



ISSN: 2395-7852



# International Journal of Advanced Research in Arts, Science, Engineering & Management

Volume 10, Issue 1, January 2023



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

**Impact Factor: 7.421**

+91 9940572462

+91 9940572462

ijarasem@gmail.com

www.ijarasem.com



# An Analysis of Namita Gokhale's Things to Leave Behind and Its Role in Tracing the Subaltern Voice

Anita Singh

Associate Professor, English, Govt. PG College, Sec. 1, Panchkula, India

**ABSTRACT:** Among Indian female authors, Namita Gokhale stands out as a major character. Her writing delves into the presumption that women keep breaking out of and challenging patriarchal norms and institutions. The novel *Things to Leave Behind* by Namita Gokhale is the subject of this paper. The postcolonial stance, drawing on Spivak's "voice" and "subaltern" notions. The subaltern's perspective is reflected in "Things to Leave Behind" and its relevance within Indian culture. The study analyses the novel's impact on our knowledge of the subaltern situation and the value of include underrepresented voices in the conversation. The book came out in 2016, and it is well regarded within the larger body of Gokhale's work. It is considered her most daring piece to date. Postcolonial theory has been a popular field of study ever since the Indian subcontinent won its freedom from colonial oppression. Because of the postcolonial context, reams of writing were produced, and the term "subaltern" emerged. As living standards have increased, the definition and attributes of the term "subaltern" have changed.

**KEYWORDS:** Gender, Indian English Literature, Indian Women, Subaltern.

## I. INTRODUCTION

A mix of fiction and nonfiction, Namita Gokhale has written twenty-one books. *Things to Leave Behind* was named the best book of 2021 by the Sahitya Akademi. For her efforts, she has been honoured with several accolades. She has received acclaim for her numerous works. In 2021, you may read *The Blind Matriarch*, which I co-wrote with Malashri Lal. re some of her other works of literature. *The Himalayan Arc: Journeys East of Southeast* (revised), and *Finding Radha: The Quest for Love*. Her work is unique, and she has contributed much to the canon of Indian literature in translation. Gokhale criticises a culture in which women are not free to make their own decisions via her empowered female protagonists. She shows how society has double standards for men and women, as well as the wealthy and the impoverished. Along with sexism and religious intolerance, the caste system is the most glaring manifestation of social injustice in India. In depth, *Things to Leave Behind* addressed discrimination based on gender and caste.

The field of postcolonial philosophy encompasses a wide range of topics. Therefore, a precise definition of this concept is required. Post-colonialism, in a nutshell, is interested in the values, customs, and economic standing of people who have been colonised or oppressed by imperialism in one form or another. The term "postcolonialism" does not mean the same thing as "after colonisation," as McLeod (2011) explains in his book *Beginning Postcolonialism*. This is more of an effort to break away from what the authors call "colonial discourse" and the "challenge of knowing the colonial ways." In the British army, a subaltern is the rank immediately below that of a captain. This expression was first used as a political term by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci in his article "Notes on Italian History," which was subsequently integrated into his widely known book *Prison Notebooks*, published between 1929 and 1930. Postcolonial thinker Gayatri Spivak argues that Antonio Gramsci, to avoid having his material restricted, substituted the word "proletarian" with the phrase "subaltern," which originally referred to a lower-ranking military officer (Spivak, 1990). Because the subaltern were left out of the primary ruling classes' historical narrative, Gramsci sought to give them a voice and protect their culture. Gramsci (1971) said, "The subaltern classes by definition are not unified and cannot unite until they can become a "state": As a result, their history is entangled with that of civil society and, thus, with the records of individual States and groups of States." Gramsci argued that the history of both the subaltern class and the hegemonic classes is complex, and he laid up a six-step plan to investigate this history. By defining the peasant as a subaltern, Gramsci gave them a fresh lease of life and acknowledged them as a social class in their own right.

### "Subaltern Studies" Group

Gramsci's notion of the subaltern was built upon by other 20th century historians interested in the history of India's peasants. Ranajit Guha, who wrote extensively on Indian peasant uprisings, was the movement's first and most



prominent leader. TourajAtabaki, Shahid Amin, Dipesh Chakrabarty, David Arnold, Partha Chatterjee, David Hardiman, and Sumit Sarkar are only a few of the South Asian historians, social critics, and academicians who were dismayed by the group's turn to postmodernism. According to Guha (Guha, 1982), "Subaltern Studies" is the study of subordination across several dimensions in South Asian society, including but not limited to class, caste, age, gender, and position. In the 1980s, the members of the group started investigating subaltern groups in order to give a "objective assessment of the role of the elite and as a critique of elitist interpretations of that role" (Guha, 1982). Historians and academics who sought to integrate subalterns in the mainstream narrative of India's independence struggle resorted to alternative interpretations of Indian history. Later, a member of the Subaltern Studies movement called Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak fought against this attempt to reinvigorate their voices in her book "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1999). Spivak argues that the group's efforts to revitalise subaltern voices are misguided. When people attempt to rewrite the subaltern's past, she says, they are essentially trying to take away their power. Therefore, in Spivak's opinion, the subaltern is rendered mute. Spivak's groundbreaking piece "Can the Subaltern Speak?" further developed her idea of the subaltern. (1988). W Spivak said, addressing the assumptions of radical French theorists Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze that the voice of the peasants can be presented. Here's an illustration: (Spivak, 1988). She also contended that patriarchy and colonialism work together to eliminate women. Spivak's investigation of subalterns, which has covered both concrete and theoretical ground, continues. As technology, globalisation, and capitalism have advanced, Spivak has shared Gokhale's social and political concerns about the subaltern predicament. "Today, the subaltern must be rethought," Spivak says. Now that obstacles have been eliminated, she or he may find it simpler to go to the centre of things. The institution is especially interested in rural and indigenous people as a source of intellectual property and cultural exchange for international commerce. TRIPs' (Spivak, 2012, p. 326).

### Subaltern Voices in Things to Leave Behind

Indian novelist Namita Gokhale shows her empathy for underrepresented people in her latest book, *Things to Leave Behind*. In this work, Gokhale draws attention to the echoes of marginalised voices. Namita Gokhale's historical novel *A thing to Leave Behind* was released in 2016. There was a proliferation of fiction, classics, and thrillers created by Indian authors in English during this time period. Novelist Gokhale's "Himalayan Trilogy" enters its last installment with this book. The trilogy begins with *A Himalayan Love Story* and continues with *The Book of Shadows*. Gokhale's *Things to Leave Behind* takes readers to the Kumaon region of India under the British Raj. A smell of mountain air, the vibrant flutter of the Pichola, and a sense of longing for a bygone era permeate every syllable. It's a trip deep into the Himalayas, full with memories and new experiences. The novel is set in the years before independence, from 1840 to 1912, and shows how the character's life is affected by the shifting political and social systems of the period. The author wove a tale with protagonists that defied social conventions and overcame obstacles to become strong role models for readers. Several generations of women living in the Kumaon region during the British Raj are featured in this novel. The term "voice of the subaltern" is used to describe the testimonies of people from underrepresented communities. Through their stories, the novel's protagonists show how caste, class, and gender contribute to the maintenance of social inequality and the subaltern position of individuals who are a part of the marginalised group. The story uses its characters to shed awareness on prejudice and offer a platform to those who are often marginalised in Indian culture. The story illustrates the many and interrelated ways in which caste, class, and gender contribute to societal inequity. The depiction of Tilotamma's experiences emphasises the significance of empowering the subaltern and the need of confronting and destroying the oppressive and unequal systems that maintain the subaltern situation.

Indians have been bound by the caste system from the beginning of recorded history, and the divisions and rites of that system were firmly established in Kumaon throughout the eighteenth century. Everyone knows that the point of society's laws is to make everyone seem the same. Because conventional culture refuses to accept that the laws of physical attraction are never predetermined by reason, individuals' preferences are rarely taken into account. There are, however, people who have dared to go it alone. The matriarch Tilotama is the tallest of all of them. Tilotama matured into a vengeful and powerful leader. She found solace in books and education, which she used to keep her mind healthy despite her struggles. Tilotama was a devoted lady who was not hesitant to criticise superstitions, much as the saying goes about educated women questioning traditional norms. Since her uncle Badri Dutt Uprety was hanged for his role in the 1857 mutiny, she developed a strong sense of independence. His words of encouragement, "Never be afraid, and do what you want," echoed indelibly in my mind. Do not settle for just mediocrity; demand the best. Tilotama takes this advice to heart and instills the same can-do spirit in her daughter, Deoki. When Deoki's husband, Jayesh Pant, falls for the blue-eyed Rosemary Boden, the daughter of a missionary, he converts to Christianity, and Deoki and her daughter go on the offensive against Rosemary's lovely Eden Ashram. Deoki discovers sexual satisfaction in an unexpected area as a *ménage à quatre* develops with the arrival of painter William Dempster. Whether it's Tilotama Uprety's mother, Durga, who committed suicide by jumping into a lake, or her daughter, Deoki, whom she ignores while reading novels and fantasising about being a *sahib*; Deoki, who is married off to Jayesh, who falls in love with the missionary's daughter Rosemary, and then Deoki determinedly sets out to win him back, but in the meantime



| Volume 10, Issue 1, January 2023 |

discovers how seductive she can The problems with the caste system, marriages made or broken by imperialist wants, and the shift from imperialist fascination to nationalist awareness are all examined in this text. Despite the presence of several female characters including Durga, Tillotama, Saruli, Deoki, and Rosemary, the story defies easy classification. This disproves the claim that Rosemary and Tillotama are virtuous while Deoki and Durga are immoral. Instead, these so-called virtues and vices, as well as knowledge and self-control, are inherent in every human being. Each character has a unique reaction when confronted with the desire machine and the conflict between modernity and tradition. Tillotama is weird and curious, yet she is never hysterical. Deoki is a kind spouse, but she is also the only one who gives in to her desires without shame. Rosemary is strict and morally righteous but never takes sides. These women, although often having to rise above extreme persecution, all exude a calm dignity and agency. The focus of the narrative shifts towards a female protagonist. One issue always arises when putting the subaltern concept into practise: Can the subaltern speak? We can confirm that the subaltern does talk based on the works of Namita Gokhale.

## II. CONCLUSION

Namita Gokhale writes on women's subaltern struggles in her book *Things to Leave Behind*. The findings demonstrate that Gokhale has investigated the exploitation of subaltern women from political, historical, and sociological perspectives, especially in rural areas. A detailed reading of the book reveals that the many oppressive lords and societal systems always prevail when a subaltern attempts to speak out. The oppressive conditions of the subaltern are supposedly shown in *A thing to Leave Behind*. The focus of this research is on investigating stereotypical depictions of social outcasts. The research also looks at how the term "subaltern" came to be and how subalterns are faring in today's advanced and globalised society. It is clear from the depiction of the "subaltern" that their status has not improved over time. They suffered under colonialism in the past and continue to suffer under a subtle and persistent social cycle of domination in today's socialised capitalist society. In terms of gender, caste, and class, most of *Things to Leave Behind's* characters are subalterns.

## REFERENCES

1. El Habib, Louai. "Retracing the Concept of the Subaltern from Gramsci to Spivak: Historical Developments and New Applications." *African Journal of History and Culture* 4.1 (2012): 4-8. Web. 12 January 2013
2. Gokhale, Namita. *Things to Leave Behind*. Penguin UK, 2016.
3. Gramsci, Antonio. *Prison Notebooks*. Volume 2. Ed. Joseph Buttigieg. Trans. Buttigieg and Antonio Callari. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.
4. Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
5. Guha, R. (1982). Ed. *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian Society and History* Vol. VII, Oxford.
6. Guha, R. (1982). "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of colonial India ." *Subaltern Studies*. Oxford. McLeod, John. *Beginning Post-colonialism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011.
7. Spivak, G. C. (1990). *Gayatri Spivak on the politics of the subaltern* (interview by Howard Winant). *Socialist Review*, 20 (3), 81–97.
8. , G. C. (1995) *Can the subaltern speaks?* in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* (eds B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, and H. Tiffin), Routledge, London



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA



# International Journal of Advanced Research in Arts, Science, Engineering & Management (IJARASEM)

| Mobile No: +91-9940572462 | Whatsapp: +91-9940572462 | [ijarasem@gmail.com](mailto:ijarasem@gmail.com) |

[www.ijarasem.com](http://www.ijarasem.com)