

**JOURNAL
OF
THE ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BANGLADESH
(HUMANITIES)**

Vol. 49

Number 1

June 2004

**Editor
Sirajul Islam**

**Associate Editor
Sajahan Miah**



ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BANGLADESH

CONTENTS

THE ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF BAGHA MOSQUE Rozina Parvin	1
ENFRAMING BANGALI AYURBED : GOING BEYOND 'FRONTIER' FRAMES Projit Bihari Mukharji	13
AMERICAN MARITIME ACTIVITIES IN CALCUTTA : CASES OF ELEPHANT AND ICE, 1785-1880 Sirajul Islam	41
THE MAKING OF A COLONIAL ORDER: INFORMATION, UNCERTAINTY AND LAW IN EARLY COLONIAL BENGAL Jon E Wilson	61
IMAGINING BENGAL: BENGALI CULTURE AND THE WELSH NATIONAL AWAKENING, 1840-1966 Aled Gruffydd Jones	81
ANTI-COLONIAL FEMINISM : DISCOURSES OF GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK AND ANIA LOOMBA Md. Mahmudul Hasan	89
WILFRED CANTWELL SMITH'S <i>ISLAM IN MODERN HISTORY</i> : ITS CURRENT PERTINENCE IN BANGLADESH Joseph T. O'connell	105
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: A VIEW FROM BANGLADESH CONSTITUTION Muhammad Anisuzzaman	123
CIVIL SOCIETY, GLOBALIZATION AND DEMOCRACY IN BANGLADESH John Barkdull and Lisa Dicke	151
NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAMME: AVAILABLE POLICY OPTIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA Muhammad Ruhul Amin	173
BOOK REVIEWS	
C.E. BOSWORTH AND M.S. ASIMOV (eds.), <i>HISTORY OF CIVILIZATIONS OF CENTRAL ASIA</i> Sirajul Islam	183
ABDUL AWAL MINTOO, <i>BANGLADESH ANATOMY OF CHANGE</i> Amirul Islam Chowdhury	189
KAZI EBADUL HOQUE, <i>ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE IN BANGLADESH</i> Mahmudul Islam	195
SHARIFUDDIN AHMED, <i>DHAKA: A STUDY IN URBAN HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT 1840-1921</i> Nazrul Islam	197

**ANTI-COLONIAL FEMINISM : DISCOURSES OF GAYATRI
CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK AND ANIA LOOMBA**

Md. Mahmudul Hasan*

Feminist movements in the present day bring revolutionary ideas to many established notions, social mythologies and, most importantly, the literary canon. With the development of various kinds of thinking within feminism, it incorporates a range of perspectives: Western feminism, post-colonial feminism, Oriental feminism, anti-colonial feminism, Black feminism, capitalist or corporate feminism, Marxist feminism, international feminism, so on and so forth. Feminist theorists and philosophers are contributing to these trends from their own critical position that, in most cases, reflects, among other things, the background from which they come and their own experiences within feminist theoretical framework. Similarly, feminist literary criticisms are shaking the very foundation of the established trends of literary criticisms. But, ironically enough, feminist literary criticism itself has come under serious scrutiny and re-examination because of its alleged lack of concern for the experiences of the non-Western feminist heroines and to the feminist literary heritage of subaltern societies. Although, since its inception feminist literary criticism has gone much further in ideological and theoretical terms, it cannot come out of the indictment of parochialism and insularity yet; because subaltern feminist experiences have not found an equal standing in global feminist arena. An equal representation of women from different ethnic, religious and geographical backgrounds, which would give feminisms credits of credibility in terms of global sisterhood, is still nonexistent in the established [Western] feminist thinking.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Ania Loomba come from a social background, that is India, which bears a badge of subalternity in comparison to the dominant West. Both of them are directly and actively involved in the combat zone of feminist academic discourses. Their ideas apropos feminisms will give us fairly a comprehensive picture of different trends of feminist thinking in a post-colonial perspective, as it will make it clear to the readers how one's social background and practical experiences help shape their mindset regarding feminist thoughts.

* Department of English, Portsmouth University, UK

A post-colonial feminist and post-modern theorist, Spivak looks at the established trend of feminisms through the lenses of a subaltern. In examining the premises of feminism, she applies an eclectic approach and brings the theoretical engagements of Marxism, feminism, deconstructive approach and postcolonialism. Her 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism'¹ locates a complicity between Western feminism and the colonialist civilising mission and the imperialist agenda of worlding 'the Third World' designed to justify Western dominance. A Shakespearean critic by training and another leading post-colonial feminist, Loomba focuses on the concept of double colonization and on the binary pairings of white and coloured, West and East, together with the gendered polarisation of male and female. Loomba critiques the overlapping structure of oppression by colonial machineries and local patriarchy, and examines the representation of women and of racial other in the Western production of knowledge. This essay intends to evaluate their feminist thinking and how they unsettle the dominant trends of Western feminism by putting it in the same line of oppression by colonialism and racism. It is also designed to contextualise their postcolonial thoughts by occasionally locating their relevance to the feminist ideas of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossein² (1880-1932).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, a literary critic and feminist theorist, has earned an international distinction through her vigorous intellectual production relating to 'the development of multicultural studies, postcolonial studies, and feminist theory' with a predominance of her theoretical 'association with Marxism, Third Worldism, and international feminism'³. The integration in Spivak of education and teaching in two different cultures (India and United States), of the Indian cultural heritage imprinted in her mind and of the practical experiences she has accumulated by her interaction and direct involvement with the mainstream feminism put her in a vantage point to look critically at feminist theoretical developments in the global context. It has also enabled her to make dispassionate observation about the qualms and reservations of Western feminism. In her analysis of the feminist theories in the West, Spivak finds a discrepant attitude to the experiences of women in subaltern societies most of which encountered direct or indirect imperialist domination of the West. Contrary to this imperialist feminism, Spivak wants to herald an international feminism that will give equal weight to the voices of global sisterhood.

-
- 1 Published in Belsey, Catherine and Jane Moore (ed.), *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism* (2nd ed.). London: Macmillan Press Limited 1997, pp.148-163.
 - 2 The leading Bangladeshi feminist writer, political activist and educationist of early 20th century.
 - 3 Donna Landry and MacLean Gerald (ed.); *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*; New York: Routledge 1996, pp. 4 & 9.

One crucial point in Spivak's feminist theoretical framework is her exploration of the links between (neo-) racism-capitalism and patriarchy that combined together contribute to women's marginalisation. She is of the view that racist bias and bigotry and capitalist manoeuvring and manipulation contaminate Western feminism and dissuade it from doing its fair play apropos the experiences of the women from subaltern societies. Some elements of Western feminism play the same role as patriarchy does in turning a deaf ear to the voices of the women of racial other and this causes a big gap of understanding between white women and the women of other ethnic origins. Spivak's reading of the novel *The Waterfall* (1971) by Drabble exposes 'the complicities of First World feminism with the heightened exploitation of Third World women's labor'⁴. This connivance of the imperialist/orientalist feminism in exploiting the women of racial other provides Spivak with a theoretical underpinning to give non-Western women an important place in her formulation of subaltern discourse.

Spivak makes it clear that subalterns' voices cannot reach the ear of the privileged either of the 'First' or of the 'Third' Worlds. Women as subaltern are under a double shadow of colonialism and patriarchy⁵. Spivak says, 'Clearly, if you are poor, black, and female you get it in three ways'⁶. What Spivak recurrently emphasises is the assimilation of a section of Western feminism into racist thinking in their attitude towards 'women of colour', which renders the situation of subaltern women more vulnerable than that of white women. In other words, white women suffer in the mechanisms of one power structure, that is patriarchy, whereas the psyche of women of colour is under double repression or, to use a post-colonial theoretical term, double colonisation: patriarchy and racism/neo-racism. Spivak's concept of double colonisation would be clearer if we compare it with the social picture of Rokeya's India, where women were under dual hegemony: patriarchy and British imperialist regime. Indian patriarchy had already been exercising internal colonialism on women; British imperialist adventure in the region brought the external colonialism putting one more shadow on the lot of indigenous women. The oeuvre of Rokeya demonstrates her cries to liberate women from patriarchy, which would predictably free her society from colonial control⁷.

According to Spivak, the waves of feminist movements in the West are in clear contradiction with the interest of the women of subaltern societies. The discriminatory

4 Ibid., p. 53.

5 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'; in Cary Nelson and Larry Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of Culture* (pp. 271-313); Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988, p.287.

6 Ibid., p. 294.

7 Rokeya's allegorical stories *Gyanphal* and *Muktiphal* are especially significant for understanding the colonial tensions in her writings. She juxtaposes the deliverance from colonial control to the emancipation of women and makes the latter a prerequisite to realise the former.

attitudes to the experiences of the women of colour are manifested at different levels in First World feminism: in curricular planning and in feminist literary criticism that 'celebrates the heroines of the First World in a singular and individualist, and the collective presence of women elsewhere in a pluralized and inchoate fashion'⁸. Spivak thus strikes the very foundation of feminist criticism that maintains a special fascination with the experiences of the women of the First World and disregards or homogenises the specificities of the experiences of non-Western women. Women from both the cultures need to be given equal attention for the interests of justice and to appreciate as well as satisfy the demands of feminism in its proper global sense. If feminism means an effort and a struggle to eradicate sexist notions and to end patriarchal domination by establishing fair play in gender relations, it is required to address the feminist issues with a global perspective not from an insular and parochial Western viewpoint. The incorporation of major feminist writers (like Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain of British India) from subaltern countries will not only provide conventional feminist thinking with a sense of equality within feminism but also enrich it with a global awareness of sisterhood, which is indispensable to give feminism a colouring of internationalism and to earn it a crucial global recognition.

What the eminent British feminist critic Gillian Beer says about past texts and present-day concerns⁹, Spivak says the same about experiences of Third World feminist heroines and their Western counterparts. Beer makes a critical approach to the reading of a past text, which is in actual fact a product of cultural conditions of the past. She emphasises the need to make a distinction between past writings and past concerns and the current needs and preoccupations that influence gender formations and their representations in a past text. When a reader reads a past text, to understand its actual meaning, s/he needs to look at it according to the past conditions of its production that contributed to what the text is. Therefore, Beer recommends 'to learn lost reading skills'¹⁰ in order to bring home the meaning of some texts that might not be clear to present day readers for their lack of cultural literacy.

When we interpret a past text, Beer says, we are influenced by our 'current training' and by 'current needs, dreads, preoccupations,' which are the product of present day 'cultural conditions'¹¹. As a result, there exists a gap between past underlying social reality which

8 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Imperialism and Sexual Difference'; *Oxford Literary Review*; 8/1-2 225-240 1986, p.237.

9 Gillian Beer, 'Representing Women: Re-presenting the Past'; in Belsey, Catherine and Jane Moore (ed.) *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism* (pp.77-90); London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1997.

10 Ibid., p. 77.

11 Ibid., p.80.

constitutes, in her words, past 'semantics, plot, formal and generic properties, conditions of production' of a text and present 'expectations' and dominance of present 'assumptions'¹². The important concept that works in the formation of such 'presentist' mentality is, Beer states, the hypothesis that what is in present is 'absolute' and everything needs to be in accordance with the mandate and exigency of our present 'utilitarianism'¹³. On the contrary, Beer makes an objective judgment of past texts and establishes their 'presentism' in their own social context. They might look *past* to present day readers but were unquestionably *present* to their first readers.

What general readers do apropos past texts, the Western feminist movement does the same when looking at the feminist experiences of the coloureds. There is a deep-seated tendency among many champions of western feminisms to over-generalise the feminist movements of non-Western societies and to always judge it in relation to their own experiences without appreciating the specificities of subaltern societies. Such essentialisation when looking at the experiences of women of colour would give an imprecise impression of the real nature of feminist tensions and demands in Third World countries. In other words, judging an Afro-Asian or Caribbean feminist text from a domineering and high-handed Western viewpoint would not do justice to the experiences of Third World feminist experiences. The feminist concerns of subaltern societies and the material conditions of the production of a Third World text should properly be considered to appreciate the experiences of non-Western women. Beer's theory of *presentism* can be put in the same line of the dominant Western mindset of absolutising Western thinking and arbitrating subaltern experiences according to its mandate. Under the circumstances, as Beer intends to make a presentism of past texts, Spivak tries to establish the inner specificities of subaltern feminist texts.

Spivak foresees the emergence of a very potential repository of feminist 'literary heritage' in the so-called Third World literature; and once recovered, it will eliminate the penchant of worlding into First and Third, as it will terminate the 'isolationist admiration for the literature of the female subject in Europe and Anglo-America' and will bring about an equilibrium in feminist thinking by eliminating a mere sense of 'information-retrieval approach to "Third World" literature'¹⁴. Although Spivak does not disapprove of the information retrieval approach to the experiences of women in Third World, she finds it

12 Ibid., p.80.

13 Ibid., p.80.

14 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism'; in Belsey, Catherine and Jane Moore (ed.) *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism* (pp. 148-163); London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1997.p. 148.

insufficient to do the fullest justice to the experiences of women of colour¹⁵. The problem with this approach is that it looks at the experiences of the subaltern women from a non-theoretical position, which prompts the feminist theorists to make over-generalisation about Third World women. The complete combination of the specifics of the women of colour will form a new paradigmatic whole for feminism. Against the background of the dominance of First World feminism, Spivak calls for forming a global sisterhood comprising women from every region: Asia, Africa, Arab, and other places¹⁶. Spivak's concern for global sisterhood and international feminism echoes Rokeya's feminist thinking that 'engages with the worldwide political tenets' of 'dispossession and minoritization of women'¹⁷. Although Rokeya's first target audience was the Muslim society of Bengal, on more than one occasion, she expresses her concerns about peripheralization of women in every society that shows her eagerness to unite women of all societies towards their liberation¹⁸.

As a Marxist feminist, Spivak's feminist thinking encompasses the economic exploitation of women by patriarchy and capitalism especially in domestic sphere. In her discussion of women's labour at home, in other words, a woman's indirect financial contribution to family, Spivak employs three economic terms: use, exchange and surplus. She makes it clear that the beneficiary of women's unremunerated household work is not the men of the house in true sense, rather the capitalist system itself is indirectly exploiting women's unwaged labour. As a woman produces more than she receives in terms of subsistence, there is a continuous flow of surplus for the man of the family and this surplus ultimately adds to the profits of the capitalist, who controls and exploits his labour. As household work does not come under the catalogue of 'pure exchange' there remains a hurdle in turning the 'use-value' of women's labour into 'exchange-value'¹⁹. This household pecuniary appropriation of women's labour is reinforced by an established myth in society that dignity for a man lies in his employment of wage-value (not just use-value); but dignity for a woman lies in 'unpaid domestic labour'²⁰, which has use-value not

15 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'; in Cary Nelson and Larry Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of Culture* (pp. 271-313); Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988, p. 295.

16 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Imperialism and Sexual Difference'; *Oxford Literary Review*: 8/1-2 225-240 1986, p. 226.

17 Sonita Sarker, Larger Than Bengal: Feminism in Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's *Sultana's Dream* and Global Modernities; *Archiv orientální: Quarterly Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 2000 441-456 Praha, Czech Republic, p.453.

18 *Motichur* [Pearl Dust] 2nd part; in *Rokeya Rachanabali* [Complete Works of Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain] (pp. 55-182); ed. Abdul Qadir; Dhaka, Bangladesh: Bangla Academy; New edition: March 1999, p.115.

19 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Feminism and Critical Theory' (1985); in Landry, Donna and Gerald MacLean (ed.); *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (pp. 53-74); New York: Routledge 1996, p.56.

20 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Diasporas old and new: women in the transnational world'; *Textual Practice* 10(2), 245-269 1996, p.248.

wage/exchange-value. This concept of dignity is directly related to Gillian Beer's disagreement with the idea of 'naturalness'. Beer has problem with the words '*nature* and *natural*' as they give an idea of essentialism which the readers tend to accept as something inviolable and inevitable. So when the readers come across such words, they become subconsciously ready to accept something as universally established hence incontrovertible. This does not leave any scope for the readers to argue, as it seems to be 'prejudged'²¹. One example of the widespread influence of the concept of *nature* and *natural* is the bifurcation of human activities between men and women in the practical world. In the c19th England (even today in many societies), it was thought *natural* that women should look after the chores and other household drudgeries and *unnatural* for them to become involved in outside social and political activities. On the other hand, it was thought *natural* for men to do the hardest physical labour and mental exertions and *unnatural* for women to *encroach* upon *masculine* spheres of activities, so on and so forth.

By denouncing the 'prejudged' conviction of the word *natural*, Beer and Spivak are actually lining themselves up with 'constructionist' feminist thinking which promotes the idea that women's incompetence in many mainstream activities and their aptitude for some particular vocation is not something inherent in them rather it is the social conditioning that has made them apparently weak and ineffective over the time. For a long time in history, the social system promoted some *feminine* attributes and encouraged women to develop those qualities in themselves. Once those *feminine* features became ingrained and internalised in the mental frame of women, it started getting a colour of naturalness. So constructionist feminists prefer to make distinction between femininity and femaleness to avoid the equivocation rendered with the words *nature* and *natural* by 'essentialist' feminist thinking.

When Rokeya, throughout her writings, persuades women to come out of the domestic seclusion and nurture their potentials in order that they can undertake the fullest responsibility (familial, social and political) as human beings on a par with men, she actually wages her war against the concept of 'naturalness' embedded in the social order that men and women have some polarised *natural* duties. All feminine traits (which are actually social constructs) in women have been thought *natural*. So this has become a common agenda of all feminist writers to dispel the charm of naturalness.

21 Gillian Beer, 'Representing Women: Re-presenting the Past'; in Belsey, Catherine and Jane Moore (ed.) *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism* (pp.77-90); London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1997. p. 83.

That the idea of naturalness has become deep-seated in society is a result of internalisation of different social mythologies by both men and women. It has been used by patriarchy as a ploy to marginalize women and to keep them from raising their voice against the oppressive power structures of the patriarchal social order. The word 'naturalness' seems to give patriarchal ideas a colouring of ultimate truth similar to the operation of physical world. Feminists try to bring the concept of naturalness from a position of scientific truth to a lesser status of social conditioning in order that it comes under the category of revolutionary agenda. Spivak appropriates the debate of *naturalness* to expose the financial exploitation of women by patriarchy under the shade of this ambiguous term. Society exploits the trope of naturalness in financially exploiting women, as women are 'naturally' expected to put their fullest efforts in household work that does not carry any 'wage-value'. When Spivak speaks for establishing women's right over her productive and reproductive labour, she in principle tries to break the myth of 'naturalness'.

The nineteenth-century English society considered it *natural* for men to earn money and *unnatural* for women to do any employment of wage-value. Although Spivak relates it to economic manipulation of women by men, the problem is deeper and it lies in the patriarchal comprehension of the very being of female. In c19th English as well as Indian society, women were thought men's property hence any financial proceeds by women would logically go to men. This concept of ownership also encompasses the reproductive power of womb. Men's socially recognised right to the custody of the child makes it clearer that they conserve rights over the product of woman's body. In this respect, Spivak gives the struggle for abortion a legitimacy, in the sense that it seeks to establish woman's right over her own body²². The basic problem of the exploitation of female labour and the control over the womb resides in the very unsettled human identity of women. That women have been thought chattels in the belonging of men rather than equal independent human beings contributes to the effacement of their human identity, which finally dispossessed them from the control over their productive and reproductive labour.

Spivak's concept of profit generating value of women's labour (both productive and reproductive) puts her at odds with Freud and Marx, as both deny the womb as a place of production. Freud is preoccupied with 'penis envy' so his attitude towards human sexuality and production is phallogentric. Spivak aims at giving 'womb envy' an equal

22 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Feminism and Critical Theory' (1985); in Landry, Donna and Gerald MacLean (ed.); *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (pp. 53-74); New York: Routledge 1996, p. 57.

weight in the discussion of 'human sexuality and the production of society'²³. She draws a history of 'antagonism'²⁴ between Marxism and feminism, as all the classical Marxist texts maintained a continuous denial of the womb as the source of reproductive power. An important Marxist-feminist critique of the labour theory of value is that, when talking about social reproduction or the reproduction of labour-power, it does not give the same value to sexual reproduction²⁵. Spivak's coinage of the concept of 'womb envy' possesses an equal burden of Freud's construction of 'penis envy', as both point to the potency as well as insufficiency of men and women in some particular stage. But the dominant patriarchal thinking refused to recognise the womb as a potent reproductive power in women, which ultimately gave the right to custody to men. Women are regarded as, in industrial term, tools or machinery devices to produce goods (in this case human procreation) and the attendant profit goes to the economic sack of men. In other words, as Spivak says in her essay 'Feminism in Decolonization'²⁶ when discussing R. K. Narayan's *The Guide*, negating women the right to their womb is practically the same as the 'commodification' of female body in the capitalist market. Narayan, as Spivak looks at the text, gives one telling example how men colonise women's body by using them as economic apparatus.

Spivak looks at the social standing of women as a subaltern position, as they are, in every society, always in a subordinate condition²⁷. The colonial encounter further enforced this subaltern status of women and re-enforced the customary 'gender-systems' in operation. The coloniser turned a blind eye to the repression of women by colonised patriarchy²⁸. This complicity of the coloniser with the indigenous patriarchal power structure in subalternising the already subordinate condition of native women may have been for two reasons: Firstly, the coloniser wanted to concentrate on making the maximum of economic proceeds from the colonised land, hence did not risk the anger of colonised patriarchy, rather upheld the patriarchal mythology by looking after masculinist interests. Secondly, they simply condoned patriarchal oppression and supported it ideologically. Spivak maintains that the intrusive imperialist power did not only turn a blind eye to patriarchy, rather buttressed it by providing it with theoretical foundations.

23 Ibid., p. 58.

24 Ibid., p. 60.

25 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*; New York and London: Methuen, 1987, p. 248.

26 Published in *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* (Fall 1991), 3(3): 139-170.

27 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Diasporas old and new: women in the transnational world', *Textual Practice* 10(2), 245-269 1996, p. 249.

28 Ibid., p. 255.

In her discussion of the complicity of coloniser and colonised patriarchy, Spivak draws a line of similarity in the apologetic reasoning and supposed vindication of the coloniser and colonised patriarchy. She takes the issue of suttee or widow immolation as a point of reference in this respect. The intrusive coloniser portrayed their imperial venture as a civilising 'social mission'; and, on the other hand, the Indian Hindu patriarchy resorted to the same mode of justification when condoning the cruel practice of widow immolation that the widow 'actually wanted to die' (as coloniser's reasoning gives the impression that the racial other needed to or wanted to be civilised) and it was socially cathected as a reward for the miserable woman²⁹. In the case of the legal promulgation by the British of abolishing suttee, Spivak rejects the assumption that white men were saving brown women from brown men. Because the imperialist power in India maintained a long chain of collaboration with the local Brahmans hierarchy in such a way that it gives every feeling that 'the British condoned this practice'³⁰.

The same truth has been reflected in the writing of Rokeya whose incisive critiquing of and critical remarks about Western culture reflects her anger against the colonisers. The long chain of collaboration between coloniser and the colonised patriarchy rendered Rokeya's struggle tougher. Rokeya found it more difficult to emancipate the colonially and patriarchally enslaved minds of women. So she directs her struggle for the emancipation of women to the ultimate liberation of her society from colonial bondage. She brings her efforts for female emancipation into line with the eventual liberation of her country from the colonisers when she says, 'Without awakening the Indian women, India cannot be waken up'³¹. She wants to make her country people eligible in order that they can unfetter themselves from the colonial manacles. Rokeya's central argument revolves around her urge to men to put women on an equal stead so that men and women put together can build a strong resistance against colonial exploitations.

Ania Loomba

Like Spivak, Ania Loomba links her feminist thinking directly to the colonial oppression and racial marginalisation. She does not regard patriarchal tyranny as something isolated from other forms of domination and human manipulation. Loomba finds clear 'linkages between patriarchal control, state power, parochialism, colonialism, and racial

29 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'. pp. 297 & 301.

30 Ibid., p. 301.

31 *Ogronthito Probandho* [Scattered Essays]; in *Rokeya Rachanabali* [Complete Works of Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain] (pp.183-254); ed. Abdul Qadir; Dhaka, Bangladesh: Bangla Academy; New edition: March, p. 211

prejudice³². So her reading of gender relations is correlated with 'cultural anxieties, a crisis of governance, and so on'³³. Loomba's concept of feminism can be grouped together with anti-colonial feminist struggles that focus on culture as a combat zone between the oppressors and the oppressed and negates the joint agenda of 'male' and 'white' to exclude women and racial other from culture³⁴. Loomba's observation of feminist scholarship of a former colonised nation (India) further strengthens her conviction that gender relations have assumed an important bearing upon the direction of assessing 'colonialism, nationalisms, postcolonial governance, religious controversies, left-wing movements, and peasant struggles'³⁵. This observation signals the many-sided developments happening in Third World feminism that is taking different ramifications in its feminist discourses. As it appears in Gillian Beer's observation, feminism in the West is also going through different changes and building up its foundation upon scientific, medical and psychological discourses. But one salient point of dissimilarity in the developments of Western and Afro-Asian feminisms is that whereas the former is more aligned with theoretically abstract discourses such as psychoanalysis and logocentrism, the latter maintains a critical examination of linkages between colonial power structure and local patriarchy and their bearing upon the development of indigenous feminist thinking. The prolonged imperial presence in the colonised land definitely put a significant influence on indigenous feminist thinking that is measuring its relationship with the feminist thinking of (ex-)colonisers. Having gone through colonial subjugation, subaltern society's feminist experiences realistically took a different shape than those of the western feminist heroines. Feminist heroines of Third World countries locate a complicity and connivance between indigenous and colonialist patriarchies.

While Spivak focuses on the complicity of colonial power structure with the subjugating of indigenous women, Loomba looks over the orientalist representation of non-Western women by Western orientalist/imperialist scholarship. Loomba's ideas of feminism correspond to those of Edward Said who finds uniformity between colonial stereotypes of colonised people and the patriarchal stereotypes of women. European imperialist stereotyping maintained a conception of colonised people as irrational, sensual, lazy and the whole 'Orient' as static; and all such attributes are ascribed to women by patriarchal white in the same line of attack. So the Orient can be coupled with 'feminine' and Europe

32 Ania Loomba, 'The color of patriarchy: Critical difference, cultural difference, and Renaissance drama'; in *Women, "Race", & Writing in the Early Modern Period* (pp.17-34); (ed.) Hendricks, Margo & Patricia Parker; New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 33.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

34 Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*; London: Routledge, 1998, pp. 40-41.

35 Ania Loomba, 'Tangled Histories: Indian Feminism and Anglo-American Feminist Criticism'; *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*; 12/2 271-78 1993, p. 275.

with 'masculine'³⁶. In other words, Loomba argues, colonial masters use almost the same formulaic representations to describe women and oriental-African population³⁷ such as: 'hyper-sexual, emotional, fickle, duplicitous, wild, jealous, and of inferior intelligence'³⁸.

The 'civilising mission' of colonial masters in the colonised land corresponds with the witch burning in Europe to purge women from their drawbacks caused by, as it was presumed, inherent sexual traits. This strengthens Loomba's belief that the colonisers looked at women and racial other with similar mind-set and launched their purgatory schema to get them assimilated after supposed rectification. White patriarchy conceived that both women and the racial other needed to be recovered from their sexual and racial traits, as both were considered in the c19th England tainted with inherent faults and failings. The Western patriarchal mindset put white women and the Oriental-African other in the same ranking of subordination. Within European land, as it was thought of the Moorish and Jewish people, women were considered a social other potential to contaminate the male citizens and this intensifies the otherness of women like a foreign land.³⁹

The 'equivalencies' put down between women and racial subaltern was so calcified in the colonial heydays that in scientific discourses, as Loomba states, 'racial traits were used to explain sexual traits'⁴⁰. Freud's metaphoric expression of a 'dark continent' to describe 'his incomprehension of the sexual life of women' intensifies the widespread convergence of European conception of women and Africa. As Loomba observes, race and gender appear in the colonialist scholarship not simply 'analogous' but they seem to be 'mutually intensifying'⁴¹. Both Beer and Loomba mention Freud's metaphoric use of 'dark continent' to describe women; but we find a divergence of concern that they are promoting. Beer's reference to Freud in her article 'Beyond Determinism: George Eliot and Virginia Woolf' in this particular occasion is to point towards the marginalised status of women in patriarchal society, whereas Loomba refers to the same metaphor to show the subaltern status of both women and racial other in the eyes of Western patriarchy. Beer, like many other Western feminist theorists, does not tell us much about the inter-cultural and racial tensions taking the shape of an intellectual battlefield within feminisms. On the contrary, the feminist thinking of the theorists with subaltern social backgrounds like Loomba is saturated with issues of racism, which reflects their concern for including worldwide feminist experiences in mainstream feminist dialogue and for

36 Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London: Routledge, 1998, p. 47.

37 Ibid., p. 107.

38 Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, p.32.

39 Ibid., p.121.

40 Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London: Routledge, 1998, p. 166.

41 Ibid., p.166.

giving equal voice to the feminist heroines of subaltern societies. Although Beer on one occasion introduces the issues of racism in connection to society's treatment of women, her concern is not directly aligned to the colonial and neo-colonial discourse of racial chauvinism and prejudice. Such theoretical position ascertains, among other things, one's experiences as a critic as well as peculiarities as a member of a particular society.

That the white patriarchal society employed similar representations of women and the racial other should not make us presumptuous that there was one clandestine deal between the imperial and patriarchal power structures and another deal between the oppressed, that is, women and the Afro-Asian natives. Any literary representation of a given society considers and absorbs what is available in the linguistic pattern that unfolds its class structure. That the patriarchal portrayal of women and the imperialist representation of the racial other used similar metaphoric languages was simply a coincidence not correlation. A deep-seated odium and discriminatory attitude were ingrained in the whole region of European consciousness and pervaded its psychic mindset, which ultimately produced many metaphoric representations of Asian and African people, especially in the writings of literary luminaries from Daniel Defoe to Joseph Conrad who promoted the campaign of imperialism in the name of European civilising mission. The patriarchal society simply exploited the handy symbolic order of the time and used the same representation in the case of women.

Loomba's feminist thinking matches that of black feminism in the sense that both tend to challenge imperialism in order to address 'the totality of oppression' by racist and imperialist power and by patriarchy too⁴². Loomba emphasises that white patriarchal society treated white women and black people with almost identical apparatuses of subjugation to the extent of rendering both as 'others'⁴³. She locates an overlapping between racial and sexual difference⁴⁴. Loomba finds an historical pattern in the interdependency between patriarchalism and racism in the sense that both pursued a policy of exclusion of women and the racial other⁴⁵. She maintains that black man and white woman combined together are considered by the racial patriarchalism as a potential threat to white patriarchy⁴⁶. In her analysis of Shakespeare's *Othello* Loomba finds an 'interweaving of misogyny and racism in Iago's' pronouncements in the play⁴⁷. She undertakes a philological study of the word 'race' and finds that the very word used to

42 Maggie Humm, *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory*; UK: Prentice Hall / Harvester Wheatsheaf 1995, p.25.

43 Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama*; Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989, p.2.

44 *Ibid.*, pp.3-4.

45 *Ibid.*, p.45.

46 *Ibid.*, p.49.

47 *Ibid.*, p.58.

describe women, as it is nowadays used to denoting the racial other. Thus she arrives at the conclusion that women were considered to be a distinct group within European patriarchal society and this establishes the overlap between racial and gender relations⁴⁸. But the attitude to non-European women went further than this, as they were depicted in colonial time as 'grotesque' and 'dangerous'⁴⁹ needed to get rid of their indigenous traces to be assimilated with patriarchal white society. This corresponds to Spivak's notion of the double shadow that a woman of colour suffers from both patriarchy and the racist chauvinism.

Despite her sharp criticism of First World feminism, Loomba takes an ambivalent position when discussing the interaction between Western feminists and their Afro-Asian counterparts. While she does not deny the positive influence of white women upon Indian women in both 'material and ideological terms'⁵⁰, Loomba also makes it clear that British women's support in liberating Indian women from patriarchy reinforced the passivity of Indian women. So the seeming sisterhood between British women and their Indian counterparts was not based on the notion of equality between them, rather it was one of superiority and vulnerability. So there existed a complex relationship between Western and Indian sisterhood as it was between coloniser and Indian patriarchy. The same relationship is still in operation between neo-colonialist capitalist countries and the Third World countries.

Ania Loomba is of the same opinion as Spivak that colonialism promotes and reinforces patriarchy and she also cites the example of widow immolation of the Indian Hindu society. When Indian society came into contact with colonial rule, the latter simply calcified that practice and, in some cases, with an intent of emulation⁵¹; or by a colonial policy of reticence⁵²; or by snatching away the legitimate rights that women had been enjoying before colonial orientation; or by subjecting women to 'untold sexual harassment, rape, enforced marriage and degradation, both under direct slavery and otherwise'⁵³. In fact, Loomba believes that the colonial approach to the indigenous gender hierarchies was one of manipulation, as it 'altered or entrenched' them according to its own colonial interests⁵⁴. Loomba finds 'an alliance between the colonial government and Indian men in questions involving women'⁵⁵ and this drives her to

48 *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2002 pp. 27 & 30.

49 *Ibid.*, p.28.

50 *Tangled Histories: Indian Feminism and Anglo-American Feminist Criticism; Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*; 12/2 271-78 1993, p.277.

51 *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London: Routledge 1998 p.157.

52 *Ibid.*, p.167.

53 *Ibid.*, p.152.

54 *Ibid.*, pp.166-167.

55 *Ibid.*, p.169.

conclude that 'imperialism, colonialism, post-colonialism and patriarchy interact' with each other in their appropriation of race and gender⁵⁶.

A repressive power has more than one manifestation of its tyranny and exploitation. The marginalisation of women and the exploitation of the racial other by the colonialists and patriarchal white were simply two features of their manipulative mentality. The fact that both the colonised *men* and *women* came under colonial repression should dismiss the idea of complicity between imperialism and patriarchy, as colonial power brought no good either for *men* or *women*. Suffice is to say that colonialists are psychologically sick with their lunacy to exploit the weak wherever and whenever it finds an outlet to do so, as in his seminal essay 'The Psychology of Colonialism: Sex, Age and Ideology in British India,' Ashis Nandy defines colonialism 'as a psychological process'⁵⁷. The reason why imperial power did not intervene with the established gender relations and did take no measure to stop the female repression such as widow immolation was their policy of colonial exploitation. They wanted to exploit the maximum out of the existing social order. They did join hand in hand with the colonised patriarchy not because of their European patriarchal frame of mind, rather they did it simply to capitalize on their economic manipulations. In other words, the colonial power maintained a position of non-concern in the gender question of the colonised nation irrespective of their direct contribution to the marginalisation of women in their countries of origin.

Post-colonial women's movements try to establish the indigenous roots of their feminist thinking denying the assumption that 'women's activism in the postcolonial world is only inspired by its Western counterparts. Such a move has involved re-writing indigenous histories, appropriating pre-colonial symbols and mythologies, and amplifying, where possible, the voices of women themselves'⁵⁸. Loomba is at odds with the First World feminism as it has made a routine unconcern to the relegation of Third World and other ethnic studies to an ancillary role as women⁵⁹. Considering the homogeneity of oppression and marginalisation of women and the racial other by patriarchal colonialism, Loomba proposes similar agenda for both feminism and anti-colonial movements. She suggests that both the movements need to 'challenge dominant ideas of history, culture and representation' and to break 'with dominant Western, patriarchal, philosophies'⁶⁰.

56 *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 3.

57 *The Intimate Enemy. Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*; Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 31.

58 *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 229.

59 "The color of patriarchy: Critical difference, cultural difference, and Renaissance drama"; in *Women, "Race", & Writing in the Early Modern Period* (pp.17-34); (ed.) Hendricks, Margo & Patricia Parker; New York: Routledge 1994 p. 21.

60 *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London: Routledge 1998, p. 40.

Such independent and indigenous consciousness of feminist thinking will give anti-colonial feminism a proper direction. If we take Beer's 'presentism' as presentism of time and space, it can be applicable to Loomba's ideas of independent feminist thinking of Third World feminism. The feminist experiences of subaltern societies may seem remote and, in some cases, irrelevant to the western feminist experiences, which is not the case with indigenous feminist heroines. So the framework of Third World feminist movements should be defined according to their variant cultural and epistemic realities. In other words, oriental feminism is fraught with its own historical and cultural contexts and should proceed with its own feminist agenda without imitating Western prescription.

Loomba, like Spivak, lines up her arguments with the thinking of Third World feminism that defies the Western perception of Third World as 'Others', 'ethnics' or 'nationals', while Western feminism denies its subjectivities and appropriates its texts⁶¹. She defies the attitudes of the First World feminism in the question of racism and 'subject formation'⁶². While white feminists have shown a systematic indifference to the experiences of Afro-Asian women, Loomba emphasises that non-European literatures should be celebrated and reinterpreted⁶³.

Loomba is quite right in her proposition of similar agendas for both feminist and anti-colonial movements. Such an approach will bring the totality of oppression and exploitation to the question of justice. Gender justice should not be treated in an isolated manner. If white feminists overlook the question of injustice committed by the racial and colonial power, the very basis of their feminist propaganda would be unsettled. Any dispassionate negligence of the Third World feminism by the First World one will undoubtedly give a colouring of artificiality to the western feminist movement. And undermining the feminist experiences of Third World countries by turning a blind eye to their feminist literary texts would reinforce an unfortunate complicity, though artificial, between the colonial and neo-colonial masters and the white feminism.

61 Maggie Humm, *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory*; UK: Prentice Hall / Harvester Wheatsheaf 1995, p. 287.

62 *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*, p. 149.

63 *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.