

Minor Research Project on

**AN INDIAN JOURNEY TO MULTIVERSE: ALTERITIES, EXOTICS
AND LIMINAL SPACES IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF
VANDANA SINGH**

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Vandana Singh, the Indian writer renowned for her speculative fiction builds a familiar Indian world in her short stories and slowly defamiliarises it to create another world. Indian women are stereotyped as paragons of home makers in a lovely feminine facade. But in her stories their unredeemable physicality merges with cosmic imageries and speculative fantasies, making them more fluid and vulnerable for transformation. Their alterities on close analysis surface as tropes of female power which makes them not female anymore. The fantasy world makes women recognise the strength of being an outsider. The new bodies transcend their limitations of physical strength, rationality and sensory powers. Their alternate self conceals their feelings and protect the privacy of their thoughts. This dreamy, sacred, mythical quasi fantastical world within the narratives legitimizes the role Indian women play in protecting the harmony and sacredness of Indian culture. It merges the boundaries of differences between the characters and identities are reformulated.

The present study focuses on her collection of ten short stories entitled *The woman who thought she was a planet and other stories*; “Hunger”, “Delhi”, “The Woman who

Thought She was a Planet”, “Infinities”, “Thirst”, “Conservation Laws”, “Three Tales from Sky River”, “The Tetrahedron”, “The wife” and “The Room on the Roof”. The first chapter analyses how Vandana Singh uses alterity as a tactic for survival and retribution in Indian society where female assertion and autonomy are still defined as strange or unnatural. The positing of the *other* in the formation of self is very elusive, but is an inalienable aspect of identity formation and assertion. So a perusal of the different way alterity is used to reconfigure the ontology of a stable self and the resultant multiple identities which disrupts the illusion of sameness in woman’s body, mind and language is made. The various aspects of embodiment , the ‘other body’, the ‘body’ as *other*, the shock in discovering the other, multiplicity of self’s discourse and the politics of situating the *other* will be figured out. It will also call attention to the revisionary myth making, specifically of a myth central to woman’s identity and its relation to alterity and the concomitant portrait of the woman as an alien, specifically the obsession with the ways in which her body is experienced as foreign or dangerous.

The remaining chapters focuses on the interaction between certain ideas, images, beliefs and practices associated with the ‘Indianness’ in the selected stories and the discursive spaces it offers in the genre to venerate Indian speculative fiction in global scenario. By using the theme of ‘exotics’ through its connotations of difference, attraction and incomprehensibility an attempt is made to examine how speculative fiction appears when shaped by Third world culture and fantasies. By attempting to theorise on the narrative strategy of Vandana Singh through concepts of alterity, and exotics I try to find out the subvertive aspect of speculative fiction in confronting the dominant paradigms of sex, gender, race, nation and culture. By situating the identity of the writer

in her world making, the present project chronicles the Indian speculative genre in its attempt for global recognition of its stories and myths.