



WWJMRD 2018; 4(2): 428-430

www.wwjmr.com

International Journal

Peer Reviewed Journal

Refereed Journal

Indexed Journal

UGC Approved Journal

Impact Factor MJIF: 4.25

E-ISSN: 2454-6615

Amit Dhawan

Research Scholar

India

The anxiety of identity and despair in Gaytri spivak's Can the Subaltern Speak

Amit Dhawan

Abstract

The present paper Can the Subaltern Speak by Gaytri Chakravorty Spivak is an attempt to present women and their all times striving for autonomous existence in patriarchal society, it is about a tale of torment and misery in male dominated society that how women is silenced and oppressed which is itself the question mark to the idea of liberty and justice. The purpose of this paper is to probe the issues like women's freedom, her effort of carving an identity of her own in the sphere of patriarchy, women is treated as useful commodity in the market, voraciously devoured by public and the other issue is the traffic in women. Women's suppression is rooted in the very basis of Indian society in traditions, in religious doctrine and practices, within the education and within the families.

Keywords: the subaltern, patriarchal society, misery, justice

Introduction

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is an Indian scholar, literary theorist, and feminist critic. [1] She is a University Professor at the Columbia University and a founding member of the establishment's Institute for Comparative Literature and Society. [2]

Considered one of the most influential postcolonial intellectuals, Spivak is best known for her essay Can the Subaltern Speak? and for her translation of and introduction to Jacques Derrida's De la grammatologie.[3] She also translated such works of Mahasweta Devi as Imaginary Maps and Breast Stories into English and with separate critical appreciation on the texts and Devi's life and writing style in general

Traditionally Indian literature viewed women as role bound possessions whose sacrifices preserved the sanctity and well-being of the family. They are confined purely to the domestic set-up daughter, wife and mother, largely ignored as a human being, denied of her individual distinctive visibility. Indian women writers established their literary offspring and striving to bring an identity for women, by highlighting various untouched and unnoticed facets of life. A woman's attempt to self-discovery leads to interrogate that she has not been only born as a woman but she becomes one as she is hardly a product of socio-cultural environment in the making of which she has any part. Spivak speaks in her essay it is impossible to recover the voice of subaltern oppressed subject and this she highlighted through natives are divided by differences of gender and class, caste and other hierarchies and she used deconstruction to examine how truth is constructed.

In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak discusses the lack of an account of the Satipractice, leading her to reflect on whether the subaltern can even speak.[4] Spivak writes about the process, the focus on the Eurocentric Subject as they disavow the problem of representation; and by invoking the Subject of Europe, these intellectuals constitute the subaltern Other of Europe as anonymous and mute.

There is juxtaposition of many voices that we trace in Spivak's essay Can the Subaltern Speak (1988) we catch the very torture of feminine sensibility within the constructed walls of

Correspondence:

Amit Dhawan

Research Scholar

India

patriarchal society, and silence towards the protest of woman grievances which is all time unheeded prospect and their struggle for self-determination already points towards women's conscious action to change the situation though there is no mention of any action taken by men to help women's though there is no mention of any action taken by men to help woman's struggle for emancipation.

Victimised women in a patriarchal system, who stands along with her family despite of all their torture, seek security and men respectability. At the same time woman is regarded as basically submissive, her role to be the respectable of male sexual drives for the subsequent production of the species. They could never think that there can be a different world outside the four walls of their house. The writer focuses primarily on the psychological exploration of inner mind of the depressed women by virtue of their feminine sensibility and psychological insight and brings to light their issues, which are the outcome of Indian women's psychological and emotional imbalances in a male dominated society.

Spivak wonders how the third world subject can be studied without cooperation with the colonial project. Spivak points to the fact that research is in a way always colonial, in defining the "other", the "over there" subject as the object of study and as something that knowledge should be extracted from and brought back "here". Basically we're talking about white men speaking to white men about collared men/women. When Spivak examines the validity of the western representation of the other, she proposes that the discursive institutions which regulate writing about the other are shut off to postcolonial or feminist scrutiny.

This limitation, Spivak holds, is due to the fact that critical thinking about the "other" tends to articulate its relation to the other with the hegemonic vocabulary. This is similar to feminist writers which abide by the patriarchal rules for academic writing.

In Spivak's essay we come across the anxiety of identity and despair which are the features of the modernism in literature. Women poets write with an intention of breaking the century's old silence and crossing the patriarchal threshold, today's feminism must be viewed as a rapidly developing major critical ideology or system of ideas in its own right. The concept incorporates a broad spectrum of ideas and possesses an international scope. But the male dominated society and its anti-woman ideology is the root cause of women's backwardness and their suffering and victimization, this brings into the focus her soul and psyche, for she expects the human attitude from the male. As a matter of fact, she is aware of the fact that every woman needs the freedom, equality and sex. But she is certain, that is quite impossible from hostile men. Accordingly she is willing to trap the new system against the backdrop of traditional concept of Indian womanhood.

Although the term 'subaltern' conventionally denotes an inferior military rank, it is more generally used as 'a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society', often expressed in terms of gender and caste.[5] In this way, both 'brown women' and low castes are subaltern, social subordinates. Sati, meaning 'good wife', signals a duty: the duty of a wife to her husband and

religion. Indian women, with some exceptions such as Daisy in *The Painter of Signs*, seem unavoidably housebound. In his opening pages, Narayan describes the women at the lawyer's house as hidden away: 'several women emerged from various corners of the house' [6]. Similarly, Sohini in *Untouchable*, although not housebound, makes the fire, collects water and cooks. Just as the woman is unable to escape the expectations of her gender, so too is the untouchable unable to escape his caste, it being acquired at birth and non-changeable. Apparently unable, then, to save themselves, it seems at first glance that the white man can rescue the subaltern.

The Hindu tradition of sati, or widow-burning, to which Spivak refers began to represent a fault line in British presence in India. The sati woman therefore represents an ideological battleground for the dispute between Eastern and Western colonial discourse. As Lata Mani states, '[British] fear of the consequences of prohibiting sati was tied to their analysis of sati as a religious practice and to their view of religion as a fundamental and structuring principle of Indian society. [7] By prohibiting the 'religious practice' of sati in 1829, the British were thus rendering illegal what seemed to them an integral part of Hindu society and identity, redefining ritual not merely as superstition, but as crime. It is chiefly for this reason that the widows in the sati texts, all of which are written from a Western perspective, are portrayed as victims of an inhumane, religious, offence, as will be discussed. Mani goes on to suggest that there is a discrepancy in the very representations of sati: 'within the discourse on sati, women are represented in two mutually exclusive ways: as heroines able to withstand the raging blaze of the funeral pyre or else as pathetic victims coerced against their will into the flames' [8] Emma Roberts presents her sati widows as the latter of these categories in her poem, 'The Rajah's Obsequies'. She labels the widow, 'A helpless slave to lordly man's control [...] compelled by brutal force' to perform the rite of sati [9]

'**Can the subaltern speak?**' is a rhetorical question asked by Spivak is to state the impediments of the subalterns, to discuss the problem of widow sacrifice in great details and she reiterates her standpoint that subaltern cannot speak and the condition of the women is even more complicated. It is not so much that subaltern women did not speak, but rather that others did not know how to listen, how to enter into a transaction between speaker and listener.

References

1. "Spivak, Gayatri." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2014.
2. "Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak". *Department of English and Comparative Literature. Columbia University in the City of New York*. Retrieved March 22, 2016.
3. Simons, Jon (2010-09-10). From Agamben to Zizek: Contemporary Critical Theorists: Contemporary Critical Theorists. Edinburgh University Press. ISBN 9780748643264
4. Sharp, J. (2008). "Chapter 6, Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Geographies of Postcolonialism*. SAGE Publications.

5. Peter Childs and Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, (Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall, 1997), p.161
6. R. K. Narayan, *The Painter of Signs*, (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p.8
7. Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India*, (London: University of California Press, 1998), p.20
8. Mani, *Contentious Traditions*, p.162
9. Emma Roberts, 'The Rajah's Obsequies' in *Oriental Scenes, Dramatic Sketches And Tales, With Other Poems*, Calcutta: 1830