New Cosmopolitanisms: South Asians in the U.S. (review)

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memoir, Asian American studies, and American Studies. Scholars interested in shaking up academic stylistic conventions will enjoy engaging with Kumar's text. At his best, Kumar provides nuance to deep and complex questions faced by all diasporic communities, who deal with not just loss but gain, not just memory but imagination. Is it possible, he asks, "to use the memories of our loss . . . and even our sometimes huge gains to reflect not only on our past but also on the processes through which we *create* our pasts?" (31).

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New Cosmopolitanisms: South Asians in the U.S. Edited by Gita Rajan and Shailja Sharma. Palo Alto and London: Stanford University Press, 2006.

New Cosmopolitanisms is an important and well-researched scholarly text that advances the dialogue between Asian American Studies and Diaspora and Globalization Studies. The text is a welcome addition to existing scholarship specifically in South Asian American Studies, such as texts by Rajini Srikanth, Sunaina Maira, and Karen Leonard, among others. *New Cosmopolitanisms*, a unique volume of six disciplinary and interdisciplinary essays, provides new illuminations to discussions of Bollywood cinema, religion, and museum collections on South Asia. The essays discuss visual and written media along with cultural expression in the practice of religion. Two essays worth noting for their original subject-matter in South Asian American Studies are Vidhya Dehejia's essay on how ethnic art is museumized and packaged for general consumption, and Dana S. Iyer and Nick Haslam's essay on eating disorders among South Asian American women.

The editors, Rajan and Sharma, present an original rethinking of the notion of the cosmopolitan by defining "new cosmopolitans as people who blur the edges of home and abroad by continuously moving physically, culturally, and socially, and by selectively using globalized forms of travel, communication, languages, and technology to position themselves between two homes, sometimes even through dual forms of citizenship, but always in multiple locations" (2–3). This configuration differs from traditional notions of diaspora that usually describe people moving from one space to a different one that becomes home. On the other hand, contemporary cosmopolitans may have multiple homes and intervene socially both in homeland and adopted homes. They inhabit "diasporas in motion," which includes the movement of people and of "capital, technology, media forms." The editors aptly recognize that "the new partakes of the old," and ground

their discussion of new cosmopolitanism in the formative work of immigration scholars, historians, anthropologists, and cultural critics.

In discussions of diaspora, the dimension of class is often left out. Its inclusion is an important contribution of this volume that recognizes the new cosmopolitans as belonging to different classes—professional middle class, the wealthy, and working class. This provides a strikingly different picture from the dark-suited cosmopolitan, mostly of an elite class, sometimes also an exile or expatriate. In the contemporary moment, South Asian-origin folks of different classes and generations partake equally of the South Asian homeland captured on Bollywood cinema, or in religious practice in temples, mosques, and prayer halls, or in satisfying nostalgia for South Asian foods. Their participation in U.S. public life, although described as a "new trend," is not entirely so, although perhaps more visible now than in earlier times as researched by scholars such as Karen Leonard and Susan Koshy. The editors also subtly point to a paradoxical reality of "shifting relationships between class and privilege that account for this group's success, which coexists with a level of invisibility" (7).

Iftikhar Dadi's essay on "The Pakistani Diaspora in North America" traces the complex history of Muslim identity. Dadi explores how the older paradigms of "diasporic cultural expressivity" in literary texts are being "supplemented by new expressive possibilities that are enacted at the popular level in various media, in activism, as well as in academia" (37). Dadi usefully articulates the problem of referring only to India in discussions of South Asia, leaving Pakistan out along with other nations that constitute the sub-continent. This essay discusses the constitution of the Pakistani diaspora, nationalism and cultural expression, class, gender, and religion, political activism by exemplary figures such as the late Eqbal Ahmad. Dadi closes with a very useful section on "the Aftermath of September 11" that provides extensive references on the racial profiling of Pakistani-Americans and other South Asian Americans.

"Identity and Visibility: Reflections on Museum Displays of South Asian Art" by Vidhya Dehejia explores the activity of museum curators in dealing with South Asian art, its selection process and target audiences. Muslim art is situated in the important contemporary context of "cosmopolitanism." Deheja reminds us that "Asian" art in museums mostly referred to East Asia, and that South Asia is a relative newcomer. Although wealthy art collectors such as Norton Simon have museums that display Indian bronzes, the viewing of sculpted gods—Siva, or Ganesha—traditionally belonged to temples and "their primary aim," notes Dehejia, "was to inspire devotion" (73). For South Asian Americans, unlike mainstream Americans, museum visits are not a common activity. Dehejia cites a striking sta-

tistic: "One in every 480 adults in the United States is a museum volunteer" (71). Museums nowadays invite second-generation South Asian Americans so that, as Americans, they may learn to adopt this as a routine leisure activity.

Karen Leonard, a highly respected scholar of the history of South Asian immigrants in the early twentieth century, astutely analyzes the "contemporary religious scene in the late twentieth-century United States" (92). This arena is influenced significantly by class and demographic factors including "numbers, types, and origins of co-religionists [that] play important roles in determining the religious identities of immigrants" (92). In "South Asian Religions in the US: New Contexts and Configurations," Leonard situates different South Asian religions—Punjabi Sikh, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, and Zoroastrian— within the context of cosmopolitanism. Leonard's approach enables cross-cultural comparisons with other religions and geographies where the same religions are practiced. Her discussion, exemplary for its breadth and depth of analysis, delineates an important distinction between "the transnational and cosmopolitan." In building "religio-ethnic identities in the United States," Leonard points out that South Asian immigrants have to face "issues of citizenship, identity, and hybridity." Even within the same religious group, there are important differences of class, education, and language. Leonard notes that "like American Buddhists, Muslims cannot be viewed as a diasporic community but as an American Muslim community in the making" (100). Within the U.S. context, new challenges are posed to "religious authority and gender" inequities. Apart from the dominant religions of Hinduism and Islam, Leonard's essay sheds important light on South Asian Christians, Zoroastrians, and Buddhists, with innovative comparisons among their demographics and changes in their diasporic versus homeland practices.

Jigna Desai's essay, "Bollywood Abroad," situates cinema as "central to thinking through pleasure and power and how they impinge on the cosmopolitan constructions of South Asian American subjectivity" (115). Bollywood cinema is global, with crossover appeal that often re-inscribes the most regressive patriarchal traditions. A monolithic Indian-ness, targeted to second-generation youth, is problematic. Most films are set partly in India and partly outside where diasporic communities abound as in New York, London, and Melbourne. Visual representations of home satisfy the nostalgic first generation, and familiar landscapes abroad fulfils the second-generation's daily reality. Desai points out that even as "cultural differences are offered up within a Eurocentric framework"; this unfortunately "does not dismantle the ways in which imperialism, global capitalism, and Eurocentrism operate" (121). The portrayal of Non Resident Indians (NRI), although westernized and wealthy, staunchly remain "truly Indian." One

expression of this is retaining male privilege in both homeland and diaspora. Upholding older patriarchs operates sometimes as overcompensating the adherence to cultural tradition. These westernized South Asians remain Indian at heart and part of the religio-cultural milieu of "the real India." The heroines in these movies are both westernized and traditionally Indian. "Diasporic cosmopolitanism" and "cosmopolitan transnationality" mark the success of Bollywood cinema.

The next essay by Nick Haslam and Dana Iyer, "The Psychological Cost of New Cosmopolitanism: Eating Disorders," explores a disturbing reality of eating disorders influenced partly by globalization and media images of the thin female body as the ideal of beauty. The authors maintain that this "thin ideal by South Asians . . . is likely to give rise to a new kind of cosmopolitanism, one that looks at people as objects of desire, irrespective of race" (138). However, this claim contradicts a later assertion in the essay, namely that "exclusionary and racialized responses of other Americans" towards South Asian American women lead to a "sense of not belonging." I agree that a racist environment may contribute to dissatisfaction with one's body image, but thinness as a way of belonging is disturbing and destructive to bodily health if this leads to eating disorders. Eating disorders among South Asian American women is an important topic for further scholarship.

This essay nicely complements Desai's on Bollywood cinema essay where female beauty is embodied in thin female heroines dressed in highly revealing Indian and Western style clothing. The display of Rani Mukherjee's long, shapely legs is a far cry from the traditional sari that definitely covers the legs even though it exposes the midriff.

The final essay, "Theorizing Recognition: South Asian Authors in a Global Milieu" by Rajan and Sharma, presents a fine discussion of literary figures whose work is increasingly visible in the mainstream. Authors have received major prizes such as the Pulitzer to Jhumpa Lahiri (Indian-American), the Booker to Micheal Ondaatje (Sri Lankan-Canadian), and Amitav Ghosh's refusal to accept the 2001 Commonwealth Prize for Fiction. These writers are "global," borrowing from themes and languages with wide appeal to audiences that have become familiar with "an ethnic undertow in place of a racial or exotic aesthetic" (151). Since these writers are "more approachable, [they] breach class, race, and gender lines to situate themselves inside a fluid space we call new cosmopolitanism" (152). These new works are regarded both as "high 'literary' culture as well as a marketable commodity by being positioned upon the double-edged sword of recognition" (168). Texts such as Lahiri's *The Interpreter of Maladies* explore multiple homes, multiethnicity, and "deftly yoke together the local with the global." Further, Rajan and

Sharma insightfully point out that this writing "ultimately comforts and absolves the global reader." The essay includes a very fine discussion of publishing trends and how certain authors/topics are marketable versus others.

New Cosmopolitanisms is a must read for scholars in South Asian American Studies, especially for the material and approaches that bring significant insights into the theoretical conjunctures and disjunctures between Asian American and Diaspora Studies. The volume is noteworthy for including different topics such as religion, literature, cinema, and art collections and for their interdisciplinary discussion with scholarly rigor and lucidity.

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Identities in Motion: Asian American Film and Video. By Peter X. Feng. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002.

In the introduction to his 2002 edited collection, *Screening Asian Americans*, Peter X. Feng describes Asian American film studies' incipient stage in which "every essay on Asian American cinema is forced to define its parameters, to constitute the field of inquiry afresh" (7). That Feng's own scholarship goes a long way toward establishing significant points of reference in a fast-developing field is evident in his 2002 monograph, *Identities in Motion: Asian American Film and Video*. This text is sure to be "required reading," not only for Asian American film studies, but for Asian American Studies more generally. Unlike such texts as Gina Marchetti's *Romance and the "Yellow Peril"* (1993) and Eugene Franklin Wong's *On Visual Media Racism* (1978), which concentrate their analyses on the Orientalist portrayals in mainstream American films, Feng's *Identities in Motion* focuses on those films and videos with Asian Americans *behind* the camera. A few edited collections have provided a meeting place for this conversation, including Russell Leong's *Moving the Image: Independent Asian Pacific American Media Arts* (1991), Darrell Y. Hamamoto and Sandra Liu's *Countervisions: Asian American Film Criticism* (2000), and, of course, Feng's own edited collection *Screening Asian Americans*, but *Identities in Motion* is more akin to Jun Xing's *Asian America Through the Lens* (1998) as a monograph offering a sustained analysis of the politics of representing identity and history. The unique and important contribution of Feng's text is its theory of racialized representations, based in the specifics of film and video, yet with larger repercussions for how we conceive of identity, stereotypes, and political resistance.