

Locating Agency Around the Funeral Pyre: Representation of Sati in Indian Women's Writing



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If the postcolonial project might be seen as an attempt to establish native self-representation, Chakrabarty's acknowledgement of the recognition given to the *Subaltern Studies* collective (Guha and Spivak, eds. 1988) with regard to this aim makes interesting reading. The collective has been widely praised for providing a platform on which to display evidence of the desire by Indians to re-appropriate a sustained interest in self-representation (Chakrabarty 1994:342). However in finding such sentiments "gratifying but premature" (p.342) he goes on to develop an argument which sets out to problematize the idea of 'Indians' "representing themselves in history" (Chakrabarty 1994:342). Chakrabarty's central argument is that within the discipline of history the continued dominance of a master narrative, "the history of Europe" (Chakrabarty 1994:342), pre-determines 'Indian' history will assume a position of subalternity. Chakrabarty's position with regard to the status of history in the postcolonial nation offers some illuminating strands of debate, or evokes terms of analysis which might be readily transferred to an examination of literary self-representation by Indian English fiction. The transference of Chakrabarty's proposition particularly resonates with regard to Indian English writing by women, which in such a framework assumes a further degree of subalternity, as not only is it positioned so that the western (especially British) canon works as a "silent referent" (Chakrabarty 1994:343) but is further marginalised by indigenous patriarchal discourses.

By situating the postcolonial novel by south Asian women writers in this doubly marginalised position it is my intention to interrogate the representation of female figures in order to identify the degree of resistance or challenge to a culturally determined sense of nation, community, or selfhood. Although various problematic issues are raised by this, such as the validity of representing the indigenous cultures of previously colonized nations in the language of the colonizer, or the Eurocentric form of the novel as a means of self-expression, as well as the necessary consideration of the position of women within both indigenous and imperial patriarchal social structures. This necessitates an engagement with the rhetoric of colonial and national discourses and their contestation by, and conflation with, feminist discourses. The implicit challenge in undertaking to situate expressions of resistance to a culturally determined sense of nation, community, or selfhood is to locate the possibility of a

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sense and place of female agency within the author's act of writing and within the actions of her invented characters.

The word 'agency' is used here to refer to a sense of "oppositional consciousness" (Loomba 1998:236) and/or forms of self-representation. The implication of the term 'female agency' used in the context of this research then assumes a position of subalternity. Subalternity used in this research reiterates Spivak's sense of the word (based on Gramscian notions of subalternity) which refers to disempowered groups lacking a coherent political identity, and more specifically her expanded use of the term in which it assumes a focus on the historical experiences of women within indigenous dominant ideological structures (Morton 2003:59). So in constructing the subaltern as female the question being posed in this analysis of Indian women's writing is Spivak's question 'Can the subaltern speak?' (Spivak 1988:66). Or perhaps more accurately my question should be: 'Does the subaltern make attempts to speak?' If so, how might she be heard?

To frame an initial response I take as a starting point the juxtaposition of three essays by feminist intellectuals working in the field of postcolonialism, which have made significant contributions to debate in the last decade or so, as they address the discourses which ideologically frame and construct women's identities. These works have contributed to my understanding of current debate with regard to the position of women in Indian society, but they also create a dialogue as they interact with each other, or may be seen to modulate the positioning of each other's argument. Gayatri Spivak's analysis in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1988), foregrounds a gendered location of subaltern women and argues that the benevolent impulse of the radical western intellectual to "represent subaltern groups effectively appropriate[s] the voice of the subaltern and thereby silences them" (Morton 2003:56) as did that of the colonial. However, as Morton notes, Spivak's expansion of the term subaltern "further complicates the lower-class connotations of the word because it includes women from the upper middle class, as well as the peasantry and sub-proletariat" (Morton 2003:59). While Morton is able to brush this comment aside by claiming that it detracts from Spivak's central concern that if "the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (Spivak 1988:287). However the issue acknowledged, and then dismissed, by Morton's comments is more fully addressed by Kamala Visweswaran in 'Small Speeches, Subaltern Gender: Nationalist Ideology and Its Historiography' (Visweswaran 1996). While Visweswaran largely accepts Spivak's analysis of subaltern speech, her research and critical analysis on women's engagement with the nationalist movement demonstrates more comprehensively the significance of caste and class to female agency. Visweswaran's undertaking examines the ways in which female agency is contained, but also seeks to discover possible "moments when an act of speech might puncture, even rupture, official discourse" (Visweswaran 1996:84). Visweswaran asks "how it is that subalternity is inflected by gender?" (Visweswaran 1996:84). The debate on women's status and agency is further punctuated by Katrik's essay 'Indian Nationalism, Gandhian "Satyagraha," and Representations of Female Sexuality' (1992). This essay outlines the ways in which Gandhi's nationalist movement manipulated the deployment of traditional Hindu constructions of Indian women. Katrik reiterates how Gandhi's political strategy of passive resistance invoked traditionally conceived female qualities of submission and sacrifice, and was consequently able to utilise women 'actively' in the independence movement without

transgressing the culturally sanctioned roles inscribed in Hindu ideology. In this discussion of women's engagement with nationalist activity Katrak concludes that it is by discovering indigenous feminist traditions "and the contributions of women who have been 'hidden from history' we balance our views of the origins of women's struggles in India"(Katrak 1992: 404). This acknowledgement of the potential for agency and voice consciousness questions Spivak's affirmative position that the subaltern (as woman) cannot speak.

These three essays indicate the complex relationship between feminist discourses and those of Indian anti-colonial and nationalist discourses which frame this analysis, and suggest how this is invariably refracted by their intersection with the problematics of a gendered subalternity. Attempts to make 'universal' assumptions about the position of women within dominant ideologies of the national culture, and the convergence with or divergence from feminist discourses, are further complicated when the category of gender is disrupted or fragmented by subject positioning in hierarchical social and economic power structures. It seems women's status as members of subordinate groups is far from stable, and their subalternity may be constantly repositioned according to the particular circumstances under review, or the discourses being deployed. Consequently this problematises the issue of how far women's agency is determined by class, particularly in light of Visweswaran's observation that subaltern studies originate in the assumption of subaltern agency (Visweswaran 1996:85). My reading of Nayantara Sahgal's novel *Rich Like Us* (1985) attempts to determine the degree of female agency the author negotiates for female characters within these competing discourses. The novel's action is set against a climate of antagonistic colonial and nationalist ideologies played out in India at the time of anti-colonial nationalist resistance, and then later in the aftermath of Independence up to and through the period of Emergency. However, re-visiting literature produced prior to the critical debate through which current interrogation takes place demands a recognition of the potential tensions raised by this reading.

In order to situate the tensions in a reading of Sahgal's work, and to further focus this analysis, two particular strands of the debate need to be addressed, or at least acknowledged as problematic with regard to a critical understanding of Indian women's writing in English. Firstly there are inherent difficulties in the postcolonial representation of Indian nationalist ideology and its various intersection or conflict with feminist discourse, compounded by the issue of where the author situates herself in relation to these discursive practices. Secondly, there are the problematics of "constituting certain gendered subjects as subaltern" (Visweswaran 1996: 84), and the location of voice consciousness of the gendered subject, that is the degree of resistance to or containment of women's speech or agency within the dominant national culture, but also the significance of such speech and agency to nationalist ideology.

The relationship between a feminist discourse and the representation of anti-colonial nationalism written contemporaneously or retrospectively becomes particularly contentious for indigenous women writers. They are faced with the classic problem: that of criticizing traditional forms of cultural practice – such as patriarchal societies, or religious and ethnic groupings – for which they are frequently attacked for not complying with or adhering to the anti-colonial or independent nationalist project. As

such, nationalism then becomes a strategy of containment with regard to women's individuality, as Katrak points out:

The belief that women even more than men were the *guardians of tradition*, particularly against a foreign enemy, was used to reinforce the most regressive aspects of tradition. Particularly during nationalist movements, slogans such as "mother land" are glorified to counteract colonialist attitudes. The dangers of reifying "traditions" of treating them as the transcendent emblems of a culture, are felt most negatively by women particularly after Independence when the rationale of justifying tradition against the enemy is no longer needed. (Katrak, 1992:398)

The compression of time and space in Sahgal's novel illustrates to some extent this construction and deployment of women within nationalist ideology, both in the anti-colonial nationalist movement and after Independence, largely through the figure of the novel's protagonist Sonali, and in particular through her retrieval of the personal history presented in her grandfather's memoir.

A further tension in the work of south Asian women writers of English language fiction is accrued from the social positioning in which their gender places them. The universalising term 'Woman' places them as subaltern in a patriarchal society, but in considering the gendering of subalternity however, Visweswaran states "one must distinguish between the figure of 'Woman' as subaltern and the question of subaltern women" (Visweswaran, 1988: 87).

The gendered relation of subalternity means that with regard to the nominal male subject of nationalist ideology, the figure of woman is subaltern; with regard to subaltern women, the recuperated middle-class woman as nationalist subject certainly is not. (Visweswaran, 1988:87)

Therefore within nationalist patriarchal structures 'woman' used as a universal term positions women as subaltern in relation to men, both oppositional elite and subaltern groups, and therefore seeks to contain or limit women's agency. Whereas the term 'subaltern women' disrupts the universality of the term 'woman' and defines women in relation to other women which implies an alternative space exists where female agency may be located. (Consequently the position of the gendered author of Indian English fiction and how her female characters are situated in the text needs to be examined and defined, which I will take up later with regard to Sahgal.)

As Visweswaran's research into nationalist historiography indicates the potential for women's speech and agency within nationalist struggle and insurgency is largely tied to class, caste and economic wealth. Similarly the voice of the woman Indian English fiction writer is achieved through membership of a privileged, urban, westernised social class which forms part of the indigenous elite. However such status is relinquished or redefined as this group is assigned to a cultural and political subaltern position as a consequence of colonial and western domination. This further impacts upon and complicates the relationship between feminist and nationalist

ideologies. Acknowledgement of such provides an interesting frame in which to investigate Sahgal's heroines, particularly Rose and Sonali in *Rich Like Us*.

Sahgal's novel, in which a central chapter revolves around an act of sati which takes place in the early 20th century, not only displays an obvious concern with such issues as the novel draws attention to the question of the colonial impact on the cultural positioning of women in postcolonial national discourses, but also questions how far writing which reflects on the past is a response to the present. Such an analysis can be located in a re-examination of the cultural practice of sati which requires to be understood in a postcolonial society which demonstrates a resurgence of traditionalism, or what is constructed as traditionalism, as this will inevitably have significant implications for women. The rise in popularity in recent decades of the ideologies which drive Hindutva politics attempts to legitimize "the more regressive aspects of state and culture in India" (Rajan 1993:7). The rise of the BJP (Bhartiya Janata Party) and the Hindu right in the 1980s filled a vacuum left by a perceived disillusionment with the pan-Indian secularist Congress Party which had led the nation to Independence. Although the BJP is ostensibly a politically motivated body, it actively asserts a cultural nationalism as illuminated in a statement by Lal Krishan Advani, President of the BJP on the legacy of Nehru's concepts of a democratic, secular nation:

Nehru's thinking made Indian nationalism an amorphous thing... Democracy and liberalism as preached by Nehru were denuded of their Indianness. So Hindu bashing became synonymous with secularism. I believe that India is what it is, because of its ancient heritage. Call it Hindu or call it Bhartiya (Indian). If nationalism is stripped of its Hinduness, it will lose dynamism. (quoted in Kanchod-Nilsson and Tetrault 2000: 103)

In a nation made up of significant numbers of ethnic and religious minorities this indicates a desire to assert a dominant Hindu national identity and marginalise those groups seen to pose a threat to this. The BJP claim Hindutva, which is ought merely to be seen as a synonym for 'Indianization' according to a Supreme Court ruling in 1996, (quoted in Kanchod-Nilsson and Tetrault 2000:101), should be recognised as a positive unifying force, the aim of policy "one people, one culture" is to create a national identity and "ensure national cohesion" (Kanchod-Nilsson and Tetrault 2000:100). However the implied communalism of the concept emerges when consideration is given to the history of the term 'Hindutva' which rose to prominence through the writing of Veer Savarkar in 1923. As charted by Geeta Chowdhry Savarkar (Kanchod-Nilsson and Tetrault 2000:101-3) three necessary interrelated principles essentially determine the characteristics of Hindutva: fatherland, which prescribes territorial parameters of the sacred lands; blood line, inferring that a true Hindu is born into the lineage and thereby excludes those groups converted to the religion: and embrace of a shared Sanskrit culture.

As Chowdhry concludes:

This criterion of citizenship privileges religious/cultural citizenship rather than territorial citizenship. Under it Muslims, Christians, Jews and others whose holy lands lie outside the spatial boundaries of *punyabhoomi* [sacred lands] are excluded both from *Hindutva* and from citizenship of the fatherland, i.e. India. (Kanchod-Nilsson and Tetrault 2000:102)

Here Chatterjee's ideas about the significance of culture, and gender, to the discourses of nationalisms (anti-colonial and contemporary) are worth noting. In *The Nation and Its Fragments* Chatterjee makes a distinction between political nationalism and cultural nationalism and claims that conventional (official) histories overlook the dynamics of nationalism if they locate its beginnings in the contest for political power (Chatterjee 1993:6-7). As anti-colonial nationalism embraced the material, 'modern' world of the imperialists (i.e. those of the west), ideas of national culture located in religion, social custom and constructions of family are aggressively asserted. Therefore anti-colonial nationalism attempts to define "its difference from Western notions of liberty, freedom and human dignity" (Loomba 1998:191).

A similar trend can be identified in the contemporary nationalism of the Hindu right consolidated by the empowering of the BJP. As Sangari identifies in the current nationalist position:

...there are attempts ...[] to re-establish the difference between us and them (the west) by taking a stand against the values of the Enlightenment (reason, science, progress) using a rhetoric of anti-colonial indigenism; these then set out via a rehash of certain nationalist projects to rediscover an essentially *desi* India with its very own modes of cognition. Not surprisingly, such projects have often clustered around the most retrogressive events, e.g. widow immolation. (Sangari 1989:3 – 4)

Sati is a site on which debates about female agency and dialogue between the discourses of feminism and nationalism converge. In colonial times sati became "simultaneously the moral justification for empire" (Loomba 1993:244) and a site of contest between nationalist groups and the colonisers. In independent India the recent rise of the Hindu right (politically and culturally) has seen sati reinvented as "a powerful male fantasy of female devotion" (Loomba: 244). As Rajan has noted the "recent phenomenon of the glorification of sati through temples and annual fairs" has disturbing implications (Rajan 1993:17). Loomba also notes feminists' insistence that a recent high profile sati (that of Roop Kanwar in 1987) "should not be viewed as a remnant of a feudal past but as an expression of distinctly modern economies and the contemporary denigration of women" (Loomba 1993:247). In the contemporary debate surrounding sati anger towards the colonial state is redirected towards Indian feminists who are seen to be "deculturalised, inauthentic, westernised and alienated from an appreciation of their own culture" (Loomba 1993:248).

It is notable that the debate over sati for the most part, occupies a space beyond the physical and humanitarian, as each performance of widow burning "helps to validate and circulate other ideologies that strengthen the oppression of women" (Loomba 1993:242). The pro-sati lobbyists cite Hindu scriptures and pre-colonial culture to claim a privileged status for the sati as a woman to "be revered by the community" rewarded with "everlasting extra-terrestrial marital bliss" (Loomba 1993:242). Such groups also emphasize that sati's validity is achieved through the voluntary nature of the act, and in doing so they privilege the desire and subjectivity (and hence agency) of women that is negated elsewhere in a patriarchal society (Loomba 1993:242). At this juncture the concept of sati becomes particularly problematic for feminism as the Hindu right appropriates the language of feminist discourse. Both Rajan (1993) and

Loomba(1993) point out at length how those groups committed to the defence of Roop Kanwar's right to perform sati draw attention to her education and modernity as an indicator of her positive embrace of Hindu nationalist culture, and advocate her action as an example of the free will of the true sati. If feminist rhetoric refuses to recognise the widow's suicide as real choice, but merely concedes it is choice dictated by ideological indoctrination, then it seems to somewhat echo the stance of the colonial 'rescue mission' in its attitude towards the status of Indian women. Such a position places feminists in a double bind, as to perceive the sati entirely as a victim figure has the effect of "emptying her subjectivity of any function or agency" (Rajan 1993:18). Yet any agency exercised by the sati obviously results in her own annihilation. As such sati is a problematic issue for feminists as Kishwar and Vanita point out, what is essentially a women's rights issue is "distorted into an issue of 'tradition' versus 'modernity', a struggle of the religious majority against an irreligious minority" (Kishwar and Vanita 1987:16).

While Visweswaran's research on female participation in insurgency focuses on colonial strategies for the containment of women's agency, by highlighting the similarities between nationalist and colonial views of women she also acknowledges points of convergence between nationalist and colonial forms of silencing women. Spivak also observes that "both as object of colonial historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant" (Spivak 1988: 82), and on this basis she concludes "the subaltern woman will be as mute as ever" (Spivak 1988:90).

Spivak's question "Can the subaltern (as woman) speak?" (Spivak 1988:92) is framed as part of an effort to give the subaltern a voice in history. To provide an answer she constructs the sentence "White men are saving brown women from brown men" (Spivak 1988:92) for analysis, stating that such a sentence is necessarily the acknowledgement of a history of repression, and indicates the ambiguity of the relationship between "imperialist subject and the subject of imperialism"(Spivak 1988:93). This sentence goes to underpin her belief (noted above) that the appropriation of the subaltern voice effectively silences it. Clearly here then as women's bodies are the site of colonial and nationalist contest, women's speech or agency is denied.

The act (and ideology) of widow sacrifice through self-immolation is an obvious and public manifestation not only of this contest between nationalist and colonial discourses in a wider sense, but also a place where women's agency is claimed, contained or denied.

As Spivak notes:

The Hindu widow ascends the pyre of the dead husband and immolates herself upon it. This is widow sacrifice. ...The abolition of this rite by the British has been generally understood as a case of 'White men saving brown women from brown men'. White women from the nineteenth century British Missionary Registers to Mary Daly - have not produced an alternative understanding. Against this is the Indian nativist argument, a parody of the nostalgia for lost origins: 'The women actually wanted to die'. (Spivak 1988:93)

This struggle between colonial and nationalist ideologies is one that is delineated in Sahgal's novel. In the central chapter eleven Sonali discovers a memoir, written by her grandfather, which provides details of his early life with his parents during a time of emerging anti-colonial nationalism, which links her with a personal and political past. The description of Sonali's great grandmother's act of sati positions her as the place of contest in which the dissimulation of nationalist ideology is pitted against colonial ambivalence towards the native subject. Locating 'Woman' as a site of conflict between patriarchy and imperialism, Sonali's great grandmother is a dramatization of "the displaced figuration of the 'third-world-woman' caught between tradition and modernization" (Spivak 1988:102). The memoir written by Sonali's grandfather records the animosity among his relatives and local feelings of discontent stirred up by the belief that "recent calamities were ...punishment for abandoning old traditions" (Sahgal 1985:159) which can be seen as a means of channelling anti-colonial nationalist sentiment. As the British administration became increasingly dominant, forcing modernity upon on a frequently resentful indigenous population, it provoked more active responses. As Ashis Nandy states:

Groups rendered psychologically marginal by their exposure to Western impact ... had come under pressure to demonstrate, to others as well as themselves, their ritual purity and allegiance to traditional high culture. To many of them sati became an important proof of their conformity to older norms at a time when these norms had become shaky within. (Ashis Nandy in V.C. Joshi 1975:68)

This is demonstrated by Sahgal's construction of a contrast through Sonali's great grandfather who occupies a more ambivalent position (from the native perspective), with regard to the embrace of modernity and the presence of imperial rule. Although he understood the power of myth and ancient custom, his education in English and professional training as a lawyer ensured he placed greater trust in reason and the values of the Enlightenment, so that while "he resented British domination, ... he admired the British and the law was a symbol of his admiration" (Sahgal 1985:151). For Sahgal he offers an alternative form of nationalism to that which is perceived as regressive and repressive, as his is the voice of a progressive, reformist nationalism of which Sonali is to some extent is the natural inheritor.

Somewhere between Spivak's sentences: the imperialist "White men saving brown women from brown men" and the nativist response "The women actually wanted to die" (Spivak 1988:92) is a place of possibility to search for women's voice-consciousness and determine whether the subaltern (as woman) can or does speak in Sahgal's novel. In a novel where the narrator is female, Sahgal situates the recovery of the history of women's bodies as a site of contest between tradition and modernity through the lens of a male narrative (in the form of the grandfather's memoir). It is in this memoir that the male narrator offers a sympathetic recognition of the lack of choice and free will in women's lives which are constructed by ancient custom and cultural practice. Although the author constructs the narrative in such a way as to maintain ambiguity about the truth of Sonali's great grandmother's act of sati, about whether she makes an active choice of self sacrifice to safeguard her son's future and which can be read therefore as an example of women's agency, or she is forced unwillingly onto the burning pyre, Sahgal makes it clear that patriarchy and certain

forms of nationalist ideology press upon women's circumstances restricting and containing free will.

The nativist refrain 'the woman wanted to die' in response to imperialist discourse which claims free will and agency for such self-sacrificing women, is examined by Sahgal through a representation of the paradoxical nature of women's free choice. Sahgal's characterisation suggests that Sonali's great grandmother would carry out the act of self-immolation, once in progress, with the appropriate dignity and courage of her class and caste. The two accounts of sati in her husband's files taken from the colonial archives reveal the cultural validity for the relatives of this ritual. Once a widow had decided of her own 'free will' to carry out sati, to then turn back would be perceived as "a transgression for which a particular type of penance is prescribed" (Spivak1988:96). The hostility shown towards women who fail to carry out their act of self-immolation is depicted in the account quoted by Sahgal of the Brahminee widow who refused to return to the pyre after escaping and immersing herself in the river:

When the inhuman relatives saw this, they took her by the head and heels and threw her into the fire, and held her there till they were driven away by the heat; they also took up large blocks of wood with which they struck her, in order to deprive her of her senses, but she again made her escape, and without any help ran directly into the river.. The people of her house followed her here and tried to drown her by pressing her under water...(Sahgal 1985:154)

In such cases the women are punished for what is determined as an abdication of the "the right to courage" (Spivak1988:96). However with a British officer overseeing an act of sati "to be dissuaded after a decision was, by contrast, a mark of real free choice, a choice of freedom" (Spivak 1988:96). In Sahgal's second account of sati from the colonial archives, the magistrate having twice failed to dissuade a young widow from carrying on with the self-cremation is described as a "victim of superstition" (Sahgal:156). In either case women are only perceived as acting autonomously by nationalist and colonial patriarchal authority alike when they conform to their particular narratives. These alternative cultural positionings objectify women by situating them as the site of conflict, and as both groups locate concepts of tradition in sati, 'tradition' becomes something that must be privileged or subordinated, or eliminated altogether.

At this juncture a reading of Sahgal would seem to further confirm Spivak's view that in locating women's bodies as a site of contest between opposing ideologies effectively silences women. However Loomba finds Spivak's insistence on subaltern silence problematic and possibly detrimental to the research of colonial cultures, and potentially closes off unexplored options (Loomba 1998:235). Elsewhere Loomba states that:

The sati is produced by and functions to recirculate ideologies that target and seek to position a larger body of women, whose experiences, articulations and silences are crucial to understanding the relations of power and insubordination which are central to any analysis of 'the subaltern'.(Loomba 1993:254)

Benita Parry has argued that she finds in Spivak “a deliberate deafness to the native voice where it can be heard” (Parry 1987:39). While Spivak’s argument that the gendered subaltern cannot speak because she will not be heard or acknowledged within dominant discourses is influential, the nuanced positions taken by Katrak and Visweswaran which encourage the discovery of women hidden from history, and provide an opportunity for us to “balance our views” (Katrak 1992:404) and provide further spaces in which to recover both woman as subaltern and subaltern women. Locating the question of female agency and subaltern speech within the concept of sati seems to provide fairly (negative) definitive answers, however if the debate is refocused and the search for subaltern speech and its representation extended, those answers may be modulated.

Similarly, how Sahgal’s novel should ultimately be read with regard to locating female agency and as a form of indigenous self-representation of womanhood, requires an analysis that penetrates the text beyond the immediate representation of the act of sati by Sonali’s grandmother. Sahgal’s representation of sati requires to be comprehensively understood within the contexts of colonial and native literatures, which may also be examined and differentiated along lines of gender. To contextualise narratives of sati in this way would further reflect how ideological perspectives are mediated by race, gender, and class. However the research should also be extended through an examination of the act of sati in relation to other characters in the novel, and to the wider action and events of the novel. Whilst the truth about the sati herself will remain unknowable, as little can be learned about her interiority, but perhaps in the act of discovering her hidden history dominant discourses might, at least momentarily, puncture or rupture dominant discourses.

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