



WOMEN AS SUBALTERN IN THE CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S *THE LAST QUEEN*: A PERSPECTIVE OF POSTCOLONIAL FEMINISM

Aura Yama Putri¹, Sari Fitria²

English Department

Faculty of Languages and Arts

Universitas Negeri Padang

email: aurayama128@gmail.com

Abstract

This research aims to analyze the depiction of women as subalterns in social and colonial contexts and identify the forms of resistance they engage in in Chitra Divakaruni's *The Last Queen* (2021). Using the perspective of postcolonial feminism and the concept of the subaltern advanced by Gayatri Spivak, this study examines how women's position was constructed in Hindustani society during the British colonial period. The method used is qualitative descriptive, with analysis of the characters' narrative and dialogue in the novel. The results show that women are portrayed as subalterns through three main forms, namely voiceless, devalued, and limited, which reflect layers of oppression such as gender inequality, power relations, class, social status, religion, and colonial pressure. Nevertheless, subaltern women still find space to resist, both politically and intellectually, although they do not always succeed in changing the existing system of domination.

Key words: Subaltern Women, Postcolonial Feminism, Women's Resistance

A. INTRODUCTION

Although society has entered a rapidly evolving modern era, most women still face forms of inequality that reflect the injustices of the colonial era. This also explained that the condition is not entirely detached from the connection to the past (Smith, 1997). Unequal power relations continue to be reproduced in various forms, both through culture, social systems, and politics. The concept of women as "the other" in patriarchal society, which is a subordinate position that places women as objects under the control of male domination (Beauvoir, 1949) similarly according to Benstead in patriarchal system, men are positioned as superior, while women are positioned as inferior, both in the domestic and public spheres (Benstead, 2020), and it was a concept from a century ago, yet it

¹ English ELLSP of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang graduated on....

² Lecturer of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang



is still relevant. Patriarchal power relations daily life have gone uncriticized, while women continue to face discrimination, violence, and restrictions on space to express their voice and agency (Sangari, 1995) In postcolonial society, the construction of women, bodies, and morality does not stand neutrally, but is influenced by colonial legacies that continue to reproduce inequality to this day. In this context, postcolonial women are often positioned as marginalized subjects and limited in their agency in a social structure dominated by patriarchal power relations (Mishra, 2013). This condition can be found in various former colonial countries.

The condition is strongly reflected in India as a social space shaped by historically, culturally, and politically rooted patriarchal structures (Singh et al., 2022). Women not only face gender-based subordination, but are also layered with caste, class, religion, and colonial heritage, which narrows their living space and voice in the public domain (Ayyathurai, 2021). Even, according to Mahaparta, there is a law in India made by the legislators of the Hindustani society, which established a list of laws that focus on women's obedience, one of the laws states, *"Women should be under their fathers when they are children, under their husbands when they are young, and under their sons when they are old... at any stage she will not deserve freedom"* (Reji, 2024). Women's identities have little exchange value because gender can never be fully interchangeable with or aligned with other aspects of identity that are firmly embedded in oneself and in the structure of society (Gairola, 2002) This can be conceptualized as the placement of Hindustani women in the position of a subaltern group, where their voice is silenced, their agency is devalued, and limited by domestic norms and roles.

Voiceless, devalued, and limited are also evident in the representation of female figures in Divakaruni's *The Last Queen* (2021). The novel focuses on the Hindustani female in the palace and Punjabi society who lived under the pressure of local patriarchy and British Colonial domination. These women are portrayed as subjects with no authority over their self-narratives, bodies, or decisions, aligning them with the concept of the subaltern woman who cannot speak within the dominant power structure. Through power relations between the royal family, the Sikh community, and the colonial authorities, the novel shows how women's voices are often erased, replaced, or reinterpreted by those in power, both by men in their societies and by colonial representations. Nevertheless, Divakaruni also shows the various forms of resistance, political and intellectual, that these women practice, demonstrating that, even in a position of voicelessness, devaluation, and limited, women still seek to reclaim the space to speak, defend their identities, and negotiate authority over themselves. Thus, *The Last Queen* (2021) provides a rich picture of how subaltern women are not only positioned as victims but also as agents fighting against silencing and the power structures that oppress them.

Several relevant previous studies have shown that subalterns are unable to voice themselves due to the pressure of power and dominance by Benedicta

Fortunae. As well as the subaltern women, face various forms of oppression, both socially and religiously by Yasin et al (2021). However, the two studies did not use the novel *The Last Queen* (2021) as the object of study, nor did they provide an overview of how women are represented as subalterns in the work. In addition, these studies tend to focus on limited aspects of voice and forms of oppression, without examining in depth variations in subaltern representation and the forms of resistance carried out. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by examining how women are depicted as subalterns and revealing the acts of resistance they employ in the face of dominant structures.

This study used postcolonial feminism to examine the intersection of colonialism and neocolonialism, as well as its impact on gender, state, class, race, and sexuality, as well as other contexts of women's lives, including their subjectivity, work, and rights (Rajan & Park, n.d.) Moreover, Spivak's theory of postcolonial feminism, particularly the concept of subaltern women, helps to understand more deeply that subaltern women are not merely a marginalized group but are systematically shaped by colonial and patriarchal power relations. The case of subalternity has long been identified as a "subject of feminism." (Griffiths, 2018). Spivak questions whether those occupying marginalized positions, especially subaltern women, can truly have their voices heard within dominant Western discourses (Mahavidyalaya et al., 2012). In this framework, women are understood as subjects who not only lose space to speak but also experience representational distortions when their voices are mediated by dominant structures. Furthermore, women often lack of agency and authority and are frequently represented by so-called authorities, both within patriarchal societies and among colonisers (Morris, 2010). The use of this theory allows for a more critical analysis of how subaltern women are depicted in *The Last Queen* (2021) and how they negotiate their positions through acts of resistance.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The data for this research were obtained from the novel *The Last Queen* (2021) by Chitra Divakaruni and analyzed using a qualitative descriptive method. The data were collected through close reading and repetition, to observe and evaluate, drawn from the narrative, dialogue, and character sections that depict female characters as subaltern and the resistance. The selected data were analyzed through the theory of postcolonial feminism, particularly Gayatri Spivak's concept of subaltern. Each finding was interpreted in depth by linking it to theory, uncovering the hidden passages, implications, and criticism of patriarchal and colonial dominance that shaped women's voices and agency in texts. Thus, the analysis not only explains the dynamics of subalternity but also

demonstrates how the work concretely reflects the subaltern condition and is grounded in robust textual evidence.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Finding (tentative)

The findings in this study show that patriarchal and colonial structures systematically place women in a subaltern position through three main conditions, namely as voiceless, devalued, and limited subjects. Women become voiceless when their voices not only lose legitimacy in the social and political space, but are also experienced as unequal, and are ignored in decision-making. Then, women are also in a devalued position, where their values and identities are reduced through labeling, stereotypes, and the construction of discourses that degrade their existence. Furthermore, women experience a limited condition: they are present but systematically regulated in how they present themselves, speak, and are understood by social structures. However, the study also shows that women are not entirely passive, but rather actively develop various forms of resistance to negotiate their positions, thus presenting a dynamic between subjugation and attempts to challenge the domination structures that limit them.

a. Women as Subalterns

Women as subalterns in the novel *The Last Queen* (2021) are represented by many female characters, including Maharani Jindan Kaur and her mother Biji, her sister Balbir, the other queen Guddan, and other female figures living under repressive social, political, and colonial structures. The novel is set during the British colonial period in Punjab. It shows how women, both in the circle of power and outside the palace, still faced restrictions due to the patriarchal system and colonial domination. By drawing on the concept of subalternity, this study views subalterns' positions not only as experienced by a single figure but also as represented through the collective experience of silenced women, whose values are reduced and whose movement is controlled by power structures. Therefore, this analysis categorizes women's representation into three main aspects, namely voiceless, devalued, and limited. The voiceless category refers to the silencing or disregard of women's voices; devalued refers to how their existence and contributions are seen as inferior; and limited refers to the restriction of women's movement, both in the domestic and political spheres. Through these three aspects, this analysis strengthens the construction of women as subalterns in complex power relations.

1) Women as Voiceless Subalterns

The category of voiceless refers to the condition of silencing or ignoring women's voices in social and political structures dominated by patriarchal and colonial powers. In this context, voiceless does not simply mean that women do not speak; it indicates that their voices are not recognised as legitimate, are not given equal opportunity, or are deliberately ignored in decision-making. Women as voiceless subalterns are in a position where their experiences, ideas, and will are often represented by other parties in power. This can be seen in the quotations below.

"Mai sits up. 'You dare to speak to me like this? Who do you think you are? Here at the Sarkar's invitation, indeed.' She claps for her attendants. 'Tell the zenana guards to throw this lying harlot out of the qila and make sure she never comes back. Not that there'll be much left for her after a night on the streets of Lahore.' She ignores Guddan's entreaties." (Divakaruni: 53)

'And I'm Nur Jahan!' Mai scoffs. She slaps me so hard that my head spins. My cheek burns—a stone from her rings must have cut into my skin. 'Take her to the women's lock-up, Bhago.' She instructs the chief guard. 'Beat the truth out of her.' Bhago grasps my arm in a vicious grip; I'm sure it will leave a bruise. I kick and curse as she drags me. I push away the terror of what will happen to me—and my family—if Mai learns who I am. I focus on one thing only. I will not give her the satisfaction of seeing me cry." (Divakaruni: 53-54)

Both of the quotations reveal women as voiceless subalterns. The female protagonist still speaks, fights, and even tries to maintain her dignity by refusing to cry, but the entire exchange takes place within a framework of power completely controlled by the figure in power. The authority of the female figure in power is present not only through verbal humiliation but also through physical violence and the threat of imprisonment, which shows that social position determines who has the right to define the truth and impose punishment. This hierarchical inequality leaves the female protagonist's words and resistance without bargaining power, as the safety of her body and family rests in the hands of those with more power. Thus, the silencing she experiences is structural: she speaks, but she is not on equal footing to influence decisions or change the situation that oppresses her. Even acts of mental resistance, such as holding back tears, became the only remaining form of autonomy,

which precisely confirmed how narrow the agency space available to her was.

Furthermore, the quotation below shows how voiceless subaltern women are not involved in determining their future, including in choosing a life partner. Instead, the authority of women's life is transferred to other parties who are more dominant.

The guest, a merchant from a nearby town, is a portly man almost as old as Manna. He doesn't speak much, except to compliment my cooking and ask for seconds. After dinner, when the men go to the yard to talk, Jawahar creeps out and eavesdrops. Later, he tells me that Manna was negotiating my marriage." (Divakaruni: 57)

The quotations indicate the female character not being involved at all in the conversation about her marriage, because the negotiation is carried out in secret by the father's character with the other male side, while the woman is in the domestic space. The fact that the female figure only learned of her wedding plans from the brother who eavesdropped on the conversation suggests that her future was determined without her direct participation or consent. The female character in this quotation is positioned as an object of social transaction whose values and status can be negotiated according to family interest or patriarchal power, while their own desires are not part of the deliberations

2) Women as Devalued Subalterns

Women as devalued subalterns highlight how women's position is systematically degraded in an unequal social structure. In the context of patriarchy intertwined with colonial powers, women are not only placed as subordinate but also experience a loss of subjectivity, where their voices and perspectives do not gain legitimacy. Furthermore, their agency is often controlled, and choices and actions that appear private are actually determined by dominant norms and power. This condition shows that women are not completely removed from the social space but are present within boundaries constructed by the system. At a more extreme level, this practice leads to dehumanization, when women are reduced to objects, either as tools, symbols, or commodities that lose autonomy over themselves. As can be seen in the quotation below.

'Mai's maid told me to wear the same colour as the other queens.' Suddenly, I understand. 'The queens aren't wearing blue, are they?' 'No. We'll be dressed in marigold. Blue is for the concubines.' (Divakaruni: 104)

The quotation explores how women, as devalued subalterns, experience a loss of subjectivity through social symbols that regulate and determine their identities without involving their will. Instructions for wearing a certain color indicate that the female body is used as a status marker, with the color of clothing serving as a code that directly classifies her position in the palace hierarchy. When blue is associated with concubines, while other colors are reserved for queens, women's identities are no longer personal. They are shaped by layered power systems, which combine patriarchy with class hierarchies and inherited social structures. This indicates that the subaltern woman is present in the social space but lacks the authority to define herself because norms and dominant interests have determined her identity.

In the broader context, women as devalued subalterns also experienced dehumanization that operates through stigmatization that places women as objects of judgment in the broader social structure, as illustrated in the following quotation.

"Guddan laughs. "Oh yes! Have you heard of Moran the courtesan, reputed to be the most beautiful woman in north-west Hindustan? Soon after he became king, the Sarkar fell hard for her. When he declared that he wanted to marry her, his relatives and advisors were shocked and angry, what with her low birth and notorious occupation, and being a Muslim as well. Even his chief ally, his mother -in-law Sada Kaur, chided him. But our Sarkas refused to back down. He's very smart when it comes to warfare, but perhaps not so much when it comes to women. He married Moran against everyone's advice, not caring whom he alienated. After the wedding, he went to the Khalsa in the Golden Temple, bowed his head, and asked to be lashed one hundred times for his crime." (Divakaruni: 48)

The quotation depicts how women are reduced to objects of moral, social, and political judgment within the structure of society. The other female character was introduced as an example of "a courtesan" known for her beauty, which immediately places her in an ambiguous position: aesthetically appreciated yet stigmatized because of her background and profession. The backlash from family and counsellors who highlight her origin, occupation, and religious identity suggests that her value is not seen as an individual, but rather as a representation of a social category that is considered inferior. In this context, women do not have the space to exist as subjects with a will, but rather as objects whose suitability is debated within the social order. Even the decision to marry her was positioned as a transgression to be atoned for, dehumanization in this quotation

works through stigmatization and social classification that erase the complexity of women's identities, as well as reducing them to symbols of values that are questioned by society.

3) Women as Limited Subalterns

Women as Limited subalterns are not completely silenced, but are still constrained by mechanisms that systematically regulate how they are present, speak, and are understood within the social structure. In this context, epistemic violence does not operate through the elimination of sounds but rather through more subtle restrictions on the possibilities of articulation and meaning. This can be seen through four main characteristics: pre-structured subject positioning, in which women's positions are predetermined to limit the way they are recognised as subjects; restriction of discursivity, which regulates forms and limits of expression that are considered legitimate, which women must adjust the way they speak and act, and distortion of voice, where women's voices must remain present but are reinterpreted or reduced according to the dominant framework; and constrained participation, which creates the illusion of involvement without giving real agency in determining outcomes. This shows in the quotation below.

"But I suspect a deeper reason for Biji's grief. Sure enough, she drops the firewood and crumples to the ground, sobbing. 'What kind of mother am I that I can't even feed my children?'" (Divakaruni: 5)

The quotation describes women as limited subalterns experiencing pre-structured subject positioning, because the female character's sadness arises not only from material conditions but also from subject positions pre-shaped by social norms about motherhood. The suffering shows that her identity as a mother has been shaped by standards she did not fully create herself. She considers herself to have failed not solely because of hunger as a structural condition, but because she internalizes the expectation that a mother should be able to feed her children, despite the limitations produced by broader social inequality. The female character understands herself through a framework that burdens her with moral responsibility while obscuring external factors, such as poverty or marginalization, that are beyond her control.

Women as limited subalterns are also involved, which affects not only their roles within social structures but also the

representation of their voices and identities. In this context, the meaning of women's self often shifts from actual experience to construct produced by the dominant party, as seen in the following quotation

"The British call me the Messalina of the Punjab, after a promiscuous queen of their culture. Gulab Singh is an ally in this plot. I'm stunned by the lies, but also by the Englishmen's presumption of superiority. How dare these outsiders, these looters, judge me? I'm particularly incensed at the ungrateful Gula, to whom I'd extended amnesty so that he could collect the ashes of his dead kin." (Divakaruni: 240)

This quotation shows how women's identities are reinterpreted through colonial discourse that reduces and distorts their reality. Labeling it as "*Messalina of the Punjab*" shows how the character's identity is reconstructed through colonial discourse that reduces her to a degrading stereotype; her experiences and truths are sidelined by a more dominant narrative. In this position, the character is still able to speak and refuse, as seen in her emotional response, but her voice is constrained by representations that have already shaped how she is understood. This confirms the position of the limited subaltern, where the woman remains present as the voice subject, but the voice has been twisted and directed in such a way that it no longer fully represents herself. Thus, epistemic violence does not erase women's voices, but rather intervenes and distorts them, so that the authority over meaning shifts from women's experience to the constructs produced by dominant power.

b. The Acts of Resistances

The acts of resistance by women positioned as subalterns in *The Last Queen (2021)* take two main forms: political and intellectual. These actions show that, despite being deeply marginalized, women still have ways to negotiate and challenge the structures that caged them. Political resistance can be seen in women's involvement in power dynamics, including efforts to influence decisions, maintain positions, and respond to relations of domination that oppress them. On the other hand, intellectual resistance is reflected in critical awareness, the ability to read situations strategically, and the courage to develop and maintain one's thoughts that are at odds with the dominant discourse. Through these two forms of resistance, subaltern women are not only positioned as objects of power but also as active subjects in shaping and redefining the narrative of their lives.

1) Political Resistance

Political resistance refers to the efforts of subaltern women to engage and influence the power structure that has limited their positions. This resistance does not always take the form of direct confrontation; it often arises through more subtle strategies, such as negotiation, position utilisation, and intervention in the decision-making process. Through these actions, women show that they are not completely marginalised from the political sphere but can create space to voice their interests and defend their agency. Thus, political resistance is an important means of showing how subaltern women actively respond to and challenge the power relations that oppress them, as evidenced by the quotations below.

"I rein in my anger and speak loudly, so that all the courtiers will hear. 'As regent, it is my duty to be here with my son. Besides, have you forgotten that it was a woman, Sada Kaur, mother-in-law of the Sarkar, who rode with him into Lahore and helped him take his palace as maharaja.'" (Divakaruni: 201)

The quotation indicates political resistance through the character's public articulation of her authority, while challenging the gender boundaries that limit women's access to power. By deliberately speaking out loud to be heard by the courtiers, she not only responds to the situation, but also ensures that her voice has reach and impact in political forums. The statement *"as regent, it is my duty..."* affirms the formal legitimacy that she has, and it becomes the basis for rejecting attempts to delegitimize her presence. Furthermore, the reference to the female character *Sada Kaur* serves as a historical strategy that strengthens her argument by showing that women in the past also played roles in the political and military realms. Through a combination of claims of authority, verbal intervention in the public space, and mentioning historical precedents, the female character effectively shifts perception. It asserts that her presence in the power structure is not an anomaly, but part of legitimate legitimacy.

The efforts of subaltern women to challenge colonial power through direct communication then evolved into a broader strategy, as illustrated in the quotation below, in which the female figure not only voiced criticism of authority but also sought to reach the public to foster a collective consciousness.

“When Roshanara wipes my eyes with her dupatta and asks how she might make my life more bearable, I can think of only one thing. ‘Give Avtar copies of the letters I wrote to Lawrence. Tell him to send them to our Punjabi papers. I want our people to know my pain as a mother and a queen. I want them to understand how unjustly the British have snatched away Punjab from my Dalip. I want to expose all of Dalhousie’s lies.’” (Divakaruni: 256)

The quotation above depicts political resistance through the media, which builds public opinion and disseminates counter-narratives against colonial power. Female figures no longer limit their resistance to private communication with authorities; instead, they strategically shift their struggles into the public sphere by requesting that their letters be published in Punjabi newspapers. The desire for “our people” to understand her suffering as a mother and queen reflects an effort to combine personal and political dimensions to mobilise sympathy and support from the people and the collective consciousness. However, beneath this strategy, the character’s ambivalent position as a subaltern woman is evident: even though she holds the status of queen, she must still find an indirect path for her voice to be heard, which signifies limited access to formal power. This condition indicates that the authority she holds is not fully recognized; thus, she is forced to establish her legitimacy through public discourse. Thus, the resistance not only challenged colonial domination but also exposed how women, even those in power circles, were silenced and had to actively create space for their own voices.

2) Intellectual Resistance

The intellectual resistance arises through women’s awareness, reflection, and thinking strategies in dealing with the power structures that limit them. In contrast to actions that appear directly in the public sphere, this form of resistance works in the realm of meaning, where women actively interpret experiences, question norms, and reject discourses that degrade their positions. Through this process, they not only accept the existing reality but also seek to dismantle and redefine the limitations imposed on them. Intellectual resistance is evident in the quotations presented below. The way women manage emotions, build arguments, and strategize allows them to survive while maintaining agency. Thus, this form of resistance is important for understanding how subaltern women retain space to think, judge, and respond.

"There are eleven smaller urns as well, representing the satis. One has Guddan's name on it. I touch it gently, though it doesn't really contain her remains. All the women's ashes got mixed up after the funeral. The queens are lucky that their names, at least, are recorded; no one remembers the concubines." (Divakaruni: 178)

The quotation above explores intellectual resistance through the character's critical reflection on how collective memory is formed and who is included in it. The realization that the ashes of women who perform the *Sati* ritual are mixed without identity, while only some of them are named, reveals the mechanism that systematically erases the existence of certain women from history. The act of touching the ashes urn of another female character becomes a symbolic gesture to restore meaning to the figure who has been removed, as if to refuse to accept that her life ended without a trace worth remembering. The statement that queens are still "*lucky*" because their names are recorded, compared to concubines who are completely forgotten, shows the existence of a hierarchy even in death, where a person's value is determined by her social position. From this perspective, the characters not only recognize these injustices but also implicitly challenge the logic that determines who is worthy of memory and who is erased, thus opening up space for a re-reading of history that has long ignored the voices of female subalterns.

The awareness of elimination and inequality in representation then continues into how the figure interprets the female body as a space that must be protected from objectification and external control, as seen in the quotation below.

"I found love again. But I cannot marry Lal. If I do, I must give up being regent. I cannot abandon Dalip like that. But should i be sentenced to loneliness just because I wish to protect my son? Many of the nobles have several wives—and mistresses, too. Their liaisons are accepted. Am I a sinner just because I'm a woman? I love only one man, but society will denounce me if it finds out." (Divakaruni: 126)

"I've done nothing wrong—nothing except follow my heart. But the world is cruel to women who love. Even the pure and beautiful Heer was poisoned by her own kin only because of her passion for Ranjha." (Divakaruni: 240)

These two quotations explore intellectual resistance through the critical reflection of the female characters on social norms that

unfairly regulate women's bodies, choices, and emotions. In the first quotation, the character questions why her desire to love should clash with her position as a regent, while men in the same structure are given the freedom to have diverse relationships without stigma. The rhetorical questions asked not only express inner conflict but also implicitly challenge gender-biased moral standards. Meanwhile, the second quotation expands on that reflection by referring to Heer's story, which shows that the experience of women being punished for love is not an isolated case but a recurring pattern in cultural narratives. By connecting her personal experiences with cultural representation, the female characters show awareness that these injustices are systemic. Through this thought process, resistance is not manifested in direct action, but in the ability to recognise, question, and reject social logics that degrade women, thus opening up space for a more critical interpretation of their position.

2. Discussion

This study examines *The Last Queen* (2021) which presents a complex representation of subaltern women through its female characters. In this narrative, women are structurally placed in subaltern positions, both in the context of patriarchal society and in colonial situations, where dominant power relations limit their existence, access, as well as their voices. These restrictions not only operate on a social level, but also permeate the daily practices that govern women's bodies, spaces, and roles; they are often not involved in the decision-making processes that define their lives. Thus, the subaltern position experienced by women in this novel shows how power works systematically in shaping and controlling their experiences.

However, the female characters in this novel are not represented as completely passive subjects. Instead, they show various forms of response to restrictive structures, whether through negotiations, subtle resistance, or efforts to maintain autonomy in limited situations. These actions show that even when they are in a position of distress, women still have the capacity to respond and reinterpret the conditions they face. Therefore, *The Last Queen* (2021) not only represents the conquest of women within patriarchal and colonial frameworks, but also affirms the existence of an agency that allows them to maintain control over themselves and their lives, albeit within strict limits.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This research shows that women as subalterns in *The Last Queen* (2021) are shaped by conditions that make them unheard and unrecognized, and limit their space to define themselves. This is seen not only in the silencing of voices but also in the condescending perspectives that limit their participation in the social and political spheres. Nonetheless, women are not completely trapped in these conditions; rather, they continue to develop strategies to respond to and negotiate the various situations they face. Furthermore, this study confirms that women's resistance takes various forms, both through political actions and intellectual efforts to shape the meaning of their experiences. These findings enrich the reading of subaltern theory by showing that the position of the subaltern is not static but remains open to agency amid limitations, while affirming the importance of recognising women's voices and participation in decision-making spaces.

Based on the findings of this study, the next study can expand the reading of *The Last Queen* (2021) by highlighting the female body as an arena of power, for example, through Naomi Wolf's idea of how women's bodies are controlled as well as used as regulatory objects that shape their identities and values. In addition, further research can examine women in the context of commodification through Silvia Federici's materialist feminist approach to see how women's positions and values are negotiated within economic and power relations. This approach allows for a broader and deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between women's bodies, work, and values, while expanding the contribution of studies in a more interdisciplinary direction.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ayyathurai, Gajendran. (2021). *Colonialism, Caste, and Gender: The Emergence of Critical Caste Feminism in Modern South India*. 33(3), 133–156.

- Beauvoir, Simone de. (1949). *The Second Sex*.
- Benstead, Lindsay J. (2020). *Conceptualizing and Measuring Patriarchy : The Importance of Feminist Theory*.
- Gairola, Rahul. (2002). Shame : Patriarchy , Gayatri Spivak ' s “ Can the Subaltern Speak ?” Fire. *Comparative and General Pharmacology*, 54(4), 307–324.
- Griffiths, Mark. (2018). *For speaking against silence : Spivak ' s subaltern ethics in the field*. (September 2017), 299–311. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12226>
- Mahavidyalaya, Shivaji, Chow, Rey, Castellanos, Rosario, & Johnson-odim, Cheryl. (2012). *Postcolonial Feminist Theory : An Overview*.
- Mishra, Raj Kumar. (2013). Postcolonial feminism: Looking into within-beyond-to difference. *International Journal of English and Literature*, 4(4), 129–134. <https://doi.org/10.5897/IJEL12.165>
- Morris, Rosalind. (2010). REFLECTION ON THE HISTORY OF AN IDEA “CAN THE SUBALTERN SPEAK?” In *Sustainability (Switzerland)* (Vol. 11). Retrieved from http://scioteca.caf.com/bitstream/handle/123456789/1091/RED2017-Eng-8ene.pdf?sequence=12&isAllowed=y%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2008.06.005%0Ahttps://www.researchgate.net/publication/305320484_SYSTEM_PEMBERTUNGAN_TERPUSAT_STRATEGI_MELESTARI
- Rajan, Sunder, & Park, You me. (n.d.). *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies Blackwell Companions in Cultural Studies*.
- Reji, Angel E. (2024). *Exploring the Evolution of Gender-Based Violence in India and its Contributing Actors Exploring the Evolution of Gender-Based Violence in India and its Contributing Actors*. 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.25148/URJ.020115>
- Sangari, Kumkum. (1995). *Politics of Diversity*. 30(51), 3287–3310.
- Singh, Abhishek, Chokhandre, Praveen, Kumar, Ajeet, & Kathryn, Singh. (2022). Development of the India Patriarchy Index : Validation and Testing of Temporal and Spatial Patterning. *Social Indicators Research*, 159(1), 351–377. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-021-02752-1>
- Smith, Sharon. (1997). *Engels and the Origin of Women ' s Oppression. c*.
- Yasin, Ghulam, Waqar, Sajid, Javed, Noveen, & Naeem, Ahmad. (2021). *ENDURANCE OF THE SUBALTERN : A STUDY OF A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS BY KHALID HOSSEINI*. 9(3), 745–753.

