

# The Voicelessness of (Subaltern) Malay Women

## Gayatri Spivak's Insights

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One must be conscious of the struggle to win back the position of the questioning subject in specific context. But if I think in terms of the much larger female constituency in the world for whom I am an infinitely privileged person, in this broader context, what I really want to learn about is what I have called the unlearning of one's privilege. So that, not only does one become able to listen to that other constituency, but one learns to speak in such a way that one will be taken seriously by that other constituency. And furthermore, to recognize that the position of the speaking subject within theory can be an historically powerful position when it wants the other actually to be able to answer back. As a feminist concerned about women, that's the position that interests me more.

- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic*<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

In any attempt to discuss the Other, one must be conscious of one's position that can only be described as 'privileged'. Often enough, this privileged position perpetuates the domination over the Subject and thus further silenced the center and relegates it to the margins. This uncovering of hegemonic practices through self-reflexivity is, perhaps, the hallmark of Gayatri Spivak's [b. 1942] postcolonial scholarship. Together with the likes of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, Spivak represents one of the few formidable Third World theorists whose influence extends to the field of modern literature, history, politics, language and contemporary feminism.<sup>2</sup> At its outset, she offers sustained intellectual critique against the domination of western colonialist thought and structures.

This essay is meant to discuss briefly some frameworks advanced by Spivak and offer them as useful conceptual tools in diagnosing the conditions of women within

contemporary Malay society. The assumptions adopted herein are two-fold: (1) the Malay woman, as a gendered class, occupies a major, if not central position as Subject in the construction of postcolonial narratives of contemporary Malay society; and (2) that what is apparent is her marginality and “voicelessness” even as she continues to be discussed and subjectified by those in privileged positions, which is predominantly male and elitist.

## **THE SUBALTERN’S VOICE(LESSNESS)**

Like most voices of resistance emerging from Third World postcoloniality, Spivak’s interest lies on the issue of margins, or what she termed as “the silent, silenced center”. In her famous essay entitled “Can the Subaltern Speak?” she provides a poignant analysis and critique of attempts to speak for the most marginal/oppressed (or the ‘subaltern’). In doing so, she first directs her critique against French thinkers like Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze who believed that the oppressed, if given the chance, and through alliance politics that build solidarity, can speak and know their conditions. Using Marxist analysis, Spivak highlighted that exploitation against the oppressed lies in structural domination, which emerged from international division of labor. Thus, attempts to speak for the oppressed often end up alienating further the Subject, for such attempts often get caught in the cycle of (re)production of a dominating discourse and representation of the Other; thus, robbing the Subject of her own voice in the process. Such attempts are also churned from within the First World that, Spivak notes, made the Subject “curiously sewn together into a transparency by denigrations” and “belongs to the exploiters’ side of the international division of labor.”<sup>3</sup>

In other words, Spivak is highlighting the problems and politics of representations. In all claims to represent the most marginal/oppressed group, the Subject (i.e. the Subaltern) is further rendered voiceless. This is because within the structural domination characterized by the international division of labor, all forms of representation must necessarily come from a privileged position or of power, i.e. from comparative privileged position accorded by educational opportunity, citizenship, class, race, gender and location.<sup>4</sup> This is the reality that Spivak referred to as “epistemic violence”.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, on the other side of the international division of labor from socialized capital, inside *and* outside the circuit of epistemic violence of imperialist law and education supplementing an earlier economic text, Spivak posed an important question: “*Can the subaltern speak?*” By raising this issue, Spivak intends to confront the presumptions of the Subaltern Studies group. Led by Ranajit Guha, the group seeks to rethink Indian colonial historiography from the perspectives of the peasants, whose role in decolonization process has not been affirmed. As Guha contends, the historiography of Indian nationalism has been dominated by either colonialist elitism or bourgeois-nationalist elitism – both of which share the same prejudice of attributing the rise of nationalist consciousness solely on elites.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the Subaltern Studies group’s project is to rewrite Indian history “from bottom up”, using the perspectives of the masses, who has thus far been silent/silenced in the narratives produced by both the colonialists and bourgeois-nationalists.

But, Spivak argues, the subaltern is essentially heterogeneous.<sup>7</sup> If the Subaltern Studies group agrees with heterogeneity of the subalterns, then any form of “giving voice” to the subaltern presupposes selection of one of the many forms of subalternity. This process is in itself flawed because (1) it is trapped in the same problematic of power and representation, which comes from a privileged position; and (2) the very act of representing the subaltern means that the subaltern ceases to be ‘subaltern’ and becomes privileged. As Landry and Maclean explained, in asserting that the subaltern *cannot speak*, Spivak meant “that the subaltern as such cannot be heard by the privileged of either the First or Third Worlds. If the subaltern were able to make herself heard – as has happened when particular subalterns have emerged, in Antonio Gramsci’s terms, as organic intellectuals and be spokespeople for their communities – her status as a subaltern would be changed utterly; she would cease to be subaltern.”<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, due to the structural domination through international division of labor, Spivak poignantly chided that “Certain varieties of the Indian elite are at best native informants for first-world intellectuals interested in the voice of the Other.”<sup>9</sup>

Essentially, what Spivak wants to highlight is that **the subaltern cannot be represented**. They have to be their own voice. If the historical narratives were dominated by

colonialists or bourgeois-nationalists' ideology, the point is not to provide another narrative; rather, it is to provide an explanation of how each particular narrative of reality became established as a normative one.<sup>10</sup> In other words, the task is to deconstruct all forms of representations and narratives and lay bare the intersections of power, ideology and interests at work. Here, Spivak proposes that for the privileged group, the issue becomes one of knowing the limits of all forms of representations. Therefore, "the notion of what the work *cannot* say becomes important."

But this is not to be understood as Spivak negating all attempts to speak of and about the subaltern. Instead, she calls for conscious self-reflexivity of those intending to speak for the subaltern. More importantly, she calls for the subaltern to speak for themselves and thus, cease to exist as 'subaltern' (i.e. as the most oppressed and invisible constituencies). The latter, "is the goal of the ethical relation Spivak is seeking and calling for."<sup>11</sup> This ethical relation involves embracing the other, where each learns from the other; in contrast to wanting to speak *for* the oppressed.

Thus, Spivak's method of self-reflexivity brings her to turn attention away from the Subject and focus upon the producers of the text/narratives, i.e. the privileged class. Here, Spivak advocates the virtue of 'unlearning' one's privileged position.<sup>12</sup> In the words of Landry and Maclean,

"Our privileges, whatever they may be in terms of race, class, nationality, gender, and the like, may have prevented us from gaining a certain kind of Other knowledge; not simply information that we have yet received, but the knowledge that we are not equipped to understand by reason of our social positions."<sup>13</sup>

Thus, "To unlearn our privileges means, on the one hand, to do our homework, to work hard at gaining some knowledge of the others who occupy those spaces most closed to our privileged view. On the other hand, it means attempting to speak to those others in such a way that they might take us seriously and, most important of all, be able to answer back."<sup>14</sup>

This attempt to unlearn one's privileges is – in Spivakian spirit – a mark of the beginning of an ethical relation to the Other.

## **WOMEN IN MALAY SOCIETY**

Having discussed some aspects of Spivak's pivotal thought on the issues of the voice(lessness) of the subaltern and how one's privileged position ought to interact with the subaltern Other, it becomes apparent that much of Spivak's insights can be useful in analyzing aspects of postcolonial Malay society. Besides being an erudite literary theorist and cultural historian, Spivak is foremost a feminist. It is on the issue of the subaltern women that we shall turn our attention to.

Often, women in marginalized groups suffer more and their pain less heard than men. As Spivak mentions, "If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow."<sup>15</sup> This double oppression is best exemplified in the case of Black women. As pointed out by bell hooks, Black women often occupy an unusual position at the most bottom of social hierarchy. It is a position where she will "bear the brunt of sexist, racist and classist oppression." hooks notes that most civil rights movements (such as feminist and anti-racism advocacies) ignored this combined dimensions of race, class and gender. Thus, while white (bourgeois) feminists strive to liberate women in general, they continue to uphold racism against the Blacks; and while Black men strive to dismantle racism, they often perpetuate sexism against Black females. In such case, the Black female became the oppressed twice – on the basis of their skin colour and gender.<sup>16</sup>

A similar situation can also be said of the female in subaltern Malay society. By the 'Malay subaltern', I am referring to a marginalized group within Malay community that occupies the bottom rung of society and has largely been neglected in the process of national development and nation-building. As a class concept, the Malay subaltern may not necessarily be the Malay peasants or fishermen who live in rural villages and struggle with daily livelihood, although they comprise the most obvious and majority.<sup>17</sup> It can also be the

urban poor who, in a modern economy, were unable to find gainful employment in cities and perpetually locked in the cycle of poverty, otherwise termed as the ‘underclass’.<sup>18</sup>

In public discourse, the voice of the subaltern Malay is rarely heard, let alone the voice of the women within it. Despite being the most oppressed under feudal and colonial rule, post-independence national narratives conveniently ignored them as a voice to be heard. Yet, the elites appeal to them to garner support (“kita mesti bela nasib rakyat yang menderita”), discussed about them (“masalah kemiskinan dikalangan kita”), theorize about them (“mengapa mereka miskin”) and claim to be doing something *for* them/selves (“upaya/tanggungjawab kita membasmi kemiskinan”). In all of these, the patronizing attitude is unmistakable; the tone is one of “they cannot speak, we speak *for* them”. Such “robbing the subaltern of their own voice” is common and serves as a way to legitimize the class structures and serves the privileged class in its continued dominance over the subaltern.

We see a similar effect in the writing of Malay history. Malay nationalism is replete with examples of the struggles, contributions and achievements of the Malay elites, often comprising of the educated and urban-centered groups and individuals. As Spivak reminds, “[I]f the story of the rise of nationalist resistance to imperialism is to be disclosed coherently, it is the role of the indigenous subaltern that must be strategically excluded.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, the values uphold and the choice of national ‘heroes’ are those that serve the interest of this class – adding to the further marginalisation and voicelessness of the common Malay folks, who retreats further into history’s oblivion.<sup>20</sup> To the extent, we see celebration of Malay feudal texts that demands silent obedience from the masses, in deference to authority (i.e. the ruling elite).<sup>21</sup>

In Singapore, we see the subaltern (read: underclass Malays) in a slightly different position. First, their existence is often absent within the consciousness of dominant state-led discourse. If occasionally they are referred to, it is not their voice that is heard; instead, their entire existence has been reduced to a mere digit (i.e. statistics rolled out annually by the Department of Statistics). Second, their absence within state-led discourse is compounded by the dominance/domination of middle-class voices, whose interest lies in trying to emulate and seek entry into the upper/’successful’-class or those they deemed as “having made it”.

We see, for example, the plight of the poor – despite huge representation in the Malay community – is rarely highlighted in the Malay daily, *Berita Harian/Minggu*. Instead, the daily is prone to giving prolonged coverage on “success stories” – running features, editorials and interviews for weeks – despite these “successes” being exceptions, rather than a norm (when compared to the achievements of other ethnic groups), in the community. Third, even if the “voices” of the poor and underclass Malays are being heard in public media, it is to serve one purpose – to legitimize the class position of the privileged. Thus, we see the poor being portrayed (not heard) in pitiful manner so as to evoke (1) sympathy and solicit donations and/or zakat payment – as seen in local television multi episodes of *Kau Istimewa* shown only in the month of Ramadan, and (2) to prevent emergence of critical consciousness that links the predicament of the poor/underclass to the continued dominance/domination of the privileged class – thus, the rhetoric of “being grateful for our blessed position, as compared to those less privileged than us.”

Within such “silent/silenced center”, lies the predicament of women – caught in oppressive structures along class *and* gender relations. Within the subaltern Malay, we find sexism that perpetuates patriarchal tendencies and allow oppressed men to now oppress their womenfolk. In patriarchal gender relations, women are invariably treated as a “commodity”, which Spivak, using Marxist concepts, explains as such:

“One could indefinitely allegorize the relationship of woman within this particular triad – use, exchange, and surplus – by suggesting that woman in the traditional social situation produces more than she is getting in terms of her subsistence, and therefore is a continual source of the production of surpluses, *for* the man who owns her, or *by* the man for the capitalist who owns *his* labor-power.”<sup>22</sup>

Within this reification of “gender”,<sup>23</sup> we see the obvious contending effect of **male dominance** and **female subordination**. In traditional patriarchal Malay society, this takes the form of denying the women’s agency (particularly in choice of life-partner, physical movement outside home and choice of education), confining the role of women to the

domestic (home-keeping, looking after children, serving the husband, cooking, etc), and suppressing/distorting her sexuality, including denial of their reproductive health and rights.

Perhaps, the best way to understand the effects of Malay patriarchy on womenfolk is through literature. This, in a way, is Spivak's project of listening to the oppressed through "psycho-biographies".<sup>24</sup> Since she problematizes all forms of representations and calls for an ethical relation of listening to the Other, psycho-biographies found in literary works are most telling. They often lay bare the real conditions of the oppressed, evoking a sudden break in consciousness (of the participant reader) as one confronts the reality – much like Draupadi's act of standing naked and unarmed before her oppressor in Mahasweta Devi's short story translated by Spivak.<sup>25</sup>

In Malay literary world, one can find many such "psycho-biographies" that captures the "voicelessness" of the Malay women. Among these are *Salina* by A. Samad Said, *Gadis Pantai* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Tok Guru* by Shahnun Ahmad, and more recently, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* by Abidah el Khalieqy. One common theme runs through these works: male dominance *and* female subordination. These novels also reveal how traditional Malay society subjugates women through denying her autonomy as individuals capable of making rational decisions for herself; for she is always the "property/commodity" of the male, be it her father or husband.

In the novel *Tok Guru*, for instance, the female character, Cumi, was forced into marrying the family's religious teacher, who already possessed two wives. A similar predicament befell the character of Annisa in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* who was married off by her father to the son of a *keiyai* soon after puberty. In both of these narratives, the female characters could only protest in silence and tears, secluding themselves in their rooms while longing for deliverance by their actual love/r. Here, we observe how male domination has the effect of silencing the female's voice, particularly in matters of her own choice in marriage. It is important to note that this act of marrying off one's daughter without the need to obtain her voice of approval is woven into traditionalist religious rulings on marriage. In one religious text, it is written:



“Berkenaan dengan izin [of the bride when asked by the *qadi*] tidak wajib dilafazkannya. Memadailah dengan diam sahaja ketika ditanya sama ada ia setuju atau tidak dengan perkahwinan itu. Hadith: ‘Dan izinnya adalah diamnya’. Adapun jika ia menangis, maka itu tidak mengapa jika menangis itu perlahan-lahan sahaja dan tidak sampai menjerit-jerit atau menampar-nampar pipinya.”<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the female is expected to protest her forced marriage in silent, while that very silence is taken as an act of acquiescence towards the marriage. Such formulation of the marriage contract can only emerge out of a misogynist tradition, not uncommon in traditionalist conceptions of Muslim law. For “Wali mujbir [iaitu wali yang mempunyai kuasa penuh, yakni bapa dan datuk] boleh mengahwinkan anak gadisnya yang perawan (dara) tanpa izinnya.”<sup>27</sup> And after marriage, she has to obey fully her husband to the point that refusing sex when the husband demands, constitutes a major sin in the same category as murder, and theft.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the female’s subordination becomes total.

## CONCLUSION

In confronting male dominance/domination, Spivak directs us to question the formation of structures. At the same time, she calls for women to assume the position of the ‘questioning subject’. She explains:

“When I was talking about putting woman in the position of the questioning subject, I was really talking more about the context of phallocentrism. It was a critique of the discourse of woman as produced, as defined by men.”<sup>29</sup>

And through assuming the role of the ‘questioning subject’, women can hope to ‘win back’ their position and away from being the silent/silenced subject.

“It also seems to me, now, that the women who can in fact begin to engage in this particular ‘winning back’ of the position of the questioning subject, are in very privileged positions in the geopolis today. So from that point of view,

I would not say that as a woman that my particular enemy is the male establishment of the most privileged Western tradition. They are my enemy in the house where I give interviews, where I teach, and so on, but the house of the world is much bigger than that little house. I have gained an entry there, and there I have to talk about winning the position.”<sup>30</sup>

It is this ‘winning back of position’ that Malay women must strive for. Throughout the development of Malay society, the voice of women has often been unheard, yet vigorously ‘represented’ to project the male agenda. One notes, for example, the appropriation of the discourse on “women’s role” in the 1970s and 80s where Islamic resurgence (*dakwah* period) was at its peak. As one author points out,

“The religious specialists and professionals who control the *dakwah* movement do encourage women’s participation in the religious revivalist organizations. However, the encouragement is only for the role of women in the auxiliary work forces rather than in mainstream activity where the leadership qualities can be developed. In this sense, women are passive followers and functionaries of the movement rather than decision-makers and leaders. The structure of the female participation does not generate active female roles.”<sup>31</sup>

This subordination of women can only be possible under a patriarchal ideology that stereotypes gender roles. As explained by Jomo and Leng,

“The low status of women generally stems from their subordination within the family. Although culturally diverse, all the major ethnic groups in Malaysia similarly identify domestic work as the responsibility of the female. It is such gender-typing that determines what is deemed suitable for women, and subsequently, what roles are to be designated for them in the context of national development. The prevalent ideology that sees the family as a key source of strength and social stability militates against progressive changes in family relations for fear that these may lead to social dislocation and unrest.

Hence, planners and policy makers are often at pains to stress that women should not neglect their traditional roles as wives and mothers in the quest for greater social and economic participation.”<sup>32</sup>

Ultimately, it is this patriarchal ideology that must be confronted. In Spivakian parlance, “truths” are socially constructed and one’s identity “is without a fixed centre and inherently unstable”.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, to dismantle the ideology is to first **deconstruct** it in order to understand how it comes to be. As Spivak would explain, “[D]econstructive position would oblige us to admit that “truths” are constructions as well, and that we cannot avoid producing them.”<sup>34</sup> This task of deconstruction, however, must not be misunderstood as positing that “there is no subject, there is no truth, there is no history. It simply questions the privileging of identity so that someone is believed to have the truth. It is not the exposure of error. It is constantly and persistently looking into how truths are produced.”<sup>35</sup> Only then can the voice of the oppressed resurface and provides the *difference* (heterogeneity) in a hegemonic world today. But as for the Malay women, this is the very dilemma that she must confront.

“This is the dilemma of the Muslim Malay woman today: on the one hand she feels overwhelmed by the ulamas, or Islamic scholars, and others who claim to be authorities on the right way to life, and on the other she feels strongly about her self-respect, self-regard and her rights. She is afraid to speak up for fear of being branded anti-Islam. And by staying silent, she may be compelled to accept the simple rhetoric that women are not inferior, only different – and because of that difference, never on par.”<sup>36</sup>

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## END NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Strategy, Identity, Writing" in *The Post-Colonial Critic*, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York & London: Routledge, 1990), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Spivak is of Bengali descent and born in 1942 in Calcutta. She was awarded PhD in comparative literature at Cornell University, USA, and currently lectures on English, literature and politics of culture at Columbia University. Similar to Edward Said, she encapsulates much of her argument in literary criticism and believes that the teaching of literature has been pivotal in the construction and propagation of the colonial mission and colonial discourse.

<sup>3</sup> Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> Spivak wrote: "It is not only that everything they read, critical or uncritical, is caught within the debate of the production of that Other, supporting or critiquing the constitution of the Subject as Europe. It is also that, in the constitution of that Other of Europe, great care was taken to obliterate the textual ingredients with which such a subject could cathect, could occupy (invest?) its itinerary – not only by ideological and scientific production, but also by the institution of the law..." (ibid.)

<sup>5</sup> By this, she means "the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subjectivity." (Ibid.) Compare with the many attempts to speak on behalf of Muslim women, churned as 'Islam-discourse' and emerging from western academia and institutions. Books were produced to depict Muslim women in either positive or negative light, but few allowing the womenfolk's own voice be heard without the intermediary of the interpreters who necessarily selects certain information to weave a narrative from one perspective, that is *other than the Subject's*.

<sup>6</sup> Guha, Ranajit, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford, 1983).

<sup>7</sup> Spivak wrote: "[O]ne must nevertheless insist that the colonized subaltern subject is irretrievably heterogeneous." Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean, "Introduction: Reading Spivak" in *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 5-6.

<sup>9</sup> Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Spivak wrote: "This is not to describe 'the way things really were' or to privilege the narrative of history as imperialism as the best version of history. It is, rather, to offer an account of how an explanation and narrative of reality was established as the normative one..." (Ibid.)

<sup>11</sup> Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean, "Introduction: Reading Spivak", op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Spivak remarked in an interview: "My project is the careful project of un-learning our privilege as our loss. I think it is impossible to forget that anyone who is able to speak in the interests of the privileging of practice against privileging of theory has been enabled by a certain kind of production." Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution" in *The Post-Colonial Critic*, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-5.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", op. cit.

<sup>16</sup> bell hooks, "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory" in *Feminist Theory from Margin to Centre* (South End Press, 1984), pp. 1-15.

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<sup>17</sup> See, for examples, Shukor Kassim, David S. Gibbons and Halinah Todd, *Teriak Melayu Miskin* (Kuala Lumpur: Marican & Sons, 1984); Wan Hashim, *Peasants Under Peripheral Capitalism* (Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1988); Syed Husin Ali, *Poverty and Landlessness in Kelantan, Malaysia* (Saarbrücken, Germany: Verlag Breitenbach, 1983); and James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>18</sup> This is particularly true in the case of Singapore society where entire populations are absorbed into the new modern manufacturing and trade economy in contrast to agricultural and cottage industries of the old economic system. For a conceptual discussion on the category of the ‘underclass’, see William J. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, The Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

<sup>19</sup> Spivak, “A Literary Representation of the Subaltern” in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), p. 337. To further show how the narratives of nationalism have been and remain irrelevant to the life of the subordinate, Spivak highlights the Mahasweta Devi’s short story, “*Stanadayini* [Breast-Giver]”.

<sup>20</sup> See, Shaharudin Maaruf, *Concept of a Hero in Malay Society* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 1984); and *Malay Ideas on Development: From Feudal Lord to Capitalist* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1988);

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, the discussion in Chandra Muzaffar, *Protector? An Analysis of the Concept and Practice of Loyalty in Leader-Led Relationships within Malay Society* (Kuala Lumpur: Aliran, 1979).

<sup>22</sup> Spivak, “Feminism and Critical Theory” in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, op. cit., p. 105.

<sup>23</sup> A distinction is made between ‘sex’ and ‘gender’. The former is a biological concept whereas the latter is a sociological construct. As explained by Ostergaard, “Gender relations are constituted in terms of the relations of power and dominance that structure the life chances of women and men. The relations between men and women are socially constituted and not derived from biology. Therefore the term gender relations should distinguish such social relations between men and women from those characteristics, which can be derived from biological differences. In this connection, sex is the province of biology, while gender is the province of social science, i.e. qualities which are shaped through the history of social relations and interactions.” Lise Ostergaard, *Gender and Development* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 6-7.

<sup>24</sup> Spivak explains: “One of the things I am doing which seems, from the outside, very complicated and intellectual indeed, is to search out psycho-biographies, regulative psycho-biographies for the constitution of the sexed subject which would be outside of psychoanalysis or counter-psychoanalysis...Psychoanalytic discourse is being imposed upon the woman elsewhere.” Spivak, “Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution”, in *The Post-Colonial Critic*, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> Spivak, ““Draupadi” by Mahasweta Devi” in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, op. cit., p. 269.

<sup>26</sup> M. Salleh bin A. Hamid, ed., *Panduan Ilmu Fiq’h Syeikh Omar Al-Khatib: Bab Munakahat (Nikah Kabwin), Jilid 1* (Singapore: SAH Publication, 2002), p. 127. This text is endorsed by no less than a former President of the Syariah Court in Singapore.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>29</sup> Spivak, “Strategy, Identity, Writing” in *The Post-Colonial Critic*, op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>31</sup> Nulifer A. Narli, “Malay Women in Tertiary Education: Trends of Change in Female Role Ideology”, PhD dissertation, Universiti Sains Malaysia (1986), p. 97. Cited in Ooi Eng Lye, *Novel Terpilih Shabnon Ahmad: Satu Kajian Pendekatan Gender* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2005), p. 55.

<sup>32</sup> Jomo Kwame Sundaram and Tan Pek Leng, *Not the Better Half: Malaysian Women and Development Planning* (Kuala Lumpur: Asian and Pacific Development Center, 1984), p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Hans Bertens, *Literary Theory: The Basics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 213.

<sup>34</sup> Spivak, “A Literary Representation of the Subaltern” in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, op. cit. p. 340.

<sup>35</sup> Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean, “Introduction: Reading Spivak” in *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Noraini Abdullah, “Equality of Malay Women – Real But Restricted” in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 132, No. 15, 10 April 1986, pp. 38-39.