

## Unmasking Post-Truth Narratives: Interpreting “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse” through the Prism of Distorted Realities

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### ABSTRACT

Post-truth is built as a theory after its recognition by Oxford English Dictionary in 2016, as the word of the year because of the increasing usage by politically active communities and people, among them alt-right and Brexiteer was at the highest use this term in the US for denoting the political situation out there. Post-truth is majorly referring to or indicating situations in which appeals to emotion and personal conviction have a greater impact on public opinion than do factual facts. The signs of the origin of this term can be traced from the word “truthiness” coined by Stephen Colbert in 2005, which could be described as being convinced of something's truthfulness even though it isn't necessarily supported by the facts. Chandra Talpade Mohanty in her essay “Under the Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse.” attacks the bogus Post-truth and monolithic statement of Western feminists and philosophers about third-world women regardless of their race, class, geographic location, or religion and without any knowledge about women of third world nation and their priorities. In order to get the superior position even in pointing out the difficulties faced by third-world women, the first-world feminists judging their way of daily routine in the light of subjugation, suppression, and ostracization, which could be seen through the post-truth theory. The essay was first published in 1986 as the opening chapter of *Feminist without Borders*. To make her point more clear Mohanty supports her statements with anti-post-truth examples, the gendered division of labour, the veiling of women, or women's financial dependency on males. According to Mohanty, unless these examples are taken into account in context, these data by themselves are not a useful source of knowledge. Western feminists' views will be incorrect and ineffectual in assisting the communities they are attempting to assist if they base them on these observable realities. So the approach of this paper is to analyze these post-truth statements with reference of the essay by Mohanty where she depicts the individual differences of third-world women and asks for strategic essentialism against these postcolonial and post-truth ways of presenting things by third-world nations.

**Keywords:** *Post-truth, monolithic, femininity, subjugation, postcolonial, third world, first world, strategic essentialism, racism.*

Any discussion of post-truth necessitates a presumptive knowledge of reality. One must first wrestle with the idea of truth in order to evaluate post-truth. Does "truth" include evidence and facts? Is it possible to discover an objective truth? If there was never a “real” truth, just truths, then why is there all of the sudden excitement about post-truth, and what does it mean? By

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itself, these queries express a very postmodernist cynicism towards reality in general. Post-truth is defined as more a feeling, strong forceful opinion than a fact by Lee McIntyre in his book *Post-Truth* (2018). According to the Oxford Dictionaries, “post-truth” refers to or describes situations in which appeals to sentiment and personal conviction have a greater influence on public opinion than do objective facts. In doing so, they emphasize that the prefix “post” is intended to convey the concept that truth has been overshadowed and is no longer significant, rather than that we are “past” truth in the sense of time (as in post-war). Many philosophers take offence at these remarks, but it's important to remember that this is much more than just a disagreement amongst scholars (Hyvönen 2-3)

Philosophy’s conception of truth dates back to Plato, who spoke of the perils of making unfounded claims to knowing via Socrates. Socrates believed that ignorance could be overcome and that ignorance could be taught. Philosophers have, of course, disagreed for ages over the validity of this kind of “correspondence” theory, according to which the only way to determine a statement's truth is by how well it matches reality (Hussain 152). There appears to be little disagreement on the importance of truth as a value, despite the fact that philosophers have differing views regarding the best theory of truth. These views are represented by the concepts of coherencies, pragmatics, and semantic truth.

“Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” by Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Post-Truth philosophy attracts numerous scholars and intellectuals to write upon and give their insights in their articles and papers such as Richelle D. Schrock from Ohio Wesleyan University in her paper, “The Methodological Imperatives of Feminist Ethnography.” writes, Mohanty contends that by portraying women in the third world as a single, homogenous group who are just the victims of their patriarchal cultures and customs, Western feminists have appropriated colonial knowledge practices. Third-world women, according to her, are the “other” for Western feminists, who through conversation portray themselves as more fully formed humans than their non-equivalents in the West. Dr. Ritu Tyagi in her paper titled, “Understanding Postcolonial Feminism in relation with Postcolonial and Feminist Theories.” writes Mohanty specifically attacks colonialism in Western feminist studies as well as hegemonic Western scholarship. According to Mohanty, there is a “colonialist trend” in certain Western radical and liberal feminist literature that produces the “Third World” woman as a single, monolithic subject, similarly, Shery Liska, a scholar from Huron University College writes in her paper that Mohanty and Hoodfar suggested that we should acknowledge the knowledge and standpoint which comes straight from the marginalized

instead of making hasty generalization and monolithic approach, the title of her paper is, “Talking Back to White Feminism: An Intersectional Review.” In “Capitalism, postcolonialism and gender Complicating development.” Sara Salem describes how economic progress depends upon a patriarchal society and how each and every sphere of human life is dominated by males but Western feminists only consider third-world women a subjugated one. After reviewing the literature related to Mohanty’s work, this paper will analyze her essay under the light of Post-Truth tendency and how western scholars and feminists uses these Post-Truth tactics to colonize third-world nations especially the sensitive community i.e. women, and leave no other choice for them to get freedom from this tendency except believing first world way of liberation and faulty generalization.

The texts authored by Fran Hosken (victims of male violence), Maria Cutrufelli (victims of the colonial process), Juliette Minces (victims of Arab familial systems), Beverly Lindsay (victims of the economic development process), and Patricia Jeffrey (victims of the Islamic code) published by Zed Press under the “Third World Series” serve as the foundation for Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s accounts of western feminism in this essay. Mohanty provides an examination of these writers' writings, which non-Western feminists may find helpful as well. Mohanty breaks down the stereotypes of Third World women as typical victims. In their works, Hosken and Lindsay examine the connection between female genital mutilation and human rights in the Middle East and Africa. They portray all women in the Middle East as victims of aggression from men. According to Mohanty, this type of presentation confines women to a set location and locks them in a sociopolitical position of powerlessness. Thus, the dual system will continue to exist. What prompts Mohanty to contend is this form of totalization.

“Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses.” by Chandra Talpade Mohanty is a seminal essay that critically examines Western feminist scholarship and its representation of women in the global South. The essay was published in 1986 and has been influential in the fields of feminist theory, postcolonial studies, and critical race studies. Her critical essay again published in her book *Feminist Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, and Practicing Solidarity* in 2003. According to Simone de Beauvoir (1953), women find it difficult to get together due to their differences. For a woman, their tyranny is the only reality. According to Mohanty, “women are characterised as a unique group on the basis of a common oppression in each particular feminist perspective.” (Mohanty 337–38) As the author deftly points out, the historical and cultural realities of women's groups are not consistent with the premise that women are a homogeneous group. This indicates that patriarchal oppressions

against women—such as income inequality, spousal violence, and sexual assault—are comparable. Though the majority of women experience these abuses frequently enough, the reasons behind these oppressions differ throughout countries, racial groups, and socioeconomic circumstances. Mohanty contends that the first world, or the West, defines itself in relation to the developing world. The suggestion is that one that helps and encourages the other. Forming a non-homogenized community around “othered” women allows Western feminists to recognize what they are not. Regardless of the challenges facing the West, it is still preferable to be Western than to be the “other,” even as Western feminists are examining their societal problems through the prism of the “other.” Mohanty supports the colonial concept by using a late Marxist statement that states that it is the duty of those with wealth to represent the people if they are unable to do it themselves.

Feminist and postcolonial scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty advocates for a more globalized definition of feminism. Mohanty was born in 1955 in Mumbai, India, and subsequently obtained U.S. citizenship. She originally earned a B.A. in English from the University of Delhi in India in 1974. She then graduated with a Master's in English from the University of Delhi, India, in 1967. Following her move to the United States, she obtained a master's degree in English teaching and a doctorate in education from the University of Illinois. She also possesses two honorary doctorates. Mohanty is currently a Dean's Professor of the Humanities and a Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at Syracuse University (Joy; Rahman). Mohanty starts writing about this article while working on her dissertation.

Mohanty, sarcastically and in a realistic way, tries to unveil the homogenization and systemization of third-world women and their identity as monolithic others and subjugated entities who always need a spokesperson and substitute someone to protect their rights, and that grateful selfless deed could only be done by Western progressive feminist writers. Mohanty revisits those Western feminist texts and deconstructs their ideas of hidden colonization through her intellectually reasonable analytical power of words and illustration. There are numerous texts that she quotes and explains about how Western feminists are trying their best to close the doors of possibilities for third-world women. First, they are colonizing them directly, then show them how subjugated they are in the hands of their own cultural identity and traditions regardless of their separate identity, perspective, standpoint, religion, region, ethnicity, dialect, linguistic difference, and some undefined verifiable.

In this way, Mohanty asks the third-world women about strategic essentialism in order to sustain their regional femininity about which she talked earlier and asks, “Can the subaltern

speak?" in order to prove her point, she quotes Egyptian-French political scientist Anouar Abdel Malek, he says in his book *Social Dialects: Nation and Revolution* (1981) that the conflict for dominance over the direction, guidelines, and choices made during the global development process based on the advanced sector's monopoly on scientific knowledge and ideal creativity. In actuality, modern imperialism is a kind of hegemonic imperialism that strives to dominate hearts and minds while simultaneously employing a maximum amount of justified violence that has never been seen before. This violence is used both with fire and the sword. Since the military-industrial complex and the major Western cultural centers, which are all founded on highly developed levels of monopoly and finance capital and supported by the benefits of both the scientific and technological revolution and the second industrial revolution itself, have a combined influence that determines the content of these institutions.

There are numerous assumptions Mohanty talks about that Western feminists and scholars have regarding third-world women and their lifestyle, the very first one is women as a homogenous group or sisters in the same kind of struggle. She says it is common to confuse the historically particular material reality of women's organizations with the discursively agreed-upon homogeneity of "women" as a group. This leads to the assumption that women are a group that has always existed and has been labeled by feminist scientific, economic, legal, and sociological discourses as "powerless," "exploited," "sexually harassed," etc. (Note that this is quite similar to sexist discourse labeling women weak, emotional, having math anxiety, etc.) Finding the material and ideological details that make a certain group of women "powerless" in a certain situation is not the main goal. Instead, a range of examples of "powerless" groups of women are gathered to support the broad assertion that women lack agency. There are some writers who have similarities in their thoughts regarding third world women as oppressed ones such as Fran Hosken presents women as a victim of colonial domination, Maria Cutrufelli projects third world women as victims of Arab familial culture, Juliette Minces describes women as victims of male-centric economical domination regardless of numerous females from a lower middle-class background working in several places to make ends meet, and according to Patricia Jeffery third world, women are nothing but an object or projects in the hands of first world scholars.

Similar presumptions exist regarding women in the third world: that they are victims of male aggression, that they are universally dependent on men, that married women are victims of colonialism, that women and the family system, that women and religious ideologies, that women and the process of development, and that oppression of women is a global phenomenon.

Mohanty discovered that, despite differences in geography, religion, and ethnicity, Western feminist researchers frequently lump all third world women together and presume that they have similar needs. This worries Mohanty because assembling a team to perform analysis on the basis of a false assumption will provide unreliable findings. When that occurs, Western feminist activists focus on issues they see as being specific to third-world women, even when these issues are not the top priorities among third-world feminists. According to her, Western feminists often concentrate on issues like Muslim women donning headscarves, women being physically abused by males, and female genital mutilation in their efforts to assist women in the third world. While third-world women face several challenges, their top priorities are frequently more pressing needs like having access to enough food, clean water, and education. Similarly, Beverly Lindsay says in her edited book *Comparative Perspectives of Third World Women: The Impact of Race, Sex, and Class* (1983) that Dependency ties are being perpetuated by social, educational, and economic institutions on the basis of race, sex, and class. These are the connections between women in the Third World. Continue pointing post-truth tendency of western feminists scholars, Mohanty effectively depicts Maria Rosa Curtruffelli's opinion about women of Africa, she says the way African women are colonized and shun by their own community, there is only one profession left for them to support themselves financially and that is prostitution regardless of African women's own choice of opting prostitution as a profession, this is also one of the major post-truth tendency that all the prostitution wants liberation from this profession, and thinks this word as an insult which is not the entire truth, instead they want liberation from this stereotype and also want equal pay, legalization, as Nalini Jameela, a sex worker from South India has written her own life experience in a book *An Autobiography of A Sex Worker* (2010) which made her a well versed author, but post-truth society will not show them and their talent, similarly Sydney based sex worker Tilly Lawless wrote her book *Nothing But My Body* (2021). Mohanty goes on to criticize the disregard for the distinctiveness of women from the third world, which leads to the creation of two different categories: the Third World Woman and the Western Woman. Feminist literature typically presents the Western woman as strong, independent, educated, in control of her own body, and all-around better. In contrast, Third World women are viewed as weaker than Western women, repressed, uneducated, without rights, and all over inferior (Tyagi 45). The assumption that women are a homogeneous, coherent group with identical needs, interests, and aspirations that are independent of geography, socioeconomic class, or religious affiliation is flawed, according

to Mohanty. This line of thinking takes the assumption that women's shared experiences of oppression are what unite them as a community.

Patricia Jeffery reduces the identity of *pirzada* women from Middle East countries as a timid subjugated entity because they have the compulsion to veil themselves due to their strict *pardah* tradition, but Mohanty argues that there are certain regions in Iran and Arab where both man and women cover their heads because of some regional reasons as most of the part of Arab countries are surrounded with desert, so it's sort of need to cover their head-up. But whenever Western scholars say anything for third-world women, they always imply it for all women in third-world countries, their post-truth ideologies is just a strategic and systemized plan for mental colonization through reductionism.

Further in the development section, Mohanty describes how third-world women are considered equally in need of economic development regardless of their individual differences. Scholars and thinkers such as Irene Tinker, Michelle Bo Bramsen, Ester Boserup, and Perdita Huston said that the third world only needs economic development, which shows a deliberate tendency to put third-world women in a single monolithic coherent group without any consideration of their individual and other differences. Women are exploited by males. As previously said, these overly straightforward explanations are both reducible and unproductive when it comes to creating tactics to fight oppression. They only serve to further the binary distinctions between men and women.

Opposite to these above one-sided monolithic opinions regarding third-world women Maria Mies in her book *The Lace Makers of Narsapur: Indian Housewives Produce for the World Market* (1982) shows how women from Kapu, Gosha, Mala, and Madiga untouchable ethnic community earning their livelihood through lacing work and serving the world economics, still they are considered subjugated and uneducated ones as they are doing these works from their homes where they are dominating by their male members and society simultaneously, but this should not be the valid reason for not counting them as an economically independent member serving financial growth of their country and world economics. As there are so many women in Western countries also who are working from their homes under the dominance and patriarchal influence of their males, still they are consider independent and educated ones just because they are western (Liska 3-5).

Initially, Minces is attacked by Mohanty for classifying all Iranian women as "victims." According to Mohanty, there are Iranian women who have participated in many initiatives for women's rights, including the well-known One Million Signatures for Change campaign.

According to current figures, women have accounted for over 60% of university students in Iran since 1990. This has led the government to restrict the number of seats available for admission to female students. The number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Iran formed and managed by women for women increased from 54 to 600 between 1994 and 2008. According to Mohanty, Muslim women are the most marginalised (Praveena 398-99).

According to Hosken, "by equating purdah with rape, domestic violence, and forced prostitution...its "sexual control" function as the primary explanation for purdah, whatever the context" (347), Mohanty emphasizes Hosken's point of view. In her opinion, the literary community is likewise unaware of how Western scholarship affects the Third World and should refrain from categorizing them as helpless victims in need of rescue.

Additionally, Mohanty criticizes Western authors who consider themselves to be emancipated and secular. This, she claims, is not the whole story in the West. In the West, societal issues are still a fight. This, she claims, is not the whole story in the West. In the West, societal issues are still a fight (Schrock 50). Statistics show that women in Canada still earn thirty percent less than men do, and that in recent years, there have been serious problems with female human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and domestic abuse. The binary placement of Third World women against Western women is contested by Mohanty.

She addresses the intricacy, variety, and multiplicity that exist in both realms. The third world is described as "underdeveloped and economically dependent" (353) by Western writers; nevertheless, Mohanty contends that "the one has to enable and sustain the other. The cause of women will not benefit from this Western-centric viewpoint.

Thus the article "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse," talked about the sociological realization of women's "sameness" in enduring oppression—regardless of their class, culture, or geographic location—is what binds them together as sisters in battle. According to Mohanty, academics should keep in mind that they must be portrayed in their writings rather than trying to represent themselves. Through the Post-Truth and postcolonial tendency and tactics of colonizing the third-world women in the name of saving them from their own country prejudices, the first-world nations feminists and scholars are making the dependent, monolithic, and generalized entities because of their racist outlook of third-world nations. This seems like Mohanty trying to emphasize the theory of Strategic Essentialism given by Spivak that all the women of third world nations should come together to fight against these tactics of colonizers regardless of their individual differences they all should stand up against these manipulations while respecting their differences, as she herself says in one of her



interviews that she wrote this critical essay to bring the solidarity among third world women despite all the differences, she says that it is written in the context of a broader anti-racist movement that included radical critique, solidarity, and outrage against the feminist theoretical establishment, which thought it was okay to erase the histories and voices of immigrant women of colour and women from the third world, including myself (Editor's interview With Chandra Talpade Mohanty 87).

The article comes to the conclusion that feminist discourses would not be necessary for Western women if they were free and in charge of their own lives. According to Mohanty, the first world, or the Western world, defines itself in reference to the third world. That one supports and facilitates the other is the suggestion. Western feminists are able to identify what "othered" women are not by forming a non-homogenized group around them. Western feminists are analyzing their societal flaws through the lens of the "other" at the same time, yet despite these issues, being Western is preferable to being the "other." Mohanty utilizes a late Marxist assertion to reinforce the colonization theme: it is the responsibility of those with the means to represent the people if they are unable to do it for themselves. The Western woman may take the lead in the debate as long as the third-world woman is othered. With their place at the center of all discourses, Western feminists are able to speak for the "other" or, at the very least, selectively appropriate the narratives of the "other" to suit their own needs.

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