

From Object to Subject: The Decolonization of the Self in Maitreyi Devi's *Na Hanyate*

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Abstract

This article critically examines Maitreyi Devi's Na Hanyate as a radical site of post-colonial resistance against the Orientalist ascendancy ingrained in Mircea Eliade's La Nuit Bengali. Eliade makes the Indian female main character an object of desire from a Eurocentric point of view, turning her into a symbol of mysticism. Devi's memoir, on the other hand, is a powerful rebuttal that reveals and breaks down the archaeological frameworks set up by various colonial epistemologies. The study looks at how decolonization works. It says that Devi is not only telling a different story; she is changing how we understand both the text and life itself. Devi goes from being an uncommon outsider to a historical figure with her own volition when she takes control of the plot. Devi's work changes the way people see themselves in relation to the books they read, not just as another example of a counter-narrative. This book shows how Devi undermines the imperial archive by questioning the politics of memory and representation. It argues that the most important act of political and self-emancipation is to reclaim the voice of the subaltern. The study further interrogates the representational violence embedded in Eliade's cultural depictions and mobilizes indigenous epistemological resources to challenge the unquestioned acceptance of the colonial narrative.

Keywords: Post-colonialism; Orientalism; Translation Studies; Subaltern; Maitreyi Devi; Memoir

1. Introduction

Throughout history, storytelling has been a vital tool for empires. It not only recorded events, but it also helped the colonizers prove that they knew more than the colonized. In the complicated discursive structures of post-colonial literature, the ability to identify, label, and depict the "Other" is a sort of violence that often lasts longer than the political control over territory. Maitreyi Devi's *Na Hanyate* and Mircea Eliade's *La Nuit Bengali* are two books that show this dynamic in a very clear way. These writings, which claim to tell the same short-lived love story in Calcutta in the 1930s, reveal very distinct ontological realities that expose how deeply gendered silence and cultural misunderstanding were part of the colonial effort. Devi's response is a powerful act of decolonization that uses the details of indigenous linguistic and cultural memory to break down the hegemonic gaze. Eliade's memoir, on the other hand, is a testament to the Orientalist imagination, making the Indian landscape and its people seem strange in order to serve a Western metaphysical quest.¹

To get a sense of how serious Devi's actions were, one must first examine how they were portrayed in *Bengal Nights*. Eliade, a Romanian philosopher living in British India,

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tells a story that is more about his own spiritual journey into the “mysteries” of the East than about the real person he meets, Maitreyi Devi. He often describes her in a way that makes her seem like an animal, saying, “I realized that she was a little animal... a creature who lived only by instinct, uncorrupted by civilization.”² This description takes away Maitreyi’s intellectual maturity and independence and instead makes her seem like a primitive thing to be explored and experienced. He clearly reduces his lover to a mere symbol of the continent itself when he writes, “Maitreyi was for me the incarnation of the Indian night... a revelation, a mystery.”² By mixing the person with the mystical setting, Eliade effectively erases Maitreyi’s subjective interiority, turning her into a passive vessel for his existential exploration.

The narrative, which was written in French, the language of India’s colonial elite, puts the female main character in well-known Orientalist discourse tropes: she is illogical, primitive, and dangerously seductive, representing the chaotic “feminine” East that demands the masculine West’s logical order.¹ This depiction constitutes an act of epistemic aggression rather than a benign romanticization. Eliade’s silence of Maitreyi takes away her subjectivity and makes her a symbol of his own existential problems. This is similar to how India is politically oppressed as a whole. In the minds of Europeans, the book becomes a prison for the colonial subject, who is silent and still.

The colonial story, on the other hand, is not always complete, and the subaltern’s silence is neither permanent nor absolute; it is always contingent upon the conditions of enunciation.³ *It Does Not Die* by Maitreyi Devi, which was published decades after the first affair, is a strong work that questions Eliade’s story.⁴ Devi wrote in Bengali, which is her first language, which is very important. This choice of words is a political move. She takes back her own experience by rejecting the colonizer’s vocabulary. Her experience is profoundly embedded in the subtleties of Bengali culture, family dynamics, and intellectual traditions that Eliade’s superficial view could never completely understand. But Devi’s testimony was only in Bengali, which limited its radical potential both in terms of space and language. The translation of *Na Hanyate* into English turned it from a personal story into a worldwide weapon against oppression.⁵

The translation of Devi’s work into the lingua franca of the old empire adds a complicated layer of “writing back” to the center.⁶ It is an act of insurgent discourse that makes Western readers face the fact that their own literary canon helps to erase other cultures. In the English translation, Devi is no longer the nebulous, melancholic heroine of Eliade’s writing. Instead, she is a fully grown thinker, a daughter of the Bengal Renaissance—that nineteenth-century socio-intellectual awakening in Calcutta that fused Enlightenment rationalism with the revivification of classical Indian thought, producing a generation of scholars who reconstituted Bengali identity on their own terms—and a survivor of a terrible breach of trust. The translation changes the place of power, not just the words. By bringing her voice into the English literary market and turning the Eurocentric narrative arc that had been in charge of the story on its head, Devi pushes the reader to rethink the “truths” they had accepted.⁷ Eliade’s “love” is shown to be an abusive violation of the sacred Guru-Shishya (teacher-student) relationship instead of a spiritual union, which shows the hermeneutical mistake at the heart of *Bengal Nights*.⁸

In this case, the politics of translation, as this study says, go beyond just bringing back history. They also help people psychologically decolonize themselves. Devi’s narrative

not only contests Eliade's assertions but also subverts the ideology that facilitated the proliferation of such a narrative. by pointing out the difference between Eliade's portrayal of her as a primitive witch and the truth about her scholarly background.¹ Through the translation, she can talk about the grief of being objectified and turn her own pain into a political critique of colonial and patriarchal systems; she reclaims discursive authority.³ She does this by bringing together the personal and the political, the private and the public, showing that decolonizing the text is not separate from decolonizing the body and mind.⁴

In the end, comparing *Bengal Nights* and *It Does Not Die* gives us a good look at the differences in how cultures are represented and how the counter-narrative might be redeemed.^{9,10} This article says that Maitreyi Devi's writing, especially the English translation, is an important place of resistance where the colonial gaze is not only challenged but also broken down. It shows how translation may be used to subvert the very systems of power that tried to mute the colonized voice. It shows that even while the colonizer's pen may record the first history, the colonized's pen can reclaim, correct, and eventually go beyond it.⁵ We can see that the subaltern changes from a static object of desire to a dynamic subject of history through this study. This change has effects that go well beyond the two texts.

2. Literature Review

The intersection of translation studies and post-colonial theory provides a robust framework for analyzing the contentious dialogue between Maitreyi Devi's *It Does Not Die* and Mircea Eliade's *Bengal Nights*. In the 1980s and 1990s, thinkers like André Lefevere and Susan Bassnett spearheaded the "cultural turn," which greatly expanded the area of translation research. Before this shift, translation studies concentrated largely on language accuracy and technical equivalency of texts. According to their theory, translation is never a neutral process but rather is intricately entwined with the target culture's poetics, power dynamics, and ideological manipulations.¹¹ By analyzing the critical discourse surrounding Orientalism, the voice of the subaltern woman, and the particular political economy of translating postcolonial memoirs, this literature review situates the current study within that poststructuralist trajectory.

The Orientalist theory, as proposed by Edward Said¹, forms the crux of the discussion of *Bengal Nights*, with critics Cornis-Pope⁹ and Spariosu¹⁰ using it to highlight the exoticisms Eliade employs. The consensus in the discussion on the text has been that the author, in his existential crisis, constructs a "textual India." However, while the Orientalist foundation of the text has been discussed, the mechanism for its subversion, i.e., the politics of translation, remains an unexplored area, and this paper attempts to bridge the gap.

The theoretical quandary of the "subaltern" woman, as postulated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak³, is central to Devi's contribution. In the seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak contends that the subaltern woman is simultaneously silenced by colonialism and then by the patriarchal traditions in her own culture. When the subaltern woman does find a voice, however, she is often speaking through a mediating intellectualism that has co-opted her voice in the name of liberating her. When we consider the dyad of Eliade and Devi, we might initially interpret Devi's text as reinforcing the arguments Spivak presents, in which the subaltern woman speaks through

the very colonialist tongues she seeks to overthrow in order to be heard. However, other theorists, like Trinh T. Minh-ha¹³, propose a counter-narrative in which the “inappropriate/d other” can circumnavigate the snares of language to establish a particular identity. This paper takes the latter position, arguing that the very use of translation in Devi’s text facilitates a “Third Space,” Bhabha’s term for the interstitial site where binary oppositions are destabilized¹², in which colonizer/colonized distinctions break down.

The theory of the translator’s “invisibility,” as proposed by Lawrence Venuti⁷, can be a useful tool for understanding Devi’s text. According to Venuti, the ideal of “fluent” translation, which seeks to eliminate foreignness to conform to dominant cultural standards, is problematic. In a way, the translation of Devi’s work resists assimilation into the dominant Western culture while at the same time aiming to be fluent enough to be consumed by the Western reader. However, unlike the exoticized version of *Bengal Nights* by Eliade, *It Does Not Die* does not easily become a consumer product. The text forces the reader to engage with a narrative that is resistant to assimilation.

Existing comparative analyses of the two texts, such as those by Simona Sawhney⁸, have focused primarily on the gendered divergence in the retelling of the love affair. Sawhney and others highlight the restoration of Maitreyi’s intellectual lineage and the critique of the “Guru-Shishya” Parampara (tradition) that Eliade allegedly violated. While this scholarship is invaluable for understanding the feminist reclamation of the body, it often treats the English translation of *It Does Not Die* as a transparent vessel rather than a political artifact. By shifting the critical focus to the act of translation itself, this paper argues that the transition from Bengali (*Na Hanyate*) to English is not a secondary feature but the primary vehicle of decolonization. It is the translation that weaponizes the text, allowing it to traverse the “imperial archive” and correct the record on the colonizer’s own turf.⁶

Finally, the contributions of postcolonial translation theorists, such as Tejaswini Niranjana⁵, are of particular interest. Niranjana suggests that translation was employed as one of the primary mechanisms of colonial administration, used to “fix” the colonized subject for administrative and scholarly purposes. In this regard, Devi’s translation of her memoir may be viewed as an act of subversion of the colonial mechanism of control. Devi, in effect, appropriates the tool of translation, which had been used to objectify her as the colonized subject. The literature of “self-translation” and “writing back,” as exemplified by the response of Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*¹⁴ to Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*¹⁵, offers a generic precedent for Devi’s translation. However, unlike Rhys’s fictionalized narrative, Devi’s translation offers a direct historiographic intervention. In advancing the debate, it may be proposed that Devi’s translation moves beyond the act of rebuttal and offers a “palimpsestic resistance,” where the original scars of the colonial text are apparent but overlaid by the indelible script of the colonized subject.

Recent scholarship directly addressing the primary texts has substantially enriched the critical conversation this study enters. Biswas, in her comparative study of the East-West confrontation in the two novels, examines the encounter through the lens of Bhabha’s concepts of mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence, arguing that “Bengal Nights is purely a colonial hybrid product in the history of British colonialism in India” whose textual instability betrays the constitutive anxieties of colonial encounter.¹⁶ Biswas further interrogates the autobiographical dimensions of both texts, drawing on Hart’s

observation that autobiographical recreation is always a “creative act performed at the present moment” shaped by the author’s cultural positioning. For Biswas, Eliade’s narrative conforms to recognizable Western fictional formulations in which the “exotic” East is made legible to a European readership, while Devi’s riposte foregrounds emotional and moral union as a counter to the corporal obsessions of the colonial text. While Biswas situates the confrontation within the broad rubric of cross-cultural romance, her analysis does not engage with the specific political economy of the English translation as a decolonizing mechanism — a lacuna the present study addresses.

Mamun’s study extends the examination of cultural politics in the two memoirs, deploying Bhabha’s theorization of mimicry, stereotype, and liminal space to analyze Devi’s text as a “linguistic agency of resistance.” Mamun argues that Devi’s narrative constitutes an act of re-textualization, re-narration, and re-orientation of the colonial “self” that functions not as an act of servitude but as a “declaration of emergence.”¹⁷ His analysis of Eliade’s assumed “positional superiority” (Said) through Bhabha’s concept of the “uncanny” offers a nuanced account of how Eliade’s Eurocentric presuppositions systematically distort his reading of Bengali family etiquette and intellectual life. Mamun’s discussion of Devi’s “cultural nationalism” further illuminates how the memoir deploys the specificity of her social world — her relationships with Tagore, her father’s scholarly household, her liberal upbringing — as a counter-discourse to Eliade’s homogenizing Orientalism. Yet, while Mamun attends carefully to Devi’s resistance within Bengali cultural discourse, his study does not examine the mechanism by which the English translation of *Na Hanyate* transforms local dissent into a globally legible political act. It is precisely this translational politics that constitutes the central argumentative contribution of the present paper.

While academic discourse firmly categorizes Eliade as Orientalist and Devi as counter-Orientalist, the specific decolonizing mechanism of the English translation in the global market requires further exploration. Synthesizing Said’s politics of representation¹, Spivak’s subaltern theory³, and Venuti’s translation politics⁷, this study demonstrates that Devi’s text is a present-day political act. It challenges the hegemony of the Western gaze by confronting it with the unassimilated reality of the Bengali woman.⁴

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Primary Texts

This study is based on a comparative analysis of two primary texts: Mircea Eliade’s *Bengal Nights* (originally published as *La Nuit Bengali*, 1933; translated into English by Catherine Spencer, 1994) and Maitreyi Devi’s *It Does Not Die: A Romance* (originally published as *Na Hanyate*, 1974; translated into English by the author herself, 1994). The approach centers on the English translations of both works to scrutinize the dynamics of “writing back” within the identical language domain.

3.2. Theoretical Framework

The methodological framework is grounded in postcolonial literary and translation theory, drawing on a constellation of critical concepts that are applied in a carefully sequenced analytical procedure. Said’s theory of Orientalism¹ provides the primary analytical lens for examining Eliade’s representational tactics, specifically his construction of the East as a mystical, ahistorical, and feminized Other whose value lies in its capacity to serve the spiritual and aesthetic needs of the Western subject. Spivak’s

theorization of the “subaltern”³ furnishes the conceptual vocabulary for analyzing the politics of silencing and epistemic violence in Eliade’s text, and for understanding the conditions under which Devi’s counter-narrative becomes possible. Bhabha’s concepts of mimicry, stereotype, and the “Third Space”¹² are employed to examine the ambivalent dynamics of cultural encounter and to theorize Devi’s hybrid subjectivity as neither fully assimilated into the colonizer’s symbolic order nor recuperable within an unmodified indigenous framework. Venuti’s theory of foreignization⁷ is central to the analysis of the English translation of *Na Hanyate* as a site of linguistic resistance, while Niranjana’s work on translation as a mechanism of colonial hegemony⁵ provides the critical context within which Devi’s act of self-translation can be read as a subversive appropriation of colonial tools. The concept of “writing back,” as articulated by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin,⁶ situates the study within the broader tradition of postcolonial counter-discursive practice, enabling a reading of Devi’s memoir as a systematic dismantling of the imperial archive.

3.3. Analytical Procedure

The research employs a qualitative, comparative textual analysis method in three stages:

3.3.1. Close Reading

A systematic close reading of *Bengal Nights* was conducted to identify and catalogue instances of Orientalist discourse against a set of defined analytical criteria. Specifically, the analysis tracked: (i) the dehumanization and infantilization of the female protagonist through animal or primordial metaphor; (ii) the construction of the East as a mystical, ahistorical, and cyclical space antithetical to Western rationality and progress; (iii) the feminization of the Indian landscape and its equation with the female body as an object of conquest; (iv) the erasure of the protagonist’s intellectual agency and the reduction of her subjectivity to a set of exotic surface attributes; and (v) the deployment of a domesticated narrative style designed to render the “Other” legible, familiar, and consumable for a Western readership. Rhetorical evidence was drawn directly from the text of *Bengal Nights* and cross-referenced against Said’s taxonomy of Orientalist representational strategies¹ and Bhabha’s account of colonial stereotyping as a mechanism of anxious repetition.¹²

3.3.2. Counter-Discourse Analysis

A concurrent close reading of *It Does Not Die* was conducted to identify the specific discursive techniques through which Devi contests Eliade’s representation. Counter-discourse markers were operationalized under four analytical categories: (i) the assertion of first-person interiority — passages in which Devi claims direct access to her own thought, affect, and moral consciousness in explicit repudiation of Eliade’s external, objectifying gaze; (ii) the reclamation of intellectual genealogy — passages in which Devi positions herself as a historically situated intellectual heir to the Bengal Renaissance rather than as a timeless, ahistorical primitive; (iii) foreignization markers — the deliberate retention of untranslated Bengali terms, culturally embedded concepts, and indigenous intertextual references that resist assimilation into the dominant Western cultural framework; and (iv) direct refutation — passages in which Devi explicitly names and denies Eliade’s claims. The three thematic categories that organize the results section — the reclamation of interiority, the restoration of intellectual lineage, and the assertion of linguistic sovereignty — emerged inductively from this systematic coding process. Throughout, Spivak’s theorization of the “subaltern voice”³ served as the evaluative

framework for assessing the conditions and limits of Devi's counter-discursive agency, while Mamun's analysis of Devi's "linguistic agency of resistance"¹⁷ provided a comparative reference point for the findings.

3.3.3. Comparative Synthesis

The findings of the two close readings were integrated in a final comparative synthesis whose tertium comparationis — the common ground against which both texts are measured — is the English translation of *Na Hanyate* as a political artifact operating within the global Anglophone literary market. The synthesis examined three specific axes of comparison: (i) the contrast between Eliade's domesticated narrative style and Devi's foreignized translation strategy⁷, assessed in terms of their respective effects on the reader's encounter with cultural difference; (ii) the contrast between the colonial silencing enacted by *Bengal Nights* and the discursive recovery enacted by *It Does Not Die*, theorized through Niranjana's account of translation as a mechanism of both colonial hegemony and its subversion⁵; and (iii) the transformation of Devi's position from the margin to the center of her own narrative, assessed through the framework of "writing back" as developed by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin.⁶ The synthesis thus demonstrates that the English translation is not a secondary feature of Devi's counter-narrative but its primary political mechanism, enabling the text to intervene in the imperial archive on the colonizer's own linguistic turf.

4. Results

4.1. Deconstructing the Silent Object: The Reclamation of Interiority

Reclaiming interiority (a shift from being an object of the outside gaze to becoming a subject of internal consciousness) is the fundamental act of decolonization in *It Does Not Die*. The subaltern woman is often denied the ability to think critically in the colonial narrative that Eliade exemplifies; she is essentially a surface to be watched, recorded, and analyzed. Orientalism, as famously argued by Edward Said¹, is based on a visual dynamic in which the Eastern object is observed by the Western subject, depriving it of its own voice. Eliade reduces Maitreyi to a set of external signifiers in her essentially phenomenological portrayal. "She was a strange creature, half child, half demon... a being of pure instinct, uncorrupted by civilization," he writes, describing her as a primordial force rather than a thinking entity.² Instead of being a thinking agent in and of herself, she is presented in this secondary text as a mysterious object of desire and a silent trigger for the European protagonist's spiritual crisis.

Devi's opening move dramatically shifts the narrative focus from the external to the internal, dismantling the objectification that Eliade's text enacts. Devi redirects the narrative gaze, questioning the very premises of Eliade's observational authority. The memoir is structured around an extended first-person account that systematically reverses what Spivak³ terms "epistemic violence" in the colonial narrative. By granting the reader access to her deepest thoughts, moral dilemmas, and intellectual conflicts, Devi demonstrates that she is a cognizant, reasoning being who engages critically with the difficulties of a cross-cultural relationship and cultural obligation — not a "mystical native" who acts on instinct alone.

The most powerful portion of this declaration of consciousness is Devi's candid explanation of the trauma of being objectified. She understands that Eliade's story has

taken away her humanity, so she stops thinking about her physical pain and starts thinking about her mental pain. She adds, “I realized that for him I was not a human being... I was an experience, an adventure, a flavor,”⁴ which is a key moment in her life. This textual linkage is crucial since it encapsulates the primary conflict between the two texts. Devi reclaims her status as a “human being” capable of analyzing her experience, whereas Eliade regards her only as an “experience” to be devoured.

This recovery of interiority simultaneously dismantles the colonial binary of “rational West” versus the “emotional East.” Through the articulate, measured prose of *It Does Not Die*, Devi demonstrates that her consciousness is guided by a disciplined intellect, not the “chaos” Eliade projected onto her. Because the book does not let the reader see Maitreyi, they have to look through her eyes and feel the pain and bewilderment of the affair from the inside out. Devi transforms herself from a static object of fancy into a dynamic subject of history by infusing the distinctive texture of her thoughts into the void created by the Orientalist narrative. The shift from the seen to the seer is the most important first step in her decolonization. It shows that she has the power to shape her own world.^{1,3}

4.2. The Restoration of Intellectual Lineage

Whereas the recovery of interiority returns the mind of the colonized subject, the recovery of intellectual lineage returns their history. One of the most fundamental principles of Orientalist discourse, as outlined by Edward Said¹, is the construction of the East as a non-historical, cyclical space that is sealed off from the progress of Western modernity. By depriving the colonized subject of their particular cultural and historical context, colonial discourse renders them “primitive,” or lacking in the civilization and progress that constitute the Western subject. In the secondary text, *Bengal Nights*, this is achieved by the way Eliade removes Maitreyi from her context, depicting her as a being of “nature” rather than “culture.” Eliade calls her a “savage” presence, one that is outside the rational world, saying, “She appeared to belong to a different species... a creature of the night, outside the law and the city.”² In this way, by refusing her any connection to the “city” or the “law,” which are clearly stand-ins for civilization and society, Eliade seeks to strip her of her background, to make her a kind of ahistorical artifact suspended in the mists of the Orient.

In her main work, *It Does Not Die*, Devi strongly disagrees with the idea of timeless literature by situating herself within a specific, respected intellectual tradition: the Bengal Renaissance. Emerging in early nineteenth-century Bengal and flourishing through the early twentieth century, the Bengal Renaissance was a transformative cultural and philosophical movement spearheaded by thinkers such as Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Rabindranath Tagore. The movement sought to reconcile Western Enlightenment thought with the classical heritage of Vedantic philosophy, producing a sophisticated intellectual tradition that was simultaneously modern and rooted in indigenous epistemology. It is precisely within this milieu that Devi was formed: not as a passive subject of colonial modernity, but as an heir to a living philosophical tradition. Instead of just saying that she is educated, she shows that she is the intellectual and spiritual heir of her father, the famous philosopher Surendranath Dasgupta. This genealogy reclamation is a strong way to decolonize, as it asserts that her identity is grounded in a rich indigenous intellectual tradition rather than European fantasy. Devi, on the other hand, presents herself as a scholar-in-training, which is very

different from Eliade's "little animal." She clearly says, "I was my father's daughter... I had drunk deep at the springs of the Upanishads and the Vedas from my childhood."⁴ This work is very important because it uses her cultural capital against the colonial story to show that her "mysticism" is not a primordial impulse but a strong philosophical foundation.

Devi also puts to rest the idea that India is a 'savage' by delving into great depth into her home life. Devi shows that her home is a place of intellectual rigor, while Eliade shows it as a strange maze. She states, "Our house was always full of scholars and students... my father was writing his History of Indian Philosophy, and I was his first reader."⁴ This shows that she grew up in a time of high modernity and debate, not superstition. She challenges the Eurocentric belief that knowledge flows exclusively from the West to the East by highlighting her role as an active participant in her father's scholarly pursuits. Instead, she shows herself to be an important part of a thriving intellectual economy among indigenous people.

The restoration of lineage is a key political move; it changes Maitreyi from "biological" to "sociological." Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin⁶ say that one of the main goals of post-colonial writing is to "abrogate" colonial terminology and "appropriate" history. Devi accomplishes this by rejecting Eliade's characterization of her culture. She changes "primitive" to "modern" and "instinctual" to "learned." By taking on the unique aspects of her father's intellectual history, Devi challenges the colonial idea that the Westerner is the teacher and the Indian is the gullible student. She maintains that she was never a tabula rasa for Eliade's projection, but rather a fully inscribed subject of an extraordinarily rich cultural heritage.

4.3. Linguistic Sovereignty and the Foreignized Subject

Maitreyi Devi's decolonization has developed through a variety of channels, including the final and potentially the most radical channel, which is the appropriation of linguistic authority. The body is limited, the intellect is misunderstood, but the voice is the only way to fight back. In post-colonial literature, writing in the language of the colonizers often carries the risk of assimilation. Devi's translation emphasizes the distinctiveness of its Bengali origins instead of obscuring cultural differences to cater to a Western audience, a method that Venuti⁷ critiques for obliterating the "otherness" of the source work. This changes the English language from an instrument of oppression to a way for people who are not in power to fight back.

In *Bengal Nights*, Eliade adopts a "domesticated" style of storytelling to make the "exotic" East simple for European readers to understand. He uses familiar Romantic language to write about India and Maitreyi, so the reader never feels lost in the strange culture. This is a translation of experience that fulfills the colonizer's need for power. The main text, *It Does Not Die*, uses a "foreignization" method instead. The story contains many Bengali words left untranslated, precise references to the Vedas, Upanishads, and the Guru-Shishya Parampara, and subtle descriptions of Bengali domesticity that are hard to understand. For instance, Devi calls her dad "Guru" throughout her writings. This is a culturally distinct word that replaces the more common English phrases "teacher" and "mentor."⁴ This particular cultural marker in the text shows Anglo-Saxon readers that they do not fully understand Indian philosophy, but it does not make Indian philosophical ideas simpler for Westerners to understand.

This linguistic strategy is profoundly political. According to Tejaswini Niranjana⁵, translation has historically been an instrument of colonial control used to “fix” the colonized person. Devi forcefully reclaims the English language to undermine this history. Instead of saying sorry or offering a servile justification of her culture, she presents it as a normal center in its own right. Devi explicitly addresses her critics and the Western audience in a strong statement about her linguistic agency: “I am writing this in a language that is not mine... but I shall make it bear the burden of my truth.”⁴ This passage makes the conflict of the decolonizing subject clear: she must use the master’s tools to tear down the master’s house.

The concept of the “Third Space”¹², a concept developed by Homi K. Bhabha, provides a useful framework for understanding Devi’s way of positioning herself within a hybrid subjectivity. As a site of interstitial negotiation, the “Third Space” reveals how meaning is neither fully assimilated into the colonizer’s language nor entirely recoverable within the native cultural framework. She constructs her position and character as a hybrid subject so that she neither becomes Eliade’s fantasy nor a passive object of the colonial lens. Devi intentionally resists the domestication of her identity and, by doing so, retains linguistic and cultural opacity to challenge the notion of seamless translation. The text sustains cultural difference and exposes the limits of colonial intelligibility within imperial discourse. This construction enacts the political function of the “Third Space” by disrupting interpretive authority and compelling the Western reader to confront the foreignized subject on her own terms.¹²

The foreignized quality of the text turns English into a language with many roots. This is how Devi decolonizes the medium of narrative itself: by using the rhythm, logic, and words of Bengali thought. The “Subject” that arises at the conclusion of *It Does Not Die* is not solely a psychological or historical construct, but a linguistic one. She is a subject who speaks in a sophisticated, assertive English that conveys the unassimilated reality of the Bengali woman to the core of the empire, not in the broken, submissive pidgin of the subaltern. This linguistic sovereignty means that the story is no longer owned by the West, but is instead a disputed area where the voice of the formerly colonized people claims its right to make its own image of the world on its own terms.^{5,7}

5. Conclusion

The shift from Mircea Eliade’s *Bengal Nights* to Maitreyi Devi’s *It Does Not Die* is a significant step in the right direction, showing how the Indian woman has moved from a colonized subject to a free person. This paper analyzes the role of Devi’s narrative as epistemic resistance, contesting Eliade’s colonial interpretation of her existence and culture. Devi dismantles the colonial frameworks that have justified her dehumanization by affirming her own subjectivity, recovering an intellectual history that Eliade’s narrative had suppressed, and asserting her linguistic authority. Her memoir changes history by arguing that the subaltern has a wealth of information and a unique family tree that runs counter to Western assumptions.³

Through the course of this paper, it is made abundantly evident that the politics of translation and the decolonization of the self are inextricably linked. The English version of *It Does Not Die* does not help people blend in; it keeps them different. Devi used a strategy known as “foreignization” to weaponize the colonizer’s language, compelling the Anglophone reader to confront the Bengali woman’s unassimilated reality. This act of

linguistic rebellion goes against the “imperial archive’s” power and indicates that the colonized individual can move through the center of power without losing her cultural identity.⁵ The translation makes her voice stand out and be heard, so that it does not get lost in the clamor of Orientalist imagination.¹

In the end, *It Does Not Die* testifies to the lasting power of the narrating self. In the struggle between silence and speech, between being an object of consumption and a subject of history, Devi’s art claims a clear triumph. The term itself is an ontological promise: once the truth of the colonized experience is reclaimed and communicated, it cannot be erased. Devi’s journey from the edge of Eliade’s book to the center of her own writing shows how taking back the pen—the power to name, define, and, in the end, live on one’s own terms—is the most important step in decolonization.⁴

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