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A Study on the Commonalities in Subaltern Silences and Resistance

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A Study on the Commonalities in Subaltern Silences and Resistance

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Tirtha Prasad Prasai has completed his thesis "A Study on the Commonalities in Subaltern Silences and Resistance " under my supervision. He carried out this research paper from September 2009 to July 2011. I hereby recommend this thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

The thesis entitled "A Study on the Commonalities in Subaltern Silences and Resistance" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Tirtha Prasad Prasai has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

This research puts the methodological framework of Subaltern Studies under examination to justify it as equally effective perspective for the examination of the subaltern voices in any text set in any spatio-temporal plains. To attain the goal, this research examines three different texts: Oscar Wilde's play *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), B. P. Koirala's novel *Teen Ghumti* (1968) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel *Purple Hibiscus* (2007) along with the examination of the writers' agency to write about the subaltern silence and resistance to the dominant, elitist discourses. The texts examined are the representative texts of Europe, Asia and Africa from the representative writers of different backgrounds, with the narration of the subalternity in three different time phases. Subaltern Studies is found equally effective methodological framework to recover the silenced subaltern voices and minority histories in these texts. So, this research derives the conclusion that the Subaltern Studies is anti-essentialist and all-inclusive inquiry that can be applied in the literary and historical inquiry anywhere; both global and local can be drawn to question the silences in its wide methodological stream.

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I. Subalternity: A Pervasive Literary Phenomenon

This research analyzes the subaltern characters and their representations in Oscar Wilde's play *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala's novel *Teen Ghumti* (1968) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel *Purple Hibiscus* (2007) which are set in three different geographical, temporal and socio-political plains. The first is set in the Colonial Western English society of late-nineteenth century, the second is set in the Third World society of Nepal during the totalitarian Panchayat regime, and the third is set in the Third World of post-colonial Nigerian society crushed under the tyranny of Military Junta and cultural colonization of Europe during 1950s. The time range covered by these texts is more than a century in their publication time and all the texts are the representative texts of their oeuvre by the acclaimed writers of their time.

The reason behind selecting the texts from diverse range carefully looking at the diversity in settings and time of their publication and still considering the diversity of the writers and their agency to represent the subaltern voices is to prove that the methodology of subaltern studies can be applied to examine the subaltern voices in the literary texts all over the world. Though, Subaltern Studies was conceived "in England at the at end of the 1970s" with "a small group of English and Indian historians (Ludden 1)" and formally born with the publication of *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History* under the editorship of South Asian scholar Ranjit Guha in 1982, its approach has no monolithic doctrine and essentialism. It is broad field with the space for the recovery of multiple and diverse silenced voices of the history. It is diverse field of intellectual inquiry into the traditional bourgeois historiography to recover minority histories and silenced subaltern voices. It is a radical departure from the Western elitist discourses of postcolonialism, nationalism

and Marxism that are laden with the neocolonial, patriarchal and white terminologies, with an aim to totally decolonize the subalterns, breaking them free of the repression of the hegemonic discourses of the West.

So, the major argument of this research is that though subaltern studies appears to evolve from the questioning of the elitist historiography and subalternity of the various minority groups and under the postcolonial Indian context, it can be applied to question any kind of elitist discourses effecting the silence of the subaltern voices in any contexts as no society is free of the hegemony of the privileged class.

The play *A Woman of No Importance* under examination here is set in the aristocratic Victorian English society where the patriarchal, sexist elitism is visible to effect the subalternity in the women. The protagonist of the play, Mrs. Arbuthnot is compelled to live the life of a social 'outcast', and her condition is no better than the untouchable or 'dalit' of the South Asian societies as the result of her premarital relation with her lover George Harford who never married her. All the shame of being an unmarried mother was born alone by her while George Harford is carefree about the circumstances as he regards women just the playthings of the males. He is rich and regarded with respect in the aristocratic society and has occupied the rank of a lord, has transformed to Lord Illingworth and the person with unsurpassing wit. He handles women for his power and dominant position in the society. His intellectual position is unrivaled. He belongs to the "organic" intellectuals in the categorization of Gramsci whose function is to assume the role of "organic vanguard of the upper class" (*Selections From the Prison Notebooks* 60), the bourgeois, male dominated class that is responsible for the appropriation of the women silencing their voice in the society. He is insensitive to the plights born by a helpless and socially discarded mother giving birth and rearing her son Gerald alone.

The social function of central male character of B. P. Koirala's *Teen Ghumti*, Pitambar, is not too different either. Even though he belongs to the totally different society of the Third World of Nepal, his social function of being the 'organic' intellectual is similar regarding the appropriation and silencing the voice of women. Though he is political activist and intellectual, and talks about democracy, he is a vanguard of elitist Hindu Brahmin class, and the conservative patriarchal codes of the society. Indramaya, in her first mode of life is young girl who protests the elitist discourse of Hindu caste system and patriarchal codes of family and marries Pitambar at her own will. Her connection to her father and mother is broken and she is disinherited by her family. Her social condition is not better than that of Mrs. Arbuthnot. But she has faith upon the love of her husband and her family life runs well for some time. She slowly starts understanding the patriarchal sexist bias of her husband as her husband turns jealous with her mingling with his male friends, and irresponsibly questions her physical ability to bear children as she demands him to cooperate properly to bear children. Sad with such sexist and dominant treatment of her husband, she keeps on loving him. When her husband is arrested for his activism protesting the King's rule, she is entangled with the love of Ramesh, her husband's friend. She surrenders with his love and continual help and makes her pregnant with the illegitimate sexual relation with him. This marks her second mode of life. Still, she keeps on loving her husband but her husband is mortally offended with her giving birth to her daughter.

His sexist domination and appropriation of her behavior comes to full realization of the protagonist with his demand to return the daughter back to Ramesh, so she leaves her husband for sake of her motherhood in the third mode of her life subverting the elitist, sexist, patriarchal ethos of her husband. Time and again, the

narrator Indramaya comes to realization of her subalternity and silence in the brahminised Hindu society and attempts to come out of the subalternity. The Nepali society has never been colonized by the colonizers outside but the elitist appropriation of the rule of King is obvious in the novel.

Ngozi Adichie's "organic" intellectual is Eugene in the setting of Nigerian society of small town Enugu in her novel *Purple Hibiscus*. He is a tyrant patriarch of the Achike family, serving the elitist colonialist values of Catholicism dominating the Nigerian Christians with the order imposed on them by the means of the local church, and the vanguard of neo-colonialist capitalist class. His dominant patriarchal role in the family, rigid Catholic dogmatism, power and wealth all are used to appropriate the neo-colonial discourses. He is neocolonial bourgeois nationalist who seems nationalist with the advocacy for democracy in the Nigeria ruled by Military Junta on the one hand and discards the Nigerian Igbo language and cultural values of terming them uncivilized and pagan. Due to his elitist, patriarchal, bourgeois nationalist attitude his father Papa-Nnukwu has been the voiceless subaltern, disinherited father and a pagan.

The remarkable subalterns of the novel include Eugene's wife Beatrice, and his children Jaja and the narrator Kambili, Eugene's father Papa-Nnukwu and Eugene's widow sister Ifeoma. Beatrice, being tired of the unbearable dominance poisons Eugene, thus, the refusal of the neocolonialist, patriarchal dominance by the subalterns reaches to the culmination with the death of Eugene. Her son Jaja takes the responsibility and shows the strong resistance to the elitist, patriarchal, neo-colonialist violence of his father. Though Ifeoma is a university lecturer in the University of Nsukka and is an advocate of the freedom and equality, she leaves for America in the quest for better opportunity frustrated with the political turmoil and deteriorating

condition of Nigeria. So, she is a muted subaltern like her father Papa-Nnukwu though subaltern consciousness is highly developed in her. Nigerian society is the postcolonial Third World society of Africa which has large number of similarities with the other postcolonial Third World societies of the South Asia. Need of complete decolonization and subaltern historiography is the need of the time to bring the subaltern voices out of the cultural imperialism, elitist bourgeois nationalism, patriarchal subordination and neocolonial hegemony appropriated with violence.

Agency of the Writers to Articulate Subaltern Voices

Oscar Wilde

Born in Dublin in 1854, Oscar Wilde was educated at Trinity College, Dublin and Magdalen College, Oxford before settling in London. During his days at Dublin and Oxford, he developed a set of attitudes and postures like his flamboyant style of dress, his contempt for conventional values, and his belief in aestheticism— a movement that embraced the principle of art for the sake of beauty and beauty alone. After a stunning performance in college, Wilde settled in London in 1878, where he moved in circles that included Lillie Langtry, the novelists Henry James and George Moore, and the young William Butler Yeats.

During the late 1880s, Wilde wrote reviews, edited a women's magazine, and published a volume of poetry and one of children's stories. His taking the side of subaltern groups like women, children and homosexuals going against the bourgeois, moral discourses of the society is obviously seen with his literary activities. In 1891, his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, appeared and was attacked as scandalous and immoral. In that same year, he met Lord Alfred Douglas, his homosexual lover, and Wilde finally started to gain literary success. Over the next few years, he wrote four plays: *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance*, *An Ideal Husband*,

and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. All of them became the commercial success and they all became the satire to the hypocritical, elitist, superficial, bourgeois discourses of the time.

During 1895, Wilde's homosexual relationship with Lord Alfred, his homosexual lover poet, led him to personal humiliation and social, professional, and financial ruin. Two weeks after *The Importance of Being Earnest's* opening night, Lord Alfred's aggressive, homophobic father, the Marquess of Queensberry, publicly accused Wilde of "posing as a sodomite." The nobleman meant "sodomite," of course, an insulting term for a homosexual. Queensberry had for some time been harassing Wilde with insulting letters, notes, and confrontations and had hoped to disrupt the opening night of *The Importance of Being Earnest* with a public demonstration. Against the advice of his friends, Wilde sued for libel and lost. Wilde probably should have fled the country, as the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 had made homosexual acts punishable by up to two years' imprisonment. However, Wilde chose to stay and was arrested. Despite information about Wilde's private life and writings that emerged at the trial, the prosecution initially proved unsuccessful. However, Wilde was tried a second time, convicted, and sentenced to prison for two years. Thus, the writer himself is the subaltern as he belonged to the minority homosexuals of the Victorian time who was to be repressed and silenced by the elitist, moralist discourses of the time. He is conscious of his subalternity and attempts to speak through his writings. His facing the trial being imprisoned for homosexuality, fighting against the elitist Victorian discourses of moralism and experimenting the new and radical themes in the plays going beyond the formula of well-made play prove his subaltern consciousness.

The play *A Woman of No Importance* has been first staged in Haymarket Theatre in London, on 19 April, 1893. It instantly drew the attention of the various critics with its break with the traditional theme and critical stand protesting the Victorian condition of the females and doubt over the institution of marriage. Generally, woman were viewed as inferior to men, yet Wilde shows compassion for them in his writing, this can be seen through his kindness to Mrs. Arbuthnot towards the end of the play.

Renowned critic of Wilde, Anne Varty, sees the radical ideas brought on the stage by Wilde as equal to the radical continental playwrights like Zola, Ibsen, and Strindberg. Praising the contribution of Oscar Wilde and his British counterparts, she values the radical ideas had been staged by them on the stage like their contemporary dramatists Zola, Ibsen and Strindberg. British dramatists were the innovators of the social dramas. For Varty, they were:

Rebelling against the commercial interests which dominated theatre practice at the time. They rejected the tradition of . . . theatrical entertainment in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In this context Wilde was revolutionary because he delivered plays which were politically engaged, artistically innovative and commercially successful. (i)

Thus, the break with the tradition with bitter criticism of contemporary elitist, patriarchal discourses bringing the revolutionary ideas on the stage is the prominent feature of Wilde's play. The apparent political engagement and artistic innovation is found in his plays that elevates his position among the radical playwrights. Wilde himself was of opinion about his own plays as they were for him, “. . . exquisitely trivial, a delicate bubble of fancy and it has its philosophy. . . that we should treat all

the trivial things of life very seriously, and all the serious things with sincere and studied triviality” (qtd. in Varty xxii). It is apparent that his valorization of “trivial” proves his articulation of subaltern sites of the society and life. Thus, his agency to speak about the subalterns is unquestionable.

Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala

Bishweshwar Prasad (B. P.) Koirala was born in 1914 in Benaras, India, as the first son of social reformer Krishna Prasad Koirala and Dibyadevi. Due to the democratic and nationalist stance in Koirala family, they were compelled to live in exile and became penniless. Thus, the neocolonial tyranny of Rana regime effected the subalternity in well-to-do Koirala family. So, from his very childhood, subaltern consciousness emerged in him. That consciousness was further heightened by Indian independence movement and that helped him to articulate the subaltern voice, to lead the subaltern people and their resistance to the neocolonial Rana oligarchy and ultimately to become a great statesman.

He began writing in Hindi when he was a student in Benaras, which helped him to establish connection with great Indian writer, Premchand. The realism of Premchand’s stories influenced him. His first Nepali short story was “Chandrabadan” that was published in *Sharada*, the famous Nepali literary magazine of that time in 1935. Koirala claimed himself as a social democrat in politics and anarchist in literature because he gave more stress on freedom in writing rather than appealing for security. He had double identity of social realist and psychoanalyst in the field of short story. In modern Nepalese short stories field, Koirala was very good at presenting the character. He is the first Nepali writer to explore the subaltern, repressed libidinal sites of the subaltern females of the Nepali society. He used the

discourses of Freudian psychoanalysis, Marxism and existentialism of Sartre and Camus to articulate the subaltern voices.

During 1960-68, he spent imprisoned life in Sundarijal Jail where he wrote many novels and stories. He was imprisoned there as King Mahendra overtook the power sacking his elected government. Though, he was isolated from the external world he maintained his tranquility and continued writing on different aspects of life. He has written in various genres like essays, poems, diary, journal and autobiography. But in the field of short stories and novel he is highly successful. His writings like *Jail Journal*, *Atmabrittanta*, *Pheri Sundarijal* etc. are very popular even now.

One of the prominent scholars and analysts of B. P. Koirala, Dr. Bhoopati Dhakal “Kamal” introduces B. P. Koirala’s writing trend as:

Politically, Koirala is a voyager of democratic socialism and appear as a psychoanalyst and existentialist as a litterateur. So, both the facets of the Koirala’s personality stand as one, taking the side of human-independence. In fact the brightest light radiated from all the Koirala’s works is the light of female liberation and female consciousness. To prove the consciousness, Koirala has kept on writing one text after another. (My Trans.71)¹

The above outstanding lines of Dhakal highlight Koirala’s subaltern consciousness and the articulation of subaltern voice of females. His subaltern consciousness is the result of his understanding of the society due to his political consciousness and activism.

He is provocative writer who has written many political essays full of political and subaltern consciousness. His various political essays are included in *Rajtantra Ra*

¹ All the translations used in the research are my own. I am thankful to Mr. Neelam Khanal for his valuable assistance gathering the materials to translate.

Loktantra (1960), *Thichieka Janta Jagisake* (1969), *Rastriyata Nepalko Sandarvama* (1970), *Kranti Ek Anivaryata* (1970), *Panchayati Vyavastha Prajatantrik Chhaina* (1978), *Prajatantra Ra Samajbad* (1979), *Rastriya Ektako Nimti Aahwan* (1980) etc.

Most of them were banned at that time due to neocolonialist oppression of the palace.

Koirala was influenced by Great Russian writer like Chekov, Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Turgenev and Gorky. Chekovian style of short stories influenced Koirala's style. He was the first person to provide the introduction of existentialism in Nepali literature. Camus and Sartre were his favorite writers.

Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala's novel *Teen Ghumti* (1968) articulates strong subaltern consciousness in female protagonist which is the radical departure from the contemporary Nepali literature. His contemporaries like Rudraraj Pandey, Rup Narayan Singh and Govinda Bahadur Malla 'Gothale' are concerned with female characters but they just present females as the passive sufferers of patriarchal domination and sympathize with them. They lack the subaltern consciousness, they are guided with the elitist patriarchal discourses but Koirala has the deep understanding of the subalternity of females. So, his female characters are full of subaltern consciousness, who, time and again challenge the dominant discourses and are articulate subaltern heroes. His female characters do not want to live life in trouble, in disgrace and in agony but they have awakened the desires and a vigorous longing for freedom. They are not passive sufferers of their domination, rather they revolt against it. Thus, the agency of Koirala to articulate subaltern voice and resistance appears unwavering as his characters resist the elitist domination breaking the barrier of social and moral codes appropriated by the dominant discourses.

Koirala's first novel *Teen Ghumti* represents Indramaya as a subaltern hero who does not bow her head before social norms and values and strongly declares her independent self free of patriarchal subordination. She is female subaltern voice of the society repressed by sexist, elitist, brahminist, and patriarchal discourses of the time. Emphasizing on Indramaya's decision to distinguish herself from the ocean of womanhood rather than to be submissive and hegemonized in front of patriarchal norms and values, one of the Nepali critics Indrabahadur Rai in his book *Nepali Upanyaska Aadharharu* asserts:

Indramaya, 45, in the novel has taken three difficult decisions at the age of sixteen; twenty five and twenty seven respectively which are important modes in her life. Indramaya in the context of those decisions remarks- Her life was normal and common like the lives of other women. If she didn't count the three decisions she made during her life, she would just become a single drop in the ocean of the overall female lives. But the independent decisions made by the drop had separated the drop from the ocean (252)

Unlike other women, who remain being hegemonized assimilating with worn out social norms and values, she radically breaks herself away from them defying the discourses responsible for her subalternity. She becomes true agent of her life who reconstructs her history by her own.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born in 1977 in Nigeria as a Nigerian. She herself was subaltern voice subordinated by elitist colonial and postcolonial discourses imposed upon the Nigerians by European theology, language, culture and Catholic Church. She grew as a teenager with extreme curiosity to search and possess

the god. She spent most of her life on a university campus in Nigeria and then in America.

While studying in Mass communication in America, she felt the cultural rootlessness in the elitist, materialist, urban American diaspora and she longed for her home, Nigeria. This sense of the longing for her home is typical of the postcolonial, diasporic writers who are suffered with the lack of home in alien culture of America. Thus, the sense of the subaltern Nigerian culture and its belongingness becomes the major presence of her literary works. Further, her mind was occupied with colonialism and its antecedences as other African writers write about it knowingly or unknowingly. To shape them as major themes in her literary works she used the vehicle of religion as she had the obsession with religion from her early teens.

Religious obsession becomes major vehicle for Adichie to write for her profound expression about the theme of colonialism and subalternity of Nigerian culture. In her novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, she embodies all the elitist discourses, colonial and postcolonial appropriation, patriarchy, and religious fanaticism in her character Eugene Achike that marks her strong presence among her predecessor African writers. This handling of Christian religion as vehicle is also seen in the novels of Chinua Achebe, reputed Nigerian writer and Adichie's idol, in his books *Things Fall Apart*, and *Arrow of God*.

Purple Hibiscus is Adichie's debut novel dealing with profound subalternity and repression of Nigerian voices and cultural displacement due to the colonialist discourses imposed by colonialist Catholic Church and the neocolonialist appropriation of the tyrant, military rule of Junta in postcolonial Nigeria during the 1950s. Covering the period of three years of the life of her subaltern narrator Kambili and the Nigerian political turmoil, Adichie establishes the subaltern heroism in

Beatrice, who kills her husband poisoning him as the refusal to his patriarchal violence and subordination. Jaja, the son of Eugene and Beatrice, defies the elitist, colonialist catholic discourse and takes the responsibility of his mother's murder of his father and goes to prison, thus becomes another subaltern hero. This novel was the winner of the Hurston/ Wright Legacy award for debut fiction. Adichie won the Orange Broadband Prize for fiction with her novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* which depicts Nigeria during the 1960s blighted by the Civil War. It depicts the horror of war and the loyalties of the characters to each other during hard time of war.

Narrated in the language of subaltern character Kambili, the refusal to the English language with the use of unfamiliar Igbo words throughout the novel *Purple Hibiscus* is the result of subaltern consciousness and reluctance of Adichie to let the room for colonial language, she creates room for the new history of the subaltern class. She recreates the silenced Nigerian subaltern culture by means replacing English words with unfamiliar Nigerian words wiping out the more familiar elitist, colonial, English culture. Adichie is successful to create the subaltern history of Nigeria in her novel. Thus, being subjected to various elitist discourses and dominated subject herself, her subaltern agency to recreate Nigerian cultural history is unquestionable.

This research is divided into six chapters. The first chapter gives the introductory outline to the whole research. It provides an introduction to the texts selected for examination and a glance into the writers' agency to articulate subaltern voices. The second chapter devotes to assess the basic tenets of Subaltern Studies a methodological approach to inquire into the literary and historical discourses to recover the muted voices of subaltern characters and their histories. Third, fourth and fifth chapters present the analysis of the selected texts. The last chapter is the

conclusion that assesses the common ground shared by the texts in which the subaltern voices are articulated.

II. The Copiousness of the Subaltern Studies

Since the major target of this research is to examine various texts to see the scope and theoretical effectiveness of Subaltern Studies as a critical approach to inquire into the historiography and silences in literary texts, it is better to examine the basic tenets of Subaltern Studies. It is a new mode of historiography questioning the existing modes of historiography laden with the terminologies of the elitist, colonial, male-dominated discourses of the West. The same applies to the micro level to study the society and nation where the elitist discourses, laden with so-called nationalistic and elitist terminologies, involve in the repression of the voice of the grass root people, the subaltern classes of the society. It is, thus, an attempt to write the “history from below”, to give the voice to the subaltern groups of the society otherwise silenced by the appropriating discourses of the elites without the knowledge of their silence.

The term “subaltern” is an adjective meaning “of lower rank”. The word is still in use in British military to refer to the military officer below the rank of the captain. Thus, it has become the catchall term for all the subordinate groups of the society like the colonized, women, blacks, the working class etc. The first person to use it as a terminology to refer to the peasant group of Italy by Italian neo-Marxist Antonio Gramsci that was subordinated and appropriated by the elitist class of the society without the awareness of its subordination. Since the term subaltern means the subordinate, marginalized, silenced groups of the society and history, Subaltern Studies becomes the project for the retrieval of the minority, muted histories and voices of the subalterns.

The subaltern is the muted as per the definition of Gramsci. For Gramsci, “The subaltern classes, by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to

become a "State": their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society, and thereby with the history of States and groups of States" (*Critical Theory since Plato*, 946). So with the aim to recover "the small silenced voice of history the voice of the subaltern" (Guha 45) South Asian intellectuals started to publish subaltern writings as *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History* in the editorship of Ranjit Guha. This move became the successful interdisciplinary approach to decolonize the Third World questioning its historically constructed subalternity and influenced the establishment of Latin American Subaltern Studies Group in 1993. As Sumit Sarkar writes about its emergence, "Subaltern Studies emerged in the early 1980s in a dissident-Left milieu, where sharp criticism of orthodox Marxist practice and theory was still combined with the retention of a broad socialist and Marxian horizon" (83). The subaltern studies draws on the Marxist and neo-Marxist terminologies to recover the subaltern voices and histories as they are socially and politically mediated by the bourgeois, elitist modes of traditional history.

Ranjit Guha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Shahid Amin, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Partha Chatterjee, Gyan Prakash and many other South Asian intellectuals started to question the colonized historiography and the subalternity of the various insurgent groups of the society subordinated by the elitist discourses in the postcolonial society with the target of complete decolonization recovering their muted history. As Marx writes, "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past" (437). Thus, the understanding that the subaltern groups of the society could never write their history due to the continuity of the same elitist circumstances continued from past with the mediation of the grand narrative of elitist history prompted the postcolonial intellectuals to find the

new mode of historiography for the “politicization of the colonized” in the term of Spivak. David Richards in his essay “Framing Identity” writes about the evolution of Subaltern Studies as:

The Subaltern Studies Collective or Group (SSG) . . . comprises a number of South Asian intellectuals and academics . . . concerned with the rewriting of the history of India, not as the traditional narrative of elites engaged in a heroic struggle with the British empire, but as small-scale local insurrections (often failing) enacted by groups and individuals – workers, peasants, women – ignored or ‘written out’ of the historical grand narrative. (23)

It is clear from the assertion of Richards that the term subaltern stands for all the groups and intellectuals who are ignored by the traditional, elitist, colonial historiography including workers, peasants, women etc. To recover their history and to articulate their new collective political and cultural agency with the resistance to the discourses of elitist nationalism Subaltern Studies Collective or Group (SSG) was found in India by the South Asian intellectuals and academics. Partha Chatterjee, the prominent member of Subaltern Studies Group, further defines the project, “The task now is to fill up . . . emptiness, that is, the representation of subaltern consciousness in elitist historiography. It must be given its own specific content with its own history of development” (62). Thus, the central question of subaltern historiography is to represent the subaltern consciousness with the articulation of the new forms of political and cultural agency of subaltern groups.

Thus, the ground of subaltern historiography is the emptiness of the subaltern voice in the traditional historiography, the ground of tension between elitist historiography and the articulation of the subaltern agency. As John Beverley

clarifies, “The project of subaltern studies exists in a tension between a project that is ‘deconstructive’ of the claims of the nation, nationalism, and formal politics to represent the subaltern, and a ‘constructive’ articulation of new forms of collective political and cultural agency” (308). According to Beverley, Subaltern Studies as a project stands on the tense ground between the deconstructive discourses of the grand narratives of nation, nationalism etc. and the articulation of the new narratives with the political and cultural agency of the subaltern. It is clear from the arguments above that Subaltern Studies is the historiography of the voiceless subaltern groups of the society of postcolonial societies. David Ludden sees Subaltern Studies “entangled with efforts to re-imagine history itself . . .” (13) This historiography is, by nature, anti-establishment historiography that rejects the dominant modes of historiography.

Subaltern historiography as an anti-establishment can be concluded from the assertion of Gyan Prakash, “Accusing colonialist, nationalist, and Marxist interpretations of robbing the common people of their agency, it announced a new approach to restore history to the subordinated” (1477). Though, subaltern historiography derives largely on the rhetoric and terminologies from the dominant modes of discourses, it charges them for their exclusion and appropriation of the subaltern groups and attempts to restore the history of the subordinated subaltern groups.

Dipesh Chakrabarty underscores the need to write the history of the subaltern groups but he carefully avoids essentialism in the name of recovering the subaltern voices in such histories. In his essay “Radical Histories and Question of Enlightenment Rationalism: Some Recent Critiques of ‘Subaltern Studies’”, he asserts:

What will history produced in this mode look like? I cannot say, for one cannot write this history in a pure form. The languages of the state, of citizenship, of wholes and totalities, the legacy of Enlightenment rationalism . . . will always cut across it. At the same time this other history will present itself as that which disrupts these languages. (757)

Thus, the form of subaltern historiography is open-ended and is not codified as in the dominant modes of historiography. Chakrabarty questions the hegemonic nature of European academic history in his essay "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?" as:

Insofar as the academic discourse of history . . . is concerned, "Europe" remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call "Indian," "Chinese," "Kenyan," and so on . . . all these other histories tend to become variations on a master narrative . . ."the history of Europe." . . . "Indian" history itself is in a position of subalternity; one can only articulate subaltern subject positions in the name of this history.(1)

There are two of the most basic tenets of colonialism: the belief in the superiority of Europe and the existence of 'lower races'. At the heart of this belief is what Blaut has called 'Eurocentric diffusionism', "Europeans are seen as the 'makers of history.' Europe eternally advances, progresses, modernizes. The rest of the world advances more sluggishly, or stagnates: it is 'traditional society.' Therefore, the world has a permanent geographical center and a permanent periphery . . ." (1).

Such Eurocentric diffusionism is according to Blaut 'quite simply the colonizer's model of the world' (10). S. Chakravarty describes this 'Raj Syndrome' in similar terms: 'European attitudes towards the non-European societies were largely

conditioned by a significant Euro-centric consciousness. To all intents and purposes Europe was presented, in sharp contrast to the non-European world, as the centre of the universe' (217). Due to such marginalization of the subaltern histories, the critique of Western colonial, patriarchal and elitist discourses came under the rigorous questioning with the advent of Subaltern Studies.

The main emphasis of Guha's argument propounding the discipline of Subaltern Studies is that Indian history, whether colonial, national, Marxist, or neocolonial, has been written by elite, about the elite, and for the elite and by definition, and intent in the process has ignored everyone else, namely, "the people", or, in Antonio Gramsci's term, the "subalterns". By this denial, elite historians have robbed the subalterns of a conscious will to be themselves, to be actors of purpose in their own history, an autonomy that Guha and his colleagues are committed to restore. The logic is most pointedly forwarded in Guha's preface (35-36) and essay "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India" (37-44), both in *Subaltern Studies, Vol. I*, and in his extended historiographic piece, "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency", in *Vol. II* (82-83).

In her influential article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak problematizes the production and retrieval of subaltern speech in light of its dependence on dominant discursive fields, which constitute subaltern subjects, define their modalities of expression, and structure the positions from which they speak and are heard. Spivak's aim is, in her words, "to learn to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the non-elite" (271). Spivak, by means of an extended discussion of sati (or suttee) -the practice of self-immolation by Indian widows on their husbands' pyres-presents as emblematic of the subaltern the case of a political activist who sought to communicate her personal predicament through her

suicide, but whose communication was foiled by the codes of patriarchy and colonialism in which her actions were inevitably inscribed.

In the essay Spivak asserts that the success of the imperial "project to constitute the colonial subject as Other" was dependent on effecting "the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subject-ivity" (280-81), for, "in the constitution of that Other of Europe, great care was taken to obliterate the textual ingredients with which such an object could cathect, could occupy (invest?) its itinerary" (280). For Spivak, the native who is the subject of imperial and colonial historiography is Europe's "self-consolidating Other" standing in for the "real" native, subaltern, the trace of whose presence, in the process of textualization, has been displaced, has been entirely silenced.

A subaltern cannot speak due to various reasons among which three major reasons are clarified by David Richards in his essay "Framing Identity" collected in *A Concise Companion to Postcolonial Literature*. It is because of the understanding of those reasons Spivak is compelled to write "Can Subaltern Speak?" as she could not speak even though she is renowned post-colonial critic armed fully with the rhetoric of Derridan deconstruction and Foucaultian discourse to question and subvert any kind of marginality and domination. The first problem comes from the methodology itself as David writes, "postcolonialism applies external, male-dominated discourse from the Western academy to the question of the subaltern and therefore is in danger of reproducing a form of 'colonization' of the subaltern subject which it ostensibly professes to oppose" (24). So, Spivak's problem is methodological one and to regard her position as pessimistic is to mock the scholarship of Spivak and her insightful awareness of subalternity inside the postcolonial discursive practice as

postcolonialism itself is colonizing her subjectivity appropriating her position and the agency of her voice.

The second problem lies in the nature of inquiry. The result of the inquiry tends to cancel its own attempt to trace the subaltern voice as they no longer remain subaltern after the inquiry as David clarifies, “to identify the subaltern and bring that voice out of the silent shadows of history is to render the subaltern no longer truly ‘subaltern’, but to incorporate that hidden or obscured identity into dominant discourse” (24). The third problem appears while attempting to valorize the subaltern as there is the danger of essentializing the subaltern itself. The third problem in David’s words “for the subaltern to speak (or rather, perhaps, for postcolonial discourse to speak for the subaltern) as a site of true and authentic identity is to essentialize that voice” (24). Then the problems within the postcolonial discourses lead Chakravarty Spivak to conclude the silence of both the subalterns and postcolonial critics inside their discursive frameworks as David clarifies, “The logic of these arguments seems to be leading to an inescapable conclusion: for the subaltern to be ‘subaltern’, he or she must remain silent. And so, too, must the postcolonial critic” (24). Rather than being too pessimistic for the recovery of the subaltern voice, she uses the impossibility of subaltern to come out of the silence as the strategic essentialism.

To come out of such situation of the intellectual subalternity and silence, a new kind of discourse other than the dominant modes of postcolonial discourses fraught with western, colonial, male-dominated terminologies is necessary as Guha’s underscores “. . . elitist historiography should be resolutely fought by developing an alternative discourse . . .” (7), rejecting the elitist nationalistic discourses. The subaltern critics see the possibility to recover their unheard voice in neo-Marxist

theorist Antonio Gramsci that let them the chance for the politicization of the neocoloniality and subalternity in postcolonial criticism as well.

Thus, this researcher argues that subaltern studies is the neo-Marxist polemics with clear cut political goal to curtail any current of the colonialism under the name of postcolonialism to preserve the minority cultures and voices keeping them intact. Many of the critics understand and radically doubt over the Western rhetoric to impose neocolonialism dismantling and erasing the minority histories and cultures in the name of postcoloniality. The cultural imperialism, extension of new form of empire is the inherent motive of the Western polemics in the name of the postcoloniality. As Lois Tyson writes about the doubt of the various intellectuals over the postcolonial project arisen in the Western schools of thought, “Some theorists believe that postcolonial criticism is itself a form of cultural imperialism. For one thing, most postcolonial critics . . . belong to an intellectual elite, an academic ruling class that has, it would seem, little in common with *subalterns* . . .” (425).

Both the inside and outside factors are equally responsible to rejuvenate subaltern historiography and bring about the drastic change as it is rooted in the doubt over the postcolonial criticism in the Western academic scholarship as well as direct the experience of Third World intellectuals about their silence in the history and failure of the Western discourses to liberate the subalterns from the eternal silence. As Ludden writes, “Change has occurred inside the Subaltern Studies project, but ambiguously, as we will see, and how much internal change is cause or effect of external change is unknowable, because inside and outside, subaltern subjects have been reinvented disparately”(2). Thus, both the local and global perspectives questioning the limitations of Western discourses to write the history of the subaltern are the contributors of subaltern historiography.

Marginality and silence are two basic tenets of postcolonial studies those are started to be radically questioned under renovated Marxist ground of Subaltern studies. So with the advent of Subaltern studies Postcolonial studies developed to new height. It is from the margins of colonial subordination and oppression on the grounds of race, class, gender or religion that subaltern or renewed postcolonial writers and theorists claim political and moral authority to contest or oppose the claims of a dominant European imperial culture.

The political and moral authority is gained by the Third World, subaltern critics from their heterogeneous local contexts of appropriation and subordination with the homogenizing tendency of Western discourses. The continual play of appropriation, domination and reappropriation is rightly highlighted in Alastair Pennycook's *English and the Discourses of Colonialism*, ". . . postcolonial writers appropriate English and neocolonial literary critics reappropriate the postcolonial writers" (201). Thus, the questioning of the relevance of the European, white, elitist and male dominated discourses by Third World intellectuals and to attempt to develop their own modes of discourses to come out of the western appropriation and to write their own history and voice their silence appears to be very plausible move.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, the frontrunner of Third World feminist criticism opposes the neocolonial appropriation of female subjects by Western feminism in her book *Feminism Without Borders* which is circulated as the "vague assumptions of sisterhood or images of complete identification with the other" (3). She refutes the homogenizing image of the women in Western feminist discourses in terms of the global sisterhood has and the "differences", plurality and multiple subjectivities have been highlighted by her using the Foucaultian analysis of discourse amidst the vague assumptions of "commonalities" of sisterhood among all the women around the globe.

Thus, the Third World and Subaltern critics examine the marginality and silence under the seemingly subversive and liberating Western, European discourses with the radical resistance over their moral ground to speak about the silence of the postcolonial subjects and claim their participation in appropriation of the neocolonial domination and perpetuation of the cultural imperialism in the name of globalization. With the highlight of female marginalization, bell hooks argues, “who are most victimized by sexist oppression; women who are daily beaten down, mentally, physically and spiritually . . . [and] are powerless to change their condition in life” (131). Thus, the call of Guha and other subaltern critics underscoring the need to recover the muted history of subalterns “in the tradition of 'history from below', was to ground our own political beings and institutions in history” (475) incorporates the views of the Third World, Subaltern intellectuals.

It is very insightful to observe the neocolonial attitude of Western discourses to classify and define the Third World to appropriate the cultural imperialism as seen in Jameson’s categorization of the Third world category by Aijaz Ahmad. The Jamesonian category of Third World is criticized by Aijaz Ahmad in his essay “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the "National Allegory"” as “Ideologically, this classification divides the world between those who make history and those who are mere objects of it; elsewhere in the text, Jameson would significantly re-invoke Hegel's famous description of the master/slave relation to encapsulate the first/third world opposition” (69). Thus, with the categorization of Jameson we see the appropriation of the colonial discourse based upon the marginalization and domination of the voice of the Third World.

As Graham Huggan explains, “marginality represents a challenge to the defining imperial “centre” The embrace of marginality is, above all, an

oppositional discursive strategy that flies in the face of hierarchical social structures and hegemonic cultural codes” (20). The problem with such claims for marginality is that it is the elite political classes of postcolonial societies who often uphold marginality as a representative subject position from which to assert the emancipatory claims of national liberation in former European colonies. Such a problem is articulated by the proletarian revolutionary character, Joseph D’Costa, in Salman Rushdie’s novel *Midnight’s Children*, who about India’s national liberation says that ‘this independence is for the rich only’ (104).

Subaltern writers and theorists have challenged the representative claims to marginality of the elite or dominant classes in postcolonial cultures and societies. Drawing on the Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci’s idea of the subaltern – elaborated in his prison notebooks, written during his incarceration under Mussolini’s fascist regime in the 1930s – the South Asian historians known as the Subaltern Studies collective have sought to recover the histories of insurgency and resistance in South Asia from the perspective of subordinate social classes. It is clear from Gramscian definition above that subaltern classes do not have their own history and their history is silenced by the history of elite class of the society. As Himani Bannerji plausibly writes, “The current theoretical approach of Subaltern Studies, however, was not born like Athena fully armed from Jove’s brow” (906). It is the demand of the failure of elitist postcolonial, nationalist and Marxist discourses to address the voice of the subaltern. It is due to the necessity to write the history of subaltern, Ranjit Guha, Spivak and other subaltern theorists underscore to record the history as per the Guha’s call to recover “the small silenced voice of history the voice of the subaltern” (45).

As Ranajit Guha puts it in “On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India”, which forms the introductory essay to the first volume of the series, *Subaltern Studies*, the elitism of Indian history, whether colonialist or bourgeois nationalist, has excluded the “subaltern classes and groups constituting the mass of the labouring population and the intermediate strata in town and country—that is, the people” (4). What Guha means by subaltern, therefore, is not only the labouring population but “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). The phrase “any other way” of Guha shows the multiple possible discourses in any circumstances can repress the voice of any possible minority, subaltern groups giving wide horizon to subaltern studies think about subalternity in any period of time.

We can take the instance of Guha’s essay “Chandra’s Death” published in *Subaltern Studies Vol. V*. In this essay, Guha examines a nineteenth-century crime report printed in a Bengali broadsheet about a rural woman of the Bagdi peasant caste of rural West Bengal, who died in an attempt to terminate her pregnancy with the assistance of her close female relatives. Through a careful reading of the document, Guha situates the representation of Chandra’s death in relation to the kinship structures of the Bagdi families in the region, and the threat that Chandra’s illicit pregnancy posed to the patriarchal authority and caste identity of the Bagdi. While Guha notes that Chandra is absent from the text as a subject, and that this “absence corresponds to her silence” (154), he also finds an example of solidarity in the support that the Bagdi women gave to the pregnant woman. For whereas the situation was a straightforward one to the male leader of the village, Magaram, to whom Chandra would lose caste on account of her sexual transgression if she did not carry out an abortion, to the Bagdi women “abortion with all its risks was preferable to bhek (caste

removal)” as a strategy to “stop the engine of male authority from uprooting a woman from her place in the local society” (164).

As well as articulating the histories of subaltern resistance and agency that are subtly encoded in textual and historical sources, “Chandra’s Death” illustrates the way in which subalternity can denote different forms of social and political marginalization, including gender and caste oppression. Subalternity has also been applied to *adivasi* or indigenous groups in South Asia. In the fiction and essays of the Bengali writer, Mahasweta Devi, for instance, the social world of the *adivasis* poses a challenge to the emancipatory claims of bourgeois national liberation; a challenge that reiterates Ranajit Guha’s conclusion in “On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India” that the “historic failure of the nation to come to its own . . . constitutes the central problematic of the historiography of colonial India” (7). Valorizing Guha’s approach, the “Founding Statement” of Latin American Subaltern Studies Group proclaims:

The insight of Guha . . . is nevertheless present in unexpected structural dichotomies, fissures in the forms of hierarchy and hegemony, and, in turn, in the constitution of the heroes of the national drama, writing, literature, education, institutions, and the administration of law and authority. (111)

Thus, Guha’s intellectual position became the inspiration for the founding of various Subaltern Groups worldwide. In an attempt to recover the silent subaltern history criticizing the elitist nationalist discourses Latin American Subaltern Studies Group was found in 1993.

While reading the literary texts for the recovery of the subaltern voice the representation of the characters and the writer’s position and agency to speak about

the subaltern characters, the characters' growth to the awareness of their subordination and subalternity, their agency to their life and the consciousness of resistance to come out of the subalternity are very important. Margery Sabin in her essay "In Search of Subaltern Consciousness", with the emphasis on analysis of the writer's position, writes, "In searching for subaltern consciousness through writing, projections of the writer's own social position and values are always discernible" (178). For Sabin the writers may knowingly or unknowingly involve to repress or to articulate the subaltern voices.

With the consideration of the anti-essentialist, anti-establishment nature of Subaltern Studies, it has been used in this research to examine variety of texts randomly drawn from the representative writers from Europe, Asia and Africa set in different socio-political settings. Though subaltern inquiry has been made in those texts, the major goal of the research is to justify Subaltern Studies as a wide methodological approach that can be used to examine the muted voices in both global and local texts. In the concluding section of the research, the commonalities among the examined texts are underscored.

III. Subaltern Heroism on the Stage in *A Woman of No Importance*

This part of the research devotes to examine subaltern voice and resistance to the elitist discourses in Oscar Wilde's play *A Woman of No Importance* (1893) briefly. The play depicts the life-style of English aristocrats in Victorian society that has ruined the women making them complacent subjects subjected to elitist, patriarchal discourses. The title of the play itself is sufficient to see that women are that major subaltern groups of the society appropriated by the elitist patriarchal, bourgeois, colonial discourses. They are compelled to live the subaltern life and thus, can rightfully be claimed as the gendered subaltern. Not only the elitist males but also the Victorian aristocratic women are engaged to define and appropriate other fellow women's actions, thus, are equally responsible for the gendered subalternity. As Kamala Vishweswaran opines in her essay "Gender and Subalternity, Gendered Subalternity", that it is not only the male domination in the society that makes women inferior. She continues:

Women became women not only in relation to men, but also in opposition to other women. Thus the subject position of the middle class or elite nationalist 'woman' must be counter posed to that of Subaltern women. The gendered relation of subalternity means that with regard to the nominal male subject of nationalist ideology, the figure of woman is subaltern. (87)

Beginning from Vishweswaran, this research first counterposes the 'nationalist' women and subaltern women. Though women themselves are the huge subaltern mass as their voice is systematically silenced by elitist patriarchal discourses, they don't feel their subalternity and regard the patriarchal culture as their universal cultural values. We clearly see the aristocratic women of Victorian society falling into two

groups elite nationalist and subaltern. Lady Hunstanton, the host and the owner of the Hunstanton Chase, Lady Caroline, and Lady Stutfield can be categorized in the first category, the women who are appropriated and appropriate other women with elitist patriarchal discourses regarding them as their national culture. In Hunstanton Chase, many of the aristocratic guests are invited to spend their time among which Lord Illingworth embodies the 'organic' intellectual and vanguard of elitist patriarchal class and appropriation of women with elitist, sexist discourses is his chief trait.

Mrs. Arbuthnot, the Puritan American guest Hester, and Mrs. Allonby belong to the second category- the subaltern women. The growing subaltern consciousness among them has been brought to the stage with the Wilde's play. Mrs. Arbuthnot is the woman of no importance for Lord Illingworth at the beginning of the play. She has the subaltern status in the society that is very similar to the untouchable "dalits" of South Asian society. She has to bear the shame of being an 'outcast' woman for giving birth to Gerald as an unmarried mother after she is betrayed by Lord Illingworth with continual postponement of marriage he has promised her before their physical union. She is made the sole sinner of the sin of which Lord Illingworth is equally responsible. Due to the fear of moral disgrace, she is unable to speak the truth before her son and society. Her voice is, thus, deliberately muted by the elitist moral codes that serve the males making them transcendent and pious. Her silenced subalternity and the elitist appropriation of female body as the source of sin is clearly highlighted by Spivak as she argues, "The Subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with woman as a pious. Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual has a circumscribe task which she must not disown with a flourish" (308). She bears twenty years of sufferings under the social domination, silence and the subaltern position of a social 'outcast' before she is stared to be

considered as belonging to the aristocratic class and recover her voice. It is because of the good virtues in her son Gerald; Mrs. Hunstanton invites her as her guest as her old friend. When Lord Illingworth offers a reputed job to Gerald, Gerald becomes the subject of talk of aristocratic society. Soon, Lord Illingworth meets resistance from Mrs. Arbuthnot and his reputed position is tested with the articulate subaltern resistance of Mrs. Arbuthnot. To gain his son, Lord Illingworth is even ready to marry her but Mrs. Arbuthnot disrupts the institution of marriage and the elitist, patriarchal discourse of female attachment at once refusing to marry him, and establishes her as an articulate subaltern voice. She crosses the constructed barrier of patriarchal elitism and becomes the agent of her own life. She becomes the subaltern hero of the play. Hester ably supports her to find her voice marrying her son Gerald and sharing her property with the Arbuthnots, thus, offering the prospect of future to Gerald and challenging the capitalist hegemony of Lord Illingworth. She is the agent of her life which is reflected in her resistance to the patriarchal interference of Lord Illingworth as she vehemently protests him just for kissing her.

Lord Illingworth's abandonment of Mrs. Arbuthnot physical union gave birth to Gerald Arbuthnot but he becomes an abandoned, fatherless child and she alone rears Gerald shaping him in to a good gentle man. Her ordeal during that period is unbearable as the patriarchal society of Victorian England produced unbalanced standards of morality, duty, and gender, usually subjugating women and holding them with strict scrutiny while, at the same time, venerating and favoring men. Wilde interrupted the status quo, then, by featuring women like Mrs. Arbuthnot and Hester prominently in his play, allowing them to act in non-traditional ways that were not considered proper or ideal for Victorian women. They stand as the articulate subaltern voices challenging their subjugation under patriarchal codes in the Victorian society.

The issue of subalternity of women is significantly discussed by Partha Chatterjee with reference to the elite Bengali male discourses in 19th century. Himani Bannerji sees importance of the women- related topics discussed by Chatterjee like motherhood, sexuality, education etc. to understand the politics of subaltern resistance as she observes:

Partha Chatterjee's writings on social and political thought of the 19th century Hindu Bengali male elite can reveal much about his need for this constellation of topics regarding women to flesh out his theory of hegemony. Topics such as motherhood, sexuality, conjugality or education as treated by him can tell us much about Subaltern Studies' general theoretical politics. (904)

Motherhood, sexuality and conjugality all converge together to create Mrs. Arbuthnot's subaltern subjectivity. She is hegemonized due to Illingworth's refusal to marry her, victimized due to the premarital sexual intercourse with him and her acceptance of the motherhood without marriage. When she realizes her subalternity because of the troubles she bears in Victorian society, she strongly denounces the institution of the marriage refusing to marry Lord Illingworth because it is the institution necessary only for the males to dominate females wherever necessary. Same Lord Illingworth who leaves pregnant Mrs. Arbuthnot in hardships, refusing to marry her in the youth and "regards women simply as a toy" (230) gets ready to marry her to gain her worthy son twenty years later. She is regarded as insignificant, "a woman of no importance" (234) by Illingworth at first, but she degrades him refusing to marry him at last and proves her strong subaltern consciousness and the refusal of the elitist patriarchal discourse. As per Guha's call for the ". . . elitist historiography should be resolutely fought by developing an alternative discourse. . ." (7), rejecting

the elitist nationalistic discourse, Mrs. Arbuthnot creates own history and thus, she comes out of the silence and she becomes articulate subaltern voice.

Himani Bannerji further writes, “Cultural and moral constructions and regulations regarding women are as important today for understanding current theories and practices of hegemony as for the past” (904). The elitist, patriarchal construction of woman and moral appropriation with the elitist discourses can be seen throughout the play. The English women are full of complacency as they respectfully praise the English gentlemen and their discourse as if it is their national value. They try to appropriate women according to the patriarchal norms.

Hester openly shows her enthusiasm about young man Gerald Arbuthnot crossing the hegemonic moral codes of Victorian women as a resistance to the English nationalist values adopted by the elitist English women. Lady Caroline attempts to appropriate and exercise hegemony to the American guest Hester with the constructed superiority of the English values as she says, “. . . in my young days, Miss Worsley, one never met anyone in society who worked for their living” but Gerald Arbuthnot is “the young man who has a post in a bank” (222). But Hester favors the working class, subaltern people declaring the people who work for their living “are the people we respect most” (222) in America. Thus, English upper-class, hegemonic, elitist values are shattered with the resistance of Hester. Lady Caroline tries to teach Hester the English social codes as we see in the following conversation:

Lady Caroline: It is not customary in England, Miss Worsley, for a young lady to speak with such enthusiasm of any person of the opposite sex. English women conceal their feelings till after they are married. They show them then.

Hester: Do you, in England, allow no friendship to exist between a young man and a young girl? (222)

The construction of stronger 'opposite sex' is seen in elitist Victorian women that gives women the status of subalternity, the identity of the 'weaker sex'. It justifies the Vishweswaran's claim that "the figure of woman is subaltern" (87).

The hegemony, as seen above is achieved by the elitist English women with the modification of the social behaviors of women defining them as moral and immoral. The sense of equality has been the vehicle for Hester that makes her believe in justice and take the choice of right refusing to be abided by wrong and resist the unequal position of women in the society. Friendship has no hierarchy like other relationships. One is equal to other and it is just and the other relationships outside it are hierarchical, unequal and full of control and domination. Hester, so, expresses her enthusiasm to see Gerald going against the Victorian English practices. Thus, she is full of subaltern consciousness and is against the discourses constructed by the elitist society. So, she continually backs the subaltern characters like Gerald and Mrs. Arbuthnot.

The elitist women attempt to define and correct the behaviors of other fellow women according to the elitist, patriarchal, moral codes. Lady Caroline comments about Mrs. Arbuthnot as "A little lacking in femininity, Jane. Femininity is the quality I admire most in women" (231). Her version of femininity is tinted with the patriarchal elitist discourse and thus, can be used for drawing a sharp line between the elite nationalist women and subaltern women. As Dorothy Smith suggests the examination of the literary text with the observation of power relation vested in the texts to see the discourse of femininity as she writes, "To explore femininity as discourse means a shift away from viewing it as a normative order, reproduced

through socialization, to which women are somehow subordinated. Rather femininity is addressed as a complex of actual relations vested in texts” (63). It is clear from the assertion of Smith that femininity has the elitist, patriarchal discursive practice and it is grounded on the text to give the women subaltern position.

The world is “made for men” (225) suggests that the contemporary Victorian history is the elitist, patriarchal history. The voice of woman is always silenced in that elitist historiography. It is understood by the aristocratic women in the Victorian society but they are habituated to think in the male language. They have no alternative but to accept the patriarchal codes as their national value. Mrs. Allonby refuses the sexist patriarchal discourse and the notion that females are the property of males as she says, “I don’t think that we should ever be spoken of as other people’s property. All men are married women’s property. That is the only true definition of what married women’s property really is. But we don’t belong to any one” (236). Thus, she is another articulate subaltern voice of the play. She protests the conclusion of Lady Stutfield that the world was made for men:

Lady Stutfield: Ah! The world was made for men and not for women.

Mrs.Allonby: Oh, don’t say that, Lady Stutfield. We have a much better time than they have there are far more things forbidden to us than are forbidden to them.

Lady Stutfield: Yes; that is quite, quite true. I had not thought of that.

(225)

Mrs. Allonby is, thus, rebellious subaltern which is justified by her doubt over the institution of marriage. She crosses the barrier of the Victorian moral codes and openly goes out with Lord Illingworth without caring about her husband. Further, her challenging witticism brings the downfall of Lord Illingworth as she challenges him

to kiss Puritan American guest Hester that ends up bringing his affair and betrayal with Mrs. Arbuthnot, denting his image to the state of criminal before his son Gerald.

Mr. Kelvil, the Member of Parliament sees purity in women. So he favors women taking part in politics but the women are not concerned about their social reality of their subalternity and they enjoy the parties in their aristocratic gatherings rather than joining in political parties. Kelvil believes, “The growing influence of women is the one reassuring thing in our political life” as “women are always on the side of morality, public and private” (226). But unlike him, Lady Hunstanton believes upon the dark consequence of politics as she says, “Politics are in a sad way everywhere, I am told. They certainly are in England. Dear Mr. Cardew is ruining the country. I wonder Mrs. Cardew allows him” (227). The view of Lady Hunstanton shows that Mrs. Cardew, the female should only be the moral guide to the politicians, males like Mr. Cardew and thus, the active participation of the females in politics was not so desirable for the Victorian women. The elitist, sexist, patriarchal attitude of Lord Illingworth towards women is clearly highlighted as he regards women as “fascinatingly willful sex” (254). Women are the things to give the power to the men. He says, “No man has any real success in this world unless he has got women to back him, and women rule society. If you have not got women on your side you are quite over. You might just as well be a barrister, or a stockbroker, or a journalist at once” (254). The appropriation of the role of woman in the life of male has been clearly highlighted with the sexist assertion of Lord Illingworth.

When Mrs. Arbuthnot sees her son ready to work for the same Lord Illingworth who has been the cause of her torture for twenty years forcing her be condemned as outcast she strongly comes to resist any possible interference from Lord Illingworth in her family. She doesn't let her son work for him at any cost. It is

very hard for her to convince her son who is already full of the ambitions and nurturing his dream, to excel his life with Lord Illingworth: she can't share him the tragedy she bore for so long due to her fear of moral indignation before her son. She tells him the tragic story of pain of a woman who was ruined by Lord Illingworth still, Gerald is not convinced and he transferred the blame to the woman who was involved with Lord Illingworth questioning the morality of that anonymous tragic woman. Thus, Mrs. Arbuthnot could not tell him that it was the story of her and she herself was the woman who faced such a tragedy. Thus, the observation of Spivak “subaltern cannot speak” (308) has been portrayed with the difficult secret Mrs. Arbuthnot bears for so long time. But when the elitist patriarchal discourse of Lord Illingworth continually challenges her autonomy and gain more advantage of her silence, she starts speaking and thus, she comes out of her silence with growing subaltern consciousness. It enables the muted voice of the subaltern hero Mrs. Arbuthnot to come out as O’Hanlon says, “the recuperation of the subaltern as a conscious human subject-agent” (196).

In continual elitist dominance, the growth of subaltern consciousness is inevitable that gives the subaltern the agency to protest, thus, gives them speech. Subaltern cannot speak is to see the subaltern as passive like the elitist women of the Victorian society. But unlike them there is subaltern polarization in the play against the elitism of Lord Illingworth and the voice of Mrs. Arbuthnot is clearly heard. Dominance, the situatedness of her subalternity, helps her to develop the subaltern consciousness and speak against patriarchy. In his essay, “Listening to the Subaltern: The Poetics of Neocolonial States”, Fernando Coronil writes:

Dominance and subalternity are not inherent, but relational characterizations. Subalternity defines not the being of a subject, but a

subjected state of being. This relational and situational view of the subaltern may help anticolonial intellectuals avoid the we/they polarity underlying Spivak's analysis and listen to subaltern voices that speak from variously marginalized places. (649)

Thus, the relativity between dominance and subalternity, Mrs. Arbuthnot speaks and her speech, the subaltern heroism dominates not only the stage of Europe but she becomes the subaltern hero for all the women who are unable to speak all over the world.

IV. Indramaya and Subaltern Consciousness in Koirala's *Teen Ghumti*

The novel *Teen Ghumti* by Nepali writer Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala is the reflection of the protagonist Indramaya about her own past. Her subalternity becomes visible through the past details of her life. The three strong decisions and the choice of her own life in each of the decision is the resistance to both the elitist patriarchal, sexist discourse and the caste-hierarchy constructed by Brahminic Hindu elites in her undemocratic Nepali society ruled by the King. She resists the traditional sexist categorization of woman in male-dominated social circumstances and transcends her position from the subalternity of caste system to the independent woman. The novel is, thus, the narration of the transcendence of a third world subaltern. The gendered bias of the males is the major reason for the subalternity of Indramaya. The elitist, patriarchal construction of gender has appropriated her voice and silence is maintained. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak asserts, “. . . the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (32). It is due to the understanding of her subalternity and the identity in the abyss of shadow and silence; she resists constructed, ideological and gendered subjectivity and creates her own history.

Indramaya, the protagonist of the novel *Teen Ghumti* is forty five and in her transition from the middle age to the old age. In her days of middle age, she begins the contemplation about her past life and the three strong decisions which demarcate her three modes of life. The title of the novel itself comes from those three important phases of her life. She begins her contemplation from the examination of her life as:

She can't say her as abnormal. Her life was normal and common like the lives of other women. If she didn't count the three decisions she made during her life, she would just be a single drop in the ocean of the overall female lives. But the independent decision made by the drop had separated the drop from the ocean. (2)

She is thus, aware of her Third World situatedness as she opposes her life against the homogeneous, elitist construction of commonality among the life and experience of females as a whole. She is very near to the proposition of Chandra Mohanty as Mohanty proposes Third World Feminism "as opposed to vague assumption of sisterhood or images as complete identification with the other" (3). Indramaya represents the subaltern with her own complexities who is untouched by the Western, colonial, elitist, constructed feminism and the "notion of feminist solidarity" (3) and whatever decision she makes it only becomes the resistance of the individual subaltern voice of the Third World. The homogenizing image of the women in terms of the global sisterhood has been refuted and the "differences", plurality and multiple subjectivities have been highlighted by her using the Foucaultian analysis of discourse amidst the vague assumptions of "commonalities" of sisterhood among all the women by the Third World feminists like Mohanty. She asserts, ". . . it is Third World women's oppositional political relation to sexist, racist, and imperialist structures that constitutes our potential commonality" (49). Throughout the novel, Indramaya assumes the oppositional stance to the sexist, racist, patriarchal and elitist structures of the Nepali society.

Indramaya resists the elitist, Brahminic, sexist discourses which is reflected in her three bold decisions about her life. As the project of subaltern studies attempts the total decolonisation of the body, the resistance of Indramaya leads her to the stage of

decolonisation of her body freeing it from the dominant discourses. As a Third World Woman she is “deeply in shadow” (Spivak 32) of the gendered, patriarchal and elitist discourses. She experiences the subalternity and silence in the society in her first mode of life. She speaks against the dominant patriarchal discourses but the later she finds her first resistance is insufficient and that leads her to articulate her voice two more time. Her agency is silenced; crushed between patriarchal and neocolonial, Brahminic discourses that can be justified with the Spivak’s assertion, “Between patriarchal subject-formation and imperialist object-constitution it is the place of the free will or agency of the sexed subject as female that is successfully effaced” (235). Indramaya’s voice is appropriated by the elitist, patriarchal, and Brahminic neocolonial discourses and she is stripped of her agency.

First, she refuses the elitist, Brahminic social codes which rob her of the agency to decide about her marriage marrying Pitambar at her own will. Second, she decides to establish the sexual union with Ramesh protesting the sexist hegemony of Pitambar and secures her right of motherhood as it is unfulfilled from her husband. Third, she decides to leave her husband resisting the tendency of her husband to control her sexual autonomy and always treat her as inferior and she gives her daughter the freedom enabling her of the agency. She rears her daughter alone resisting the traditional notion of subservient and economically male-dependent females and she creates domination free, democratic family that is seen when she lets her freedom to decide about her marriage by her own. These three decisions mark three modes of her life and due to these decisions she diverges away from the traditional elite nationalist women, and strongly resists her subalternity mediated by various elitist discourses.

Caste-system of Hindu society is fabricated by elitist Brahminic Hindu discourse. When Indramaya takes the first decision to marry Pitambar caste-system comes as the hurdle for her and she needs to face the consequences alone going against the social code of Nepali society leaving her family behind. Caste is elitist construction to appropriate the subjects of society for the advantage of dominant Brahmin elites of the society. Drawing on Gail Omvedt's observation about caste Partha Chatterjee in his essay "Caste and Subaltern Consciousness" writes, "Caste is 'a material reality with a material base', it is 'not only form but also concrete material content', and it has historically shaped the very basis of Indian economy and society and continues to have crucial economic implications today" (176) but when Chatterjee analyzes caste in relation to class, he observes, "Because of the separation of the economic and social levels under conditions of capitalist production, class and caste no longer coincide" (176). In the local context of Nepal, the caste and class are nearly equivalent as the political and economic power is often debated as belonging to a few brahminist elites.

Vishweswaran's claim that, ". . . women became women not only in relation to men, but also in opposition to other women. Thus the subject position of the middle class or elite nationalist 'woman' must be counter posed to that of Subaltern women" (87) is very significant to draw the line between Indramaya and her mother. Mother acts as the vanguard of Brahminic, patriarchal values and thus, she can be categorized as elite nationalist woman and an opposition to the subaltern woman like Indramaya. She opposes Indramaya's decision with the discourse of caste that is the material reality of the Nepali society giving the Brahmin elites agency to subjugate the lower-caste people. Rejecting her decision she says, "How is it possible, Indramaya? He is Parbate Brahmin and we are Newar Vaishya" (3). At that moment Indramaya feels

that even her parents who are her nearest ones were alien to her. The social codes based on the caste-system locate her in lower position of being Newar, a subaltern and Pitambar in the privileged class as a Brahmin. Understanding of her subalternity is observed in the narration as:

The world of her mother and father in which she had been breathing till now was alien territory for her. The barriers of social codes were trifle for her as she had been completely immersed in the love of Pitambar; her parents were trying to pull her out to the bank of river in which she had been drowned, throwing the weak rope of the same trifle social codes. (3)

With the experience of her subalternity and hegemony imposed on her with the codes of the society, her subaltern voice becomes articulate and this becomes her first mode or 'Ghumti' of her life. She denounces the social norms and reconstructs herself as a self with subaltern consciousness and rejects her silence as she decides to marry the person she loves.

The elitist appropriation of the subject of the society is seen in Nepali society. The King is the agent of elitist, Brahminic neocolonial appropriation of the people. The people in the society are abided by the King. Pitambar is a political activist fighting for democracy but gradually Indramaya sees the democracy he is fighting for is elitist, sexist, Brahminic democracy and is another neocolonial appropriation as an alternative to the neocolonial discourse of the king. The hegemony is achieved by the King with the appropriation of lower-caste people that is clearly seen in the mother's refusal to let Indramaya marry Pitambar. Her mother says to the Indramaya:

You should know one more fact. We are the King's people and we have the reputation in the society because of our old relation with the

palace. Pitambar is a man of political party whom palace hates. Since there is negative attitude of the palace to him, I am warning you for your own happiness how long might he keep hiding? (6)

In such difficult sociopolitical situatedness, the agency of the people has been robbed and hegemony has been imposed with the politics to divide the people and rule them. Indramaya recuperates her voice in such difficult situation “as a conscious human subject-agent” (196) in the terms of O’Hanlon.

The elitist, sexist construction of females as subordinate subjects starts to haunt Indramaya soon after the beginning of her marital life. Elitist, patriarchal discourses appropriate the female subjects defining them as coward. She recollects the conversation:

Some would address me lovingly, “Sister! What do you know about practical politics? The tyrant has only understood the fear.”

Indramaya would laugh and ask, “Hasn’t the people understood the fear? Isn’t the tyrant capable of generating far more fear than us?”

All would laugh and speak in collective voices, “See the attitude of coward woman, see!” (11)

Even though Pitambar and his friends are engaged in radical activism against the rule of the king they are the vanguard of patriarchy and their understanding of the male superiority and dominant social position is still the same. Indramaya understands women are subaltern and males belong to powerful and transcendental class. She never complains her husband’s extramarital affairs but her husband questions her behaviors even in her minor interactions with his friends. Her silence here is the result of her unflinching love for husband. Soon, the patriarchal appropriation of her silence needs reconstruction and she starts to contemplate on the unequal horizons of love

between a male and a female and understand her subalternity and silence. Indramaya realizes her gendered subalternity where multiple elitist discourses and forms of oppression exist in society to appropriate the silence of the females. As Radha Subramanyam argues, “The larger structures of oppression, class, caste, feudalism, and patriarchy intersect, and she, the gendered subaltern, falls into the category of the most oppressed in any permutation” (37), she is made the subaltern subject due to the various forms of oppression in the society. She ruminates upon her subalternity and concludes:

It is because of the inherent distinction between the male and female nature, the love has been so different between them. Male is ruler by nature. The state of male nature is always flying high towards transcendence and male needs to find himself always flying high to feel secure in his reputation, and position to see the security of his manhood Unlike them, we, females, have just opposite tendency. We know only to dedicate and sacrifice and remain inferior. Our normal condition naturally demands the ascent, the transcendence. In such condition, where does the pride of our love lie? (16)

Her understanding of her subalternity and silence in the society appropriated by the elitist, patriarchal codes is responsible for bringing the second mode of her life. When she wants cooperation from her husband to bear children and become a mother, his dominance and appropriation of his wife reaches culmination as he charges her to be an infertile and solely responsible for not bearing the children. Soon, he is arrested for his political activism and her second mode of her life begins. In this mode, after a stint of unselfish love she gets from Ramesh, she is involved in the sexual union with him to procure her unfulfilled motherhood; she snubs the repressive patriarchal codes of

Pitambar and the society. Thus, she retrieves her triumphant subaltern voice with the hegemonic account of her history through continual and logical retrospection as per Spivak's observation, ". . . the retrieval of the history of the margin can be a lesson not only to the writing of woman's history triumphant, but also to the writing of the most hegemonic historical accounts" (239). Indramaya's history is not only triumphant but also the historical account of hegemony in the society.

The second mode of her life is the phase of strong resistance to the construction of her gender role by patriarchal values of Pitambar. The challenge posed by Pitambar's questioning of her capacity to bear children and prove her fertile becomes the psychological agent that leads her to decide about her sexuality herself and she bears a child from Pitambar's friend, Ramesh when her husband is imprisoned. Thus, she disrupts the stereotype of women as subservient in their sexuality to the males.

In the third mode of her life, she realizes hegemonic appropriation and control over the female sexuality and body by the elitist, sexist, patriarchal discourses as Pitambar neglects her daughter Rama and demands her to return Rama back to Ramesh, her real father. His excessive bias over her sexual choice, hard-gained motherhood and dominating attitude over her sexuality force her to reconsider her self questioning the elitist, sexist discourses. Full of subaltern consciousness, she resists the sexism and decides to leave her husband, and becomes a transcendent, autonomous, independent woman in the third mode.

Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid analyze the social inequality and female domination with the control over the female sexuality. They claim, "The lives of women exist at the interface of caste and class inequality, especially since the description and management of gender and female sexuality is involved in the

reproduction and maintenance of social inequality” (5). It is clearly seen through the Indramaya’s experience and the domination she bears throughout the novel. She resists the sexist hegemony of her husband and his continual concern over her sexual union as an articulate gendered-subaltern voice as she protests:

Sex ...sex...sex! Can’t you free yourself from the thinking of sex for a single moment, Pitambar? However important is the sex for human life, it doesn’t have such a right that it could give the man the prestige of a husband. Haven’t you seen from your experience that mere sexual relations couldn’t make you the husband to all the women you slept with? Nor all the customers of a prostitute are her husbands. (67)

Thus, with the refusal to the elitist, sexist discourses Indramaya becomes the agent of her own life. She at once defends her motherhood and resists the patriarchal and sexist domination she bears for so long. bell hooks in her essay, ‘Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory’ depicts the vivid picture of the Third World or non-white women as she observes, they “are most victimized by sexist oppression; women who are daily beaten down, mentally, physically and spiritually . . . and are powerless to change their condition in life” (131). This victimization and oppression is resisted by Indramaya that makes her the strong, articulate subaltern voice of the Third World. She has the agency of her life as she develops strong subaltern consciousness and becomes able to change her condition.

V. Retrieval of Subaltern History in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

It is very insightful to consider the observation of Gyan Prakash from his essay, "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism" to begin the examination of subaltern voice in post-colonial Nigerian writer Adichie's novel *Purple Hibiscus*. He observes:

Subalternity . . . emerges in the paradoxes of the functioning of power, in the functioning of the dominant discourse as it represents and domesticates . . . agency as a spontaneous and "pre-political" response to colonial violence. No longer does it appear outside the elite discourse as a separate domain, embodied in a figure endowed with a will that the dominant suppress and overpower but do not constitute. Instead, it refers to that impossible thought, figure, or action without which the dominant discourse cannot exist (1483)

With the observation above we see the emergence of subalternity in the paradoxes of functioning of power. This is the reality of Nigeria where the novel is set. Nigeria is in the situation of political turmoil in post-colonial condition where the complex exercise of power among distinctly three power centers – the Church as the colonial power center attempting to reappropriate the colonial dominance, the military Junta gaining the control over the people with the use of state apparatuses, and the people with the nationalist Nigerian cultural values. The third power center is the space of subalternity as other two strong power-centers have either money or the state mechanism to back them but only the legacy of the cultural heritage. Nigerian culture is in the state of subalternity, subjected to the marginalization due to cultural imperialism of colonial Catholic discourses. According to Lois Tyson:

Cultural imperialism, a direct result of economic domination, consists of the “takeover” of one culture by another: the food, clothing, customs, recreation, and values of the economically dominant culture increasingly replace those of the economically vulnerable culture until the latter appears to be a kind of imitation of the former. (425)

The subalterns of the novel are crushed under the two dominant elitist, patriarchal, neocolonial discourses of Catholicism, and the tyrannical military Junta. Beatrice, Jaja, Kambili, Papa-Nnukwu, Father Amadi, Ifeoma and her children belong to the subalterns whereas Father Benedict and Eugene belong to the neocolonial Church appropriating the elitist colonial values and thus imparting the silence among the Nigerian people. The subaltern voice becomes articulated when Beatrice poisons her husband Eugene who is the ‘organic’ intellectual and the vanguard of the neocolonial class of Catholics as the resistance to his perpetual domestic violence in the name of imposition of the codes of Christianity. Before her poisoning of her husband, her son Jaja starts the resistance to the fanatic Christian codes and violence imposed on them refusing to go to the Church on Palm Sunday. The narrator, Kambili is the muted subaltern throughout but she has been given the voice to reconstruct her subjectivity by the writer as her childish and curious observations shapes the novel. Papa-Nnukwu is muted subaltern of the novel as he dies without being heard.

The postcolonial subaltern agency cannot be elaborated better than Gyan Prakash’s above observation. In *Purple Hibiscus*, the agency of the subaltern characters Beatrice and Jaja has been depicted as “autonomous and ‘pre-political’ response to colonial violence” (1483) as they reject the neocolonial dominance of Eugene with the use of colonial discourse of Catholicism. Beatrice poisons and kills her husband as an autonomous response to his years-long domestic violence and

torture. The refusal of Jaja to go to Church St. Agnes on the Palm Sunday is also an autonomous response to the patriarchal, colonial violence of his father. His subaltern voice is loudly articulated when he takes the responsibility for the murder of his father, and goes to prison giving his mother the freedom from the punishment.

It is insightful to observe the colonial appropriation of Eugene. He has dropped the Nigerian name and always favored the English language in the place of national Igbo language for communication in public and he is stuffed with the colonial values. As the narrator Kambili, Eugene's daughter, describes him, "He hardly spoke Igbo, and although Jaja and I spoke it with Mama at home, he did not like us to speak it in public. We had to sound civilized in public, he told us; we had to speak English. Papa's sister, Aunty Ifeoma, once said that papa was too much of a colonial product" (13). His repression and the attempt to appropriate the Nigerian cultural values and language in the name of civilizing his family makes him brutal, as Césaire observes, "Colonization works to *decivilize* the colonizer, to *brutalize* him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism" (13). The highlight of the brutality and violence in the novel is his punishment to Kambili as she is tortured by her father for spending more than fifteen minutes time with her grandfather, Papa-Nnukwu. Eugene pours boiling water on her feet in order to teach her that she should not "walk into sin" (194). Appropriated by the patriarchal and Catholic discourses she feels guilty of her action of spending some time with her allegedly heathen grandfather. She feels every action of her father is right and bears the excruciating pain caused by the boiling water. She narrates the moment of the brutal punishment of the barbaric father as:

I wanted to say "Yes, Papa," because he was right, but the burning on my feet was climbing up, in swift courses of excruciating pain, to my head and lips and eyes. Papa was holding me with one wide hand, pouring the water carefully with the other. I did not know that the sobbing voice - "I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" was mine until the water stopped and I realized my mouth was moving and the words were still coming out. (194-95)

The violence is thus, the common phenomenon of Achike family that give us the glance into the dominance of patriarchy and colonial values and the silencing of the rational faculty of the colonized subject that significantly curbs the subaltern voice closing their eyes to see the injustice. The violence of the father justifies itself to be right. In his essay entitled "Coming of Age: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and the Voice of the Third Generation" Heather Hewett comments about Kambili as the subaltern, able to retrieve her voice amidst the rampant violence and patriarchal domination with the increasing awareness of her silence as:

She suffers because she cannot articulate herself - her father's patriarchal rule has subsumed her individual identity almost entirely, and his abuse rends her from her own ability to speak. But at other moments she struggles to speak; and while fear often prevents her from speaking the truth, she does manage to talk. What she says, however, is often misunderstood by others. They do not really hear what she means, or they do not listen to her silences, which speak louder than her words. (85)

We can easily see in the above quoted lines how the colonizers silence the Nigerians, colonized subjects, their culture and language in the name of being civilized. In the

contrast, Father Amadi and the family of Aunty Ifeoma are more Nigerians than the subjects of the colonial values. They are light hearted, always ridicule the colonial values and orthodox Christianity with the laughter, tended towards their own native values and language and encouraged the rational debates and logical observations. Though Father Amadi is faithful Catholic and popular among the people under his church; he never drops his Nigerian name like Eugene.

Questioning the church and popery is forbidden with Eugene and Father Benedict but the questioning seems simple and normal for Father Amadi. When Father Amadi is about to go to Papua New Guinea from Nigeria in the service of church, Amaka, the daughter of Aunty Ifeoma, questions him about his journey professing the colonial God as narrated, “The White missionaries brought us their god,” Amaka was saying. “Which was the same color as them, worshipped in their language and packaged in the boxes they made. Now that we take their god back to them, shouldn’t we at least repackage it?” (267) Thus, the Nigerian cultural consciousness and the sense of subalternity in under colonial appropriation can be observed in Amaka. It is the instance of mimicry of the colonial discourse from a subaltern character. In his book, *The Subjection of Women*, the colonial discourse of Christianity and its opposition to other cultures and religion has been analyzed by John Stuart Mill. He argues, “(Christianity) has been the religion of the progressive portion of mankind, and Islamism, Brahminism, etc. have been those of the stationary portions” (46). Its discursive construction as a progressive religion has thus, established its opposition to the other passive religions and cultures like Nigerian and legitimized its intervention to other cultures and justified the cultural colonialism.

The description of the colonizers like Father Benedict is given from the point of view of the Nigerian people in the novel. The description shows refusal of

Nigerians to let the colonizers any role as the part of society. In the long time period of seven years, Father Benedict has not been assimilated by the people of Enugu even though they regularly go to the church St. Agnes for the service of church. Thus, there is the continual distance between the colonizer and colonized and the colonized have the certain degree of contempt to them. It is the division marks the sense of subalternity, resistance and the awareness of neocolonial hegemony among the people. As the narrator narrates about the colonial appropriation of Nigerian subjects and, culture and language, we see the subalternity is not the personal but the cultural phenomenon in Nigeria. She narrates:

Father Benedict had changed the things in the parish, such as insisting that the Credo and Kyrie be recited only in Latin; Igbo was unacceptable. . . . But he allowed offertory songs in Igbo; he called them native songs, and when he said “native” his straight-line lips turned down at the corners to form an inverted U.(4)

The subaltern consciousness and the mimicry of the colonial values are clearly seen in the narration. English is the language of elitist colonizers that replaces the Nigerian languages like Igbo reducing and appropriating their space. Thus, Nigerian culture is the subaltern culture.

The writer, full of the consciousness of the cultural subalternity, uses typical Nigerian words and phrases like ‘*gbo*’ (13), ‘*nne, ngwa*’(8), ‘*nno*’(94), ‘*Igwe*’(94), ‘*umunna*’ (96), ‘*biko*’ (8), ‘*ngwanu*’ (97), ‘*ima mmuo*’(87), ‘*ichakas*’(86), ‘*agwonatumbe*’(86), ‘*O joka*’ (95), ‘*maka nnidi*’ (102), ‘*nekene*’(91), ‘*abia*’ (100) etc. without glossary throughout the novel denying the space for the colonial language. Thus, by the means of subaltern, repressed marginalized Nigerian language, she articulates the subaltern Nigerian voice, enabling her of the agency to speak about

Nigeria. As Graham Huggan explains, “. . . marginality represents a challenge to the defining imperial “centre” The embrace of marginality is, above all, an oppositional discursive strategy that flies in the face of hierarchical social structures and hegemonic cultural codes” (20). The awareness of marginality and subalternity enables her agency to challenge the defining, imperial, elitist discourses with the strategic use of the space of the colonizer’s language that subverts the authority of the colonizer over the colonized, thus enables the space to articulate the subaltern voice. The novel thus, becomes the attack upon the western historiography that denies the space for the subaltern historiography, culture and episteme as Rosalind O’Hanlon observes:

At the very moment of this assault upon western historicism . . . the self-originating, self-determining individual, who is at once a subject in his possession of a sovereign consciousness whose defining quality is reason, and an agent in his power of freedom-is readmitted through the back door in the figure of the subaltern himself, as he is restored to history in the reconstructions of the Subaltern project. (191)

The questioning of elitist, colonial historiography and recuperation of the subaltern history is the characteristic of the novel, with the depiction of profound subalternity in Nigeria.

Among the characters of this novel, Papa-Nnukwu is the muted subaltern. He is old, lonely, and his family has been broken due to the imposition of colonial Christian values. He is the subaltern shrouded with the problem of representation. As Dipesh Chakrabarty in his essay “Marx after Marxism: A Subaltern Historian’s Perspective” argues, “The figure of the subaltern is necessarily mediated by problems of representation” (1096). He is represented as a pagan or a heathen by his own son,

Eugene, the vanguard of Catholicism. The elite colonial discourse of Catholicism has given him the negative representation. Eugene disinherits him just because he is not a catholic convert but the true practitioner of the subaltern Nigerian cultural values. He does not allow his children to see him more than fifteen minutes once a year; he is left forlorn, shrunken in poverty. Aunty Ifeoma, his daughter, is his only help in the need and regards him not as a pagan but as a traditionalist as she says, “. . . Papa-Nnukwu was not a heathen but a traditionalist, that sometimes what was different was just as good as what was familiar, that when Papa-Nnukwu did his *itu-nzu*, his declaration of innocence, in the morning, it was the same as our saying the rosary”(166). The Catholic prayer rosary is the colonial practice that can be replaced by *itu-nzu*; the Nigerian religious prayer that means the understanding of the potential of discursive opposition to Catholicism in Nigerian cultural values as in Huggan’s words “an oppositional discursive strategy that flies in the face of hierarchical social structures and hegemonic cultural codes” (20). It is the politicization of the dominant elitist discourses and finding the counter discourse in subaltern cultural values to resist the hierarchical and hegemonic cultural codes. Thus we see the transference of subaltern consciousness and the sense of resistance from Aunty Ifeoma, to the narrator.

The narrator and her brother Jaja come into the touch with the Nigerian cultural values when they get chance to spend time with their grandfather in Aunty Ifeoma’s flat and they begin to see how the colonial discourses of Eugene has misrepresented the Nigerian values as heathen. It grows the subaltern consciousness in them. After that, Jaja starts to be defiant to the Christian values and doesn’t go for the communion in the church on Palm Sunday. Thus, ideas about own Nigerian nationalistic values in Jaja start to stir and refuse the colonial White god. Adichie begins her novel with the details of that particular Palm Sunday on which Jaja refuses

the service to the church. The title of first part of the novel “Breaking Gods –Palm Sunday” suggests the ‘spontaneous . . . response to colonial violence’ (Prakash 1483) as the refusal to the colonial discourses appropriating him as subaltern.

Amaka, the daughter to Aunty Ifeoma, listens to the music composed by subaltern African artists which she says culturally conscious music. She is peer to Kambili and their continual touch in Aunty Ifeoma’s house also helps the narrator to discover her cultural subalternity. At the beginning, she is not used to those music but slowly she starts to find her cultural identity in them. The narrator narrates her as:

She turned the cassette player on, nodding to the polyphonic beat of drum. “I listen mostly to indigenous musicians. They are culturally conscious; they have something real to say. Fela, and Osadebe and Onyeka are my favorites. Oh, I’m sure you probably don’t know who they are, I’m sure you’re into American pop like other teenagers . . . she said “culturally conscious” in the proud way that people say a word they never knew they would learn until they do. (118)

The subaltern consciousness in Amaka is clearly highlighted with her tendency to listen to ‘indigenous’, inferior, subaltern singers. Further, the bitter hatred to the elitist, colonial music has been depicted with her refusal to the American pop music. Her understanding of the cultural subalternity helps the narrator to awaken and understand the subalternity. The Nigerian teens are being robbed of the sense of cultural belongingness due to the colonial music and are being appropriated as the muted subaltern, the colonial subjects.

The sense of cultural belongingness and the subaltern consciousness heightens in Kambili after she sees the practice of the Nigerian values in Papa-Nnukwu. Aunty Ifeoma has played the great role to let her see across the Nigerian values preserved by

Papa-Nnukwu as she sees Papa -Nnukwu as “not s heathen but a traditionalist” (166) and shows Kambili how the colonial values have appropriated the silence in the subaltern values even though they are far better than them. The Nigerian values Papa-Nnukwu practices are wider, unselfish and all inclusive but the colonial values are narrow and directed to hegemonize the minority cultures to rule and exploit them. They are just the colonial weapons to strip people of their cultural consciousness and appropriate their subjectivity as their compliant silent subjects.

Aunty Ifeoma is, thus, important subaltern character; she is full of subaltern consciousness and sense of resistance. She is a traditional intellectual, an advocate of the role of Nigerian cultural values. She plants the seed of resistance in the mind of her children, the narrator and her brother, Jaja. She teaches in University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

She works as an intellectual who helps to see their subalternity in society appropriated by elitist, colonial discourses. Jaja and Kambili, the subaltern characters devoid of their agency dominated by Catholic tyranny grow conscious about their subalternity and learn to resist the colonial domination and violence. She underscores the role of resistance, when subaltern understand their silence and appropriation. She talks about the riot that had been staged before university few years ago due to the neocolonial domination and appropriation of subaltern voice. Her conversation with Jaja highlights this:

“Where was the riot about?” Jaja asked.

“Light and water,” Obiora said, and I looked at him.

“There was no light and no water for month,” Aunty Ifeoma added.

“The students said they could not study and asked if the exams could be rescheduled, but they were refused.” (131)

Aunty Ifeoma, thus, helps the narrator and her brother to recuperate their muted voice inside the family with the resistance to defy the colonial values of Catholicism embodied in their father Eugene. Aunty Ifeoma shows the name 'Jaja' itself carry the sense of resistance as he is named after the "defiant King", "Jaja of Opobo" (144). She clarifies it, "He was king of the Opobo people", Aunty Ifeoma said, "and when the British came, he refused to let them control all the trade. He did not sell his soul for a bit of gunpowder like the other kings did, so the British exiled him to the West Indies. He never returned to Opobo" (144).

Thus, Jaja, like the legendary king who never surrenders to the colonial appropriation, starts defying the colonial British god and the discourses firmly ruling over the Achike family and maintaining their silence. As per Guha's call for the ". . . elitist historiography should be resolutely fought by developing an alternative discourse. . ." (7), rejecting the elitist discourses appropriated by the colonial meditation, Aunty Ifeoma uses the African cultural discourse of resistance that helps Jaja to find his voice and resist the colonial historiography full of domination and violence.

The value of resistance to the elitist, colonial domination is highlighted as, "Being defiant can be a good thing sometimes", Aunty Ifeoma said. 'Defiance is like marijuana it is not a bad thing when it is used right'" (144). It becomes the turning point and the action of the subaltern character Jaja to resist the elitist, colonial, patriarchal domination of his father. Aunty Ifeoma is similar to a guardian to the subaltern characters as she is only one to listen all the plights of the subaltern characters like Beatrice, help Jaja and Kambili to find their voice to resist the colonial violence force in their home by their father Eugene and help Papa-Nnukwu, the muted subaltern and the opposite extreme of the colonial Christian values.

It is because of her support Jaja starts defying the elitist, catholic, white God refusing to go to church on Palm Sunday. It highlighted in the first part of the novel subtitled 'Breaking Gods- Palm Sunday.' Thus, the novel itself begins with the strong subaltern voice and the refusal to the elitist discourses and violence. Resistance to the colonial and patriarchal violence reaches to culmination as the long- born violence upon the Achike family is ends as Beatrice murders Eugene poisoning his tea. Jaja proves to be really defiant as he takes the charge of the killing of his father killed by his mother and goes to the prison. Thus, the colonial Catholic violence ends in Achike family and gives them the air of freedom. Symbolically, the death suggests the fall of colonial values and hence proves to be the victory of subaltern Nigerian values.

Adichie in her essay entitled "African "Authenticity" and the Biafran Experience" writes, "Africa has for the past two years or so been very fashionable in the United States and Europe, and this new "afro fashion" is based in part on the stereotype of the poor starving African in need of salvation by the West" (44). This Colonial stereotype of Africa has been attacked and African subalternity is questioned by Adichie with the rigorous examination of the violence and appropriation of subaltern subjects with the elitist discourse of Catholicism. Thus, she recovers history from below with the purpose of complete decolonization of Africa.

VI. Conclusion

Past as the Common Denominator to Retrieve the Subaltern Voices

As we analyze the diverse ranges of the texts to retrieve the silenced subaltern histories and recovery of the subaltern voices with the consideration of the large number of subaltern theorists and critics, we come to the conclusion that the understanding of one's subalternity is achieved by the reflection of the subaltern past. No past is free of subalternity and thus, subalternity is the profoundly widespread phenomenon. By the same token, we can claim that subalternity is not geographically bound, narrow and monolithic criterion. The largest chunk of the historiography is elitist historiography, the history of the subaltern silence. Thus, the recording of the minority, subaltern history free of elitist domination is inevitable.

Marx underscores the role of understanding the repressive past as he argues, "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living" (437). The understanding that the histories subalterns are already appropriated by the discourses of the dead elites in the past becomes the major weapon for the retrieval of the subaltern voice as they are responsible to maintain the silence of the subaltern. This understanding of subalternity and profound silence of the subalterns throughout the in the Indian historiography appropriated by colonial discourses compels Guha to attempt the recovery of "the small silenced voice of history the voice of the subaltern" (45). Thus, examination of the past, the elitist historiography, to enable the subaltern agency which is robbed by multiple elitist discourses is the defining feature of subaltern historiography.

In our analysis, the understanding of hegemonic past becomes the prominent feature of the subaltern consciousness in characters. The subaltern consciousness of Mrs. Arbuthnot, the protagonist of the Wilde's play, is the result of twenty years of silence in the English society appropriated by the elitist, sexist, patriarchal domination. The subaltern consciousness of Koirala's protagonist Indramaya also is the outcome of her retrospection and continual assessment of her past which is devoid of agency and is crushed under the sexist, patriarchal oppression and control over her sexuality. The subaltern consciousness of Adichie's characters is because of their longing to return to the Nigerian cultural values free of colonial domination and violence, the past appropriated by the colonial violence of Eugene with the dogmatic Catholic discourse. Thus, the past full of violence and physical abuse is crucial for the articulation of subaltern voice in the characters like Kambili, Jaja and Beatrice. They are able to retrieve their 'minority history' or resist their 'minor' position in the elitist, colonial, patriarchal historiography. This is closely connected to their assessment of past history and the discovery of their subalternity.

The 'minority' culture means the insignificant culture of the history in relation to the dominant, colonial, elitist, European history according to Dipesh Chakrabarty. In his essay "Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts", he clarifies, ". . . the act of championing 'minority histories' has resulted in cases in discoveries of subaltern pasts, constructions of historicity that help us see the limits to the mode of viewing embodied in the practices of the discipline of history" (476-77). He uses the discursive construction of the terms 'minority' and 'majority' as Europeans are minority statistically but they regard themselves as majority as majority of laws of the world are written by them. He writes, "Minority and majority are, after all, no natural entities; they are construction" (475). Thus, with the construction of 'minority', the

insignificant subject of history, the dominant, elitist discourses have silenced the subaltern voices. So, close examination and inquiry into the 'minority histories' and recuperate the subaltern voice from the past proves to be essential for the recovery of subaltern historiography, the retrieval of "the small silenced voice of history" (45) in the terms of Guha.

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