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On Violence and Resistance: Narratives of Women in South Asia

By Goutam Karmakar

This special issue seeks to examine women's accounts of violence, resistance, and resilience in South Asia. While the emphasis has been placed mostly on literary perspectives, this issue also features cultural, political, and feminist reflections, including ethnographic and artistic work, as well as an interview and poems. Contributors attempt to illustrate how violence and resistance of women in South Asia intersect with sexuality and gender identity, war and armed conflict, transnational activism, socio-cultural and historical dynamics, discrimination of trans women, and third world feminism in general. As the focus of this issue is violence and resistance of women in South Asia, a brief account of the diverse theoretical and contextual development of western and non-western frameworks has been provided to comprehend the types of factors that lead to violence and how women in South Asia resist. In the first part of this introduction, I discuss certain western concepts (both theoretical arguments and models) as hypotheses that can, to a certain extent, comprehensively characterize violence against women. From the perspective of global Anglophone studies, I consider it crucial to explore the transcultural functionality of issues pertaining to women in South Asia. Consequently, in the second section of the introduction, I provide a brief overview of South Asian Feminism, emphasizing that what characterizes violence against women and their resistance varies significantly across cultures.

Violence, a complex, self-directed, interpersonal, collective, and structural term, alludes to the workings of the power structure of certain social groups on others. Structural in this context, a term coined by Johan Galtung in 1969, refers to the avoidable constraints that society imposes on individuals and groups, preventing them from obtaining their basic requirements and attaining a standard of living that might otherwise be achievable. These restraints, which may be of a political, socioeconomic, religious, cultural, or legal nature, are typically imposed by institutions with authority over specific subjects (Lee, 2019, p. 123). Violence against women comprises a variety of abuses committed against them throughout their lives. The United Nations defines violence against women as a gender-based abuse that causes or is likely to cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm or distress to women, including threats of these acts, punishment, or disproportionate deprivation of liberty, regardless of whether they occur in public or in private (UNGA, 1993). This statement points out violence as acts that cause or have the potential to cause harm, and this gender-based definition emphasizes that it is rooted in inequality between women and men. This gender-

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based violence is frequently used interchangeably with violence against women, and both cases symbolize gender discrimination, which can be defined as discriminatory practices in responsibilities and opportunities as well as in access to and control of resources, which is deeply embedded in the socio-culturally intrinsic belief that masculinity is dominant, favorable, and superior to femininity (Krantz & Garcia-Moreno, 2005, p. 818). In the case of women, the unlawful imposition of physical force broadly conceptualizes the notion of a continuum of violence that comprises a wide range of effects, behaviors, and actions, ranging from the materialization of honor killing, rape, and murder to verbal acts of racial and sexual abuse.

On Theories and Models

Lewis Okun (1986), in one of the most extensive and comprehensive studies of the empirical perspective on violence against women, identified a minimum of twenty separate hypotheses of domestic violence, maltreatment, and other forms of abuse in interpersonal interaction. Standard components and empirical evidence on violence against women corroborate these perspectives. Numerous approaches to this issue have been proposed and analyzed to date. Nevertheless, no single explanation adequately explains violence against women (Brownridge, 2009; Renzetti, 2011, p. 9). Discussing all these theoretical arguments and models is beyond the scope of this editorial, which is about violence against women and their resistance in South Asia. So, I am going to talk about three types of theories to help readers understand how different theoretical frameworks work together to help us understand the complex sociocultural and historical matrix that leads to violence against women. Here, I agree with Jana L. Jasinski and argue that a comprehensive understanding (Figure 1) of micro-oriented concepts, macro-oriented explanations, and multidimensional interpretations can assist in conceptualizing this expansive and diverse domain.

Figure 1: Theoretical Model of Violence Against Women

![Figure 1: Theoretical Model of Violence Against Women](https://www.eduionic.com/paradigms/gender-studies/theories-of-violence-against-women/)

Source: Dockrell and Messer (1999, p. 139)
The micro perspective is reflected in social learning theory, psychopathology, psychological, and physiological interpretations, resource theory, and exchange theory as factors that cause violence against women. In contrast to micro theories, macro or sociocultural theories are based on the social and cultural circumstances that make violence against women conceivable. These encompass the cultural acceptance of violent activity, patriarchal and women’s issues, a violent cultural tradition, and compositional emotional turmoil. Sociocultural theoretical approaches examine the impact of social location (social economic standing, youth development, and economy) on violence against women and therefore intend to incorporate both social structure and familial dynamics. Simultaneously, multidimensional theories address gender and violence, the male peer-support paradigm, and the societal etiological framework, and incorporate both socio-structural and individual features into consideration (Jasinski, 2001).

Oftentimes, theoretical notions relating to violence against women intersect, making it difficult for readers to discern and identify their core principles. I give a specific example of the correlation between intimate partner abuse and violent threats against women. Here, I provide a brief overview of the efficacy of five theoretical concepts: sexism, family violence, dependency, exchange, and status inconsistency. The five theories cannot be easily identified in their elemental state because they overlap, making direct comparison difficult (Rodrguez-Menés & Safranoff, 2012, p. 584). On wife beating, the sexism perspective may be largely attributed to R. Emerson Dobash and Russell Dobash’s (1979) early feminist work. Scholars working on this issue argue that asymmetrical power dynamics between men and women in patriarchal countries are the principal cause of intimate partner violence among women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Yllo, 1993). Arguments about family violence show that patriarchy is only one variable in a complex network of disparities and hierarchies that foster violent environments (Gelles, 1993; Straus et al., 1980). This “socio-economic” approach challenges sexism scholars’ ignoring of elements such as social status that predict family violence separately or in conjunction with gender (Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Lee, 2000). By emphasizing women’s absolute resources, dependency theory examines how minimal possibilities and various restrictions resulting from women’s positions in the socio-economic structural system adversely impact women’s autonomy over their lives, rendering them dependent on their male counterparts and increasing the likelihood of victimization (Harway & Hansen, 2004; Kim & Gray, 2008). Exchange theory is also a component of a larger ‘bargaining power’ paradigm that signifies women’s resources as compared to men’s, where resources enable the exercise of authority by whoever has more. When exchange theory is combined with patriarchal culture, the subjugation of women appears as its most fundamental aspect and the primary causative source of violent action (Gelles, 1983; Johnson, 1995; Rodriguez-Menés & Safranoff, 2012). Theoretical arguments about status inconsistency can be linked to the work of J. E. O’Brien (1971), Hyman Rodman (1972), and Richard J. Gelles (1974). These authors show how differences in professional and educational accomplishments that favor women in interpersonal interactions upset traditional patriarchal views and lead to violence and aggression.

While discussing intimate partner violence, it is essential to note that numerous theories and models have been developed to comprehend IPV in recent years. Different theories, such as biological, cognitive, feminist, observational, and ecological, can be applied to classify these ideas and concepts. While some of the theoretical perspectives have already been mentioned, I would like to highlight two models, namely Lenore Walker’s (1979) The Cycle of Violence (Figure 2), the Duluth model (Figure 3), and Lori L. Heise’s Ecological Model (Fig. 4) in this brief editorial. Commonly presented, Lenore Walker’s cycle of violence comprises three phases: tension building, abuse or explosion, and honeymoon, or repentance and forgiveness. It explains the events leading up to a violent act as well as the aftermath that gives victims hope.
that it won’t happen anymore. However, the argument of this theoretical model was short-lived because women’s experiences did not align with the concept (Ali & Naylor, 2013, p. 613).

**Figure 2: The cycle of violence**

The Power and Control Wheel (Figure 3) was developed by Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs in Duluth, MN. Analysis of the general pattern of abusive and violent actions practiced by a batterer or abuser to exercise and retain control over his victim is simplified by the Power and Control model. One or more violent acts are frequently followed by a variety of other types of violence that are more difficult to recognize, yet they develop a habit of coercion and exercise power in the relationship. Here, power and control constitute the center of the wheel, as this is essentially what the abuser seeks to accomplish. The spokes of the wheel are comprised of eight methods, and they are the most common kinds of violence that victims encounter. Physical and sexual violence constitute the rim of the wheel since they strengthen the other strategies and assist in keeping the sufferer in the relationship. But the problem with this model rests on the fact that it can lead to an ideology where females are largely perceived as victims and males are commonly regarded as perpetrators, and thus it can contribute nothing to evaluate violence in same-sex relationships.

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https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol24/iss6/1
It is worth mentioning that The Equality Wheel, another model developed by Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs in Duluth, MN, offers a viable alternative to power and control, enabling both women and men to distinguish between a violent relationship and one that is constructive and helpful for both groups. The Ecological Model (Figure 4) explains the prevalence of violence against women and aids in the identification of relevant preventive solutions. This model has four levels: individual, relationships, community, and society. The overlapping rings as shown in the model represent the interconnectedness and interdependence of the variables. The model also argues that multiple elements at different levels must be concurrently studied and reviewed to address the issue of interpersonal violence. Unlike the theories and models, I have briefly discussed so far, feminist perspectives look at how larger social forces like patriarchy contribute to violence against women.

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5 Particularly, the Equality Wheel was developed so men could understand what was required to transform a violent relationship into a nonviolent one. For further reading: https://www.raftcares.org/resources/community-blog/trading-the-power-and-control-wheel-for-the-equality-wheel/
As this special issue primarily focuses on violence against women, the contributors paid particular attention to the feminist approach to addressing violence and the interconnected oppressive structures that come from inequalities. The feminist model of addressing violence incorporates racism (stereotyping based on skin color), sexism (gender-based discrimination), classism (discrimination associated with socioeconomic condition), casteism (prejudice or marginalization based on caste), hetero-sexism (valuing or presuming that everyone is heterosexual), ageism (age-based discrimination), ethnicism, ethnocentrism, and transphobia among others. Since violence is the consequence of injustice, exploitation, and prejudice, the feminist model can assist in preventing the application of repressive tactics. Radical feminism has made a significant impact on the sociological study of women’s abuse, even though there are numerous versions of feminist views on violence disseminated across the literature (DeKeseredy, Ellis, & Alvi, 2005). Radical feminists contend that men actively engage in this practice because they need or want to control women, and their arguments have been instrumental in “breaking the silence” on the assorted varieties of male-to-female violence, victimization, and the resultant trauma (Kelly, 1988). This special issue on women in South Asia demonstrates the assertion that violence against women is “widespread” and “omnipresent” (Liddle, 1989) in developed civilized societies and beyond. This suggests that the literary framework on women’s issues in South Asia may also help to understand how the very hegemonic Western feminist theory may be deficient in understanding the reality of violence against women in developing and third-world countries. Here I am talking about “intersectionality” (Fig. 5), a concept proposed in the United States by black feminist scholars, activists, and thinkers (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Nash, 2008) that examines the experiences of

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women who are impacted by the privileges and limitations associated with other social groups to which they belong.

Figure 5: Intersectionality and Oppression

By challenging the homogenous idea that all women’s experiences are identical, intersectionality highlights the significance of systemic structural inequalities and power dynamics stemming from different identities and orientations, such as gender, race, and class, which overlap and have a cumulative effect on women’s issues and experiences (Karmakar, 2022, pp. 388-389). While discussing intersectionality, it is important to note that trans individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer (LGBQ) may be more susceptible to sexual assault and harassment due to the intersection of gender and variety in sexual orientation. The term transgender, frequently reduced to trans, refers to people whose gender identification and expression differ from the biological sex assigned to them at birth (Schilt & Lagos, 2017; Ussher et al., 2022). Trans women are individuals whose gender at birth was male but who now identify as female. Trans women choose a variety of descriptions for their gender identification, including “woman, femme, nonbinary, gender queer, gender fluid, gender nonconforming, gender diverse, and nonbinary transfeminine” (Ussher et al., 2022, p. 3554). Because of the interaction of gender, sexuality, race, and socioeconomic class, trans women of color often encounter additional discrimination and stereotypes. Based on sociological and public health theories, the socio-ecological model (Figure 6) below illustrates how transgender individuals get stigmatized. This model (Baral et al., 2013; Link & Phelan, 2006) suggests that transgender individuals are stereotyped on three levels as well as through three different

mechanisms: structural, interpersonal, and individual. While structural stigma refers to the societal conventions and institutional regulations that limit access to resources, interpersonal stigma refers to direct or performed manifestations of stigma such as verbal abuse, physical aggression, and sexual assault based on one’s gender expression or identity. Individual stigma refers to the experiences people have about themselves or the perceptions they believe others have about them, which might influence future behavior, such as the expectation and avoidance of discrimination (White Hughto et al., 2015, pp. 222-223). Simultaneously, cross-cultural anthropological and ethnographic investigations of violence against women, such as David Levinson’s (1989) and Counts, Brown, and Campbell’s (1992) assessment of fourteen cultural contexts, highlighting the significance of sociological and cultural ideologies, including gender relations, in the affirmation and advancement of violence against women (Niaz, 2003, p. 176).

Figure 6: Socio-ecological Model; Transgender individuals and Stigmatization

All of the above-mentioned concepts (both theoretical arguments and models) are hypotheses that can, to a certain extent, comprehensively characterize violence against women. Echoing the contributors’ arguments, I agree that the “violence continuum” chooses the female

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8 Retrieved from the article “Transgender stigma and health: A critical review of stigma determinants, mechanisms, and interventions” by Jaclyn M. White Hughto, Sari L. Reisner and John E. Pachankis. This article can be accessed via this link: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.11.010
body as the prime site of violence and also the prime medium to delineate the trajectories of the violated bodies in terms of docility, volatility, and performativity. In this issue, contributors investigate the various dimensions of women’s narratives in South Asian literature and popular culture in which the female body is no longer relegated and has been elevated to fundamental preoccupation and driving force. Taking into account the collective arguments of the contributors, I consider it necessary to present a very concise overview of the western theoretical framework regarding body studies in respect to feminist interventions. By breaking the notion of the fixed body that is colonized under the discursive practices of objectification by the patriarchal system, materialist, and Cartesian concepts, contributors echo feminist theorists and attempt to establish the rationality, fluidity, performativity, functionality, and subjectivity of the female body. Michael Foucault places the body in the premise of the power structure, and for him, the body is not biologically fixed and pre-given but is a part of the cultural discourse that encompasses “gender performativity,” a term used by Judith Butler. The body under power is docile and also provides the site for resistance. While Frederick Nietzsche’s postulation sees the body as the agent of knowledge and resistance because of the energy and impetus of its forces, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari render the body’s corporeality, radical refiguring of ontology concerning its intensity, desiring machinery, schizophrenia, and its rejection of binary opposition described as “rhizomatics.” Addressing his ideas of a “semiotic society,” Bryan S. Turner depicts how cultural, social, and political issues are expressed and fought out by the body. By viewing the corporeality of the female body, Elizabeth Grosz opines that bodies are volatile because they act and react, function productively and interactively, and generate what is unpredictable, new, and surprising. Because of their mobility and changeability, racially, sexually, and culturally dominated female bodies resist the ethics and aesthetics of power structures. Taking a cue from the Foucauldian ideology of the disciplinary body, Judith Butler and Susan Bordo accentuate the body’s performativity, acts, and gestures. Luce Irigaray chooses “volume fluidity” to symbolize how women controllably resist the masculine and patriarchal fantasy of a female body, and Julia Kristeva showcases the emanations, drives, and pulsations of a female body to address its materiality. Simultaneously, South Asian feminists including Ania Loomba, Ratna Kapoor, Kumari Jayawardena, Vandana Shiva, Gayatri Spivak, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, and Urvashi Butalia, among others, contributed to rethinking colonial and postcolonial literature and history; law; society and the nation-state; domestic sphere and family; ethnic and religious orientations; sexualities; fresh perspectives of female agency; patriarchy’s workings; and potential ideologies for postcolonial feminism.

Regarding the overlapping theoretical and contextual justifications of the articles in this issue, contributors emphasize that violence in South Asian women’s narratives is grounded in intersecting narratives that can result in prejudice and exclusion of women. The contributors to this special issue appear to suggest that diversified narratives of women in South Asia can be studied by multifaceted knowledge, collective resistance, and transnational activism to promote transformation and awareness. Critical perspectives on western and non-western frameworks necessitate the notion that realities can be uncovered through the assessment of these existent circumstances in the contemporary socio-cultural and political structure of South Asia. Figure 7 (which can be seen as a non-exhaustive illustration of violence and resistance) demonstrates how research findings can collectively make people aware of repressive structures and create the space for multiple voices to be heard (Egbert & Sanden, 2019).
Figure 7: Model of Feminist Theory

Taking into account some of the theoretical discourses on the body, violence against women, and their resistance and agency, the contributors in this special issue evaluate the narratives of women in the context of the history, society, and culture of South Asia. So, this special issue, in an open and constrained way, articulates feminist epistemology and adds an emphasis on multifarious forms of embodiment that befuddle normative boundaries and humanist paradigms of the validation of male supremacy.

“Feminism Without Borders”: South Asia in Focus

In South Asia, violence is intricately connected with cultural discourses, whether it is caste-inflicted violence, terrorism, or violence based on gender discrimination. Sexist abuse of women by men, as well as patriarchal and colonial violence on women by both men and women, have come to public attention in the past two decades in the Indian subcontinent, and this is a phenomenon that needs serious introspection. The culturally accepted superiority of men over women in every spectrum of life has faithfully catered to the violence against women. The validation of male superiority by popular religious practices that are heavily discriminatory against women has further “normalized” the undue exercise of power over women. At the same time, it has been observed that trans and non-binary women are often subjected to transphobic hate crimes and state violence. The amalgamation of Hindu, Islam, Buddhist, and Christian ethics and patriarchal family structure highlights the socio-political and economic suppression of women, exemplifying how violence is gendered in the subcontinent. Within the spectrum of this gendered violence, violence is decoded through the problematized network of bolstered masculinity, which works in multifarious domains of the “social ecology.” The 2020 Asia-Pacific regional snapshot of violence against women (Figure 7) highlights the predominance and dynamics of violence against women in Asia-Pacific regions.

Due to their gender and their vulnerable position as members of a minority or other marginalized group, women in economically, historically, and culturally weaker sections of society in South Asia experience a double risk of violence. This violence is often institutionalized at all phases of a woman’s life within diversified communities in South Asia, and consequently becomes the standard practice. Among these groups are women from Dalit and indigenous communities in Bangladesh, India, and Nepal, as well as women from ethnic,

9 Retrieved from Feminist Theory by Jo Ann Arinder. Link to access the chapter:  
https://opentext.wsu.edu/theoreticalmodelsforteachingandresearch/chapter/feminist-theory/
religious, and sexual minority groups throughout South Asia (PDSN and IDSN, 2013). In times of conflict (sectarian, ethnic, and civil among others), women from socially disadvantaged communities and religious minorities are especially susceptible to rape and other forms of sexual violence in South Asia (GOI 2002; Kapadia 2002; SAARC 2006; Sen 2007; Government of Sri Lanka 2011). Notably, when intending to accomplish the Millennium Development Goals, several governments in South Asian nations fail to monitor the progress of minority groups, instead concentrating on communities that are easiest to access and whose inequity is least expensive to address (Minority Rights Group International, 2013, p. 12; Solotaroff and Pande, 2014, pp. 117-118). In their struggle to cope with multifaceted violence, South Asian women and their families often fail to seek justice for themselves because of their reluctance to reveal their horrifying experiences. However, in the last two decades, activists have come forth to break taboos, raise public awareness, expose violence, conduct campaigns, initiate life-skill programmes, and engage men and household members in a systematic way to address and resist violence and gender indiscrimination in South Asia. Writers from South Asia have made an extraordinary effort to depict the symbolic, cultural, and epistemic violence that affects women and also attempt to break the silence imposed on victims by a biased structural society. With their “public” discourses on “private” violence, they challenge the corrupted and dictatorial system, and with their authenticated forms of commonly validated narratives, they dismantle the dichotomous relationship between the private and public worlds.

Figure 8: Violence Against Women - Regional Snapshot (2020)\(^{10}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year of data collection</th>
<th>Survey methodology</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Last 12 months</th>
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<td>21,324</td>
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<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>2015</td>
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<td>3,070</td>
<td>15-49</td>
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<td>15-49</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
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<tr>
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Women from historically excluded and disadvantaged groups (diverse in regards to ethnicity, religion, caste, and tribes) become vulnerable to trafficking, gender discrimination, and disciplinary extremism in South Asia, as evidenced in this issue. Interpretations of wartime rape, honor, gender roles, and restrained sexual orientation, which establish the cultural boundaries of acceptable and normal ideals of a “good” woman, illustrate many of the chronic

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threats of violence that South Asian women confront (Solotaroff and Pande, 2014). The articles in this issue demonstrate how the geopolitics of religion, minority, caste, military conflict, racial and ethnic profiling, taboos, and stigma, as well as the varied gendered functionalities of the patriarchal ideology that pervades much of South Asia, impact community dynamics. At the same time, contributors from a wide range of literary, sociocultural, historical, and ideological contexts examine South Asian women’s resistance, autonomy, and agency as requiring a shifting of power (Nancy, 1995; Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005) and mechanisms of intervention at the specific, contextual, and collective levels (Batiwala 2007; Cornwall and Edwards 2014; Nazneen et al., 2019). Echoing Ania Loomba and Ritty A. Lukose, this special issue intends to comprehend the trajectories of South Asian feminisms by studying the concerns throughout the region, with its long-standing and cross-cutting narratives of colonialism, nationalist ideologies, and women’s movements, as well as challenges around sexuality, religious practice, individual rights, military conflict, harmony, neoliberalism, and the contemporary iterative development of hegemony and the subjugation of labor (Loomba & Lukose, 2012, p. 1), and can expand the greater theoretical praxis of feminist epistemologies of the South. This mention of the epistemologies of the South (Figure 8), a term coined by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014), provides a framework of reference to recognize the realities of the South from the perspectives of the South.

![Figure 9: The Epistemologies of the South](image)

This concept acknowledges the development and integration of contemporaneous, alternative, and mutually reinforcing social structures and local knowledge. The epistemologies of the South are premised on two propositions: the inadequacy of the Western perspective on the world and the boundless accessibility of knowledge based on boundless heterogeneity. These two distinct foundations of the epistemologies of the South recognize the limitations of Western homogeneous standpoints, enabling the emergence of new and disregarded epistemologies (Tchoumi, 2020, p. 6). Understanding South Asian feminism through perspective of the Global South can pave the way for “cognitive justice,” which is the ability to recognize the varied methods of perceiving individuals’ lives and their existence in South Asia. Here, I agree with Santos, who explains why global social justice cannot exist without

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global cognitive justice, and argues that Western supremacy has profoundly side-lined the indigenous understandings and knowledge of women’s issues in South Asia. Like Sonia Reverter, I also believe that the connotation of an epistemic transition, along with a decolonial and postcolonial feminist perspective, can provide us with a more comprehensive way to understand violence against women and their resistance in South Asia, a part of the Global South. The contributors to this volume address the global conundrum of violence from the perspective of South Asian epistemologies and explore the possibilities for addressing violence against women in South Asia and articulating their resistance. As a result, South Asian feminism cannot be contained within a clearly defined or homogeneous structure, and an intersectional feminist methodology can be used to address multiple dimensions of violence, prejudice, and power abuse (Azim et al., 2009, p. 3; Reverter, 2022, pp. 5-9).

**Concluding remarks**

While formulating my concepts for the introduction to my issue on violence and resistance of women in South Asia from a multidisciplinary perspective, I decided not to confine myself to feminist theories on violence and resistance because I believe that any such predetermined interpretation can provide a partial accounting in which even a comprehensive explanation of methodologies can lead to particular findings. Even when attempting to theorize components of violence, concentration on specific notions with the assumption that their explanations are applicable to other contexts (Brubaker, 2019, p. 3; 2021, p. 718) can be problematic. Intriguingly, contributors to this issue avoided this generalization when they examined multifaceted conceptions of violence and resistance of women in South Asia by incorporating a plethora of western and non-western theoretical framework in their articles and conceptual understanding. In this context, they testified to Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s notion of “feminism beyond borders,” which discusses the politics of difference and solidarity, decolonizing and democratizing feminist practice, the crossing of borders, and the relationship between feminist experience and understanding and social movements (Mohanty, 2003a; 2003b). Here I would like to mention that postcolonial feminist thinkers like Spivak (1985; 1988; 1999) and Mohanty (1988; 1991) opine that discursive practices of feminist writing colonize the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the Global South and generate a reinforced, singular image of Global South women. As feminist interpretations are interdisciplinary in nature, contributors here methodically incorporated Western rhetoric along with indigenous and third-world feminist arguments to demonstrate the heterogeneity and multiplicity of South Asian feminism. When contributors discuss how women in South Asia experience violence in myriad ways and how they resist it, depending on the sociocultural and political circumstances of their location, the cumulative study shows that a robust study of decolonial feminist interventions can provide adequate correctives to the exclusionary dynamics of liberal feminist perspectives. This ideology of decolonial feminism, a term coined by María Lugones (2008; 2010), creates a space for the expressions and perceptions of marginalized, “othered” women and prioritizes all knowledge and subjective experience equivalently, thereby establishing a new methodology within the geopolitics of knowledge production, one that requires respect for the cultural pluralism of differences (Manning, 2021, pp. 1204-1210). The articles and feminist reflective pieces in this volume establish a framework for the violated bodies with wounded histories and traumatic memories of women in South Asia to become agents of knowledge production in the South Asian literary landscape. I conclude the introduction with the expectation and conviction that this issue, like other critical perspectives on women’s issues in South Asia, can contribute to the development of an inclusive transnational solidarity, political cohesiveness, subaltern epistemology, critical border thinking, and the intersubjective and collective dimension of South Asian feminism.
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