

Tribhuvan University

Representation of the Voiceless in J. M. Synge's *The Well of the Saints*

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by

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Abstract

This research based on J. M. Synge's *The Well of the Saints* makes a critical observation on the social and political situation of the economically backward groups of people. Political framework have been set up in such a way that the power has remained within the reach of small groups of the elite rulers. This political formation is such that the power, influence and opportunities are limited within the reach of those who are in and around the state powers. Hence, a large group of people's interest, social and political demands is negated in the course of human development. This discrimination becomes even more pathetic when the people are physically challenged and belong to weaker section of the society. The old couples in *The Well of the Saints* depict the pathetic situation of people who are not in the main stream of politics and power. Hence, the notion of subaltern people is a historical phenomenon to which they are a systematic victim. Even the formation of the state is also based on the interest of the small groups of rulers, and hence, there is the continuation of those groups of people that are systematically deprived of social and political approach and hence historically are subject to subjugation.

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I. Introduction: Voice of the Subalterns

Subaltern Studies entered a new domain with the inclusion of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in *Subaltern Studies IV*. While pointing, Spivak made it clear that Subaltern Studies is a discourse to speak on behalf of the marginalized groups, has not paid as much attention to women as it should have. She is amazed as its “indifference to the subjectivity not to mention the indispensable presence of the women as the crucial instrument” (358). Synge’s plays were produced at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, which was established to perform plays about Irish subjects written by Irish playwrights.

Irish dramatist J. M. Synge’s *The Well of the Saints* is a tale of two worlds where people are discriminated on the basis of their outer appearance rather than their inward quality. Our society is such structured in such a way that people are viewed on the basis of their appearances and economic status, which makes them superior to the rest of the people. Synge’s play brings in the notion of an old couple who desires to have their eye-sight but, upon having it realizes that life is not worth by external eyes. They come to a realization that life for the marginalized and physically challenged people is not as they have wished for. In this perspective, the present research takes into consideration of sufferings and woes of the old couple in application of subaltern studies.

Idea of giving voice to the physically marginalized people is a rare attempt in dramas and literatures, even today. Furthermore, when it comes to people with disabilities, it is still a far cry. However, Irish dramatist and dominant figure of the Irish Renaissance Synge is a

literary revival of the last years of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century attempts to bring in the voice of the a visually challenged couple. Synge's great achievement was his musical and poetic dialogue that creates a dramatic effect when coming from the mouths of his peasant characters. His humor, while occasionally ironic and bitter, was pronounced and at times boisterous.

Thus, subaltern as tool help to dig up the position of marginalized people, especially woman. Subaltern consciousness had always been a critical feature of subalternity and in 1987 Ajit Chaudhary reiterated that "The focus of subaltern studies is on the consciousness to be studied historically? What kinds of sources, method and reasoning should we use? Around these questions, a shift in orientation certainly occurred" (87).

Synge's *The Well of the Saints* is about a blind couple, Martin Doul and Mary Doul, who wishes for sight but then regrets having it back when they realize that by visual standards they are old and ugly, was staged in 1905. The drama created a lot of wave and ripples on the issues of humanity and, especially in concern to those who were physically challenged. It was not only during the late 1960s and 70s the issue of the differently able came into mainstream politics and literature. However, many critics defied the play for being orthodox and traditional and much more emotional than required. Woes of a pair of weather-beaten blind beggars live peacefully by the wayside, unless they regain their eyesight, but only to realize that the world of vision is not as they have envisioned.

Michilo Wakamatsu of Hosci University opines that *The Well of the Saints* is rich in dramatic structure. In "A Share in the Dignity of the World," Wakamatsu praises the rich structural pattern of the drama, as:

The Well of the Saints possesses a unique dramatic structure. Unlike most plays, each of the three acts is self-contained with an individual climax, although there is a continuity in the three acts that progressively develops the psychological dilemma that envelops Martin, the protagonist. In Act I, we see the tragedy on a comic plane; in Act II on a poetic plane; and in Act III it appears on a spiritual level. (15)

The rarest quality of this play is the extraordinary intensity and richness in the productions' three tragic climaxes, which disclose human tragedy revolving around the clashing of dream and reality on three levels.

The Well of the Saints is a serious comedy based of a French farce *Moralite de l'Aveugle et du Boiteux* (Morality play of the Blind Man and the Cripple) by Andrien de la Vigne.

Though, Synge is inspired by *Moralite de l'Aveugle et du Boiteux*, the plot, setting, tragic-comic elements, philosophical base of the theme of *The Well of the Saints* is his own invention. Synge took up a romantic dream of love for the sake of poesy in the play. The ridiculous beggar's impossible dream of romance plumbs the emotional and idealistic depths of Synge's protagonist and transforms what was farcical in *Moralite de l'Aveugle et du Boiteux* into a tragedy in *The Well of the Saints*.

Synge was a sickly, solitary boy who pursued his interest in languages at Trinity College, Dublin, where he won prizes for Hebrew and Irish and earned his B.A. degree in 1892. After graduation Synge studied music in Germany, and then made his way to Paris, where he attended lectures on modern languages and on Celtic, a language group that includes Irish, the ancient language of Ireland.

According to Mary C. King, it was William Butler Yeats who inspired Synge to come up with some creative insights. In *The Drama of J.M. Synge*, King opines:

In 1896 Synge met Irish poet William Butler Yeats, who encouraged him to travel to the isolated Aran Islands off the west coast of Ireland, where he could study the language and ways of life of people who still spoke Irish. Synge made the first of five visits to the Aran Islands in 1898, spending most of his time on Inishman, the most remote of the islands. (63)

This experience provided him with sketches for the book *The Aran Islands* (1907), with plots for the plays *Riders to the Sea* (1904) and *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), and especially with exposure to a distinctive dialect called Hiberno-English. This dialect, which he used in his writings, combines English vocabulary with Irish syntax (sentence structure) and inflection.

Although most of the attacks directed against Synge concerning his use of foreign sources in his plays were not subtle, they succeeded in deforming his reputation for a time and made his works the most controversial of the Abbey dramatists. Nevertheless, the idea of giving voice to the physically marginalized is probably one of the first of its type. The idea that there are people of different groups of people whose voice should be addressed is probably best addressed in *the Well of the Saints*.

Critics no longer debate to what extent Synge was influenced by foreign literature as they are interested in showing him as a writer who drew his inspiration from Ireland. In Paris, in 1897, Synge met W. B. Yeats, who directed his talents in the right way, urging him to find his material in his own country. W. B. Yeats in *Essays and Introductions* narrates his visit with Synge, as:

‘Give up Paris’ I remember having said to Synge for Paris was long devoid of creativity. ‘You will never create anything by reading Racine, and Arthur Symons will always be a better critic of French literature. Go to the Aran Islands. Live there as if you were one of the people themselves; express a life that has never found expression.’ (18)

This was what Synge did, for in 1898, he went to the Aran Islands, a group of stony islands on the west coast of Ireland, visiting them on five successive occasions between 1898 and 1902. Amidst the thorny hills and stony mountains of the Aran Islands, the *Well of the Saints* was first composed.

In the Aran Islands, Synge lived with the peasants, learned their language, and listened to their stories. He was near the subaltern people and it was here that he realized the fall of ethics and values. However, with these innocent people who were subdued and dominated from the mainstream of social and political life, Synge got the inspiration to give the voice to these voiceless people. Of these visits to Aran, Elizabeth Coxhead writes:

Synge’s visit to Aran in 1898 was a true Renaissance, a spiritual rebirth. The knowledge he had been subconsciously acquiring during his follow years suddenly came into focus; he looked at these primitive people, and through them, into the heart of humanity. He found an almost untouched peasant culture, with Irish as the universal language, and with an extraordinary beauty and dignity in the bare cottages and the treasure of poems and stories. (19)

Synge’s observations of the islanders’ life were recorded in his book *The Aran Islands*, which had a great impact on his plays. It, together with his articles on Wicklow, West Kerry and

Connemara, is like a source-book of folktales and stories which form the plots and the social background of all of his plays. A close reading of these travel sketches provides not only a further insight into the life of the Irish peasants, but also a deep understanding of their psychology, circumstances and problems which Synge portrays in his plays.

Based on the experiences, Synge obtained from the Aran Islands, in 1905 his first three-act plays *The Well of the Saints* was produced. This was one of the firsts of the plays that associated the famous series of debate on which Synge was involved in understanding the sense of deteriorating social and economic status of people that were left away from the political circle and upper caste groups.

Subaltern denotes to marginalized groups whose actions and deeds are not recorded in the colonialist historiography during when they were dominated by a specific group or class of people. The tragedy with the subaltern people is when they try to raise their 'voice' – voice of justice and equality they were termed as 'the other.' Despite being co-operated in the power gained authority, they were underestimated. As a result Subaltern Studies (SS) is an attempt to explore the forgotten history of the people who were left behind the race of human civilization. Subaltern Studies began at the end of 1970s but it formally came into existence in 1982 with the aim of writing the historiography of the people ignored by the elitists.

Antonio Gramsci analyzed the term 'subaltern' in social theory, using it to denote the people in the margin as opposed to those in the center. During his stay at the prison, he analyzed the use of the word from the perspective of those who have been left in the development of the human race. However, with the development of time, the word was widely used to denote the politically, socially and historically dominated.

Later on, Subaltern Studies Group aims to promote in consciousness that people oppressed groups of society through a new historiography that rewrites history from below. They describe their project as an attempt to study the voices that were not visible and heard during the rule of domination by elite or a group of aristocrats. Ranajit Guha narrates this history in *Subaltern Studies I* as:

Subaltern Studies group sketched out its wide ranging concern both with visible history, politics, economics and sociology of subalternity and with the occluded attitude ideologies and belief system in short, the culture informing that condition. A general attribute of subordination in South Asia Society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way. (Guha vii)

When Subaltern Studies Group emerged in 1982, it was set to undertake empirical study on various aspects of subaltern people irrespective of caste, gender, color, profession, space and class. Therefore, subaltern studies did not take up the women issues distinctly up to the first three volumes of Subaltern Studies.

The idea of subaltern studies is consciousness that people make sense of the world in which they live, it is in consciousness again that they make their judgment on how to change it.

Dipesh Chakrabraty in his essay “Invitation to a Dialogue” says:

The central aim of subaltern studies is to understand the consciousness that informed and still informs political actions taken by the subaltern classes on their own, independently of any elite initiatives. It is only by giving this consciousness a central place in historical analysis that we see the subaltern as the maker of the history she/he lives out. (32)

The formation of the consciousness is largely determined by the level of awareness to which an individual has been reared. Hence, two types of mentality of subaltern people by nature is formed. On the one hand, they try to be free from domination and exploitation. They want to rebel to secure the position in the society. But another characteristic of the behaviour of the subaltern class is their subversiveness.

They consider that the domination and the subjugation of the subalterns are because of the ill fate to which a person has been victimized to. Hence, there is a general assumption that one is destined to be suppressed for s/he is born in such a family where resources are limited with no access to the state bodies or mechanism. Hence, when someone is a born prince, while the other one, acutely poor and deprived of resources. Gautam Bhadra in “The Mentality of Subalternity” opines: “It is well known that defiance is not characteristics of the behaviour of subaltern classes. Submissiveness to authority in one context is as frequent as defiance in another. These two elements together constitute the subaltern mentality” (63). As such, the subalterns are born to submissive to the authority, and someone born to an authoritative family has the mentality to dominate and rule the ground class of people.

Subaltern Studies has developed into a cultural theory as it is based on the culture of the subaltern people. It has moved away from people’s politics to the study of the culture of the subaltern people. Now it tends to take root to cultural as well as literary modes of knowing history. The emancipator act that subaltern Studies Project perform in our understanding of tribes, castes or other such groups as Veena Das write in her article, “Subaltern as Perspectives” opines that it is a process “to restore to them their historical being” (314). In all, its commitment to restore history of subaltern people is rather genuine aspect about Subaltern Studies has

become “an original right for a new kind of history from below a people’s free of national constraints” (12)

Subaltern consciousness is another hotly debated issue about SS. Spivak, in her seminal essay “SS: deconstructing historiography” gives a deconstructing reading to the activities of SS group. She tries to assess their work in her writing. Like many others, she, too finds with their compartmentalized views of consciousness. While assessing their work comes to realize that it somehow resembles deconstruction which puts the binary oppositions like elite/ subaltern under erasure. Their project, in her view is rather a positivist and as it aspires to investigate, discover and establish a subaltern or peasant consciousness for Spivak. Subaltern Studies projects offer both a theory of change and a theory of consciousness.

The issues of change in the way of interpreting the socially and economically backward groups of people are highlighted by critics like Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Spivak. They take the woes and sufferings of these people from the perspective of those who are left behind in the humane development by the state and state mechanism. However, these critics and others have hardly introduced the concerns of those who are economically weak and physically challenged. The idea of the old couple in the *Well of the Saints* not only brings this concern in forefront but also lay bare, the lacunae of Subaltern Studies. Most critics and scholars have either negated or bypassed the concern of these target groups of people. The definition and understanding of the Subaltern has been confined to politically dominated and historically left in the race of human development. As such, the present research will consider the aspects of dominance borne by the doubly dominated groups of people. The old beggar couples are doubly dominated because they are visually impaired and also economically backward.

Subaltern studies group emerged in India with an aim of writing the historiography of the people ignored by colonialist as well as bourgeois nationalist historiography. The term 'subaltern,' as Ranajit Guha announces in the editorial of SSI (1982), "will be used in the pages as a name for the general attribute of subordination in south Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way" (vii). Mahashweta Devi writes stories about the subalterns, who have been denied access to the official history. She writes about peasants, widows, untouchables and laborers, who are oppressed and exploited in the society. This means that the institutions that produce the discourses, fill it with certain set of standards and 'logos' that are imposed in the society, that in turn, raise the institutions in the level of power.

Sumit Sarkar tried to clarify the term subaltern and its group by saying:

I am employing the term 'subaltern' as a convenient short-hand for three social groups: tribal and low-caste agricultural laborers and share croppers; landholding peasants, generally of intermediate-caste status in Bengal (together with their Muslim counterparts; and labor in plantation, mines and industries along with Urban casual labor). (273)

To be powerful and to rule over the subject class or suppressed group, discourse will be created by elite class in the society. Michel Foucault, a German philosopher opines that 'truth' and 'power' are interrelated. Power creates the truth for the sake of power. Discourse is the embodiment of power, and it is the discourse through which speak the power of ruling culture- the power of govern and control.

Discourses in all the fields are produced in the real world of power-struggle, and used to gain real power. All institutions, either it university or army, writing media or medical are

involved in power foundation by means of discourses. There are very refined rules and regulations to support and continue the existing social systems. To elaborate the relation between knowledge, power and discourse. Foucault in his book *History of Sexuality* says: “Indeed it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together” (100).

Spivak’s approach is direct and precise. Her stories do not get elliptical. Instead, they, as stories of survival, move towards the goal: depiction of the oppression and exploitation of the subaltern people at the hands of elites and the empowerment of the subaltern and thus resistance to the elites. She dauntlessly does away with the so-called feminine sensibility in reaching her goal. Though she focuses on the class, her stories deal with a wide range of issue like gender, race and caste.

In consideration to all these concepts, the present researcher intends to explore the voice of those people left behind the human development. ‘Introduction: Voice of the Subalterns’ which make a critical approach on various literature reviews available and will introduce the idea of subalterns in our societies. The researcher will explore how the notions of the socially and economically backward groups of people have been dominated in terms of socio-political, economic and racial concerns. It is worth remembering that when Subalterns issues are discussed and debated by the state organs, it is either social or economic; but, these groups of people are more dominated when it comes to physically challenged individuals.

The Well of the Saints takes on these groups of people who have been subdued by the state and the societal values and concerns in the process of empowering them. Similarly, the second chapter will investigate the process of giving voices to the groups left behind in the human race, under the title “Revisiting of the Voice of the Voiceless in *Well of the Saints*.” Finally, the research will conclude with a suitable conclusion.

II. Representation of the Voiceless in *Well of the Saints*

The Well of the Saints opens at cross-roads nearby a Wicklow village from where Martin and Mary Doul, a blind, old, ugly, battered beggar couple is passing to the fair. The couple is happy and living peacefully by the way-side, sustaining in the ignorance that they are a handsome couple. Their illusionary world is founded on the deceitful mockery of the villagers who instilled the illusion in this ignorant, miserable couple out of mixed feelings of pity and jest. Due to ignorance, Martin and Mary consider themselves as “so fine looking” (62) and “the finest man and the finest woman of the seven countries of the East” (62). Martin considers that he has “wedded with the beautiful dark woman of Ballinatone” (69) who has “yellow hair” and “soft skin” (70).

The other characters of the play like Timy, a middle aged vigorous smith, Molly Byrne, a fine looking girl, Bride, another girl and other villagers deceive Martin and Mary and make them believe that they are extremely beautiful, while in fact, they are unattractive beggars. Throughout the Act I, Martin and Mary Doul live in the world of false impression and ignorance in which they imagine themselves as “so fine looking” (62) which gives them a feeling of false contentment, pleasure and exhilaration.

The blind couple becomes innocent victim of the village people’s deceit, due to their ignorance. On this ground, the play evokes our pity for Martin and Mary. What they know about themselves is through others’ languages. As Mary C. King Pointed out, “language has mediating role for the blind couple since they are dependent on it to construct their vision of objective and subjective reality” (King.1985:106). It is clearly evident in couple’s, especially in Mary’s speech that what they in reality know or think about their bodily

appearances is gathered from the villager's talk. "I've heard tell" (61), "for I do look my best, I've heard them say when I'm dressed up with that thing on my head (67). It shows that "through the medium of language the blind couple shares in a social interaction with the community, in which the villagers serve as mirror to the couple" (109).

But Martin and Mary are not only deceived by others but also by themselves ignoring the reality. There are two aspects to this ignorance of the old couple. First, they are aware to the fact that they are being cheated, but could not react to it for they are physically weak. Second, the poor often have to bear the heat of discrimination. For, there is no alternative to the fact that they are borne to bear the heat of discrimination and domination. And, the other aspect is, most of the poor are habituated to sympathy being bestowed on them by those who also provide them with a meager amount of food items.

No exception, these fellow villagers are first deceived by their fellow villagers, but since what they hear fits their imagination of their desired beauty they accept the lie without making much effort to question it. In Act I, Martin expresses his longing for the recovery of his sight in order to make sure that his imaginary picture of themselves is in fact true: "It'd be a grand thing if we could see ourselves for one hour, or a minute itself, the way we'd know surely we were the finest man and the finest woman of the seven countries of the East" (62).

At the end of the Act I, the Saint's holy water cures their sight. We see Martin Dougl crying out in joy that he sees the walls of the church and the great width of the sky:

Oh, glory be to God, I see now surely ... is the walls of the

Church, and the green bits of ferns in them, and yourself, holy

father, and the great width of the sky.

[He runs out half-foolish with joy, and comes past Mary Doul as she scrambles to her feet, drawing a little away from her as he goes by.]

TIMMY — [to the others.] — He doesn't know her at all. (73)

He runs in half-foolish joy and sees Molly Byrne, with her grand hair and soft skin and eyes, sitting in Mary Doul's seat. When Molly makes game of him, he goes from one young girl to another identifying Mary and people are cruelly mocking "Try again, Martin, try again, and you'll be finding her yet" (74). After restoring their sight, Martin and Mary have to face a bitter reality of life. Society often recognizes the social outfit groups in terms of their ugly physical appearances and the deceit they were living in results in immediate disappointment and the rejection of each other which is worsened by the villagers' ridiculing.

Subaltern study is basically a school of the colonial history. Its main focus is to investigate and describe the contribution made by the people on their own, independently of the elites, and to est. a subaltern or peasant consciousness. Subaltern represents the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those who could be describe as the elite.

SS Group is based around Delhi University. Their main organ is the annual journal *SS: Writings on South Asian History and Society* published in 1982. The group includes, amongst other Ranjita Guha, Sahid Amin, Gyanendra Pandey and G Spivak. The group made and eradicable impact on historical, political, and critical studies of South Asia. In the work of the SS Group, they use the term to describe the 'peasant,' the 'insurgents' who periodically rose up against the British Colonialist, or, more generally 'the people.'

Subaltern people are dominated and exploited in their society by elite group. But

Subaltern is not homogeneous term having a fixed identity. It does not have single criterion to identify as a subaltern. Sumit Sarkar also opine that the term is ambiguous because it does not have stable identity. In *The Condition and Nature of Subaltern Militancy: Bengal from Swadeshi to Non-cooperation*. Sarkar writes:

Subaltern is no more free of ambiguities and problem that its rough equivalents (for example 'popular mass', 'lower-class'); it does have the advantage of emphasizing the fundamental relationship of power, of domination and subordination. Nor does the Subaltern concept exclude more rigorous class analysis where the subject or material permits it. (273)

Subaltern can be defined as the people of the lower class, untouchable, politically dominated and so-called inferior in social rank. Gramsci writes: “I first used Subaltern as a collective description for a variety of different dominated and exploited groups who explicitly lack class-consciousness” (79). Gramsci is of the opinion that ideas should be flourished and nurtured in such a way that all groups of people in a society can claim their ownership in the ruling system.

Gramsci categorized 'subaltern' in the place of 'preliterate' who are by any way exploited and dominated by the elite group of the society, elite class rules the society by constructing the truth in their own favour. Seldon writes in his book *A Readers Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* “It fits the descriptions of truth laid down by the intellectual or political authorities of the day by the member of ruling elite, or by the prevailing ideologies of knowledge” (100). This means that the institutions that produce the discourses fill it with certain set of standards and 'logos' that are imposed in the society, that in turn, raise the institutions in the level of power.

In identifying members of a social out-group, it is often the case that prejudiced

persons are far more accurate than are their non-prejudiced counterparts. This discrepancy can be explained as a result of visual violation, the stares in which victims of prejudice are fixed and through which prejudiced persons learn the cues that identify their enemy. Any difference is potentially stigmatizable and through the sense of sight 'the stigma of others most frequently becomes evident.

This state of affairs substantiates in terms of gaze, namely, information and possession of the physical look of the socially outfit groups of people. The contention is that because gazes are exchanged in a manner that can be scientifically defined in terms of good and ugly look. The division of the good and the ugly looks is also the notion framed by the so-called higher class of people. When the same costume worn by the elite in one hand is fashion, when the same is worn by the socially dominated, it becomes ugly. The discrepancy of the gaze and its value is determined by the eyes that belong to the upper class bourgeoisie. Hence, the notion of beauty is either white or formal dress that the ruling class have framed and developed. Anyone who does not abide to this code of conduct of dress and behavior, they are uncivilized.

But, the reality is, if only one party has sufficient vision – both in terms of education and social exposure, then only one party has access to the language, literature and can shape the societal orders. The same cannot be expected of those who live in the street and have to wear those clothes and feed that food being given to them under mercy and sympathy. Martin and Mary are merely two victims whose apathy has been multiplied for they are born in street and no access to whatsoever form of political and cultural aspects. Hence, they are unable to refute or confirm any accusation in terms of conditions

determining the social and political set up. As such, the subaltern assumes a position of invulnerability while inflicting the very opposite of the invisible victim.

Synge's *The Well of the Saints* has caught a lot of exaggeration for the text takes into the concern of the people avoided and deprived of societal values. The interesting thing was Synge dared to bring in the two old visually impaired couples as the central character of the play. Nobody then even thought of giving voice to these class of people. Many famous writers have commented on this influence of the play. William Fay and Catherine Carswell, while defending the source of Synge's *The Well of the Saints* (1905), write:

All good dramatists have taken their plots from where they could find them, to take for William Shakespeare used Italian *novella*; Oscar Wilde got the theme of *Lady Windermere's Fan* from *The Family Herald*; and Arnold Bennett had a box full of old Spanish plays that he dipped into now and again when he was short of ideas. (13)

It was the characteristic of the period, however, and the nature and psychology of the Irish public which made such an influence. The notion of physical deficiency is common to humans, but this notion rarely does exist in literature.

Reflecting Martin's previous disillusionments, the seeing world looks no more than a cold, dirty and trying reality. His longingness to see the world through his eyes becomes a mere illusion. For, the deeper his disillusionment, the more passionately he seeks for his lost dream. The beautiful Molly's image, idealized in the imagination of a blind man, is now all the more sharpened because of Martin's gloomy realization of reality. His mad passion lifts him above ordinary society into the sphere of the visionary, and the ecstasy of love which he

pursues in the image of a beautiful woman is incorporated into his dream world: the lands of Iveragh and the Reeks of Cork.

The fact is we often idealize things and object that are not in our reach. We make a beautiful world of nowhere, like the old couples who have dreamt that the world will be a beautiful place to see at. However, with the coming of the eye sights, the illusion vanishes, and he soon laments for having got his vision. As such, the dream of supreme ecstasy, however, does not enchant the insensitive Molly, but rather frightens her, although it mesmerizes her briefly. In her eyes, Martin is nothing but a dirty former beggar 'a big fool' who's lost his mind. The dialogues between these opposing figures create a strangely superb artistic effect that few other dramatists have approximated. We know of Martin's crude and violent nature from his wild sayings. He expresses the voice of the differently able groups of people in the form of the blind couples. Hence, the idea that Subaltern people are dominated and exploited in their society by elite group is depicted in the form of hopeless living of the people.

Gayatri Spivak is one of the most outspoken proponents of a revision of post colonial literary theory. She is one of the leading figure of Subaltern studies group also. In her seminal essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Spivak explores the ways in which the "subaltern" – members of the non-ruling class express the oppression theory in counter. In attempting to speak for the subaltern, members of the intellectual elite can only present an interpretation of the subaltern voices through filter through an intellectualist view point.

Hence, the subalterns are relegated to the position of subjects rather than participants in a two-way dialogue. They are merely objects who resemble human beings for they have similar

organs and can express their views and opinion similar to that of the ruling class people. But, the reality is, they are merely an object resembling the rulers. Spivak encourages academics to understand how their positions of intellectual and economic privilege limit their integrity in serving as a spokesperson for the subaltern. In other discussions, the critic posits women in the role of subaltern questioning the male – constructed voice of women within a patriarchal society.

Spivak resists the idea that one voice can represent a way of thinking, particularly when they way of thinking strives to recognize the significance of the multiplicity and positionality in the creation of a text. In *Can the Subaltern Speak?* She explores the idea of how the subaltern, or non-elite finds ways to express its oppression, she argues that the wish of intellectual to provide a space for this voice becomes problematic because of their respective positions. In the process of speaking about or for the subaltern the radical intellectual cannot avoid reading a representation of the non-elite. This representation does not allow the subaltern to speak and represent itself, rather, the intellectual further colonizes the subaltern by positioning the non-elite as a subject. The subaltern merely becomes a subject of intellectual pursuit instead of a responsive participant in a dialogue. As the intellectual seeks to transform the insurgency of the subaltern into a text that documents its resistance s/he must consider the politics of representation and how the writing shapes this representation. In an attempt to address the issue, Spivak suggests that intellectual should acknowledge and understand how their privilege positions can inhibit the possibility for the subaltern.

The questioning of who speaks for whom is an integral aspect of Spivak's ideas on feminism. She compares how the feminine has treated in a similar way to the subaltern by pointing to deconstructive criticism and certain types of feminist criticism as spaces where

this treatment occurs. Spivak contends that it is because of the colonial production of history and male dominance that women have been silenced through their absence in historiography, not because they have not participated. She points to subaltern historiography as a way to resist this type of representation.

But Subaltern is not homogeneous term having a fixed identity. It does not have single criterion to identify as a subaltern. Sumit Sarkar opines that the term is ambiguous because it does not have stable identity. In *The Condition and Nature of Subaltern Militancy: Bengal from Swadeshi to Non-cooperation*. Sarkar writes:

. . . Subaltern is no more free of ambiguities and problem that its rough equivalents (for example 'popular mass', 'lower-class'); it does have the advantage of emphasizing the fundamental relationship of power, of domination and subordination. Nor does the Subaltern concept exclude more rigorous class analysis where the subject or material permits it. (273)

Subaltern can be defined as the people of the lower class, untouchable, politically dominated and so-called inferior in social rank. Gramsci writes: “I first used Subaltern as a collective description for a variety of different dominated and exploited groups who explicitly lack class-consciousness.” (79)

Similarly, Michael Foucault one of the prominent critics on power theory sees the ill fate of subalterns from the perspectives of state’s mentality. In his famous book *Madness and Civilization*, he defines the notion of subalterns in “Panopticism” as:

This problem is worsened because a state of uncertainty about the duration of the vulnerability is also induced. Put briefly, invoking the concept of panopticism, the withdrawal of the Unseen Stare reaches the Unseeing Victim

no more clearly than does the stare itself. Essentially, a machine for dissociating the seen as being seen. (202)

The conceptual aim of the Panopticon was to challenge the late eighteenth-century conventions of institutionalism by suggesting that rather than being kept out of sight, in dungeons and darkness, prisoners might occupy a ring of illuminated cells that could be viewed from a central inspection tower.

The key point in identifying the woes of the unseen and the physically challenged is that like in Panopticism where the prisoners would never know when the inspection tower is occupied, the psychologically controlling effect of which is portrayed most famously in the mid twentieth-century novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: ‘You had to live - did live, from habit that became instinct - in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized.

In Act II, we see Martin and Mary facing harsh realities of life. Martin is seen working for Timy at his forge. He was working hard and getting less than when he was sitting blinded at the cross-road: “It’s more I got a while since, and I sitting blinded in Grianan than I get in this place, working hard and destroying myself the length of the day” (78). Besides the tyranny of his master, Martin also has to face contemptuous humiliations by Molly Byrne. Martin and Mary both are seen frustrated, humiliated. They are seen not at ease as they were in their blindness. The grand day of restoring their sights proved but a bad day.

Similarly, we know that the notion of the people who are historically subdued by the state and the state policies are hardly able to rise up. The subaltern people reflected on the communality, mutual support, poverty and suffering is not as integrated as it has been

portrayed in the story. It has its pitfall. In spite of being attracted from all the sides for its essentialism, *The Well of the Saints*, however, survives as a substantially strong political critique regarding the exploitation and the oppression of the subaltern at the hands of the elites because of Mahasweta Devi's appropriation of essentialism with the awareness of its fissure and cracks for her vested political interest

The subaltern people are so much exploited that they are compelled to turn their grief into a source of livelihood. Gulbadan, when her abusive natural father dies, winks at his nephew, who had tried to have sexual intercourse with her. Gulbadan had been ousted when she refused to submit herself to his lust. Her wink, in such a context, is a powerful gesture, which subverts even the elites: "He and he nephew were reduced to helpless onlookers. While hitting her head on the ground and wailing loudly, Gulbadan turned her dry eyes in the direction of the nephew, cast him a leering wink and grinned" (91). Not only has the grief at the hands of subalterns like Gulbandan become a means of survival but also a weapon to challenge the elites.

In Act III we find, Martin and Mary Doul have lost their sight and are visually impaired again. Sitting back at the cross-road realizing an early spring day, the couple are once again leading their previous life sans light, but contend. The Saint comes once again and is ready to cure sight of Martin and Mary at second time and permanently. But Martin and Mary are not ready to get it restored because now they attained the knowledge of 'real self' and real world. Martin says to the Saint;

MARTIN DOUL: *[more troubled]* We are not asking our
 sight, holy father, and let you walk on your own way,
 and be fasting, or praying, or doing anything that you
 will, but leave us here in our peace, at the crossing of the

roads, for its best we are this way, and we're not asking to see (98).

The idea of giving voice to their desire is no more. They are content to what they have. The idea of subalterns not able to rise is because they hardly can face their present realities to that of the others. As such, many of the subalterns still like to live the life of self content and satisfaction, but away from the main stream political, social and legal periphery.

Although the saint was ready to cure their sight permanently to integrate them into the societal of the seeing people, they willingly reject it and decide to return to the state of their blindness. When their sight fades again, they achieve a new illusion of their dignity of old age and fly in terror from a renewed offer to restore their sight of real world. The source of their disappointment is obviously the society around them into which they are not able and not willing to integrate. Mary's scornful remark on the society, "they're bad lot those that have their sight" (62) is quite evident in this connection.

Colonized people try to copy the colonizers' culture to show themselves advanced and civilized but at the same time they cannot forget their own culture and they feel culturally displaced and identity less. The culture created at that time is called hybrid culture. Diaspora, cultural fragmentation and displacement, hybridity and mimicry are some of the important themes of postcolonial writings.

Freedom of the subaltern is as if the concept of independence and nationalism that has developed to subvert the imperialistic notions of writings. Postcolonial writers started to write about the social discrimination and cultural domination done over Negro by the European white people. They tried to prove that they are not savage and they do have their own culture and own history. The postcolonial discourse emphasizes the identity of the natives. They consider that

their culture is not inferior as it is supposed by the white people.

Martin and Mary reject the holy water to restore their sight once again at the end of the play because they attained the knowledge of 'true self' and life. They want to keep themselves away from the harsh realities of the life. As has already mentioned, the source of the couple's disappointment is not only their ugliness but also ugliness of the society around them. The couple turns their back to the superficial, hollow world and finds reconciliation in the fantasy of their imagined world. They also want to keep themselves aloof from any sort of worldly pleasure. As like Alexander Pope's *Ode on Solitude*:

Thus, let me live, unseen,
 unknown; Thus unlamented let me
 die,
 Steal from the world, and not a
 stone Tell where I lie. (Pope.
 2000:101)

Martin and Mary want to live far away from the din and bustle of the society. They long for absolute freedom from cares and anxieties which constitutes the very essence of happiness in life.

Idea of solitude is one of the best preferred identities of the subaltern people; whether be physically challenged or socio-economically backward. Hence, Synge's protagonists in the present play, Martin and Mary aspire to an impossible noble life, cherishing their personal distinction, even in the teeth of life's bitter realities. Synge's other protagonists are aristocrats of the soul. Blind Martin and Mary Dougl of the present play also

take their place in this company. What is most fascinating about the play is not the story but the questions it raises. Martin and Mary were ignorant about the real meaning of beauty, self and life but at last they attained a perfect knowledge of the self. At last, we can recognize their cry for assistance in their transcendence. They prefer blindness instead of sight because they come to know the finite nature of all the objects of the world and want themselves to lead *asat* to *sat*, ignorance to knowledge.

The Well of the Saints concerns Mary and Martin Doul, a pair of elderly blind beggars who believe themselves to be attractive and happy together. When a traveling saint restores their sight with holy water, the miracle turns disastrous: Mary and Martin discover the physical ugliness both of each other and of the muddy landscape. The villagers mock and isolate them. And when they eventually ask to have their blindness returned, their neighbors are enraged, and the saint is revealed as a self-righteous prig. Although Martin and Mary have a kind of understanding of each other and a profound bond with the physical world, they are far from warm or admirable characters. They insult each other mercilessly, and Martin repays a local blacksmith who's offered him a job by lazing around all day and attempting to seduce the man's pretty and high-spirited young fiancée.

With the coming of the subaltern groups formally into existence in 1982 the writing of the historiography of the people ignored by elitists started to have its voice. Antonio Gramsci, analyzed the term subaltern in social theory, using it to denote the people in the margin as opposed to those in the centre. Later on, subaltern group aims to promote a systematic discussion of oppressed groups of society through a new historiography that rewrites history from below. They describe their project as an attempt to study:

The general attribute of subordination in South Asian Society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way. SS sketched out its wide ranging concern both with visible history, politics, economics and sociology of 'subalternity' and with occluded attitude, ideologies and belief system-in short, the culture informing that condition. (Guha vii)

As Ranajit Guha sees the contrasts politics with elite politics, he privileges the former over the latter. He thinks that politics of the people “was an autonomous domain, for it neither originated from elite politics, nor did its existence depend on the latter” (4). It, in spite of the end of colonialism, continues in different forms. The development of nationalist consciousness, in accordance with elitist historiography, has been an achievement either of colonialist administrators, policy, and culture or of elite Indian personalities or ideas.

Obviously such historiography, claims Guha, fails to acknowledge or interpret the contribution made by the people's politics, an autonomous domain, which outlives elite politics. Of course, the subaltern politics is different from elite politics. When the history of subaltern classes was thriving in India, the Subaltern Group quarreled with the official history ignored the indigenous people. Their purpose was to eliminate the imbalance created in academic work by a tendency to focus on elites and elite culture in South Asian historiography of the colonialist. Elitist historiography of nationalist type counts British writers and institutions among its principal protagonist. According to subaltern, both these varieties of elitism- colonialist elitists and bourgeois nationalists share the prejudice that the making of the Indian nation and the development of the consciousness were predominantly elite achievements.

For historiography, these achievements are credited to British colonial rulers, administrators, policies, institutions and culture. According to them, the bureaucratic nationalist

history was also successor to colonialist history as both of them ignored the activities the subaltern people did independent of elite groups. These people had played a very significant role to stand British scientists in a right track. However, the colonialist historiography did not record their deeds and actions. Subaltern had been ignored by elite scholars in the past. Thus, all the old research becomes elitist.

If there's anything resembling redemption in this play, it lie in the music of the words, Synge's obvious love of nature and the many things to ponder here: the forms of blindness and what it really means to see, the importance of simple human contact. Ed Baierlein and Sallie Diamond — themselves husband and wife — play the Douls as both pitiable and ridiculous, giving rich, grounded performances that anchor the production. L. Corwin Christie's energy and fire as sexy Molly provide a good foil, though she's sometimes a touch loud for the tiny Germinal Stage space. Tupper Cullum makes an appropriately self-righteous and ascetic saint. But there are some weaknesses in the smaller roles, and the entire cast might have paid more attention to the rhythm and meaning of the language.

Synge died of cancer in 1909, at the age of 37, and the six plays he wrote — several of them one-acts — are seldom produced today. But Baierlein, one of the most literate artistic directors around, has made a specialty of bringing such forgotten and half-forgotten gems to the stage. In a theater world that seems intent on showing and re-showing the same old classical warhorses, dated 1950s scripts, Neil Simon revivals, ain't-women-wonderful song-and jokefests and endless productions of *Nunsense*, we should all be grateful that he's brought us *The Well of the Saints*.

Synge reworked it for a revival at the Abbey in May 1908. He drew on the reputation

of a well to cure blindness found on Arainn, the largest of the Aran islands, the story of which he heard from an old blind storyteller, Martin Conneely. He also drew on a mediaeval french farce in which a blind man and a cripple are cured by an unsought blessing from a saint. Finally, Synge set the play in his beloved lower glens of Wicklow. Martin and Mary Doul, a blind old couple of the roads, believe themselves beautiful above all others, until a saint restores their sight with water drawn from a well in a 'place across a bit of the sea, where there is an island'. They are now able-bodied, and must hire themselves out for manual labour to survive. Blindness descends on them once more, and they settle themselves to await a beautiful old age.

The elite groups mobilize their politics through an adaption to parliamentary institutions whereas subaltern class association. Even the strategy of political mobilization demonstrates the link between British colonialism and bourgeois nationalism. The bourgeois nationalists have adopted the legacies of colonialism. In a way, they are successors to colonialism. The elite historiography equally claims that Indian nationalism was primarily an idealist venture in which the indigenous elite led the people from subjugation to freedom. It illustrated how the elite historiography ignores the roles the subaltern classes have played independent of elite command during the anti-imperialist movement.

Likewise, the national narrative fails to speak on behalf of the people as the postcolonial nationalist project imposes an indigenous form of elitism. The importance of the subaltern reworking of colonial Indian history derives its importance from the fact that it presents the viewpoint of the mammoth subaltern population of India a point of the voice consistently gagged both in the imperialist and nationalist construction of colonial Indian history.

The Indian National Movement of the first half of the twentieth century challenged the

imperialist notion of India in so far as if conceived of India and Indians as active and sovereign whereas Imperialism saw only passivity, otherness, and dependency. But the movement, which was dominated by the upper-and middle-class people, also imbibed the premises on which the imperialist notion of which India was built. The result was that the voice of the majority of the Indians- the subalterns remained under erasure in both discourses. The subaltern historians seek to recover this erased history.

The saint goes to restore their sight a second time and they refuse. Meeting fierce objections they bow to the second blessing, only that Martin at the final moment upends the can of holy water with a strike of his stick. They embrace a life on the roads, having 'seen' the ill-will of those around them. Synge wrote of his play in 1905: 'I have written this play like a monochrome painting, all in shades of one colour' and it remained always a favourite of Samuel Beckett's. *The Well of the Saints* was first performed at the Abbey on 4th of February, 1905. It was revived at the Abbey on the 14th May, 1908. Both productions were in part supervised by Synge, and in the first production Molly Allgood had a walk-on part, her first at the Abbey, whilst in the second, by then engaged to Synge, she took on the role of Molly Byrne.

Martin and Mary prefer blindness instead of a permanent cure of their sight at the hand of the Saint. This leading or transformation of Martin and Mary is not a physical one. But it is a journey of souls of Martin and Mary from what they misunderstand to be theirs to what truly is of their own. They got knowledge of the things that the things of the world and material pleasures are impermanent and cannot bring them lasting happiness.

As well as being a 'utilitarian tool of transformation', literature is a 'medium for

further stigmatizing disability in the imaginations of its Audience' (Mitchell & Sneyder, 1997/2000, p. 13). Indeed, on the premise that representation 'shapes the reality that it supposedly reflects' (Thomson, 1997b, p. 304), the paper will provide insights into the hegemonic capacity of fiction, suggesting that the Unseen Starer in literature can affect not only characters but people. After all, regarded as a legitimate tactic (Shakespeare, 1994/1997), the stare is a 'specific form of social oppression' for disabled people (Thomson, 1997b, p. 300).

That is not to make the deterministic claim that the reality of the Unseen Stare is a direct result of representation, but to argue that the latter can shape the former by defining it as a legitimate tactic. Nevertheless, the argument is complicated because this legitimation invokes an omnipresent gazer that can theoretically shape the reality of the victim irrespective of influence over potential perpetrators. In other words, the paper will suggest that the incessant representation of the Unseen Starer is psychosocially problematical for two reasons: first, because it can perpetuate a sense of curiosity among people with unimpaired vision; and second, because it can invoke an idea that in itself has the potential to affect the behaviour of people with impaired vision.

The human goal according to *Vedanta* is self realization, attainment of knowledge of self from ignorance. The *atma* is the ultimate reality, when one realizes his true nature, he attains spiritual fulfillment in this life itself. Then, upon death, he does not go to any heavenly abode but simply merges into the supreme reality. This is what Martin and Mary might have understood; hence they prefer blindness instead of sight in Synge's *The Well of the Saints*.

Well of the Saints is a tale of disarming simplicity. At the beginning the blind beggars Martin and Mary Doul, who have been habitually flattered by villagers about their good looks, discuss appearance as they wait on a mountain road leading south. They are as curious about sight as the approaching villagers are curious about a miracle. The Saint, a wandering friar carrying a can of holy water from the well of the saints, can apparently satisfy everyone by offering the couple a cure.

Martin, eager for the miracle, quickly brushes aside Mary's reservations, but sight brings immediate disenchantment: he mistakes the beautiful, young Molly Byrne for his ugly, aging wife, thus exposing himself to Molly's jibes and his spumed wife's fury. Matters worsen as the unskilled Martin, now expected to support himself, labors under Timmy the smith for barest subsistence. Although described as "almost elderly," Timmy, like Martin, has an eye for Molly Byrne, and Molly has an eye for a good provider. They find a common bond in taunting Martin, who exists at the lowest level of their society. As their treatment becomes unbearable to him, Martin loses his sight and returns to Mary who is also blind again.

So, it is simply that there is no place for the inferior to go for. As it is rightly said by Ranajit Guha, "The only place for the poor to go is with the poor" (23). The Douls' experiment with seeing has been disastrous: they have lost dignity, insight, and each other. Restored to their former blindness, they struggle to reach accord. When the Saint returns, offering them a second- and guaranteed permanent-miracle, Martin opposes enormous pressure from the villagers. He knocks the watering can out of the friar's hand. In this approach to the play differ in perspective from Reed Way Dasenbrock who states that it was "Synge's peasant drama that turned the Irish dramatic movement away from mythological subjects toward the peasant

drama that for a time became its signature" (136).

The idea of people being victimized to the unfair worldly process is delivered in the speech of a Saint, as:

SAINT — [speaking half to the People.]: Men who are dark a long while and thinking over queer thoughts in their heads, aren't the like of simple men,
 who do be working every day, and praying, and living like ourselves; so if he has found a right mind at the last minute itself, I'll cure him, if the Lord will, and not be thinking of the hard, foolish words he's after saying this day to us all. (31)

Idea of human values and dependence on the superiority of societal concerns are rooted in physical appearance. This is the disillusionment of societal values existing in the society for ages.

Each of the rarer Aran plays has quality. Synge worked on *The Well of the Saints* from the winter of 1903 to its opening in May 1905. He reworked it for a revival at the Abbey in May 1908. He drew on the reputation of a well to cure blindness found on Arainn, the largest of the Aran islands, the story of which he heard from an old blind storyteller, Martin Conneely. He also drew on a mediaeval French farce in which a blind man and a cripple are cured by an unsought blessing from a saint.

Synge sets the play in his beloved lower glens of Wicklow. Martin and Mary Doul, a blind old couple of the roads, believe themselves beautiful above all others, until a saint restores their sight with water drawn from a well in a 'place across a bit of the sea, where

there is an island'. They are now able-bodied, and must hire themselves out for manual labour to survive. Blindness descends on them once more, and they settle themselves to await a beautiful old age. The saint goes to restore their sight a second time and they refuse.

Meeting fierce objections they bow to the second blessing, only that Martin at the final moment upends the can of holy water with a strike of his stick. They embrace a life on the roads, having 'seen' the ill-will of those around them. Synge wrote of his play in 1905: 'I have written this play like a monochrome painting, all in shades of one colour' and it remained always a favourite of Samuel Beckett's. *The Well of the Saints* was first performed at the Abbey on 4th of February, 1905.

The play was revived at the Abbey Theatre on the 14th May, 1908. Both productions were in part supervised by Synge, and in the first production Molly Allgood had a walk-on part, her first at the Abbey, whilst in the second, by then engaged to Synge, she took on the role of Molly Byrne. *The Well of the Saints* was first published in Dublin and London in editions to coincide with the production in 1905.

Grim and giddy, *The Well of the Saints* makes Beckett look like Synge's annotator. Two blind crones (family of Endgame) wonder where they are (a la Godot), while preening themselves (as in *Happy Days*). When a miracle restores their sight, they discover the lies they've been told about each other's beauty - 'It's a poor thing when the Lord God gives you sight and puts the likes of that man in your way' - and choose to go back to being blind.

The only disappointment is *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, written when Synge was dying of Hodgkin's disease. This legend of the beauty who brings doom to the House of Ulster has everything that makes the Celtic revival ridiculous. It's a kings-and-queens dressing-up story,

with a lot of keening tossed in. Druid makes it look like a gorgeous tapestry, spectacularly shredded with catastrophe. But no one could make it interesting and it sits weirdly with the Aran plays.

This evening of superb company acting has knockout performances from Eamon Morrissey and from Sarah-Jane Drummey, a luscious tease who kicks up her heels and bum like a kid goat. Marie Mullen is astounding: as a bereft mother frozen with grief; as the frisky widow who almost tucks the playboy on to one of her swaying hips; as a crone like a standing stone. They can be seen again tonight, when the plays are staged on the Aran Isles, in the walled fortress of Dun Chonchuir on Inis Meain. Anyone within hailing distance of a currach should get over there.

Hence, the idea that people who are not seen or whose voice does not carry significant value in the state formation are left away by the state. This is the systematic process of domination where people often find themselves in a state curtailed by hope; which eventually evaporates. The idea Synge apparently use is his acute ear (he was trained as a musician) to listen to the islanders through cracks in the floorboards; he then wrote their speech down or up.

Synge's plays, too often, have been turned into heritage drama, with daftly, capering comics and saggy, tragically shawled women. Under the musical power and influence of the writer, the drama turns intense and truthful. There's no indulging an English ear, the pain of loneliness and aloofness are clearly visible in the play. The drama seems to slide towards Gaelic. But given time, which you've got if you take the plays in an eight-and-a-half-hour draught, you tune into this and into the curling and twisting of Synge's sentences. You are

transplanted.

It is Martin who expresses the greater need for the miracle; the attractiveness of the myth has such a hold on Mary that even Molly Byrne's reported jibes have had no power to assail the fortress of her belief and dignity. Martin, however, has a need to learn; he is somewhat skeptical and largely curious, as he reveals in his plaintive comment to Mary:

I do be thinking in the long nights it'd be a grand thing if we could see ourselves for one hour, or a minute itself, the way we'd know surely we were the finest man and the finest woman of the seven counties of the *east-(bitterly)* and then the seeing rabble below might be destroying their souls telling bad lies, and we'd never heed a thing they'd say. (23)

The journey, then, is to be Martin's journey- it is he who needs to learn that the physical sense of sight cannot identify the finest man and the finest woman and he who must gain the concomitant confidence to never heed a thing they'd say.

Owing to the connotations of empowerment and disempowerment, a valid comparison can be drawn between the evaluating gaze of the able bodied upon the disabled and the 'evaluating gaze of the male upon the female. This comparison is elucidated by the contention that the objectification of women in pornography parallels that of disabled people in charity advertising, for in each case the gaze focuses on a passive and available body.

The hopelessness of the subaltern is further illustrated in the literary representation of people with impaired vision, as is implicit when the protagonists are weary of the so-called world of the visuals and the elitist. Martin and Mary return to their own world of dark is a bitter

reality that most voiceless people are destined to suffer at the hand of so-called groups of elitist who hardly let the marginalized to come to the forefront of the society.

III. Conclusion: Voicing the Voiceless

Idea of giving voice to the subalterns is associated with those who have been marginalized by the ruling class in a systematic manner from a historical timeframe. During the long historical era, people in the ruling class have mostly been centered in and around their personal desires and family circle. As such, those who were not in the mainstream of the politics or belonged to powerful families were negated from even the minimum basic facilities essential for their survival. These politically and socially people were not only those socio-politically affected by the unfair political and legal system of the nation, but also who are physically challenged. The ruling class or the State has hardly paid any attention to physically challenged people. In fact, these people were often termed as burden to the society and left to struggle theirs' life with minimum resources.

Synge's *The Well of the Saints* is a representation of those characters whose voices and demands are hardly addressed by the society. Martin and Mary, the old and blind couple is one example of the unfair socio-legal and political discrimination prevalent in our society, since time in memory. These old couples are forced to live in the wayside by the street for years, and now they are old, feeble and no place to go. Despite, life has to go on, and they are hanging their life amid all sorts of challenges and hardships. However, similar to other subalterns they also desire to see the world around them. It is the nature of suppressed people to demand rights to which they are denied to. They want to see themselves and the nature around them, for at least once, before they die.

The notion of the voiceless is they want to imagine themselves to those which they are historically deprived of. They not only desire to achieve to which they are historically deprived of, but also want to gain a social status that have been deprived of from historical period. For

critics, this idea has to do with the suppression of the voices which they are made to live in with for throughout their life. Hence, when the old couples desire for eyes, they are expressing the desires of the subaltern people. This is the nature of those who are deprived of social, economic and political rights. However, the tragedy is when they obtain with their desires.

The tragedy with the voiceless people is once they are given the right to which they were historically deprived of the issue of management takes its toll. They find it very challenging to adjust to the new surroundings and, life becomes even more troublesome. In case of the old couples, after they achieve their eye-sight, the old couple finds life further more horrible. Suddenly, they are aware to the fact that they are very untidy and live in one of the filthy sites of the town. This reality makes their live even more painful for when there was no eye-sight they were unaware of the events taking place around them.

To add to the woes of the subalterns, there are social concepts and assumptions that take the backward class of people for granted. There are no serious attempts to the management of problems being faced by these classes of people. Besides, historically they have never been taken as a serious issue of national agenda. They have been given no or very little space in almost every social and political arena making their life, as miserable, as it was. Sadly, the trend continues to the day.

The state is yet another reality to make the common people realize the difference existent amongst the high class people and the backward groups of people. There are state policies that discriminate the common people by not allowing them an easy access to various state facilities and opportunities. The old and blind couple is one of the examples that depict how people are left to struggle in the street for the state does not find itself binding and liable to them. It is the duty of the state to ensure that maximum numbers of people are within the reach

of state facilities and opportunities. However, most of the time, the economically and socially backward people are not provided with such facilities.

Hence, within the perimeters of the subalterns, yet other forms of marginalized groups of people are living a pathetic life and they are the physically challenged groups of people. They are the people with disabilities who are doubly marginalized because they are economically backward, on one side; and visually impaired on the other aspect. Martin and Mary Douls are one such examples of prevalent injustice existing in our society. As such, the lives of these unfortunates are not only horrible but are going through a double layer of exposition. Traditionally, they are victimized by the elite groups, and secondly, from within the same caste, race and social status of people.

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