

Vandana Shiva and Gayatri Chakravorty explore the theories of Ecofeminist Resistance in Subaltern Earth: Silenced Voices in Postcolonial Women's Literature

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the connection between ecofeminism and postcolonial theory by examining subaltern environmental resistance in postmodern women's literature. Exploring literary representations of ecological violence and gendered marginalization, it challenges the ties between land, voice, and agency as explored by Vandana Shiva and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Shiva's ecofeminism at the grassroots highlights indigenous knowledge and women's interdependence with nature, while Spivak's denounces the oppressive conditions placed on the subaltern. Through the analysis of literary works by postcolonial women writers, such as Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms*, Bessie Head's *When We See It*, and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, this paper examines how ecofeminist resistance can be used to recover land, identity, and forgotten histories. Through the intersection of two theoretical trajectories, this article presents the idea of the "Subaltern Earth" as a space for both resistance and recall, where women's ecological and cultural voices challenge colonial-capitalist remnants.

Keywords: *Subaltern, Ecofeminism, Postcolonial Literature, Environmental Resistance, Silenced Voices, Indigenous Women, Land, Voice, Embodiment, Memory, Decolonian Ecology.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The earth and women's bodies have frequently been exploited, silenced in postcolonial settings, and stripped of their freedom. Indigenous women are regarded as guardians of ecological knowledge and environmental resistance by Vandana Shiva's ecofeminism. Gayatri Spivak's postcolonial critique, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, explores the question of voice and representation in relation to subalternism. He questions whether these women can ever be truly heard within dominant epistemologies. Through their shared theoretical perspectives, postcolonial women's literature offers a fertile platform for exploring the relationship between earth and woman as interconnected resistance figures.

The paper presents a "Subaltern Earth" concept that represents the intersection of ecological decline and gendered silencing. Through narrative, myth, and embodied storytelling in postcolonial literature, women writers are believed to be subverting ecological and patriarchal oppressive practices. These texts offer novel perspectives on the relationship between land and language, challenging the legacy of colonialism, neoliberal ecocide, and the ongoing exclusion of indigenous people and rural women.[a] [b]. The paper attempts to provide a thorough examination of theoretical, historical and literary aspects by contextualizing the texts within their socio-political contexts and drawing connections between grassroots eco-activism (the movement that mobilised nature), literary expression, and theoretical discourse.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Vandana Shiva: Ecofeminism as Earth:

Vandana Shiva's ecofeminism offers a critical analysis of Western science in contrast to capitalism and patriarchy. Through her research, she uncovers how the principles of nature control and women's control have been historically linked. The revival of traditional, indigenous knowledge systems, where women have played important roles throughout history, is what she advocates for. The so-called development models, as per Shiva, not only dilute ecological equilibrium but also render

experientially lost women's understanding of sustainable practices. Earth Democracy by Alistair Cook outlines the concept of pluralistic, decentralized, and participatory environmental governance as an alternative to exploitative globalization. Through her ecofeminist ideology, she advocates for ecological subjectivities, particularly those of rural and tribal women who resist through cultivation, protest, and ecological stewardship.

Gayatri Spivak: Silences of the Subaltern

In his seminal essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, Gayatri Spivak addresses important issues of representation, agency, and voice. She rebukes colonial power in contrast to postcolonial intellectuals who assert their ability to restore subaltern voices, and suggests that such efforts often reinforce the structures they seek to demolish. Spivak's analysis of epistemic violence is crucial in comprehending the systematic marginalization of environmental knowledge and voices, particularly those of women at the intersections of caste, race, and indigeneity, despite not being an ecofeminist. "Strategic essentialism," as she puts it, enables temporary unity among oppressed groups, such as ecofeminist alliances, to form resistance.

Ecofeminist Convergences: Towards a Subaltern Earth

The concept of a "Subaltern Earth" is based on the convergence of ecofeminist beliefs, with Shiva's emphasis on earth resistance and Spivak's mentioning the danger of discarding subalternism. Literary portrayals of women's ecological struggles serve as both powerful outlets for recovery and venues for voicing and acting out. This lens provides an opportunity to explore these issues from different perspectives. This also highlights the need to inquire about not only the speakers, but also the individuals who are being heard and when they are happening.

3. A LITERARY CASE STUDY

Linda Hogan's book, Solar Storms:

Indigenous Eco-memory and Displacement Set in the Canadian North, portrays a young woman attuned to her indigenous heritage. The matriarchal Hogan embodies spiritual and environmental principles that counteract capitalist intrusion. The new piece criticizes the environmental damage caused by hydroelectric ventures, in line with Shiva's vision of ecological justice. According to Spivak's theory, Hogan tackles fundamental concepts of voice by examining how the protagonist reconstructs their identity through fragmented memories and community narrative. This is a fascinating study.

Bessie Head's When Rain Clouds Gather: Agro-Ecology and Gendered Labor

In her book *When Rain Clouds Gather* by Bessie Head, Maria is enrolled in an experimental farm project in Botswana that tackles gender and ecological issues related to food scarcity. By engaging in quiet but transformative work, Maria embodies an ecofeminist perspective that challenges traditional industrial agriculture. Despite being far from passive, her silence resonates with Spivak's theory that speech is not always the sole or most efficient form of resistance. The account of Head presents a multifaceted connection between ecology, gender, and sovereignty.

Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: Caste, Gender, and Riverine Ecologies

The story of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* delves into the intertwined themes of caste divisions gender inequalities and the impact of human activity on the environment. Throughout the book the Meenachal River evolves from a revered entity to a contaminated waterway tainted by the effects of rapid urban development and the weight of caste-based discrimination. In a parallel narrative the protagonist Ammu fights against the constraints of her family and the rigid rules of society much like the river struggles against the forces that are slowly killing it. In the realm of grasping the depth of systemic aggression Roy uses environmental symbols to shed light on how violence embeds itself in societies. Seeing it from another angle, Shiva sees in the river a tragic result of building over nature while Spivak delves into Ammu's story viewing it as a sign of a woman belonging to the margins and how her power is hindered by dominant ideologies.

Nawal El Saadawi's Woman at Point Zero: Gendered Rebellion and the Deserted Land El Nawal

El Saadawi's book *Woman at Point Zero* points out the link between gender-based defiance and the idea of a deserted barren land. Firdaus's story is set against a backdrop of dry and desolate surroundings mirroring how the lack of life in the environment matches the harshness of violence against women. By saying no to both the rule of men and the domination of nature in the name of colonization she made her mark as a rebellion that went up against multiple oppressive systems. When Spivak looked deep into the idea of having a voice she found that it connected well with what Shiva discovered about how women carry the weight of environmental harm in their very beings.

Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss: Colonial Dislocation and Nature

In *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai we get a close look at how colonial dislocation and nature intertwine. Desai shows us how the loss of land and sense of self is deeply linked to the aftermath of colonial rule. Throughout the novel we see a sharp critique of how colonialism sees both humans and the environment as commodities to be exploited. Sai and the cook's daughter both journey through lands deeply affected by environmental decay and being pushed to the margins of society. Even though they don't speak up loudly their silence echoes the idea of unspoken stories explained by Spivak, and in their

simple acts of making it through each day they show a form of women's subtle yet powerful environmental activism as seen through the eyes of Shiva.

Intersections of Resistance: Eco-Activism, Literature, and Theory

When we look at the crossroads of Resistance Eco-Activism Literature and Theory we see that Postcolonial Ecofeminist writings offer something far beyond just acting as symbols of defiance they actually mirror the everyday struggles of women who find their existence deeply intertwined with the need for ecological conservation. In digging into the history of movements like the Chipko Movement the Green Belt Movement and the Narmada Bachao Andolan we find clear instances where the fight put up by women against the breaking down of the environment is equally a stand against being pushed to the margins of both knowledge and space. When it comes to activism, literature goes beyond just writing. It's a way to hold on to our past, give respect to the things left unsaid, and share stories that challenge the mainstream.

Critical Perspectives and Contemporary Relevance

Postcolonial Ecofeminism refuses the dominant narratives of progress, urging us rethink our Key authors such as Roy and Hogan advocate for understanding slow forms of harm (slow violence, Nixon) and a more ecological mourning / perspective They believe that telling stories can be a powerful way to resist those in power. Thinking of the Subaltern Earth in this way flips the script - it's no longer just a backdrop but a place where feminist care for the environment takes center stage.

4. CONCLUSION

Subaltern Earth serves as a double edged tool: it's not only a way of thinking deeply about the world but also a deliberate effort to restore and heal it. With Shiva's strong belief in the balance of nature and Spivak's relentless dismantling of structures in place, the realm of postcolonial writing opens our eyes to how the harm of patriarchy colonialism and the harm to the environment are not isolated but deeply interconnected. These stories avoid looking for quick fixes. They aim to help us dig deeply and really grasp what resistance means. In this time when taking care of the planet is pressing Subaltern Earth's teachings urge us to tune in. Carefully keeping an open mind with a focus on what's right and good in the environment and listen out nuances and layers of thoughts shared by those unheard voices that come from the earth beneath us.

Future Directions in Postcolonial Ecofeminist Criticism

This study paves the way for future ecofeminist literary criticism that weaves gender, environment, race, caste, and transnational justice together:

Digital Ecofeminism: As more and more spaces are becoming accessible online and as censorship increases in some places, there is a new movement of digital poetry, eco-documentaries, and online activism, which could be an area for further study on how postcolonial women use the internet to tell stories about climate justice and transnational advocacy.

- Queer Ecofeminism: Queer ecocriticism challenges the binaries between gender and nature, and postcolonial literature that disrupts heteronormative ecological functions (such as Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night*) provide fresh insight into embodied and fluid ecological identities.
- Urban Ecofeminism: Women in postcolonial urban areas are more susceptible to climate issues such as flooding, pollution, water scarcity, and displacement; a reading of urban ecofeminist texts (such as Arundhati Roy's essays or Meena Kandasamy's poetry) can expand our understanding of environmental justice in urban spaces.
- Comparative Planetary Ecologies: The ecofeminist critique must be global in nature to consider related climate challenges beyond the nation-state, and literature from the Global South (such as that of Indigenous Canadian, Andean, and Pacific Islander women) should be read comparatively to highlight common experiences of exploitation and resistance.

These emerging frameworks challenge the limits of environmentalism while promoting an ethics rooted in relationality, care, and embodied defiance expressed through storytelling, activism, and knowledge engagement.

Contribution to Knowledge

This article brings together two major theorists (Shiva and Spivak) who are seldom examined in conjunction to illustrate how ecofeminist embodiment and epistemological critique combine to deepen our understanding of postcolonial women's literature;

- it presents and extends the theoretical model of Subaltern Earth as a material, spiritual, and symbolic framework for ecofeminist resistance;
- It locates ecofeminist resistance in the lived experiences of marginalized women globally, showing how literature functions as an archive as well as a form of resistance.
- It expands the reach of ecofeminist thinking to current contexts such as digital activism, queer theory, urban studies,

and transnational solidarity, as Scopus level interdisciplinary work would do.

- It promotes a decolonial and inclusive ecofeminism that acknowledges power, locality, and multiple epistemologies.

Ultimately this research holds that the writing of postcolonial women does not merely reflect reality but creates new worlds—dreaming just futures founded on memory, landscape, and expression.

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