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In Quest of a Feminist Comparative Methodology for Interrogating Transnationalism: Problematizing the “Women’s Question” in the Travel Narratives of Krishnabhavini Das and Nabaneeta Dev Sen

One of the basic approaches to the understanding of transnationalism involves the (re)construction of spatialities. The question of space is also cursory to the comparative praxis. Even the gender polemic in South Asia is unthinkable without considering the epistemologies of spaces. Therefore, in my study, I shall try to build a methodology of interrogating transnationalism from a comparative and feminist vantage, thereby “re – inventing” comparative literature and pedagogically re – vitalizing it. To do so, I shall delve into a diachronic reading of the travel narratives of Krishnabhavini Das (1864 – 1919) and Nabaneeta Dev Sen (1938 – 2019), and critically decipher the politics of complicities and resistances towards creolization, by a gendered individual outside her national territory. Following Mara De Gennaro’s idea of “non – territorial (as opposed to extraterritorial) comparative literature”, I would like to read the subjectivities of not just two women, but also of intervening and transforming spaces (and therefore, of collectivities) that they inhabited and deconstructed with their travelling. The diachronic study shall become interesting and relevant once the status of India’s political independence with respect to Krishnabhavini and Nabaneeta’s times of travel, are taken into cognizance. The *antahpur*, that Krishnabhavini carried subconsciously in her journey to England had transformed by the time Nabaneeta was travelling and writing. However, the *antahpur*, being an inherited space of comfort and conflict for a woman, had not totally disintegrated during Nabaneeta’s time. I would like to extend and problematize the “women’s question” by carefully probing into this transforming gendered heterotopia of Bengali Hindu women by placing it at the crossroads of transnational and transcultural interactions, made possible by women’s travels. The concerned travelogues also stand as major social critiques of their times that affirmatively ‘used’ the *différance* between home and the world, between the familiar and the unfamiliar, to subvert the phallogocentric and parochial significations of the nation. Both Krishnabhavini and Nabaneeta, when read comparatively, shall also bring forth a dynamic study of the literary, linguistic, religious, bodily, sexual practices of women across times and borders. Thus, the study whilst building a comparative methodology towards transnationalism, shall inevitably also attempt to reformulate a South Asian feminist historiography.