

A B S T R A C T

The East Indian Woman in Caribbean Writing: Images and Perceptions

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This paper examines from a feminist perspective the role of the East Indian woman in Caribbean literature, as character and as writer so that on one level attention focuses on images of the East Indian female as presented by male and female Afro-Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean writers in their literary works, and on another level the focus is on Indo-Caribbean female writing. The influences of race and sex are therefore considered.

A comparative approach is adopted to determine whether Indo-Caribbean female writers form a separate and identifiable writing tradition. In determining this, several questions are raised: do they write out of an Indo-Caribbean tradition, sharing commonalities with male Indo-Caribbean writers, or out of a female tradition, exhibiting commonalities with both the Black and White female traditions, and is their writing necessarily feminist? Or yet again, is it that thematically, stylistically, aesthetically and conceptually

East Indian female writers in the Caribbean manifest common approaches to the act of creating literature, the result of the common experience of being East Indian, female and a writer in the Caribbean?

The findings indicate that, generally, non-Indian writers and male Indian writers base their portrayals of Indian females on stereotypes, the majority of which are negative. Further, while Indo-Caribbean female writers do manifest commonalities with other writers, their work forms a separate and identifiable writing tradition because of the unique perceptions that they, as Indo-Caribbean female writers, bring to bear on it. Finally, this tradition is still very much in the embryonic stages because Indo-Caribbean female writing is as yet small-scale and limited, with few exceptions, to local journal contributions.