

## **Empowering the Marginalized: The Heroic Adventures of Female Characters in Post Colonial Narrative**

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### **Abstract**

Women in particular are frequently portrayed in post-colonial literature as victims of historical and cultural forces. These factors, which are influenced by patriarchal structures and colonial legacies, frequently result in women being marginalized, silenced, and marginalized. But whenever these women recover their identity and agency and triumph over colonial and gender-based oppressions, post-colonial narratives also show the way to empowerment. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of the subaltern, which refers to underprivileged populations whose voices are traditionally excluded from power and discourse, is a key idea in post-colonial feminist discourse. Spivak provides an insightful perspective on the challenges of post-colonial society through her study of the subaltern woman, who lives at the nexus of race, gender, and class.

This essay intends to employ Gayatri Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak?* as a theoretical framework to examine how Sita, the main character in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), is portrayed. As a character, Sita experiences victimization owing to her caste and colonial past in addition to her gender. The paper will explore how, amid her unfortunate circumstances, she overcomes exploitation and achieves a sense of empowerment through investigating her character by means of Spivak's perspective. Additionally, the paper will examine how Spivak's subaltern theory contributes in developing an understanding of the dynamics of female empowerment in post-colonial literature.

**Keywords:** oppression, post-colonial feminism, Sita, agency, caste, gender discrimination, colonialism, empowerment, Arundhati Roy, subaltern.

### **The objectives**

These are the objectives of this research paper:

1. To examine how female characters are represented in post-colonial literature, particularly in Arundhati Roy's writings, and how their experiences reflect the oppression of colonialism and gender.
2. To employ Gayatri Spivak's framework of the subaltern—specifically, her idea of a marginalized woman who confronts social as well as historical silencing to examine Sita's character in *The God of Small Things*.
3. To explore how, in spite of her discrimination, Sita resists her abuse and finds a degree of empowerment at the expense of a terrible conclusion.
4. To demonstrate how the complexities of female agency and resistance toward colonial and patriarchal oppression are explained by Spivak's the post-colonial feminist theory.
5. To integrate subaltern concepts with artistic representations of female empowerment in the post-colonial narratives for the purpose to broaden scholarly debate on post-colonial feminism.

### **Methods**

The present paper applies an inductive and analytical research methodology that draws from post-colonial feminist theory and literary analysis. The following crucial steps characterize the approach:

1. Textual Evaluation: *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy will be critically read, with a

focus on Sita's depiction. The study will look at how Roy constructs Sita's character in relation to post-colonial India's broader social, political, and cultural context. In order to examine the intersections of caste, gender, and colonial history, this reading will concentrate on Sita's relationships particularly her forbidden love affair with Velutha and the tragic results .

2. Theoretical Framework: In order to analyze Sita's victimization, the study will make use of Gayatri Spivak's concept of the subaltern, especially the concept of the subaltern woman. A framework for evaluating Sita's silence and eventual revolt will be provided by Spivak's theory that colonial oppression and patriarchy combine in order to prevent the subaltern from speaking.

3. Comparative Analysis: To determine whether recurring themes of subjugation and empowerment develop, the study will also examine Sita's journey in relation to that of other female protagonists in post-colonial literature. One way to understand how post-colonial narratives treat marginalized women is to quickly examine characters from books like Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and Jean Rhys.

4. Contextual Research: To place the study in the specific social context that the character experiences, historical and socio cultural research on post-colonial India will be included, especially in relation to the caste system, colonialism, and gender roles. The theoretical interpretation and textual analysis will be accompanied by this contextual investigation.

5. Secondary Literature: To contextualize this study within the larger scholarly debate, a brief survey of the body of research on Spivak's theory of the subaltern and post-colonial feminism will be conducted. In order to give the analysis of Sita's character more depth, theories of subjugation, resistance, and empowerment will be studied .

#### **Theoretical Structure: Gayatri Spivak and the Marginalized Woman**

Gayatri Spivak criticizes the Western intellectual tradition and its role in oppressing marginalized voices, especially those of women from colonized regions, in her seminal essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Spivak argues that the intersection of patriarchal, class, and colonial pressures results in the double marginalization of the subaltern, especially the subaltern woman. The social and cultural systems that physically and figuratively mute the subaltern woman prevent her from speaking out against her oppression.

Since colonialism and gender intersection frequently make women inaccessible in historical and political discourses, Spivak's theory offers an essential framework for analyzing the difficult circumstances of female protagonists in post-colonial narratives. In post-colonial feminist readings, the subaltern woman becomes a pivotal role, as these characters must cope with both the legacy of colonialism and deeply embedded patriarchal norms. As a lower-caste woman in the post-colonial India, Sita represents a symbol for the subaltern woman who finds herself divided between gendered violence and the effects of colonialism.

#### **The God of Small Things' Intersection of Caste, Gender, and Colonialism**

The intersecting relationships between gender, caste, and colonialism characterize Sita's life in *The God of Small Things*. Because she belongs to a lower caste, Sita suffers internalized and societal oppression, which is made worse by the impact of British colonial control. Despite the official end of slavery, the novel depicts post-colonial India as a society which is still heavily influenced by patriarchal and colonial structures.

In post-colonial India, the caste system, which was established during British colonialism, remains substantially in existence. Sita's relationship with Velutha, a member of the untouchable

caste, signifies her rebellion against oppression based on both gender and caste. The terrible outcome of their relationship—Velutha's brutal killing and Sita's own eventual demise—highlights the extent to which society condemns such rebellion.

Due to the complex backdrop established by the conflicts between the old colonial powers and the developing national identity, the legacy of colonialism also has a significant impact on the social structures of post-colonial India. Roy explores the personal struggles of oppressed women as well as the broader connotations of postcolonial identity and the enduring inhumanity of both colonialism and patriarchy through Sita's character.

The historical background of colonialism, which established a legacy of hierarchical divisions within society, makes Sita's victimization significantly more severe. When the rule of colonization came to a formal end, racial discrimination and socioeconomic segregation remain prevalent in post-colonial India as an effect of its legacy. Sita is confined within an oppressive framework that severely restricts her options and opportunities for self-expression because of the dual oppression of caste and gender.,

### **The Colonial Legacy and the Victimization of Sita**

The patriarchal and colonial systems which impact Sita's existence are strongly connected to her victimization. She lacks the same benefits as people from higher castes because she is a woman from a lower caste. Her gender and caste status significantly restrict her freedom of speech, and her body is constantly regulated. Moreover, caste divisions, which were made worse by colonialism, still dominate her interactions with others and relationships, revealing the significant impact of colonialism on her life.

These socioeconomic differences are made worse in post-colonial India by the impact of British colonialism, which makes the lower caste members even more vulnerable. Sita is constantly marginalized in her community and in her relationship with Velutha, who is also from the untouchable caste, due to the caste system's embedded dominance in Indian society. Sita has to confront the severe constraints imposed by both gender and caste as a consequence of their forbidden love, which challenges established social norms. Sita struggles to get free from the rigid constraints that these systems impose on her life, even in spite of her inner power and rebellion.

The physical and psychological abuse Sita experiences is a representation of the historical oppression of women in dominated cultures. It illustrates the extent to which women's bodies serve as battlefields for both gender and colonial violence, and it shows the destructive impact of colonial legacies that continue to impact the post-colonial world.

### **Sita's Resistance-Based Empowerment**

When Sita experiences terrible loss along her journey, her acts of resistance are essential to her emancipation. Despite being politically and socially unacceptable, her relationship with Velutha turns into a personal act of resistance. Sita challenges the restricted gender and caste regulations that aim to define her by choosing Velutha. Even though her love eventually results in violence and death, it never the less represents an expression of agency.

Sita asserts some degree of power in her restricted environment by opposing social classes and the power of patriarchy. This resistance emphasizes the struggle of the subaltern woman who must negotiate her freedom in a society that seeks to suppress her voice, even while it is not fruitful in a conventional manner. Sita's effort of resistance echoes throughout the story, despite her physical  
serene.

According to Spivak, Sita's empowerment comes from her efforts to speak up against a system that requires her to remain silent rather than from resisting abuse. Even though it was cruelly cut short, this act of resistance characterizes Sita's journey as one of heroic rebellion and represents the difficult process of subaltern women reclaiming power in post-colonial cultures. Her resistance demonstrates the inner power that enables her to confront restricted norms, even when victory may be elusive.

**Conclusion:**

The subaltern woman in post-colonial fiction is powerfully represented by Sita's figure in *The God of Small Things*. Post-colonial female protagonists have to negotiate the intertwining of gender, caste, and colonial history, illustrated in her tragic and multifaceted journey. Sita resists the oppressive systems designed to define and silence her through her rebellions at love and rebellion. Although she fails to acquire traditional empowerment at the end of her journey, her resistance creates her a tragic yet heroic heroine whose struggle symbolizes the challenging process of rediscovering power and voice.

We can understand the challenges that marginalized women experience in post-colonial countries and the complexity of empowerment in an environment where existence itself could be considered an act of resistance by discovering Sita through the perspective of Gayatri Spivak's concept of the subaltern. The complex nature of female freedom in a society that consistently suppresses those who bravely challenge its norms is illustrated through Sita's character. Her narrative serves as an emotional symbol of the constant fight for subaltern female empowerment in post-colonial societies.

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