisters are defined as women who can lead their own existence and represented on screen as women who create and collaborate together to challenge patriarchal structures of control.

The transformative and empowering power of dance can also be seen in Chadha's *Bend it like Beckham*. In this case, there are two dance scenes that clearly point out the possibility for a character to change consciousness through dance (the dance of the football team in a pub in Germany, 46' 43''-49') as well as to lead a common contestation against the patriarchal social order (Pinky's wedding dance, 1h21'58''-1h27'). For example, the scene in Germany displays the first time that Jessminder Bhamra can wear Western clothes. Jess wears a short black leather fancy dress and she dances with Jules and her coach Joe as well as with her whole team. It is while dancing that Jess experiences and puts across with her true identity as a free woman who can dance to any kind of music (at her house only devotional chants are listened to) and with girls from everywhere and every religion present in the pub. Also, she starts dancing and gathers the necessary strength to get closer to Joe and express her love towards him (1h25'34''). At this moment, Jess has been able to embrace an emotion of Happiness for the first time beyond a football pitch. It is this dance scene that, in my opinion, enables Jess to understand her own possibilities as a free woman that, in the diaspora space, can travel and be honest to her because she feels free and can derogate all the impositions that had told her how to dance and what to do under South Asian standards.

Thus, the dance scene in Germany connects Jess with her own power as a free woman and the later dance scene at Pinky's wedding lets her definitely reconnect and come to terms with her South Asian roots. In this scene (1'21'' 58-1h27'), Jess appears again overwhelmed by Fear and Grief as she thinks that she will not be able to perform in the final of the football championship where there will be an American scout. When the wedding services finish, the wedding dance starts playing non-stop Punjabi music (music from Northern India with a lot of drums and percussion). While everybody shakes and engages with the music, Jess is described through facial gestures that show her Grief.

Nevertheless, the festive celebration makes her father change his opinion and he finally authorises Jess to leave the wedding and play in the tournament that is happening meanwhile. She goes and she scores the ultimate goal. Then, Jess has to be dressed again to resume her attendance to her sister's wedding. It is in this moment that all the girls in her football team (including Jules, with whom Jess had had a tantrum over Joe's love towards her) help her drape her sari (1h27'). This scene is the corollary of the common nurturing space that is created by every girl in the football team: All of them are amazed at Jess's sari and it seems that it is the first time that Jess enjoys something from her South Asian roots. In my opinion, it is the net created with her friends that helps Jess to overcome her incessant hate of her roots and to recognise the silver lining of it.

Subsequently, Jess is in high spirits and she expresses Laughter and Wonder. It is with this emotion that she is back to Pinky's wedding to dance and celebrate, for the first time in the movie, her South Asian roots as well as her new path because she knows that she could go to the US to play professionally because she has obtained the promised sponsorship by the US scout. It is at this moment that she understands and connects with her own sacredness and comes to terms with her true potential as a talented football player. She now dances ecstatically with every member of the family (1h29'34'') and gathers the necessary strength to confess to her parents that what she truly wants to do is to play football because her skills have been Guru Nanak's gift (1h34'). By so doing, Jess acknowledges her own sacredness in both her South Asian roots and the professional possibilities offered by the diaspora space. Thus, it has been through these two scenes with dance that the character of Jess has unveiled her true identity and possibility in the diaspora and has defied what was expected from her as only a South Asian woman.

In this sense, the final scene in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1h23'-1h24'22'') confirms that this empowerment is not only individual but also collaborative because I

believe that the transformation ignited by dance lets women interweave nets of collaboration in the diaspora to undertake a common contestation against patriarchal structures in the diaspora space. When the women in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* reach the pub in Blackpool as the meeting point to return back to Birmingham (1h23') they share nasty looks with each other because they have had different arguments after the events in the movie. Nevertheless, when the striptease begins and they are asked to dance, Asha, Pushka, Laddhu and Maddhu laugh together for the first time in the movie (1h23'12"). Actually, when Ginder is taken up on stage (1h23'54") they all start to enjoy themselves together. In my opinion, these women recuperate in this moment their marginalised presence in the diaspora through dance, as they subvert their expected roles as South Asian women who should have been at their homes in Birmingham to fulfil the tasks that a wife should do. Instead, they are dancing and they ignore the duty, honour and sacrifice that, as expressed to Asha by an Idol in the beginning of the movie, they should bear as South Asian women (1'16"). However, Ginder's pullover's sleeve falls when she is dancing on the stage and the group sees bruises on her and they understand that she has been suffering physical mistreatment (1h24'34"). It is here that Ginder leaves the pub although, for the first time in the movie, the whole group of women gather together to find her.

In this sense, the experience of dancing together has allowed them to interweave a network of collaboration and share a different role beyond their expected roles as passive wives. After they rescue Ginder from Amrik's hands, they understand that they are now part of a much broader hybrid culture and that they are not alone. Dance, therefore, has been an empowering language that has mixed cultural traditions as the striptease is performed to a Western song and the youngest South Asian girls in the group danced with pop-music dance steps and the older South Asian women with mudras and facial gestures.

Here, it is through dance that the women in Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* become aware of their sacredness as a group as we have seen also happens in the previously described Mehndi ritual (49'14''-52'36'') and "Chunari, Chunari" (1h 23'12''-1h 27'40'') scenes in Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding*. Consequently, dance lets them understand that history, culture and their own identities are something fluid that can change and evolve if united they stand on behalf of the gender equality target that Simi started the trip with in *Bhaji on the Beach*.

To sum up, I believe that it is through dance that Nair's and Chadha's selected films offer a new platform for women to start anew and in which they can turn from submissive women into active dwellers of the diaspora space. Likewise, I have illustrated how the dance scenes play a key role for Nair and Chadha because it makes the women identify and transform the limitations that in terms of gender and race are imposed on them. Here, Nair and Chadha foster, as I will explain in the next section, new representations for South Asian women to facilitate new roles for South Asian women as they reimagine British literary classics that portrayed racial and patriarchal social structures where South Asian women and culture were either ignored or simply reduced to subaltern positions.

3- TALKING ANEW FROM LITERARY CLASSICS: THE EMPOWERMENT OF SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN IN THE DIASPORA AND THE HOMELANDS

Chadha and Nair propose new hybrid narratives that rewrite old colonial narratives that stereotyped South Asian culture into celebrations of the South Asian Subcontinent and the pioneering role of their women to derogate systems of gender and race inequality. Here, I

will study Chadha's adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) in *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) and Mira Nair's rewriting of William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero* (1848) in *Vanity Fair* (2004) in order to illustrate how both filmmakers challenge the gender limitations imposed on the characters of Elizabeth Bennet and Becky Sharp respectively. Accordingly, I will analyse how both Chadha and Nair recreate these two characters as pioneering women that empower their communities of women to fight for gender equality. I will examine how both films are contextualised in India and in the diaspora in the UK and the US in Chadha's film and the UK in Nair's movie, to dismantle the derogatory and stereotypical representations about the colonies that, as Australian scholar Imelda Welehan and British scholar Deborah Cartmell recognise in their seminal book *Adaptations. From Text to Screen. Screen to Text* (1995: 2), defined canonical nineteenth century British novels such as Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Thackeray's *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero*.

Accordingly, it is my aim in this section to recapitulate how Nair and Chadha's hybrid narratives disrupt canonical stories to give a modern protagonist role for a new kind of woman who, in the diaspora space, fights for race and gender equality. Hence, I will firstly analyse the character of Lalita Bakshi in Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* as a woman who symbolises how female independence can be achieved as opposed to the British Victorian concept that the promise of female independence is only a fantasy and can never be attained, as Jane Austen described for the character of Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*. Afterwards, I will introduce Mira Nair's reinvention of Thackeray's Becky Sharp as a free woman who can still be a good woman and who can lead an honourable life by herself, as opposed to a reading of Becky as a free woman who loses her femininity and is viewed as a bad mother.

Thus, it is my intention to praise Nair and Chadha's rewriting of history of British literature through South Asia's pioneering women who subvert the patriarchal order to empower themselves in a hybrid society that advocates respect and democracy. In this sense, Palestinian-US critic Edward Said already pointed out in *Culture and Imperialism* that canonical texts must be re-read "with an effort to draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented in such works" (66). Therefore, I believe that Nair and Chadha's modifications of British canonical texts have the purpose to change or, at least, give voice to South Asian women and the Subcontinent.

I hereby bear in mind the words by Canadian scholar Linda Hutcheon who states that adaptations of novels or films are "deliberate, announced and extended revisitations [*sic*] of prior works" (2006: xiv). It is under these terms that I depart from the theoretical notion that both Nair and Chadha, as postcolonial artists, challenge colonialism and its still existing structures with their films because, as Hutcheon herself admits, "cultural forms of representation are ideologically grounded and cannot avoid involvement with social and political relations" (1989: 39). In my opinion, this is the new sense of equal, respectful and democratic presence that Chadha's Elizabeth Bennet (Lalita Bakshi) and Nair's Becky Sharp unveil for diaspora space dwellers.

So, Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice*¹¹ subverts the passive role granted for the Bennet sisters in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (18), where the Bennet sisters seem to be waiting for a man with whom they can start a life of their own that it is not such as they will be always dependant upon their husbands. I believe that Jane Austen only described British women from a middle-high economic class who were trapped by the lack of social and economic possibilities for women such as the Bennet sisters in *Pride and*

¹¹ The screenplay was written by Gurinder Chadha and her Chinese American husband Paul Mayeda Berges.

prejudice. For example, they need to get married to a rich man if they want to break from their familiar impositions. Moreover, they do not aim at becoming free individuals because they give in to what their future husbands and the Victorian society may ask for them: reading or doing home chores. I hereby recognise that Jane Austen is not a feminist writer because neither did she join the early fight of female feminist writers such as British writers Aphra Ben (1640-1689) or Mary Collier (1688-1762) nor did she reflect the coetaneous fight started by committed feminist writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797)¹². Accordingly, Cartmell and Welehan state: "Jane Austen is the British epitome for class, [canonical] literature, virginity and family viewing" (1995: 2); as well as US scholars and writers Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar describe Jane Austen as "a conservative writer" (153-154) who did not fight against high class domination over low class society.

From my point of view, Chadha's rewriting of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* as a hybrid narrative in *Bride and Prejudice* subverts the gender roles associated with female characters as well as contests British colonising concepts of the white and high class superiority over the colonies (in this specific case illustrated in Austen's ignorance of India in her novels). At this point, it is important to remember that the recurrence of Jane Austen and the cinematographic adaptations of her novels in the 1990s and 2000s has been prominent although there has not been, beyond Emma Thompson's reading of Marianne Dashwood in Ang Lee's version of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), a clear subversion of gender submission and high class colonising ideals such as in Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice*¹³. Accordingly, US scholar Rebecca Dickson in *Austen in Hollywood* adds that

¹² This discussion can be used as point of departure for further studies carried out by Comparative Literature scholars. Some feminist scholars recognise that the role of Jane Austen's characters in terms of education meant an improvement to what was expected before (Looser 1995; Littlewood 1999). Nevertheless, I agree more with scholars such as Deborah Cartmell, Imelda Welehan or Helen Gilbert, who state that Jane Austen neither did engage with any feminist ideals nor with a commitment to promote a much more equal society.

¹³ US Amy Heckerling's *Clueless* (1995, based on *Emma*), BBC's *Pride and Prejudice* (TV series, 1995), US Douglas McGrath's *Emma* (1996) or British Sharon Maguire's *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001, based on Helen

1990s re-readings of Austen's women have "misrepresented" and "harlequinised [*sic*]" (44, 178) even more Austen's characters and their inherent gender submission to men and the higher classes. For instance, the BBC series *Pride and Prejudice* (1995) basically described Elizabeth Bennet as a submissive lady that accepted whatever Darcy wanted and Amy Heckerling's *Clueless* was built upon Jane Austen's *Emma* (1815) and her necessity to find a husband.

However, Gurinder Chadha's postcolonial rewriting of *Pride and Prejudice* proposes a subversion of the myth of female autonomy as a fantasy as well as a challenge to the normative British Empire's description about the colonies that simplified them to exotica stereotypes. At this juncture, and as explained in Chapters II and III, postcolonial art emerges as a tool to destroy colonial stereotypes about the homelands. So, Chadha rewrites the character of Elizabeth Bennet into an Indian free woman, Lalita Baskhi, who decides to stand up against familial and social impositions to marry whomever she wants, consequently disrupting the previous depiction of Elizabeth Bennet as a passive character and correcting the lack of accurate references about India in British eighteenth century novels.

The character of Lalita is therefore rewritten as a free woman who chooses who to be married to. So, she refuses Mr Koli (43'31'') and decides to marry Darcy (1h39'49''), after she had already fought against Darcy's early opinion about India and Indian women as, respectively, "poor" and "backwards" (23'57''). It is in this sense that, as opposite to how miserable Elizabeth Bennet feels after her refusal to Willingham and her love to Darcy in Austen's original, Gurinder Chadha rewrites the character into Lalita Bakshi, an independent woman who does not need to marry and who does not only fight for her

Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* which, at the same time, was inspired by Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*). Further adaptations such as British Joe Wright's *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) slightly changed the role of Elizabeth Bennet to somehow foster a promotion of feminist values but it was only propaganda as, for instance, the representation of patriarchal clichés shown in British Julian Jarrold's *Becoming Jane* (2007).

freedom but towards her sister's contestation and empowerment. Subsequently, Chadha creates the character of Lalita as a flagship of hope and change that subverts the desire and fear with which Austen described Elizabeth Bennet.

Besides, Chadha makes Lalita stand up as a pioneering Indian woman who leads and empowers her sisters to challenge the patriarchal order imposed by their mother and Mr Darcy's mother (as described in Chapter IV and the early sections of this chapter). Thence, the previously explained dance and song "No Life, without a wife" (40'27''-45'56'') is illustrative of South Asia's own discrimination of women and how Lalita subverts both to claim herself as a free woman that will fight to do as she thinks and loves. Furthermore, Lalita confronts Mr Darcy's mother (1h18'15''-1h18'59'') because she still holds interest in building a hotel complex in Goa without respecting the natives and the green spaces of the area.

Moreover, Gurinder Chadha lets characters change views and evolve, something that was not possible for a narrow-minded classical character such as Austen's Mr Darcy. In this case, Mr Darcy's position in the beginning of the film is representative of the Western economic control and cultural stereotyping of South Asia offered by previously referenced films such as Daisy von Meyer's *The Guru* (2005). This reductionist image of South Asia was a consequence of the British Empire's narratives, which, as explained in Chapter II, represented India by *Orientalist* descriptions and Indian people as an unqualified and almost savage *Other*. However, Lalita struggles against both and becomes valedictorian of the idea that India and Indian women are something beyond stereotypes that reduced them to poverty, Yoga or submission (1h19'02''). By so doing, she is able to make Darcy aware of what India truly is in itself, without the necessity of having to be defined by others.

Consequently, Lalita is representative of leading a revolution for herself, her family and the whole of India against Mr Darcy's mother's constant stereotyping and so Chadha's

adaptation of Austen's classic stands for a postcolonial rewriting of history and the role previously given to those who were colonised. In this sense, let us consider Linda Hutcheon's words when she states that "adaptations are deliberate, announced, and extended revisitations [*sic*] of prior works" (2006: xiv) and so it can be stated that Gurinder Chadha deliberately reverses gender and cultural roles in her portrayal of Lalita Bakshi as well as announcing her own *revisitation* of *Pride and Prejudice* as a text that now is told from the colonies and that, as a hybrid narrative, gathers genres and artistic techniques from different cultural traditions and languages.

Similarly, Chadha allows all the characters in the film to change pre-established opinions about Western and Eastern cultures because it is not only Darcy shifting his clichéd ideas about India but Lalita and the Bakshi family gain new understanding of the UK and the US when they visit both countries. In this sense, Darcy himself challenges his own opinion not only about India when talking about arranged marriages and Lalita tells him that nowadays is more or less as online dating¹⁴ (23'46''), she makes him question his family's capitalist philosophy of work while in Goa (28'27''-29'05'') as well as during their journey through California, where both experience the cultural hybridity of different dance and music styles in the song "Show me the way, take me to love" (1h20'56''-1h24'29''). Furthermore, Lalita herself changes her opinion about the US and US citizens as explained in the previous section of this chapter. Thus, Chadha's postcolonial adaptation of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* embraces the possibilities of diaspora space for gender and race subversion in characters such as Lalita and Mr Darcy as well as for the transnational

¹⁴ Lalita Bakshi challenges the tokenistic refusal against arranged marriages shown by the West and wants to highlight that some parents simply arrange dates. Nevertheless, it needs to be born in mind that arranged marriages are a terrible issue in the Subcontinent especially in rural areas because girls can have their marriages arranged to men from other villages at the age of 8 or 10 and be made to move to their husband's village so that they remain isolated from their original communities and have to accept all the conditions imposed by her in-law family. For further research, academics should bear in mind the works by Tulik Jaiswal (2014) and Vanitha Dayanada (2010) who deal with the practice of arranged marriages in both rural and urban to fully understand what the millenary practice of the trend.

audience of the film who, probably, will become engaged with the pioneering empowerment led by Lalita Bakshi and her sisters.

This groundbreaking empowerment of women through a new representation of South Asian women as well as South Asian homelands is also what Mira Nair promotes in her postcolonial version of William Makepeace Thackeray's novel *Vanity Fair* (1823)¹⁵. In fact, Mira Nair's telling of the British classic turns the negative image of Becky Sharp in Thackeray's writing into a heroine. Besides, Mira Nair includes explicit visual references to India when in the novel Thackeray only offered *Orientalist* portrayal of the colonies. Spanish Professor Ana Moya illustrates this point when she states: "Mira Nair rescues both women and the colonies from the periphery they occupy . . . [and so] the margins ultimately replace the centre in Nair's refreshing reading of Becky Sharp" (85). In this sense, Nair's film (2004) describes the submission of gender and class and the subjugation of India to the British Empire and she challenges both by rewriting the character of Becky Sharp as a pioneering woman who criticises and subverts the patriarchal and colonial limitations imposed on both women and the colonies. Similarly, Ana Moya has studied how Nair "feminises" Becky (73) to offer a new reading of the character and US scholar Carolyn Porter Phinzy has analysed the "subtle subversion" created by Mira Nair (1).

Mira Nair portrays Becky Sharp as the heroine that, quoting Thackeray's original title *Novel without a Hero*, the original novel lacks. Nair displays Becky Sharp as a free woman who does not depend upon her family or husband and who, unlike in previous cinematographic versions, survives physically and economically without losing herself to vice, corruption or a marriage that she does not want. By so doing, Nair gives a choice to Becky Sharp to redeem herself from the original novel and those cinematographic versions

¹⁵ Screenplay by Matthew Faulk, Mark Sheet and Julian Fellowes

that had described her as a wicked prostitute and a bad mother¹⁶. Actually, Nair states that, when she read the novel at high school, “Becky was the most memorable for me. She was a woman who was like us. She had been dealt cards by society but wanted to make her own deck” (2005). So, Nair reverses the role given to Becky and represents her as a woman who challenges the limitations imposed by society in terms of class and gender.

Likewise, Nair depicts Becky as a woman who fights against what Moya calls the degrading portrayal of Victorian aristocracy (78-79) that Thackeray’s original novel is built upon. I believe that Thackeray himself would agree with this statement because he ended the novel wondering: “Which of us is happy in this world?” (517). Consequently, he truly unveiled that the atmosphere that Becky Sharp lived was full of unhappy and miserable people although, as he wrote to his editor when preparing the novel, Becky “was always herself along the novel” (qtd. in Moya 83). In my view, this statement confirms that Thackeray used Becky as a frame for himself as he felt as both an insider and outsider in the world he lived in¹⁷.

I recognise that Nair’s subversive depiction of Becky “rescuing her from the margins she had been pushed” (Moya 83) entails the revolution of both Becky Sharp and Thackeray against the false and hypocritical morality of their times. It is in this sense that Nair carries out the role that Thackeray did not dare to write for Becky Sharp, as he wrote to his editor that he was realising that he was starting to like Becky Sharp and she could have been “the hero [*sic*] of the book” but he had to keep with the story (qtd. in Moya 83). Accordingly, Nair’s construction of Becky lets the character express her discontent and

¹⁶ Previous remarkable adaptations of *Vanity Fair* that did not change the role of Becky Sharp and so represented her as a sinful and shameful woman are: BBC Mini- Series directed by Marc Munden *Vanity Fair* (1998) under a screenplay by Andrew Davies or the early movie *Becky Sharp*, directed in 1935 by Rouben Mamoulian and Lowell Sherman.

¹⁷ He was born in India because his father was a Secretary to the East India Company. Later, Thackeray would travel to England alone after his father died and her mother decided to stay in India. Although he enjoyed literary success, he had to overcome the loss of his wife and his own physical decline.

complain about her inaction as she expresses in Nair's version. For example, Becky complains that it is difficult for women to explore new places, as Joseph Dudley asks Becky if she has ever been to India because she seems to know a lot about it and she answers: "No. I love to visit new places. How I envy those men who can explore!" (7'54''-8'04''). Furthermore, Becky criticises the limited roles of women as wives as she explains to Amelia: "We are soldiers' wives and we live with uncertainty" (1h15'04'). Later, she denounces that the submissive and passive role of women is partly a consequence of the lack of women's commitment with struggle as she proclaims: "Of course is women the ones who keep the doors closed. They do not like outsiders to discover that there's nothing behind" (1h37'34'').

It is against these models of Victorian women's inferiority that Nair praises Becky Sharp in the film as a free woman that struggles, independently, to give her son, her husband and herself a decent existence. In the novel, Becky is described in opposition to her classmate Amelia Sedley, a good natured, lovable and simple-minded character who belongs to a middle class and who awaits for the declaration of love of her beloved George Osbourne. Contrarily, Becky's description of herself in the novel is "I'm no angel" (49) and so Thackeray defined the character as a drunk and perverted woman, a wicked and distant mother. By so doing, Thackeray, following Victorian moral standards, boasted Amelia's passivity and the necessity of men to her and punished Becky's freedom with a cruel fate as a lonely woman who, in the end of the novel, sells her body to win alcohol and subdue her own ravenous pride. Nevertheless, Nair gives Becky a chance and describes her as a clever and beautiful woman who is able to challenge her condition of outsider as a low-class female orphan by giving her means.

In Nair's version, Becky is described as a clever woman who decides to denounce the limitations that British society has imposed on her. She is a free woman who does not

lose for being independent but, rather, wins an existence of her own. In this sense, Becky's freedom let her rebel against the social critique that she suffers from high-class women when she married Rawdon Crawley (1h10'51'') and so she complains against and provides for herself, beyond her husband's spending of money on gambling (1h38'33''). By so doing, Becky is able to live her own life according to her own moral values of freedom despite the Victorian standards that were based on class and patriarchy. At this juncture, Nair represents Becky with new ideals that did not appear in Thackeray's novel such as love towards her son Rawdy and the weaving of a female fraternity to help other women in need such as Amelia Sedley, who is deceived and alone at the end of the novel. These values clearly oppose the description of Becky in Thackeray's original where she betrayed her own son and Amelia for her own interest.

In Nair's version, Becky leads her own life to provide an education for Rawdy (1h17'21') and helps Amelia discover how her husband had betrayed her (2h06'48''-2h07'07''). Thus, Nair congratulates Becky Sharp as a pioneering woman who, despite the gender and economic constraints imposed upon her in Victorian times, searches for independence and struggles to empower herself and other women such as Amelia to do the same. Here, Ana Moya points out that Nair portrays Becky as "seeking integration and restoring her from [social] periphery... denouncing the ways in which Western discourses of gender have been constructed in the past centuries and are still constructed nowadays" (73, 85). Consequently, Nair's re-writing of *Vanity Fair* describes Becky Sharp's search for independence as a victory that, instead of a defeat, can be used to weave a net of collaboration that, as explained in Chapter IV, can help other women nurture themselves.

It is in the end of the film that Nair grants Becky with a double feminist victory as she thought about two possible endings that changed Thackeray's original. The first possibility, shot but dismissed by the producer Harvey Weinstein (although available in the

special edition of *Vanity Fair* DVD, 2005), shows Becky returning to England from Germany to meet her son who finally would forgive her and recognize Becky's efforts to give him the best she could. The second option, the one finally presented in the international release of the film, portrays Becky meeting Joseph Sedley the man she truly loves and the man who truly loves her from the beginning of the film (12'04''-12'18''). In this ending, they finally confess their love to each other and they initiate a journey to India, where Joseph Sedley lives, so that both can start a life anew without Victorian limitations (2h09'38''). The film closes with the celebration of an Indian wedding between Becky and Joseph revealing the possibility of a new beginning for Becky who can enjoy the possibilities of living as a free woman.

Thence, Mira Nair offers a new definition of Becky as an independent human being that matches the individual and group empowerment of Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* or Lalita in Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice*. At this point, Becky is congratulated for her independence and not punished for it as in the original novel. Thenceforth, Nair offers a new representation for Becky as a free woman and the colonies as a space that needs to be told anew beyond the British Empire's stereotyping shown in the film. Here, it is important to focus on how Nair tells the story as a hybrid narrative so that Becky embodies a political subversion of both women and the colonies against the discrimination inflicted by the Victorian chauvinist and imperialist society of the nineteenth century. Moreover, Mira Nair subverts, through the embroidering of *Vanity Fair* as a hybrid narrative, imperialist representations of South Asia and creates a new representation of the colonies in Victorian times, allowing the colonies and the periphery to be defined beyond *Orientalist* limitation.

So, Nair voices and settles specifically in India, what Thackeray had defined as "Becky's daydream about marrying into money and moving to an India . . . [described as] an infinity of shawls, turbans, and diamond necklaces" (28), dances by "Nautch girls"

(475), the appearance of “Mesroul the Nubian (492) or the presence of “Turkish Soldiers together with a peaceful black slave [and] Egyptian head figures in the scene” (493). Accordingly, Nair films a postcolonial reinvention of the literary classic and so she dedicates the film (“Salaams to Edward W. Said for continuing to inspire”, 2h13’32”) to one of the most important postcolonial theorists, Palestinian Professor Edward Said because, in her own words:

[Said] was a great neighbor and friend. In fact, we had many conversations about *Vanity Fair* – on which he had written quite copiously. He loved my films . . . I’ve been very influenced by his work and he had a great impact on my film. My conversations with Edward reinforced my desire to link the colonialist experience to the narrative of *Vanity Fair*. (qtd. in Porter Phinzy 9)

In my opinion, this fact clearly informs of Nair’s commitment to dismantle not only the patriarchal structure of British society by letting Becky Sharp be an independent woman but also the *Orientalist* misrepresentation of India in British narratives. Likewise, Nair rewrites the character of Becky Sharp criticising, as Porter Phinzy states, “the backdrop of an Oriental fantasy . . . [and] the amazement of the UK with the splendor of India (4, 13). It is at this point that Nair works with *Vanity Fair* because it is one of the novels that obsessed her most (Nair qtd. in Porter Phinzy 2) and subverts the image of Becky Sharp to shape Becky as a feminist heroine and India as a territory that had a culture beyond *Orientalist* definitions.

Nair’s own commitment therefore matches Edward Said’s premise in *Culture and Imperialism* when he states: “We must read the great canonical texts . . . with an effort to draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented in such works” (66). Thus, Nair enhances a postcolonial act of historical and gender subversion through *Vanity Fair* because the film is constructed as a

hybrid narrative that offers a new definition of women and a new representation of the homelands.

As Carolyn Porter Phinzy also states (2), Nair recreates three key scenes in the movie setting them in India or using South Asian tradition: the garden scene where she can interact with Joseph Sedley (10'54''-16'10''), the dance scene where she performs for the King of England (1h48'56''-1h51'18'') and the closing scene of the film where she arrives in India with Joseph Sedley (2h09'27''-2h10'2''). As a consequence of these choices I believe that Nair carries out, as US critic Jonathan Foreman recognises, "a postcolonial lack of respect for a dead white male's English classic" (58). In other words, she subverts colonial and gender stereotypes because if, as previously stated, neither is Becky a submissive woman nor is India a mere exotica fantasy. Let us see how Nair does it and what she wants to display.

Firstly, Nair recreates the garden scene organised by Joseph Sedley outdoors (10'54''-16'10'') in contrast to the indoor ball described in Thackeray's novel (38-39). Mira Nair imagines the scene outside and portrays British aristocracy frowning with superiority at the recreation of an Indian Palace full of peacocks, Indian acrobats and South Asian classical drumming. Every character in the scene simply overlooks the Indian setting that is an Oriental representation of India. Nevertheless, Becky had already asked Joseph Sedley, who works in India for the British Empire but who appreciates and respects Indian culture, about his life there (7'54''-8'04'') and Joseph's interaction with Indian culture (12'34'').

Here, as opposed to Thackeray's description of Joseph Sedley as a British man living in a high-class British ghetto in Calcutta, Joseph talks about the power of South Asian dance there and the many possibilities that India offers (11'45''). Becky is amazed at his description and listens to him considering the possibility of accompanying him as a way

to explore and know more about the world (12'58''). Becky's interest contrasts to the stiff reluctance of the other guests. Thus, Nair ridicules the lack of understanding shown by the Victorian society and juxtaposes Becky's desire to know about the world.

Secondly, Nair changes some aspects in the scene in the novel where the Marquis of Steyne organizes a Nautch¹⁸ girl dance (475). Although Nair respects the array of events portrayed in the book, Becky subverts the *Orientalist* description made by Thackeray where "bedouins" and "harem motifs" are included in the dance of the Nautch girls (Thackeray 475) because Becky starts the dance following mudras and performing arts techniques from South Asian performing arts tradition. Then, she associates herself with the other dancers to render a very astonishing performance that shocks Marquis de Steyne who has invited the King to the show. In the novel, this interaction is not shown as under no circumstance does Becky collaborate with other women in the original novel. Likewise, Thackeray describes the total isolation of Becky in the social event organized by Marquis of Steyne. In Thackeray's own description of the scene: "The women, [Becky's] enemies, were left quite alone" (475).

Instead, Nair recreates this part of the novel as if it were a scene from Indian director Guru Dutt's film *Pyaasa* (1957, *Thirst*)¹⁹. By so doing, Nair defines through Becky's dance and her group choreography a final subversion for the character where she becomes a woman who, in Mira Nair's own words, does not care about what other people think (as qtd. in Porter Phinzy 9). Actually, Becky subverts the whole scene entitling her dance the "Zenana²⁰ Ballet" (1h48'56''-1h51'18'') because she performs a dance where she leads a

¹⁸ Nautch refers, during colonial times, to female dancers that were used to entertain, through the repetition of South Asian static dance steps during colonial celebrations in the Subcontinent.

¹⁹ Guru Dutt (1925-1964) was a pioneering Indian director considered a classical director of Indian cinema because he mixed dance and music with narrative in a style that anticipated the explosion of *Bollywood** cinema in the 80s and 90s.

²⁰ Places reserved for women in a household and public buildings so that women can be secluded from social and public life.

sexual revolution against men's control through their own intelligence and tricks (1h50'-1h51'18"). Thus, Nair lets Becky emerge as a woman who, through her dance, denounces the chauvinist aristocracy and high class of the nineteenth century and subverts the rules that are socially expected within a zenana. Instead, Becky carries out a rebellion where women can dance with a South Asian style to reclaim a place for themselves as slaves that break their chains in front of the very same King of England (1h51'9"). The parallelism with the ongoing British invasion in India at those times is clear and how women disrupt their shackles can be linked to how Indian people would try to fight and defeat British means of colonization.

Thirdly, the ending of the movie changes the novel and, instead of showing Becky and Joseh Sedley leading an idle life in Germany (Thackeray 527), Nair imagines a wedding parade of both Becky and Joseph in India²¹ (2h09'27"-2h10'2"). This final scene relocates to India as the place where both Becky and Joseph can go to break with the hypocrisy of England. In the scene, Becky is portrayed as a free woman who states: "India, so many possibilities" (2h09'29"). The image of Indian festivities illustrate the wedding as, in Mira Nair's own words, she chose India to make some justice to Thackeray's quality writing and Becky's struggles throughout the novel. In Nair own words, "having crossed mountains of problems . . . [I decided to let Becky] stand in peace. Ready for another invention" (2005: 2h09'38", 2h11'14"). By so doing, Nair offers a different version about the East through Becky's free way of looking at things as her arrival at India illustrates that India will not get a Victorian stereotyping due to Becky's experience and ideals.

Thus, Mira Nair's *Vanity Fair* presents Becky as a dweller of the diaspora space who finally inhabits three different countries (England, Germany and India) and as a free woman who subverts gender burdens and encourages others to do the same. In this sense,

²¹ The scene was shot in Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur, in the Northwestern state of Rajasthan.

both Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* and Nair's *Vanity Fair* create postcolonial stories from British literary classics through hybrid narratives that foster a new description of female characters in the South Asian diaspora.

To sum up, this section has explained how Chadha and Nair re-vision these two British literary classics using the multidisciplinary languages of South Asian performing arts as a way to illustrate the interaction of cultures and the hybridity that emerges out of it. Thence, both enable women to have a different role and so they allow the female characters in their hybrid narratives to join a feminist commitment towards an equal world where women empower themselves against gender and patriarchal burdens to interweave a nourishing space of collaboration. In my opinion, this place of association facilitates the cultural hybridity of the characters in the films to be portrayed so that the hybrid audiences of Chadha and Nair's films create an empathetic relation with the female characters to understand the subversive possibilities granted in the diaspora space to attain a much more solidary society. Accordingly, Nair and Chadha offer a new definition for South Asian women on screen to show that there is a possibility of living together and fighting for gender equality while celebrating the making of cultural diversity that defines the inherent hope for equality granted in the diaspora space we all live within.

CONCLUSION

It is a fact that we live in a contemporary age that promises to fight against the existent economic disparity amongst people at the same time as it celebrates the connivance of hybrid identities. Nevertheless, reality appears to be defined by financial and educational inequality as well as gender and racial discrimination. At this stage, we stay as passive or active spectators that see how different cultural distinctiveness can confront, fight and radicalise each other. In this dissertation I have tried to clarify some of the roots of these conflicts as well as the possibility of new routes that could potentially ease the situation.

As we have seen, different cultures intermingle together and weave new identities that subvert previous and current racist, chauvinist and class-conscious limitations. I have also detailed how current systems of domination create disparity among human beings and cultures due to them being based on race, sex and class. Furthermore, I have pointed out that the situation is especially cruel for migrants. This statement is remarkable because I wrote in the Introduction that we currently live in a transnational world where we are all potential migrants. At this juncture, I have illustrated that the movement of peoples or their dispersion is called diaspora and that we tend to study diaspora as an iceberg, focusing too much on its surface while ignoring what lies beneath. Accordingly, I have used Avtar Brah's conceptualisation of diaspora as diaspora space (1996), a concept that can be defined as a three dimensional tapestry from where we apprehend and analyse the possibilities of the cohabitation of cultures granted by the flux of peoples. All these theoretical remarks have concentrated on the unequal position that the South Asian diasporas in the UK and the US occupy in their socio-economic and educational systems as

a consequence of race and gender differentiation (as explained by Wilson, 2006; or Ahmad & Seddon, 2012).

Throughout these pages I have analysed the gender conflicts that, as represented in Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair's diasporic films, are suffered by South Asian women in the diaspora space because I believe that these women personify the racial, gender, economic, educational and cultural discrimination as well as being representative of the dilemmas that we all share as ambiguous and heterogeneous characters of a hybrid identity. At this stage of the dissertation, it is time to paraphrase the start of Gurinder Chadha's *Bend It like Beckham* (2002) where a journalist wonders if Jessminder Bhamra is the answer to the British needs with the following question (1'23''): Have Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha provided an answer to the pressing needs of the new identities, inequalities and promises constantly created in the diaspora space? I hope that this dissertation has confirmed that they are a perfect starting point from which to initiate a multidisciplinary study as the one undertaken in this dissertation.

It is under this token that I have recognised that Chadha, Nair and their films are pioneering and empowering for three main reasons. Firstly, because they were the first South Asians in the diaspora to release mainstream films that represented without Orientalism the South Asian diaspora in the UK and the US. Secondly, because they have an intrinsic narrative and artistic style that can reveal hybrid identities to different audiences around the world. Thirdly, because they offer optimistic representations of the diaspora space where hope is, according to Henry Giroux, "subversive" (2004: 38-39) and from where they encourage a different description of the roles of South Asian female characters in the diaspora in the UK, the US and the homelands.

I have illustrated how Chadha and Nair's films involve a need to reconsider how South Asian women in the diaspora and in the homelands should be viewed in historical,

theoretical, postcolonial and feminist terms. In this sense, where Jigna Desai claimed that “we are still waiting for a film about diasporic South Asians which will go further than merely *acknowledging* the existence of older Asian women to create characters who are ambiguous, complex and driven with contradiction [and such] *a film* would inevitably question the multiplicity of power relations and, in doing so, would overturn the assumptions of the film and TV industry”, I have proven that not only Chadha and Nair offer that cinematographic representation Desai demands but that they imagine new possibilities of subversion to the racist and patriarchal structures that are still imposed in both the identity of South Asian diasporic women and the transcultural dynamics we all share (138, my emphasis).

Hence, I have confirmed how Chadha and Nair represent the *ambivalence* and *complexity* demanded by Desai and so I have presented their films as dismantlers of the many stereotypes about the South Asian Subcontinent and its diaspora. At this point, I have illustrated the diversity of cultures in the Subcontinent and its diaspora together with the cultural impositions undertaken by the British colonialism or the current *Hindutva** post-Partition nationalism. I have followed the enlightening words by Antonio Gramsci where he states that “the starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is knowing thyself as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory” (324) because I have proven that Chadha and Nair films denounce the historical constraints inherited by the South Asian subcontinent and its people in the diaspora and in the homelands. Accordingly, I have highlighted how they propose new roles for South Asians in the diaspora space that modify behaviours and constraints established in and by welcoming communities in the UK, USA, South Asian communities in the diaspora and local populations in the homelands.

In this regard, I have stated that both Chadha and Nair place their stories in the historical interstice of diaspora where identities are, paraphrasing Stuart Hall, always “creating, reproducing and transforming themselves anew” (1980: 328). By so doing, both Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair *acknowledge* the subversive possibilities inherent to that theoretical abstract space of contact and transformation that is depicted in their cinematographic portrayals of the South Asian ethos through hybrid cinemas and hybrid narratives.

By so doing, I have been able to confirm that art is revolutionary because it always provides new possibilities of understanding and representing *other* realities. Secondly, that cinema is a collective artistic practice that evaluates the transnational dynamics of the world and so it corroborates the existence of an important inequality in terms of race and gender if the economic and political structures are to be observed. Thirdly, we see that Chadha and Nair embrace the subversive power inherent to that revolutionary nature of art and that their hybrid cinema is engaged with a clear feminist and antiracist commitment. Consequently, it can be stated that, both as women of the world and filmmakers of hybrid cinemas, Chadha and Nair are cultural and artistic mediators who challenge racist and patriarchal power relations, overturn stereotypical assumptions and offer the subversive hope of empowerment to South Asian women in the diaspora and the homelands.

Additionally, I have shown that their films use performing elements and narrative techniques from the South Asian performing arts tradition as gathered in Bharata Muni's *Natyasastra* (200 BC) to define new female South Asian characters in the diaspora and in the homelands recognising their own roots. In my opinion, this is a postcolonial flagship motif that challenges Western representations of South Asia by authors such as Rudyard Kipling. It is in this trend that *GRANTA*'s Winter 2015 issue is devoted to and entitled *India. Other Ways of Seeing* exactly eighteen years after the *GRANTA*'s issue in 1997

commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the country's independence (or postcolonial Partition) in 1947. The 2015 issue has been edited and introduced by Ian Jack who mentions that until the second half of the last century "India remained largely content to see itself as others saw it" (9). Afterwards, he continues to explain that it was very important for Indians writing in English to be published in London and New York as a "necessary seal of approval" despite not knowing how much the European or North American [readers] knew or cared of India (11). Later, Jack quotes Indian writer Amitava Kumar who understands Indian writing in English as "an act of translation on behalf of the West" (qtd. in Jack 11). I believe that these remarks are of central importance to understand how Chadha and Nair's use of South Asian performing elements redefine women in the diaspora space. Their female characters become descriptive of the possibility to create a definition applicable both to the West and to the East's interrelated realities and identities in order to overthrow the economic, professional and educational differentiation imposed upon South Asian women by both White and South Asian communities.

Here, I have shown how Chadha and Nair's films propose new identities that are built through the coexistence of artistic languages from the West and the South Asian tradition. Likewise, I have reviewed how the new representations offered by Nair and Chadha about women who are active agents within the diaspora space overcome gender difference in terms of academic education and freedom to choose a love relationship in both the diaspora and the homelands. By so doing, I have discovered that characters such as Mina in Nair's *Mississippi Masala*, Ashima in Nair's *The Namesake* (2006), Asha in *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) or Jessminder in Chadha's *Bend It like Beckham* (2002) identify, condemn and subvert the gender limitations imposed upon them in the diaspora. Also, I have found that characters like Ria in Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) or Lalita in Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) are inspired by the possibilities opened by the

diaspora space and they feel that they can do the same to change their realities in the homelands. Besides, I have exposed how Nair and Chadha re-tell British classic such as Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) or William M. Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847) including new descriptions about the South Asian Subcontinent, South Asian women and women in general to portray that the world is a gendered space that can become more equal if women interweave collaborative networks from where they can nurture each other and empower the world to derogate the interlocking systems of domination that still exist in terms of race, class and sex.

Subsequently, I believe that this dissertation has confirmed that we all live in an abstract diaspora space and that we are all examples of the hybrid identities there configured. I consider that the role of the artist is that of making ourselves aware of other realities in order to come to terms with our own selves. And I consider that Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair's films display the heterogeneous idiosyncrasy of the South Asian diaspora and the homelands and that the resolutions taken by characters like Asha, Mina, Jess, Ria or Ashima, alongside Chadha and Nair's own activity of filmmaking, can be considered as subversive forces of disagreement that implement the necessity of art and the artists as a "rehearsal for revolution" (2010: 20, my translation), as Olga Barrios paraphrases Brazilian pedagogue Augusto Boal in her inspiring study *La mujer en las artes visuales y escénicas. Transgresión, pluralidad y compromiso social (The Woman in the Visual and Performing Arts, Transgression, Plurality and Social Commitment)*.

Consequently, it can be said that our contemporary world needs filmmakers such as Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair because they denounce the wrongs of society and remind us of the possibilities that we all have within us to perform the transgression, plurality and social commitment Barrios talks about. It is at this vital crossroads that Chadha and Nair's revolution is a rebellion that proposes a historical reconsideration of structures of social and

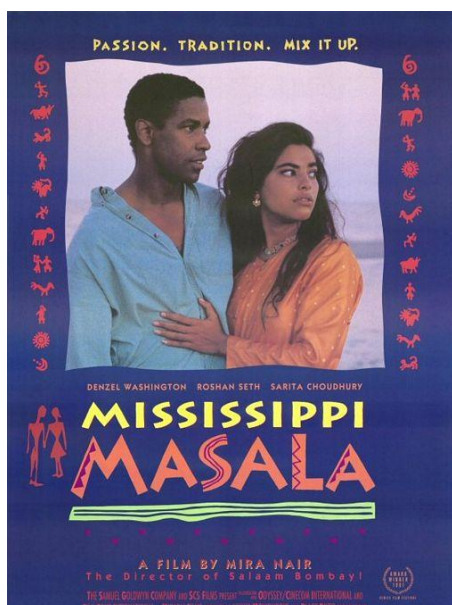
economic inequality, a postcolonial assessment of the racist structures that dominate our world and a feminist evaluation of educational prospects and familiar traditions.

Thus, I believe that Chadha and Nair's cartographies and selected films provide examples of the empowering women who need to be acknowledged if the patriarchal assumptions and power relationships are ever to be overturned in our contemporary age. Furthermore, I think that these filmmakers create new artistic spaces that allow all women to find their voice, as well as facilitate cultural sites of coexistence and involvement that empower us all as hybrid citizens of the world. It is in this sense that, as illustrated by this dissertation, we need to be aware of these transnational artists that open up hybrid possibilities so that the whole global world subverts its own economic, educational, race and gender limitations. In relation to this awakening, and with mediators like Gurinder Chadha and Mira Nair, I believe that we could all bend it like Beckham!

**SUMMARY
OF SELECTED FILMS**

Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala* (1991)

“Can you imagine dumping Harry Patel for a black? . . . These modern ideas spread like a disease. Better send her back to India, get some ideas and be back to find a decent suitor” (21’).



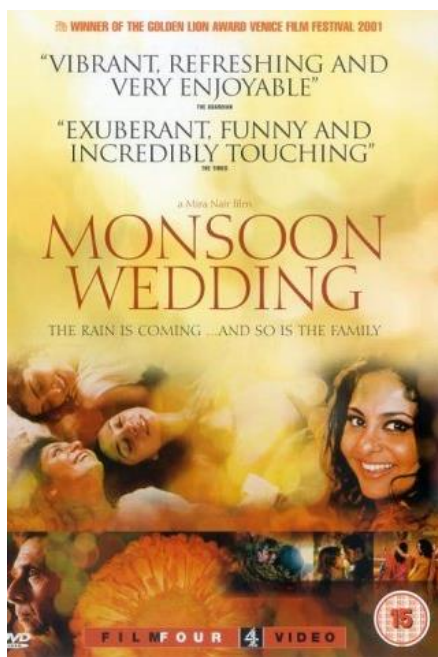
Jay, Kinnu and Mina are an Indian family living in Greenwood, Mississippi (US). They used to live in Uganda, where Jay worked as a barrister for the British Empire, although they were expelled from Kampala following General Idi Amin's *Indictment* of November 1972, where Amin fostered that "Africa should be for black Africans" (6'). Now in the US, Jay collaborates with the South Asian Community in the management of a family Motel business and helps her wife Kinnu run a liquor shop. Mina is their only daughter, a mid-twenties girl who is also employed at the same Motel business.

While Jay keeps on thinking that one day his family will return to Uganda and Kinnu dreams about Mina getting a promising marriage with Harry Patel (a successful man from the same South Asian community), Mina falls in love with Demetrius, an African American man who runs his own cleaning company. However, their interracial love-story is rejected by Mina's family and community in the fashion of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. It is here that both Mina and Demetrius must overcome the racial prejudices imposed both by the white US society and the South Asian community. It is in this context that Mina, as a mixed *masala** and an Indian woman who has never been to India, embraces the possibilities of the "Diaspora Space" (Brah 1996) to subvert the extra burden that, based on the existent gender discrimination, does not allow her to pursue an academic education and have a relationship with whomever she desires. At this crossroads, Mina and

Demetrius' final getaway will illustrate that there is another alternative to the racial and gender intolerance, that of embracing an interracial possible identity, that of recognising the mixed *masala**.

Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001)

"I want to study Creative Writing . . . [it] give me happiness and a future of my own, and I will be able to show the path to other women" (1h14').



The Verma family gathers at Delhi for Aditi's arranged wedding to Hemant Rai, a very successful Punjabi doctor working in Houston-Texas (US). Nevertheless, while Mr and Mrs Verma welcome relatives from "every corner of the Continent, Australia, the UK and the UK" (4'), Aditi conceals her love affair with a famous TV married presenter. At the same time, Ria (Aditi's orphan cousin) wonders how to announce to the whole family that

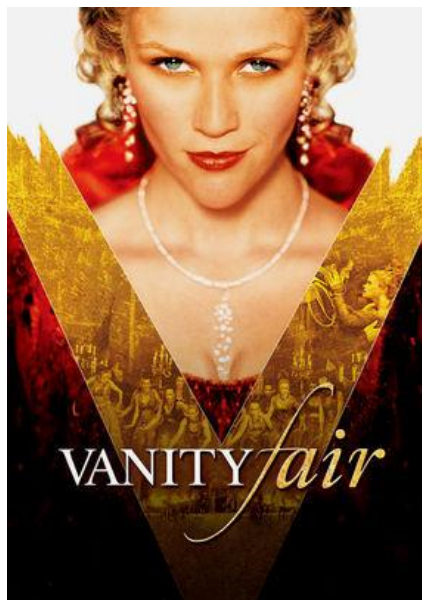
she wants to be the first woman of the family to attend university and study Creative Writing. This is the stage at which, as the Punjabi wedding celebrates its many rituals (combining Sikh, Hindu or Buddhist commemorations), both Aditi and Ria finally decide to speak for what they truly want.

On the one hand, Aditi discovers that her lover is not in love with her after an incident with the Police from where she obtains "all the necessary courage" to start living a life "of [herself] now that [her] marriage with Hemant is going to take place" (48'). Then, Aditi confesses to Hemant that she has been having an affair that is now finished but that she needs to tell him all about it to guarantee that she "will speak truth for what she really feels in the upcoming years" where she wants to "enjoy what you and the US can offer" (1h12'). On the other, Ria tells the whole family that she wants to pursue an academic education studying what she truly desires. Soon, Tej Puri (the successful uncle in the US everybody congratulates on arrival at the Verma's home) assumes the patronage of Ria's

education. While all look happy, Ria feels miserable but assembles the necessary courage to denounce that Tej Puri abused of her when she was a child, something that he will be probably repeating with Aliya, the youngest cousin in the family. In this context of reconciliation, both Ria and Aditi challenge the previous patriarchal order and silence imposed by the family to embrace the hopeful prospects announced by the wedding celebrations. It is at this moment that the monsoon bursts out and irradiates a new opportunity for another life to flourish elsewhere.

Mira Nair's *Vanity Fair* (2004)

“Every slave wishes to escape if he[/she] can” (5’39’’).



Mira Nair's film is an adaptation of William M. Thackeray's *Vanity Fair: A Novel without Hero* (1847) where Becky Sharp is described as a respectful person and mother who defies Victorian classist and jealous society of London. She is presented as an orphan that leaves Miss Pinkerton's academy with Amelia Sedley, her friend of good family. Amelia returns to her family and Becky starts working as a governess at the Queen's Crawley House and soon falls in love with Rawdon Crawley's, son of her boss's sister. Their family disapprove of the marriage and Rawdon Crawley is disinherited of his rights to the family's fortune. Rawdon Crawley is a British military and Becky travels with him wherever he is appointed because, in her own words: “We are soldiers' wives and we live with uncertainty” (1h15'04’’). Consequently, Rawdon, Becky and their son Rawdey go to the British mission in Brussels (1812) and once it is finished they return back to England after Rawdey's condecoration. Nevertheless, Rawdon soon starts gambling and they begin to go through economic problems.

Becky decides to start working to bring money home to pay for the house they live in and the food Rawdey needs. Becky dances and becomes a very important figure in social events under the patronage of Marquis du Steyne. Rawdon becomes very jealous and leaves Becky because he joins a military campaign in Coventry Island where he would die. Becky therefore continues working to pay for Rawdey's education and she sends him to Rawdon's sister house so that he lives in a much more appropriate atmosphere than Victorian

hypocritical society. Later, Becky will meet Amelia and her brother Joseph in Baden Baden. Becky and Joseph will fall in love and Joseph will take her to India so that they can both start a new life far from the prejudices of Victorian London.

Mira Nair's *The Namesake* (2006)

“I want to be free [that’s why] . . . I have decided to sell the house. I am going to do what your father and I had always planned. Six months in India and six months in the US. Then I can go and sing in Kolkata. That is if any guru wants a forty-five year old student. I want to be free” (1h29’).



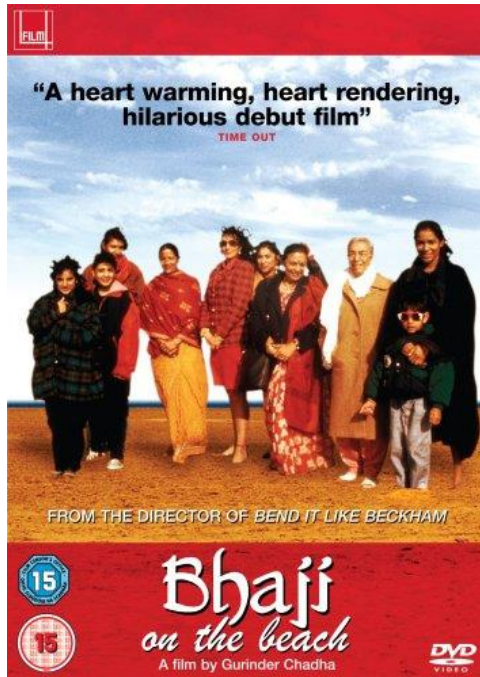
Mira Nair's *The Namesake* is the cinematographic adaptation of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2002). It tells the story of Ashima who leaves Kolkata giving up her singing and academic education to fly to the US with Ashok Ganguli, an Indian physician working in New York, with whom her marriage has been arranged. Shortly afterwards, Ashima gives birth to Gogol and Sonia and devotes her life to bring them up in the US while Ashok teaches at college. Nevertheless, after Ashok unexpectedly dies and both

her children have left home, Ashima renegotiates the path of her life under the influence of having had access to a job as a librarian at her neighbourhood's community library.

After these events, Ashima decides to sell the familiar detached house at New York because it had always been her and Ashok's dream "to go back to India and end up their days there . . . living six months in India and six months in the US" (1h29'). By so doing, Ashima embraces the true nature of her name which, translated from Bengali, means *without frontiers*. She has now become a fully independent citizen of the world with the same prospects ahead as that laid upon both Gogol and Sonia, an existence caught up in the subverting promises of the diaspora space. By so doing, Ashima will resume her education back in India while enjoying her empowerment as a woman of the world who can choose a life of her own.

Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993)

"Hello sisters, *namaste* [Hindi], *sat sri akal* [Punjabi], *salaam a lekum* [Arabic]. It's not often that we women get away from the patriarchal demands made on us in our daily lives, struggling between the double yoke of racism and sexism that we bear. This is your day" (21', my emphasis).



The Saheli Group (a Non Governmental Organisation for South Asian migrant women settled in Southall, UK) has organised a trip to Blackpool to share a day-out and see the Dwivalli's lightings. Thus, women of different ages but with a common geographical and social background gather to enjoy the trip. Nevertheless, the ideal premise is not such, because the oldest aunties start to bully Ginder for her lack of honour (she has run away from her husband) and praise doctor-to-become Hashida (until they discover that she has a black boyfriend and she is pregnant).

However, as the day goes on and both Ginder and Hashida start to act as individuals who are not dependant on the community but as women who react against the aunties' judgements, the film describes the racist and gender yoke that all these women have to bear in England. Likewise, they are insulted by white British men and patronised by the men in the South Asian communities, while they have no room to speak for themselves, as illustrated in the character of Asha and her visions. But, as the day-trip finishes, they realise that together they are stronger and so they defy Ginder's husband (after they discover that he mistreats her) and smile at the possibilities that Hashida embraces for the community. As these events take place (alongside the group's visit to a male striptease club), it is their mutual understanding and association what will truly make them comprehend what a day out of their duties truly means.

Gurinder Chadha's *Bend It like Beckham* (2002)

"I played the best and I was happy because I wasn't lying to you or sneaking out. . . . There was a scout from America and he has offered me a place at a top university with a full scholarship and a chance to play football professionally. And I really want to go and if I can't tell you what I will like to do now I won't ever be happy" (89').

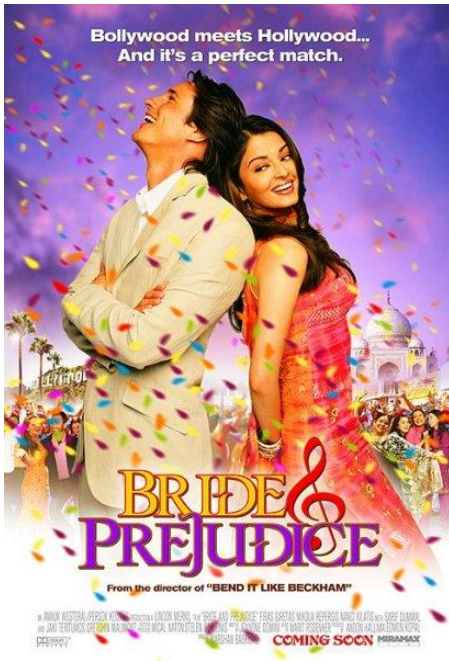


Jessminder Bhamra (Jess) dreams of becoming a footballer while she studies to pass her A Levels and plays in the park with the boys from her Sikh community in South-West London. Soon, she meets Jules, who invites her to play in an all-female team with the prospect of participating at an official tournament where there will be an American scout. Jess tells her parents, who disagree completely with the idea although they are too busy planning her sister Pinky's love-marriage with a Sikh man. At this stage, Jess lies to them and keeps on playing with the team until they reach the final, which collides in day and time with the main ceremony of her sister's wedding.

Nonetheless, Mr Bhamra finally takes Jess to the match in the middle of the ceremony because he recognises his own frustrations as he himself was a cricket player for England in East Africa but had to quit once in the UK. Jess's team wins and she is offered a full scholarship in America together with Jules. Even so, she must return to her duties as the bride's sister, those of comforting all guests. Yet, once the ceremony is over and all the family is at the Bhamra's living room elaborating plans for Jess wedding prospects, Jess gathers the necessary courage to tell the truth to all her family and inform them about what has also happened that day. To her own surprise, she soon encounters her father's support, who explains to the rest of the family that Jess has to accept the scholarship and all the possibilities that it opens for her as a woman of the world. It is at that moment that Jess starts to overcome her subaltern position and she bends, as paraphrasing the title, the still existent racist structure of contemporary UK as well as the unequal opportunities that for female footballers are sketched as opposed to those offered for men.

Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* (2004)

“Just imagine if Maya would live in UK. We could visit her all the time. It will hurt me to have my daughters far but they will earn more there, perhaps we should have drowned one or two once one Indian fellow went to America. . . . [The] girls who are born there, they have totally lost their roots. Ours are very traditional. In US all of them are outspoken and career orientated and some have even turned into a lesbian” (38’).



Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* is the cinematographic adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), now settled in India, the UK and the US. Lalita, Maya and Lakhi star as the Bakshi sisters who, correspondingly, fall in love with William Darcy, Balraj and Johnny Wickham. While the three sisters live in Amristar (sacred city for Sikhism sited in North of the Punjab), the three men come from *abroad*: William Darcy is a rich US entrepreneur of the hotel business about to open a new touristic complex in Goa (West coast of India), Balraj is a prominent Indian doctor in the UK and Johnny

Wickham is a British resident, although born in the US, whose main activity is to “travel around the world” (34’). The six meet, following Austen's original story, at a wedding, although in this cinematographic adaptation the ceremony is placed in Amristar, where the characters rejoice together under the gaze of Mr and Mrs Bakshi, who are trying to arrange the marriage of their three daughters.

It is at this stage that the three couples start three love relationships that frustrate once the celebrations are over and the three men have to go back to their places of origin. However, and with a familiar journey to the US (with a stop-over in the UK) the three sisters will be able to resume their love affairs once they discover that they were under a patriarchal and racist burden that was imposed on their lives and that did not allow them to choose what they truly want to do with their own lives. At this moment, Lalita, Maya and Lakhi together recognise the familiar and cultural limitations that were placed on them for the fact of being women. And, significantly, they do so when they are to start their own lives along the three continents (Lalita in the US, Maya in the UK and Lakhi in India) and

after having realised about the power that lies inherent to their mutual understanding of their possibilities within the dynamics of the contemporary world.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Ahimsa. (Sa¹) *Ahimsa* refers to the philosophical attitude of *no violence* that is inherent to the calm that follows an intense spiritual reflection. It will be the base for Gandhi's *satyagraha**.

Aparigraha. (Sa) Jainism adopted the principle of *non-possessiveness* (English translation from Sanskrit *aparigraha*) to guarantee the acceptance of only the necessary thoughts, words and actions as a state of spiritual comfort and mental balance. The idea of *aparigraha* would later be confounded with *karma** in some yoga schools, which radically reinterpreted *aparigraha* as the free state of mind of absolute *no-hoarding*.

Apauruseya. (Sa) The Sanskrit *apaur-* refers to the capacity for revealing and transmitting the doctrines contained in the *Vedas*. Then, the *apauruseyas* enhanced the passive role of the listener, the annihilation of any comprehensive faculty, a clear rendition to the *samsara** and the prospect of an infinite *dukha**.

Ayurveda. (Sa) A whole system of psychological and medical knowledge based on alternative medicine and holistic therapies.

Bhangra. (Pu) It is a kind of music and dance originated in the Punjab region, as the farmer's folk dance which commemorated the coming of Spring (*Vaisakhi*), also sharing traits with the South of the Sub-Continent, Afghanistan and Iran. With the Partition (1947),

¹ Abbreviations stand for the oldest etymological root where the word is referenced. They refer as it follows: (Be) for Bengali, (En) for English, (Hi) for Hindi, (Pa) for Pali, (Pe) for Persian, Pu for (Punjabi), (Sa) for Sanskrit and (Ur) for Urdu.

Sikh and Hindu in the Northern parts of the Punjab (borders of Pakistan) adopted bhangra as their folk dances and music to counteract Pakistan Islamic influence. Technically, Bhangra is considered “a total hybrid performative event” (Ali 2004), enlarged by its proliferation in Hindi popular films, on TV programs watched by the Indian diaspora across the world and on the theatrical popular representation.

Biraderi. (Pe) The literal notions of Persian *biraderi* refer to the kinship networks established among labourers. After Partition, Pakistani notions of *biraderi* were used as synonym of brotherhood and clans emigrating to UK and USA to be reduced into the category of Muslim Gang. *Biraderi* is then the main discourse of media (BBC, *The Times...*) to address the construction of the stereotype of the bad, radical and chauvinist Muslim.

Bollywood. (En) The 1990s congratulated the so-called Bollywood (a retake of Bombay and Hollywood) as a popular manifestation of Indian colourful saris and Ancient grandiosity. Nevertheless, the label Bollywood normally involves a certain *Orientalist* and simplistic reading of the Indian culture, in the fashion of exoticism (such as the Selfridge's exhibition in the summer of 2000) and propagandistic cultural simplification. Thence, the Bollywood label normally involves the description of the Hindi movies that, from the British introduction of cinema in India in 1930s, continue to write stereotypes of *Hindutva** conservatism. The popular Hindi movies still continue to present classic melodramatic stories in which India is depicted as a society split in castes (not varnas) inheritor of the Aryan grandiosity where women are to be victimised. Films like *Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Devdas* (2004) or Ashutosh Gowariker's *Lagaan* (2005) are perfect instances of the Bollywood film that must be comprehended from the stereotypical gazed expected from

Bollywood. The songs and dances are a key part of the movie, normally with propagandistic purposes (both political and economic).

Buddha. (Sa) Although *Buddha* normally addresses the historical Buddha for antonomasia, Siddharta Gautama, the Buddha, *buddh-* (from its Sanskrit root) refers to the acts of understanding, seeing and blooming that is inherent to the *Pratītya samutpāda**. Raimon Pánikkar asserts that the comprehension of the linguist root of *buddh-* leads to the true Buddhist awareness, that which “un-chains knowledge rather than the acts of (re-)chaining religious or philosophical restrictive definitory parameters chains” (175, my translation).

Chappattis. (En, from Hi *capāti* & Pe *chapātī*). Flat, unleavened and typical bread from the Punjab (North of the Subcontinent). It is cooked on a griddle out of wheat flour. It is currently present in all British restaurants as *chappati* or *any other regular bread*.

Chutney Music. (En) *Chutney* is the general term which refers to the condiments and species that accompany every South Asian meal. For instance, there are fruit, vegetable and even meat or fish *chutneys* served alongside a rice or chicken dish. There is not a defined pattern in which *chutney* has to be arranged. Likewise, *Chutney Music* stands for the music and songs which appeared in the Caribbean (especially Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago) as a consequence of the Indian indentured diaspora of the 19th c. As an outcome of this migration, Afro calypsos and songs became in contact with *Indian* instruments such as the Sitar, the Dholak or the Dhantal. Nowadays, Chutney Music is still very important in the Caribbean. Artists such as Rikki Jai, Rakesh Yankaran, Devanand Gattoo, Heeralal Rampartap and the late Ramdew Chaitoe sing and compose in Hindi, Gujarati or English,

adding new South Asian beeps, old calypsos from East Africa and typical *Bollywood** artistic direction in the video-clips.

Coolies, Coolitude. (En) *Coolitude* comes from the Tamil *kuli* meaning to hire, payment for occasional menial work. *Coolitude* and *coolies* now refer to the 19th c. indentured Indian diaspora to the Caribbean and East Africa, probably because they called themselves *kulis*, as they were hired labourers. In this sense, *coolitude* was appropriated by the British patrons adding the pejorative nuance *The Oxford English Dictionary. A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles* (3rd edition in 1978) informs about as it follows: “[The] name given by Europeans in India and China to a native hired labourer, normally as cheap labourers” (960). The basis for the racist nuance *coolie* was then strengthened in the UK and the USA. In this sense, even one cricket round receives the name *kuli*. Obviously, the round refers to a mistake in the game.

On the other hand, *coolitude* is used as a synonym of *creolisation*, responding to the blend of cultures. In this sense, Carter and Torabullyan define *coolitude* as “an aesthetic blend, a kind of a complex culture, bringing to the imaginaries a part of the other. It calls to attention ‘Indianness’ in relation with ‘otherness’ as a premise which leads to a transcultural awareness. This is in keeping with the fundamental attitude of creolisation” (168).

Dharma. (Sa) In its strict Sanskrit roots, *dharma* defines the eternal and universal phenomenon and teaching norm which leads life to be unveiled and unveil itself under the notion of *pratitya samutpada**. Furthermore, *dharma*, in its Buddhist reconsideration, addresses a more complex meaning involving absolute condition for the object of *knowledge* (both physical and mental), the doctrinal path towards *nirvana**, the absolute

principle towards the supreme honesty or the mental teaching for the physical and mental teaching. Nowadays, self help books promote the notion of *Chö*, which is the Tibetan translation of *dharma*, agglutinating both the Sanskrit and Buddhist understanding.

Dukawalla. (Sa) *Dukawalla* is the Sanskrit term with which the south Asian immigrants in East Africa referred to their trade occupancy and regency of the first South Asian diasporic shops. After WWII and their migration to UK and USA, *Dukawalla* will be used by Westerns as a derogatory term for Non-White commercial settlements.

Dukha. (Sa) Sanskrit root *dukh-* refers to the suffering of being ignorant, the lack of revelation and knowledge that characterise the *samsara** and the *pratitya samutpada**.

Gurudwara or gurdwārā. (Pu) Name given to the Sikh temples which literally translates as *the door to the gurus*. The most famous is the Golden Gurudwara of Amristar, in the Punjab (North West of India). In the Subcontinent, Sikh credo announces that a film starting with an image of a gurudwara guarantees the good luck of the movie. Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) opens with an image of the Golden Gurudwara in Amristar. Gurinder Chadha herself, in the Director's Commentary to the Special Edition DVD of the film explains the previous belief of "prosperity and economic success for a film" (1').

Hindutva. (Hi) *Hindutva* refers to the political actions and national thoughts undertaken for the creation of a free and independent Republic of India. The term is taken from the political pamphlet published by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in 1923, pamphlet entitled "Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?", where a cultural Sanskritisation of India, a total rupture with

anything Muslim and the radicalisation of Indian Hindu were enhanced as the only guarantee to get independence from the British Empire.

Izzat. (Ur) Persian *izza* refers to the *glory* of a person. Thence, *izzat* (Urdu reconversion of Persian *izza*) stands for the notions of honour which are expected from a person in relation to, for instance, a good marriage or a proper attitude of life. Notions of *izzat* are, in determinate Muslim communities, rather strict with women and so domestic violence is normally defined as *izzat abuse* or *izzat-crime*

Kala pani. (Sa) The Brahmanical prejudice against crossing the *kala pani* (Sanskrit for *black water*, the ocean) because the Ancient peoples in the Sub-Continent (pre-Aryan invasion) considered seagoing a sort of recklessness only produced by greed. As A.V. Kumar Babu points out, the Inscription of Ganapatideva in the Motupalli Pillar illustrates the attitude towards the Kala Pani, "Foreigners who have incurred the great risk of a sea voyage with the thought that wealth is more valuable than life" (188).

Karma. (Sa) *Karma* means, from its literal Sanskrit translation, *act*. Then, *karma* is the universal principal which binds everything to the principle of interdependent causality. *Orientalist* rewritings of positive or negative *karma* (colloquially understood as good or bad *vibs*) come from the idea that all the beings can have a good or bad *karma* in the ever-existent rewritings involved to the *samsara**.

Lagaan. (Hi and Ur). *Lagaan* refers to the percentage of the harvest or money obtained through it that, as a form of tax or revenue, must be handed to the owner of the land where the production takes place. In British colonial times it was normally double, and the

agricultural workers had to provide revenues both for the South Asian chief of the land and the British administration.

Masala. (Pu) The *masala* is a Punjabi cooking sauce, made out of many different species to obtain a hot and spicy flavour. Beyond this, and within the Hindi Popular Cinema commercial market, a Masala is a type of commercial film in Hindi which combines long and spectacular action scenes with comedy moments and an archetypical love story.

Moksha. (Sa) Sanskrit literal reference for *release* and *liberation*. *Moksha* is attained throughout *nirvana** and it conveys break with the eternal cycle of causal re-births bound to the *samsara**.

Nirvana. (Sa) The literal translation of *nirvana* within its roots is that of *ultimate revelation*. In these regards, *nirvana* takes place when the human, animal or physical being realizes about the conditioned existence of the *pratitya samutpada** and the *samsara**. Likewise, the awareness of *nirvana* leads to the final liberation from both the *pratitya samutpada* and the *samsara*, the final illumination (*buddh-*) and liberation from all *dukha**.

Pratitya samutpada. (Pa and Sa) The Buddhist consideration of human experience as interconnected with everything that surrounds reality. *Human existence* understood as an agglutination of every aspect of *life*, the mutual interdependence of *everything* as the base for the conditioned origin of *existence*.

Samsara. (Sa) Sanskrit *samsara* is normally translated into *existence*, a simplification of the term within mere philosophical or religious terms. Nevertheless, we must remember

that it is very difficult to find, in the South Asian context an only philosophical or religious doctrine but a mixture of both. Thence, I enclose Ramón N. Prats's definition for *samsara*, because I believe that his words summarise with clear exactitude and amplitude of understanding scope the notion of *samsara*,

Samsara is the never-ending migratory cycle of the innumerable existences – human, animal, divine... – to which all beings have their karma condemned to; a condition which leads the instinctive and psychological tendencies to be re-born or reincarnated in a determinate condition or predisposition. (341, my translation)

Sangeeta. (Be) Sangeeta refers to the popular performance that joined music and drama in the centre of the villages and cities of the Bengal Province. It normally consisted on a dramatisation of religious or folkloric texts by a figure similar to the well-known African griot.

Satyagraha. (Sa) Gandhi adopted the *satyagraha* as his main emblem. It consisted on the devotion to the truth, based on a pluri-religious understanding and a civilising appreciation of the human existence. The *satyagraha* also involved the no-violence principles that defined Gandhi's active but peaceful revolution.

Sikhism. (Pa *sikkha* and Sa *sisya*) Sikhism is the fourth religion in the Sub-Continent although it is one of the most visible in the South Asian Diaspora, as *Encyclopedia Brittanica* positions Sikhism as “the fifth organised religion in the world” (284). It was born in the fifteenth century by Guru Nanak referring to the condition of disciple (from Pali *sikkha*) and instruction (from Sanskrit *sisya*). It emerged as a devotional scission from brahmanical devotion, therefore rejecting the Brahmin hegemony over the ritual and caste system. Guru Nanak first refused this hegemonic structure by pointing at

how he had been educated in both Hindu and Muslim belief but that none of them were true but the core bound to both. In his own words, as quoted by *Brittanica* "There is no Hindu, there is no Mussulman, there is only a God of many names and an only reality [called *om* as taken from the Aryan Vedas], accessible through the repetition of his name, the hymns of praise and meditation; all the rest is illusion (*maya*)" (281). Sikhism therefore was a reaction against the Hindu sectarian social differentiation.

During the British occupancy in the Sub-Continent, Sikhs were granted with many privileges that ensured the English control over the Punjabi region. After 1947 Partition, there was a movement that claimed at creating a Sikh nation, Khalistan, in the area around Amristar. The radicalisation of this movement ended up with the assassination of India Prime Minister's Indira Gandhi in October 1984.

Sramana. (Sa) The Sanskrit *sram** relates to *performing, exerting and labouring*. Furthermore, the *sramanas* were those who performed their own doctrinal knowledge. Siddharta Gautama (the *Buddha**) and Mahavira (founder of Jainism) were the first *sramanas*, who denounced and defis the revealed knowledge (*apauruseya**) of the Brahmanical doctrines.

Tarikh-i-hind. (Pe) The decimal system transmitted by the Arab civilisation throughout Asia, Africa and Europe has its roots in the Punjab and was referred as *tarikh-i-hind*, the system therefore referring to the valley of the Hindu Valley.

Varnas. (Sa) The structure of work in the Aryan Society of the Sub-Continent had, as read and illustrated in the *Rig Veda*, a four-fold possibility: The *Brahmans*, the *Kshatryas*, the *Vaishiyas* and the *Shudras*. As read in the *Rig Veda*:

When gods prepared the sacrifice with Purusha as their offering /its oil was spring, the holy gift was autumn, summer was the wood/ When they divided Purusha how many portions did they make? What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his tights and feet? . . . The Brahman was his mouth, of both arms was the Rajanya (Kshatrya) made/His tights became the Vaishiya, from his feet the Shudra was produced. (xi, 90)

This labour division was later enhanced by the British dominion to create the notion of caste (which, in Sanskrit has a different word, *jati* that refers to the hierarchical structure of society) and strengthen the social inequalities among the different groups. The *varnas* (Sanskrit word for colour) referred the four colours which characterised the clothes of each of the categories. Although each province/kingdom had its own *varnas* system, we can say that the common roles were as following: the Brahmans transmitted the *Vedas* to the society and their true Aryan status was very far from the economic subtlety and refinement described and praised by the British, they survived through donations, and sometimes the Brahmanical condition was that of “hunger and shruks” (Agud 24, my translation). Furthermore, the *Kshatriyas* agglutinated the governants and army officers, the *Vaishiyas* were merchants, artisans and cultivators while the *shudras* were farmers and ploughmen. The *pariahs* or *dalits* (commonly known as *untouchables*) were out of any *varna*, outcasts, doing the contaminating works (butchery, cleaning of dead animals, assassins).

Yoga. (Sa) Sanskrit word for *control*. Hence, *yoga* is the collection of activities which enable the mental, physical, sensitive, spiritual and energetic control of one's self to overcome and resist the *dukha** involved to the *pratitya samutpada** and the *samsara**.

APPENDIX OF IMAGES

LIST OF IMAGES**IMAGE 1**

Map of the South Asian Subcontinent

IMAGE 2

Demographic Charts

IMAGE 3

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva

IMAGE 4

Sarah Maple's *Haram* (2007) and other significant visual work by the artist

IMAGE 5

Paintings by the Singh Twins

IMAGE 6

Reproductions of a real Banyan Tree

IMAGE 7

A colonial reproduction of a Banyan Tree

IMAGE 8

Shree Swaminarayan Mandir, London (UK).
Photograph taken by Jorge Diego Sánchez

IMAGE 9

Hindu Goddess Saraswati
(Popular reproduction after colonial times)

IMAGE 10

Excerpts from Annu Palakunnathu Matthew's *Bollywood Satirized* (2004)

IMAGE 11

Images by Guerrilla Girls

IMAGE 12

Eight Rasas, performed by Sohini Roychowdhury (2014)

IMAGE 13

Shiva Nataraj, Musée Guimet (Paris, France) (11th Century)

IMAGE 14

Anna Pavlova and Uday Shankar in *Radha/Krishna*

IMAGE 15

Painting by Raja Ravi Varma, *Tilottama* (19th. Century)

IMAGE 16

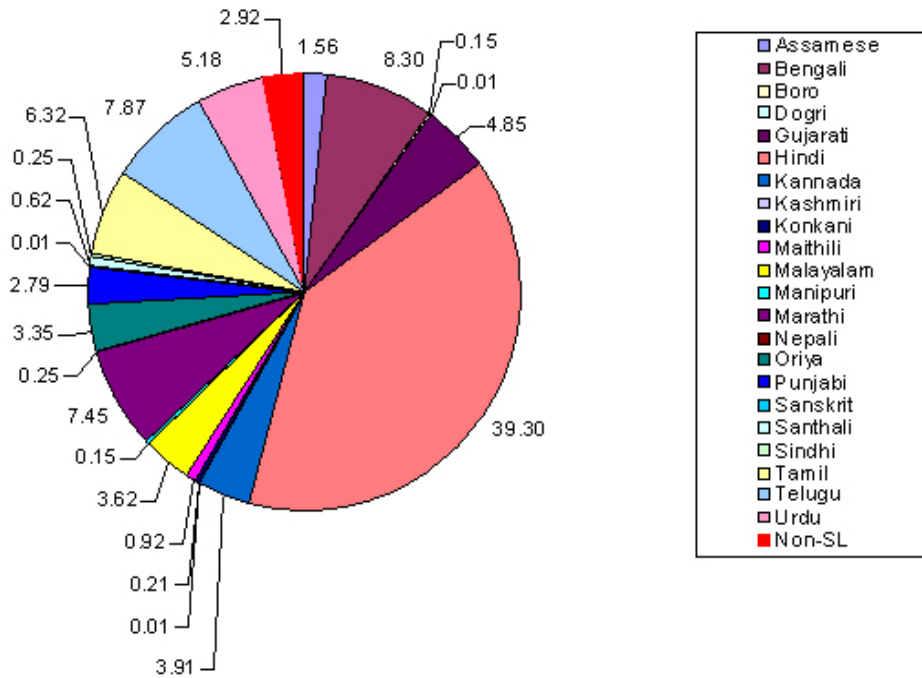
Tamil Nadu Temples (details)
Photographs by Angela María Higuera Gómez

IMAGE 1
Map of the South Asian Subcontinent



IMAGE 2
Demographic Charts

Language Diversity in India



From “Linguistic Majority-Minority Relations in India” (Mallikarjun 8).

Religious diversity

Religious group	Population %	Growth (1991–2001)	Sex ratio (total)	Literacy (%)	Work participation (%)	Sex ratio (rural)	Sex ratio (urban)	Sex ratio (child)
Hindu	80.46%	20.3%	931	65.1%	40.4%	944	894	925
Muslim	13.43%	36.0%	936	59.1%	31.3%	953	907	950
Christian	2.34%	22.6%	1009	80.3%	39.7%	1001	1026	964
Sikh	1.87%	18.2%	893	69.4%	37.7%	895	886	786
Buddhist	0.77%	18.2%	953	72.7%	40.6%	958	944	942
Jain	0.41%	26.0%	940	94.1%	32.9%	937	941	870
Animist, others	0.65%	103.1%	992	47.0%	48.4%	995	966	976

Retrieved from www.wikipedia.org, “Religions in India”, according to the information provided by the 2001 Census of India undertaken by The Indian Census Office.

IMAGE 3
Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu
(Popular Representations)

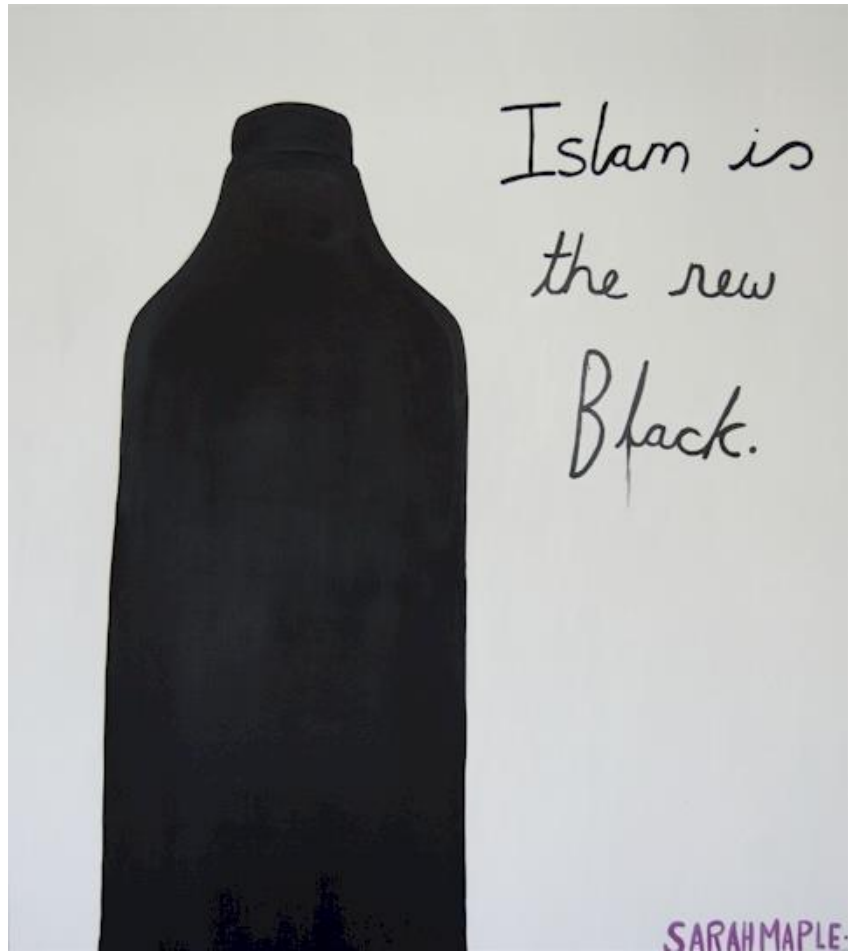


Templates taken from www.zazzle.com and www.hullquist.com.

IMAGE 4
Sarah Maple's *Haram* (2007) and other significant visual work



Haram (2007)



"Islam Is the New Black" (2006)



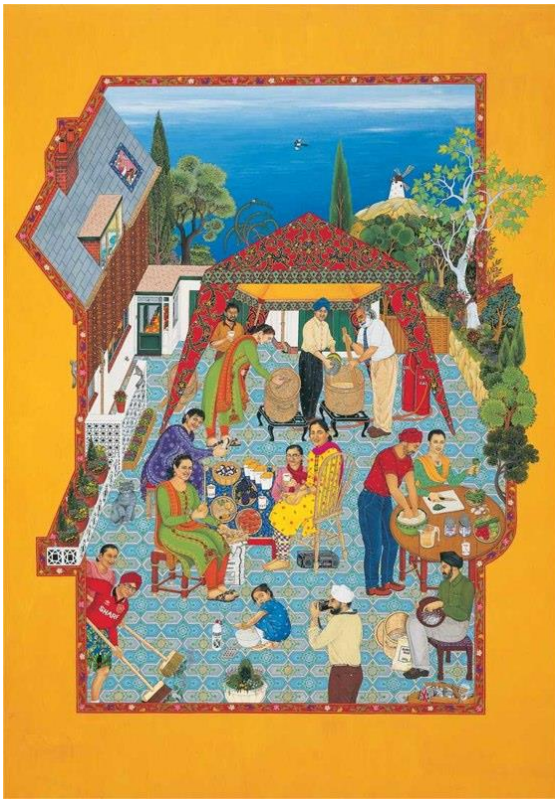
Passport (2006)



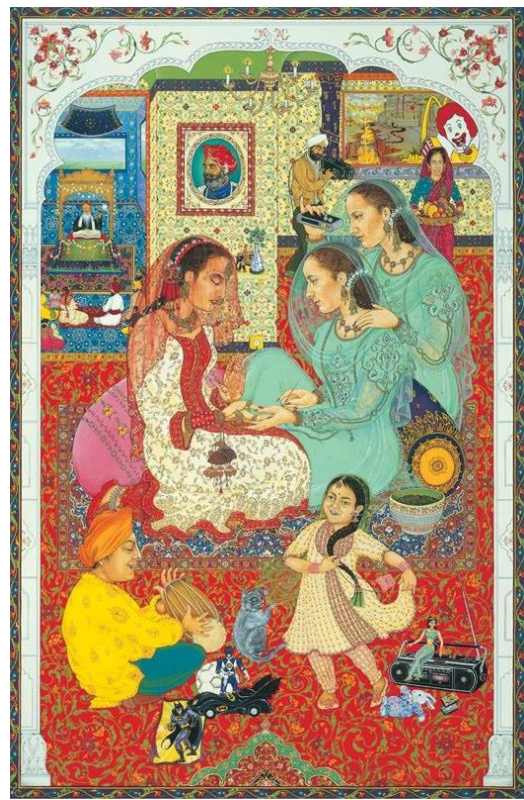
Vote for Me (2006)

Winner of Four Sensations Graduation Prize (2006),
promoted by Channel Four and Saatchi Gallery.

IMAGE 5
Paintings by the Singh Twins



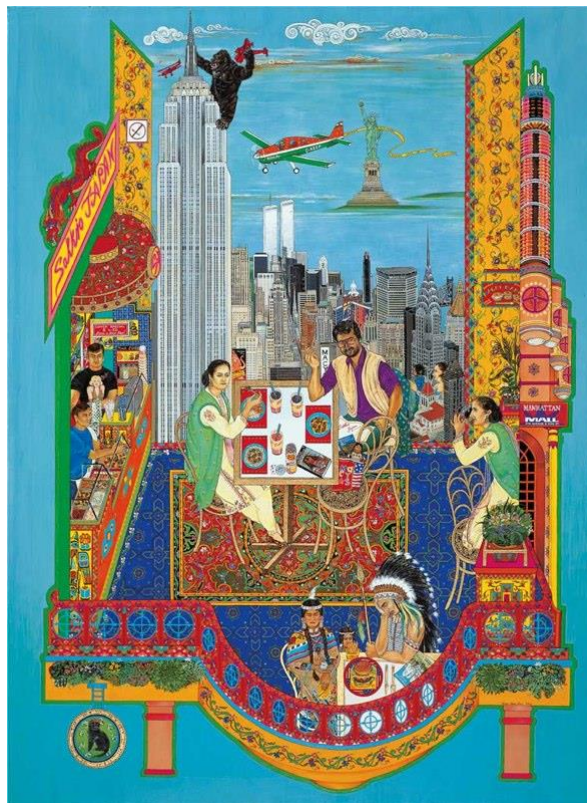
All Hands on Deck (2004)



Nyrmala's Wedding (2004)



Some Like It Hot (2004)



Manhattan Hall (2006)

IMAGE 6
Reproductions of a real Banyan Tree



“Banyan tree at Botanical Gardens, Calcutta” (1880)
 Source: www.ebay.com, auctioned in April 2008.



“Banyan Tree, Botanical Gardens, Calcutta. A photo in late 1800s”
 Source: www.ebay.com, auctioned in April 2008.

IMAGE 7
A colonial reproduction of a Banyan Tree



“The Banyan Tree from a Sketch by Captain Sherwill”
Source: *The Illustrated London News*. August 30th, 1856.

IMAGE 8
Shree Swaminarayan Mandir, London (UK)



Photograph taken by Jorge Diego Sánchez
04/04/2007 15:26

IMAGE 9
Hindu Goddess Saraswati

(Popular reproduction after colonial times)



Taken from <http://www.salagram.net>

IMAGE 10
Excerpts from Annu Palakunnathu Matthew's
Bollywood Satirized (2006)



The Acid Thrower



Alien

IMAGE 11
Images by Guerrilla Girls







<http://www.guerrillagirls.com/latest/film.shtml>

IMAGE 12

Eight Rasas, performed by Sohini Roychowdhury
Photographs by Pedro Alvera and Denica Vasinova



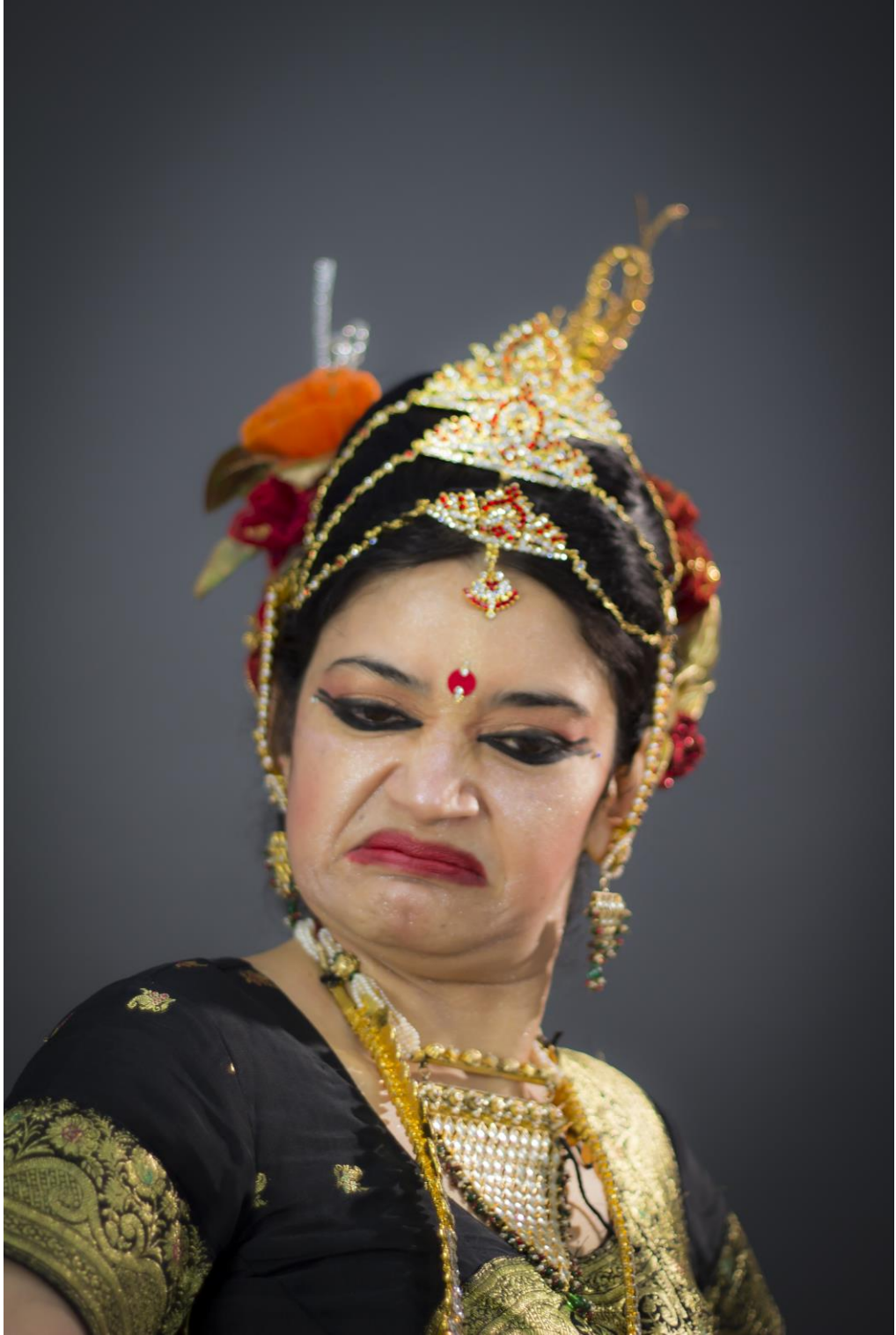
©Pedro Alvera y Denica Vasinova

Sngaram, Love



©Pedro Alvera y Denica Vasinova

Raudram, Fury, Anger



©Pedro Alvera y Denica Vaselina

Bibhatsam, Disgust



©Pedro Alvera y Denica Vaselineva

Viram, Heroic mood



©Pedro Alvera y Denica Vaselineva

Hasyam, Laughter



©Pedro Alvera y Denica Vaselineva

Karunyam, Compassion



©Pedro Alvera y Denica Vaselina

Bhayanakam, Horror



©Pedro Alvera y Denica Vaselineva

Adhutam, Wonder

IMAGE 13
Painting by Raja Ravi Varma



Tilottama (19th. Century)

IMAGE 14

Shiva Nataraj, Musée Guimet (Paris, France) (11th Century)



IMAGE 15
Anna Pavlova and Uday Shankar in *Radha/Krishna* (1923)



Museum of Music History, London



http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e4/Uday_Shankar_and_Ana_Pavlova_in_%27Radha-Krishna%27_ballet%2C_ca_1922.jpg

IMAGE 16
Tamil Nadu Temples (details)



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