

I. Strategic Essentialism in *Countdown*

Amitav Ghosh's non-fiction *Countdown* primarily shows the nuclear policies of India and Pakistan and its impacts on the common people. In this non-fiction, Amitav Ghosh, an intellectual himself is visiting Pokhran area - Khetoloi village and taking the opinions of the villagers about the nuclear tests of India. Not only Ghosh visited the villages but also visited Kashmir, Siachen glacier with Defence Minister George Fernandes and took the opinions of the soldiers and officers about nuclear programmes of India and Pakistan. Similarly, Amitav Ghosh came to Pakistan and took the interview with Asma Jahangir, a leading human rights lawyer.

An intellectual traveller Amitav Ghosh is disseminating his anti-nuclear views through the mouths of the common villagers, soldiers, and a lawyer in this book. The Indian government under the leadership of Bhartiya Janata Party tested five nuclear devices at the Pokhran site on 11 May, 1998. The politicians were joyful for the tests and organized festivities and handed out celebratory sweetmeats on the streets. After three months of the Indian nuclear tests, Ghosh travelled to Pokhran sites where the government of Indira Gandhi had tested first nuclear power in 1974. In Pokhran, Ghosh met Manohar Joshi who had much knowledge of the impacts of the nuclear tests of 1974 and 1998. Regarding the impacts of the nuclear test of 1974 Manohar Joshi said, "There was so much illness here that people did not have money to buy pills and people began to get cancer after the test" (*Countdown* 3). Mr. Joshi further told Ghosh about a village called Khetoloi that was just six kilometers far from the test site, the nearest human habitation. According to Manohar Joshi, Khetoloi was unusual village and its inhabitants made their living mainly from the tending of livestock. Khetoloi village was the victim of the nuclear tests of 1998. Remembering the moments of nuclear tests of 1998, villagers said to Ghosh "There was a

tremendous shaking in the ground and a booming noise. They saw a great cloud of dust and black-and-white smoke shooting skywards in the distance. Cracks opened up in the walls of their houses" (5). There were impacts of nuclear tests in Khetoloi, Ghosh himself saw those impacts and spoke on behalf of the villagers. But after the test the Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said "No thing had happened in Pokhran" (5). Really Prime Minister did not speak truth. The walls of some of their houses were cracked and that blast split their under ground tanks which were built to store water for their livestock. The villagers had faced the sufferings of the nuclear tests since 1974. Regarding the sufferings of the nuclear test, a young man said to Ghosh, "Before the tests of 1974 cancer was unknown to Khetoloi. Since that time some ten to fifteen people had died of the disease" (6). Leaders become happy after the nuclear tests but innocent villagers die of cancer, by bringing such critical events from the mouth of a young clerk or a villager, Amitav Ghosh is speaking on behalf of the subalterns. Furthermore a young man said to Ghosh, "Some twenty children had been born with deformities in the limbs. Cows had developed tumours in their udders. Calves were born blind and with their tongues and eyes attached to the wrong parts of their faces" (6). Khetoloi villagers who had running their lives by tending livestock, after the test of 1974, were getting deformed children and deformed calves. In one sense, they were losing their lives because cows were means of their livelihood. People had developed consciousness about the negative impacts of the nuclear test after 1974, villagers were enraged and ready to complaint the media about the nuclear test. That's why, Bhartiya Janata Party cancelled the programmes of celebration in Khetoloi in 1998.

Amitav Ghosh in this non-fiction meets the leaders like Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan who was in the opposition of nuclear test. Not only Paswan but also Amitav

Ghosh, George Fernandes a parliamentarian were anti-nuclearist. George Fernandes, was one of the very few political leaders who sounded a note of criticism for the test of 1974. By supporting Fernandes Ghosh writes, "I could say, without shame, that he spoke for me and my opinions" (14). Thus, Amitav Ghosh in this non-fiction, by taking the references of common villagers, political leaders; is showing his anti-nuclear attitude and raising the agendas of the farmers who want their cows in place of the nuclears. Ghosh by using his intellectual strategy, he is speaking on behalf of the subalterns.

George Fernandes along with a party of journalist including Amitav Ghosh flew to Kashmir military camps. Indian and Pakistani governments are spending millions of budget in the glacier for the national security. Regarding this, a senior officer said to Ghosh, "The Siachen glacier costs India the equivalent of about twenty million U.S. dollars per day. Pakistani's costs are much lower but still substantial" (30). In India and Pakistan there are many people who are living hellish lives in poverty but the government is spending millions of U.S. dollars in glacier and nuclear tests.

Amitav Ghosh after returning from Kashmir flew to Lahore, it was his first visit to Pakistan. Ghosh went to see Mr. I.A. Rahman, Dr. Akmal Hussain and lawyer Asma Jahangir. Dr. Akmal Hussain told him about the economic crisis of Pakistan due to the nuclear test of India, the situation was the same in India after Pakistan had tested nuclear weapons. In Pakistan, Ghosh interviewed with Asma Jahangir whom he ranks with Burma's Aung San Suukyi as a figure of moral authority and an embodiment of courage. While responding Ghosh's question, Asma Jahangir talks about the peoples' ignorance about nuclear bomb, India's and Pakistan's irrational

policies and adhoc decision makers who do not listen the voice of the margin.

Regarding the decision -makers of India and Pakistan, Jahangir says:

Our decision - making is done by a few opinion-makers on both sides.

It's not the ordinary woman living in a village in Bihar whose voice is going to be heard, who is going to say, for God's sake I do not want this nuclear bomb, I want my cow and milk for my children. She is nowhere, she does not figure anywhere. It worries me. It really worries me. (62)

Ghosh presents the voice of the subaltern woman who does not want the nuclear bomb rather wants her cow and milk for her children. Through the mouth of lawyer, Ghosh is speaking on behalf of the farmer.

Thus, it can be argued that Amitav Ghosh an intellectual anthropologist by taking the nuclear issues of India and Pakistan in *Countdown*; is speaking on behalf of the farmers, the common people and the soldiers. Amitav Ghosh by visiting the Pokhran site, military camps and by taking interviews with them, is presenting the voice of the subalterns and speaking on behalf of the subalterns.

The argument of this research in *Countdown* is that Amitav Ghosh is presenting the nuclear consciousness of the subalterns by visiting the different places and in his text the subalterns speak through the strategic position of the intellectual. In this non-fiction, the author Amitav Ghosh himself is visiting the Indian village Khetoloi, army camps, Lahore to understand the views of the common people about the nuclear programmes of India and Pakistan. In this context, the research question has been: how Ghosh is presenting the nuclear consciousness of the subalterns and whether the subalterns can speak.

Amitav Ghosh an intellectual who holds a Ph.D. in social anthropology from Oxford in this non-fiction gives an account of his travel to Pokhran the test site meets the villagers and presents the destruction and diseases caused by the test from the mouth of the villagers like Manohar Joshi and a young clerk. Since the test of 1974, there is calamities in the village. Villagers are suffering from cancer, skin diseases, and cattle are blind and their udders have tumours. Thus, Ghosh by visiting the villagers and taking interviews with them, presents the nuclear consciousness of villagers. Next, important argument in my thesis is that subalterns' can speak through the strategic position of the intellectual. Regarding the subalterns voice, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay, "Can Subaltern Speak ?" writes "the subaltern has no history and cannot speak." But Spivak in an interview suggests the writers to embrace "strategic essentialism" (*Key Concepts* 79) to speak from the side of the subalterns. By taking Spivak's idea of "strategic essentialism" this thesis argues Ghosh an "intellectual elite" tries to speak for the subalterns. As such this thesis will show that subalterns have nuclear consciousness and speak through the strategic position of intellectual in Ghosh's *Countdown*.

Amitav Ghosh's non-fiction *Countdown* has achieved few critical responses since the early phase of its publication to till today. Dr. Priya Kapoor in her essay, "Of Moral Positions and Nuclear War: Novelist Arundhati Roy as Peace Activist" writes that Roy's *End of Imagination* and Ghosh's *Countdown* are important artifacts of peace activist research in a national and regional climate where the most were enjoying nuclear testing by India rather than to detract. Furthermore, Dr. Kapoor in this essay writes about Ghosh's use of "seasoned ethnographic approach" and his contribution to the narrative. Regarding *Countdown* Dr. Kapoor writes:

Countdown has largely escaped critical literary scrutiny of the academic community. It was a powerful offering at an important moment in India's historicity with the nuclear bomb. Using a seasoned ethnographic approach, trained anthropologist and novelist Amitav Ghosh conducted a series of interview in an effort to understand the rhetorical value and political imperative of the Indian and the Pakistani governments to conduct nuclear test. The writer's narrative unfolded a grim story of nation building, religious communalism, and impending war at the cost of destruction of natural habitats and disease on set among rural citizens living in the testing ground. (6)

According to Dr. Kapoor, *Countdown* is a powerful offering at an important moment in Indian's historicity with nuclear bomb. Ghosh in *Countdown* by using "ethnographic approach" conducted a series of interviews with Indian and Pakistani intellectuals and common people to understand the rhetorical value and political imperatives of the government to conduct nuclear tests. Moreover, Dr. Kapoor says that Ghosh narrative shows impending war at the cost of destruction of natural habitats of the villagers living at the test site. I also agree with Dr. Kapoor, Ghosh an anthropologist, is visiting Pokhran site and has shown destruction and fatal diseases in Khetoloi village due to the nuclear tests of 1974 and 1998 by the Indian government.

Another critic Patrice Riemens associates the book with the nuclear policies of India and Pakistan. He writes "*Countdown* is Amitav Ghosh's harrowing account of India's and Pakistan's parallel, but treacherously unequivocal nuclear policies" (1). In this book, Amitav Ghosh presents harrowing accounts like cracks in the houses, fatal diseases caused by the nuclear tests in India. Both countries have showy nuclear policy, they act without thinking the forthcoming impacts on citizens.

Sankaran Krishna in his essay, "The Bomb, Biography and the Indian Middle Class" opines that in *Countdown* Ghosh examines the sense of injury of the soldiers and the views of the Indian middle class towards the bomb. In this context Sankaran Krishna remarks:

In *Countdown*, Ghosh examines the sense of injury and the denied membership that animates so many in the Indian middle class to support the nuclearisation of the country. The desire of the middle class to be seen, valued and appreciated in international forums, to be welcomed to the status of a great power, is palpable in nearly every encounter he had with member's of India's strategic enclave. Nationalism and anti-colonial resistance under go a strange transformation and become reasons to support the bomb. (30)

According to Krishna Ghosh examines sense of the injury of the soldiers of India and Pakistan in Siachen. In the text, most of the Indian middle class people seem supporting the bomb but Krishna takes this scenario as an anti-colonial resistance and expression of nationalism.

Another critic Kanika Batra in her essay, "Geographical and Generic Traversings in the Writings of Amitav Ghosh" writes about *Countdown* that Ghosh mentions the "cartographic aggression" of the U.S. which published maps of this region with lines drawn through the Siachen glacier (216).

Amitav Ghosh expresses his aggression for the U.S. cartography which sketches the border of India and Pakistan. Furthermore, Ghosh writes in this non-fiction that the glacier has "no strategic, military or economic value" (27). I really appreciate Ghosh's pacifist and liberal thought but in the command of mean leaders of

both country Indian and Pakistani armies are exchanging barrages of artillery fire at the heights that range from ten to twenty thousand feet since 1983.

David Adler views *Countdown* as the critique of the nuclear 'bomb cult' in India and Pakistan and he shows the nuanced portrait of George Fernandes, the former anti-nuclear activist who served as Defence Minister in the hardline Vajpayee government.

Definitely Amitav Ghosh in *Countdown* critiques the 'bomb cult' of India and Pakistan. Recently in the month of April 2012, first India tested the ballistic missile, almost after a week Pakistan also tested the missile. India and Pakistan are spending millions of budget in the test at the cost of citizens' life. Most of the people are suffering from disease, poverty in India and Pakistan but leaders are unaware of them and taking the enjoyments in the nuclear tests.

Another critic Amartya Sen in his essay, "India and the Bomb" examines the challenges of nuclear policy in subcontinent in general and in India in particular. He further shows the "nuclear confrontation" in the subcontinent. Regarding this he writes, "The five Indian nuclear explosions in Pokhran on May 11 and 13, 1998 were quickly followed by six Pakistani blasts in the Chagai hills. The subcontinent was by now caught in an overt nuclear confrontation, masquerading as further empowerment of each country" (n. pag.)

Obviously, there is nuclear confrontation in the subcontinent. According to Amartya Sen, China conducted 15 nuclear explosions between 1964 to 1974. Looking at the history of Indian nuclear test, India tested first nuclear power in 1974 second tested in 1998 and recently in 2012 also India and Pakistan tested the ballistic missiles. Regarding the nuclear tests of Pakistan Sumit Ganguly writes that Pakistan tested an intermediate range ballistic missile, code-named Ghauri, on April 6, 1998.

The Ghauri was built with either Chinese or North Korean technology, had range of 1,500 kilometers and carry a payload of 750 kilograms. Its range would enable Pakistan to target twenty six cities in India. The Ghauri test was sufficient for B.J.P. government to proceed the nuclear tests. And Indian government tested five nuclear devices in Pokhran in 1998 as a reaction Pakistan also tested six nuclear devices. By observing these events, there is a obvious nuclear confrontation between India and Pakistan and will keep on going.

By studying the above reviews, it is evident that none of the critics has yet thrown light upon *Countdown* from the perspective of the subaltern studies. Within the parameters of subaltern theory, this thesis justifies that the subalterns in *Countdown* speak through the strategic position of the intellectual.

Antonio Gramsci uses "subaltern" to refer to the peasants, workers and similar proletariat groups who are subject to the hegemony i.e. "intellectual and moral leadership" (57) of the ruling class. The subaltern classes "by definition are not united and can't unite until they are able to become a 'state'" (Gramsci, 52). Their history is intertwined with the history of the civil society, dominant groups and state. Thus, it becomes necessary for him to study (1) their objective formation; (2) their active or passive affiliation to the dominant political formations; (3) the birth of new parties of dominant group to maintain control over subaltern groups; (4) the formation that subaltern groups produce themselves, and other formation like trade union and political parties (52). The history of such social groups is "necessarily fragmented and episodic" (54-55) because the ruling class interrupts even the provisional stages of their unification and also because they are subject to the ruling class even when they rebel. Gramsci believes that the subordination of the subaltern classes cannot break without their permanent victory.

While Gramsci uses "subaltern classes" interchangeably with "popular classes", and "masses", Ranajit Guha equates the term with "people". Trying to reconstruct the history of the "people" or subaltern classes of India, Guha writes the such groups are the social groups or elements that represent "the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those who we have described as the 'elite'" (44). Thus defining the subaltern as the other of the elite, Guha refers to the three categories of the elites in India: the dominant foreign groups, dominant indigenous groups on the all-India level, and dominant indigenous groups at the regional and local level. The first category includes the British rulers in the colonial India; the latter two groups are bourgeois-nationalists despite being the ideological product of the British rule. Among the three elite groups, the last one has a more complex dynamics. It consists of the groups that are heterogeneous in their composition and differs in each area because the regional economic and social development is not even. They act "not in conformity to interests corresponding truly to their own social being" (44) but in the interest of the dominant groups on all-India level.

The notion of resistance to the interests, ideology, and domination of the elite groups remains one of the invariant ideological features of the subaltern groups. Notwithstanding this essentialist position, Guha asserts that the "subalterns" is a heterogeneous category: The subaltern ideology reflects "the diversity of its social composition" (41). During India's struggle against the British rule, the subaltern groups contributed in making of Indian nationalism with their independent politics parallel to the elite politics. Such subaltern politics is "an autonomous domain, for it neither originate[s] from elite politics nor [does] its existence depend on the latter" (40) and contributed to their mobilization.

The subaltern mobilization is horizontal in contrast to the vertical mobilization of the elites. The elite mobilization was relatively more legalist and constitutionalist as well as more cautious and controlled. Its instrumentation is "characterized by a relatively greater reliance on the colonial adaptation of British parliamentary institutions and the residue of the semi-feudal political institutions of the pre-colonial India", whereas the instrumentation of the subaltern horizontal mobilization relies on "the traditional organization of kinship and territoriality or on class associations depending on the level of the consciousness of the people involved" (40). The subaltern's mobility is more "spontaneous" and "violent" and can make them the participants in a movement to overthrow the political and cultural forces that subordinate them.

However, Gramsci sees a subaltern having no clear theoretical consciousness of the activities but an understanding of the world. This common sense takes countless forms and remains, even in an individual, "fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential, [and] in conformity with the [subaltern's] social and cultural position" (Gramsci 419). It also absorbs the various social and cultural environments uncritically, thus, can be "historically in opposition to his activity." It means that "he has two theoretical consciousness (or one contradictory consciousness): one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with all his fellow-workers in the practical transformation of the real world; and one, superficially explicit or verbal, which he had inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed" (333). The subaltern's inherited consciousness results from the society's hegemonizing by the dominant groups and remains only on verbal and superficial level.

The subaltern groups' own consciousness, though nascent, manifests itself in action "occasionally and in flashes" when it acts as an organic whole. Otherwise, in

normal times, the groups accept the borrowed conception "verbally and believes itself to be following it" (327). Though the contradictory consciousness holds a social group together, it weakens their action, decision, and choice and finally leads to moral and political passivity. The combination is not specific, and it changes while common sense transforms and enriches itself with the scientific and philosophical ideas that enter ordinary life. Gramsci's comment on the contradictory consciousness is, as Partha Chattarjee affirms, "a methodological approach" (174) to explore the subaltern consciousness.

When Guha, Chatterjee, and other members of the Subaltern Studies Group attempted at recovering subaltern consciousness effaced in India's elite historiography with this approach, they encountered the problem of agency. Though sympathetic towards the Group, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak criticized their aim at retrieving subaltern voice through "the agency of change". Spivak argues that the group's effort to displace the discursive fields results in failure because the subaltern, the supposed agency of displacement, "cannot appear without the thought of the 'elite'", and thus, "the generalization is by definition incomplete [...] 'non-originary'" ("Subaltern Studies" 339). The Group's all attempted discursive displacements of theory of change are accounts of failure.

She declares that the Group's project charts the subject-effect or "that which seems to operate as subject" while making an attempt to retrieve consciousness. Such subject maybe a "part of an immense discontinuous network of strands" like politics, ideology, economics, history, sexuality, language, and the like and depend on other "heterogeneous determinations which are themselves dependant upon myriad circumstances" ("Subaltern Studies" 341). The subaltern subject which Guha and even Gramsci posit as autonomous is merely "the effect of an effect, and its positing a

metalepsis, or substitution of an effect for a cause" (341). In the essay "Can Subaltern Speak?" she questions: "On the other side of the international division of labor from specialized capital, inside and outside the circuit of the epistemic violence [i.e. 'a complete overhaul of episteme] of imperialist law and education supplementing an earlier economic test, *can subaltern speak?*?" (78). The question is purely rhetorical.

The attempts to analyze the subaltern consciousness in its "'pure form', before the politics of nationalism and socialism begin to penetrate the country side" are "self-conscious fictions, since neither accurate observers nor recorded statements accord with what is imputed to be the 'true social being or the subaltern'" (Schwarz 308-15). The subaltern subjects are irretrievably heterogeneous, complicated by the imperialist project, identified by difference and have the effaced itinerary. Thus, Spivak concludes that for the true subaltern group, there is no subject that can "know and speak" itself (Ashcroft et al. *Post-Colonial Studies* 8). Bill Ashcroft and others interpret Spivak's position that either the marginalized groups have no way to voice their resistance or they have to appropriate dominant language to be heard (*Key Concepts* 219). While analyzing *sati* in "Can Subaltern Speak?" and Mahasweta Devi's "Stanadayani", Spivak speaks for the subalterns assuming the speaking position that points to Ashcroft's second interpretation more valid. Nevertheless, Spivak considers the subject-effect of the subaltern a strategic essentialism: Subaltern Studies becomes "a perspective" (Das 324) to speak for the subaltern subject effect.

Thus, "the small peasant proprietors" who can't "represent themselves" "must be represented" ("Can Subaltern" 71). "There", Spivak assumes an 'elite' speaking position in order to recover and represent subaltern consciousness as a strategic use of positive essentialism. What lays bare in subject-effect assumptions of the subaltern is the fact that true recovery as well as the representation of the subaltern consciousness

depends upon the strategy of the speaking elite. Thus, in *Countdown* by assuming a strategic position, Amitav Ghosh tries to speak for the subalterns,

This thesis will focus on how intellectual speaks the voice of the subaltern. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay "Can Subaltern Speak?" apparently writes that subaltern "has no history and cannot speak." In the same essay she writes the small peasant proprietors "cannot represent themselves; they must be represented." Obviously, according to Spivak subalterns can't represent themselves, and must be represented by the intellectual. By taking the ideas of subaltern scholars and Spivak, I will prove that Amitav Ghosh, an "intellectual elite" is able to speak on behalf of them or rather subalterns speak through the strategic position of the intellectual.

I have divided this research work in to three chapters. In the first chapter, I have introduced the text critically from the perspective of Subaltern Studies. In this chapter I have quoted the ideas of theorists like Antonio Gramsci, Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak etc. In the second chapter, I have extracted the textual evidences, have analyzed them within parameters of Subaltern Studies. In the third chapter, I have concluded the arguments put forward in the second chapter.

II. Representing the Subalterns in *Countdown*

In this text Amitav Ghosh, a renowned Indian writer presents the nuclear conflicts of India and Pakistan and its impacts on the common people of their own country. The research explores Ghosh's strategy of finding the consciousness and resistance of the subalterns about the nuclear programmes of India and Pakistan. In doing so, Ghosh assumes a strategic position so that the subalterns could speak. In the acknowledgements Ghosh writes "In the course of writing this piece I talked to many hundreds of people in India, Pakistan and Nepal" (*Countdown* 83). Amitav Ghosh, an intellectual anthropologist, visits the test site Pokhran, Kashmir army camps, Siachen glacier, Lahore and collects peoples' opinions about the nuclear programmes of India and Pakistan. Ghosh is not only taking the peoples' opinions but also presenting their views positively and is able to represent their voices and concerns.

Representation refers to an act of presenting or showing somebody or something in a particular way. However, in its broadest sense, it refers to the "verbal formation" (Abrams 191) which is created by the persons who hold the power which they circulate in the different strata of the society. Subaltern Studies, in one or other way, revolves around the issues of 'Representation'. As subalterns themselves "cannot speak" so intellectuals, bourgeois or nationalists represent their voice. Here in this non-fiction an intellectual Ghosh is presenting the subalterns positively.

Amitav Ghosh an Indian writer is raising the nuclear issues of India and Pakistan. By going to the threshold of the people Ghosh is presenting the subaltern's voice. Infact, true recovery as well as the representation of the subaltern consciousness depends upon the strategy of the speaking elite. Ghosh as an "intellectual elite" uses 'interview' as the strategy to speak on behalf of the subalterns. Amitav Ghosh an "elite intellectual" by visiting and talking to Manohar Joshi, a

young clerk, Dalit leader, soldiers, officers, a lawyer named Asma Jahangir and the journalist Kunda Dixit, is presenting the voice of the subalterns and as an intellectual elite he is able to "touch the consciousness of the people" he represents ("Can Subaltern" 80). These characters are conscious about the impacts and the expenditure of nuclear power. Khetoloi Villagers are undergoing the pain of nuclear tests of 1974 and 1998. Officers and soldiers are also conscious of the expenditure of the nuclear tests.

The Indian government under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee tested five nuclear devices in Pokhran in the northwestern Indian state of Rajasthan on 11 May, 1998. Especially Bhartiya Janata Party's cadres were joyful for the tests and organized festivities and handed out celebratory sweetmeats on the streets. On 15 May, the Prime Minister flew to Pokhran with the several members of his party. They organized a celebration on the crater left by the blasts. The Prime Minister took the photograph standing on the crater's rim, throwing flower into pit but after the Indian tests in Pokhran, Pakistan was facing economic breakdown. People had diverse voices how to respond the Indian government. Ultimately, Pakistan also tested "six nuclear devices on May 28, 1998 at Chagai in Baluchistan" (Sen, n. pag.) as a response to Indian B.J.P. government. Then Pakistani economy wake up but this test gave a sobering effect to India where rupee had fallen to a historic low, the stock market index had plummeted, prices had soared and the B.J.P government was shaking. Amitav Ghosh who moves pen on the subaltern concerns travelled to Pokhran site after three months of nuclear tests of 1998 to witness the situation of Pokhran and its people where the government of Indira Gandhi and Atal Bihari Vajpayee tested the nuclear devices in 1974 and 1998. Politicians never tried to understand the situation of Pokhran since 1974. They were indifferent to the sufferings of the villagers rather the

Prime Minister Vajpayee said that he had been to Pokhran and nothing happened, there was no radioactivity. Robert Oppenheimer, the principal architect of the world's first nuclear explosion, as he watched the atmospheric explosion of the first atom bomb in New Mexico desert near the village of Oscura on July 16, 1945 uttered, "The radiance of a thousand suns ... burst in to the sky. I am become Death, the shatterer of worlds" (qtd. in Sen, n. pag).

Politicians rarely speak the truth, they speak according to the interests of mass as such Vajpayee seems blind and liar who did not see the nuclear impacts in Pokhran. Really, Indira Gandhi and Vajpayee made the dwellers of Pokhran, Khetoloi villagers a guinea pig for their personal interests. Nuclear tests victimized the people around the test site Pokhran. Explaining the sufferings of the villagers, Manohar Joshi, a worker who had got the high school education and developed a strong interest in nuclear matters said to Ghosh " After 1974, there was so much illness here that people did not have money to buy pills. We had never heard of cancer before in this area. But people began to get cancer after the test. There were strange skin diseases. People used to scratch themselves all the time. There were sores on their skins" (*Countdown* 3). India tested the first nuclear in 1974 in Pokhran under the prime ministership of Indira Gandhi. This test is called Pokhran-I. Since Pokhran I people were suffering from many diseases and they had finished money buying medicine. After the test, people were suffering from the cancer and other several skin diseases. Such calamities occurred in Pokhran due to the nuclear tests which spread radioactivity in the atmosphere. In Gramscian term "subaltern" refers to peasants, workers and similar proletariat group who are subject to hegemony i.e. "intellectual and moral leadership" (57) of the ruling class. Subalterns have "less access to the means to control their own representations" and "less access to cultural and social institution" (214). As a Marxist

Gramsci was very much concerned with the proletarians whose voice remains suppressed in the history. Regarding the voice of the subaltern Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her influential essay "Can Subaltern Speak?" clearly asserts that the subalterns cannot speak for they do not have the privileged position from where they can express themselves. For this reason "The small peasant proprietors" who cannot "represent themselves" "must be represented" ("Can Subaltern" 71). Thus, Spivak assumes an 'elite' speaking position in order to recover and represent subaltern consciousness as a strategic use of positive essentialism. Thus, this thesis argues that Amitav Ghosh an "elite intellectual" presents the sufferings and consciousness of the subalterns. Ghosh by speaking the sufferings and consciousness of subalterns caused by nuclear tests, is able to speak on behalf of the subalterns.

Manohar Joshi and Amitav Ghosh headed towards a village called Khetoloi which was just six kilometers far from the test site. Khetoloi villagers had severely felt the effects of the test of 1974 than anywhere else in the district and the effects of the tests of 1998 was no less than that of 1974. Khetoloi villagers made their livings mainly from tending of livestock and had grown prosperous at this trade. They were Bishnois, members of a small religious sect whose founder had forbidden the felling of trees and killing of animals. In Khetoloi, Amitav Ghosh talked to three turbaned elders, they told him about the impacts of the blasts of 1998 which they saw before them. Due to the tests, cracks opened up in the walls of some of their houses. Some of the villagers who had built underground tank to store water for their livestock, the blast split those tanks. Khetoloi villagers witnessed the destruction of the nuclear tests in their own home and their expensive underground tanks were useless. By experiencing the destruction of nuclear tests, khetoloi villagers got the consciousness about the dangers of the nuclear powers. Though the government official came around

and offered them small sums of money as compensations, the villagers "refused to accept the money and demanded more" (*Countdown 5*). Villagers by refusing the money resisted to the interests, ideology and domination of the elite leaders.

According to Ranajit Guha the "notion of resistance to elite domination" (41) is one of the invariant ideological feature of the subaltern groups. Thus, Amitav Ghosh by showing the subalterns' resistance to the interests, ideology and domination of B.J.P government, is able to speak on behalf of the subalterns.

Khetoloi villagers after being victimized since the tests of 1974 and 1998, they came to know the negative impacts of nuclear powers. Villagers had got the consciousness that nuclear test was harmful. Villagers were enraged with the government to the extent that they were ready to complaint to the media. That's why the government cancelled the programmes of celebration in Khetoloi. Slowly villagers had the consciousness and they became ready to complaint to the media about the impacts of nuclear tests. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay announces, "The Subaltern Studies Collective generally perceive their task as making a theory of consciousness or culture rather than specifically a theory of change" ("Subaltern Studies" 331). It was the first major shift in the history of Subaltern Studies.

In Khetoloi the elders handed the burden of conversation to the youngman who held a clerical job in the government office. The youngman said to Ghosh "The only people who benefit from these tests are the politicians. They bring no benefits to anyone else in the country" (*Countdown 5*). Such types of tests increase the power of the politicians but the villagers or the common people suffer from the fatal disease like cancer. Nuclear tests are lucrative to the politicians only. Amitav Ghosh by showing the disadvantages that fall upon the subalterns, is able to speak on behalf of the subalterns.

A young man or the clerk had more knowledge about the effects of nuclear tests. In the second world war after America threw the missile in Hiroshima the Japanese intellectual Kenzaburo Oe called, "the most terrifying monster lurking in the darkness of Hiroshima" (qtd. in Sen n. pag). As such death monster was lurking in the Khetoloi after the nuclear test of 1974. By giving the details of casualties of villagers due to test; a young clerk said to Ghosh, "Before the tests of 1974, cancer was unknown to Khetoloi. Since that time some ten to fifteen people had died of the disease. Some twenty children had been born with deformities in the limbs. Many had suffered from inexplicable skin rashes. Sores and boils appeared on the skin when it rained" (5). Before tests of 1974, people had no cancer since that time some ten to fifteen people had died of cancer. Some twenty children were born with deformities in the limbs. People were suffering from skin diseases. The atmosphere was filled with radioactivity. When it rained sores and boils appeared on the skin. Amitav Ghosh by assuming a strategic position has shown the sufferings of the villagers through the mouth of the young clerk and is able to speak on behalf of the subalterns.

Since the tests of 1974 villagers as well as cattle were suffering from the different diseases. Regarding the sufferings of the animals the clerk said to Ghosh, "When it rains even cows and camels get sores on their hide. It's as though the grass itself is covered with radioactivity. Cows had developed tumours in their udders. Calves were born blind, and with their tongues and eyes attached to the wrong parts of their faces. No one had heard of such things before" (6). After the nuclear tests of 1974, villagers had faced the calamities, villagers themselves werenot healthy. Their properties cows and camels were not healthy. Cows were giving birth to the deformed calves whose tongues and eyes were attached to the wrong pacts of their faces. After facing such heart-rending events villagers were conscious about the negative impacts

of the nuclear tests. At least the young clerk was able to speak the sufferings of the villagers. Amitav Ghosh by showing the awareness of the subaltern, is able to speak on behalf of the common people.

The clerk further expressed the dissatisfactions of the villagers about the nuclear tests with government, "In the past, the villagers had always tried to cooperate with the government. They had not publicize their complaints and they had been careful when talking to the press. But now we are fed up. What benefits do we get from these tests?" (6). Ordinary villagers who were under the hegemony of the government were co-operative with the government. They did not publicize their complaints to the press. To some extent, they accepted the government's domination but subalterns are fed up with the nuclear tests, this shows their attitude of resistance with the government. Regarding such culture of subalterns Dipesh Chakrabarty in his essay "Invitation to Dialogue" puts, "Subalternity is the composite culture of resistance to and acceptance of domination and hierarchy" ("Subaltern Studies" 376). Amitav Ghosh by incorporating the features of "Subaltern Studies", presents the villagers positively and speaks on behalf of the Subalterns.

The person who knows the impacts of the nuclear tests, does not want to touch the water of test site. After the test water is filled with radioactivity. The visitors who come to khetoloi donot touch the water. The clerk said to Ghosh, "Outsiders never want to drink our water. Even the people who come to tell us that everything is safe won't touch our water" (*Countdown* 6). Outsiders who come to visit khetoloi never drink the water but the people of the test site have to drink the water, there is not any alternative option. Without water life is not possible, if water is impure how life becomes good. Amitav Ghosh an anti-nuclearist by showing adversities and

compulsions of the villagers due to the nuclear tests, is able to speak on behalf of the subalterns.

In New Delhi many people had talked to Ghosh about how nuclear weapons would help India achieve 'great power'. But Ghosh was surprised by that archaic phrase 'great power' and writes in this book, "What would it mean to the lives of working journalists, salaried technocrats and so on if India achieved 'great power status?'" (7). In this extract, Ghosh is worried about the lives of working journalists, salaried technocrats and so on. The lives of subalterns would not change by the Indian achievement of great power rather government should provide them appropriate working environment, Ghosh by assuming a strategic position tries to speak for the journalists and technocrats.

Most of the Indians supported the Indian nuclear tests as being the icons of power but Ghosh, an intellectual anthropologist and anti-nuclearist, is not satisfied with that line of argument. Ghosh went to the Lok Sabha on 4th August 1998 to watch a debate on the foreign policy fall out of the recent tests. The majority members of the parliament were vociferously critical of the government for permitting the tests. Most of the politicians were ringing denunciations of the Bhartiya Janata Party's nuclear policies. Amitav Ghosh later went to see one of the leaders who spoke that day, a Dalit who was the Railway Minister in the short-lived government that preceded Vajpayee and is today something of a cult hero among many of the country's three hundred million Dalits. Mr. Paswan an anti-nuclearist said to Ghosh, "These nuclear tests were not in the Indian national interest. They were done in the interests of party, to keep the present government from imploding from within" (13). Bhartiya Janta Party did nuclear tests to show them powerful. Actually nuclear tests are not beneficial for the people. Amitav Ghosh through the mouth of Mr. Paswan is showing

the weakness of B.J.P. government which did the nuclear tests at the cost of the common people. Ghosh's main concern is that party's deed should be for the national interest and for the common people.

Mr. Paswan is really worried about the ordinary citizens. Mr. Paswan by pondering about the problems of the common people and annual expenditure of the government in armaments said to Ghosh:

In this a country, where ordinary citizens donot have food to eat.

Where villagers are being washed away by floods. Where prices are touching the skies. Of the country's six hundred thousand villages, one-third don't have arrangements for safe drinking water. Fifty percent of our people live below poverty line. For the price of a single battle-tank we could open one hundred primary schools. But what we do instead is that every year we spend thirty-five thousand crores of rupees on armaments. (13)

Mr. Paswan is worried about the Indian ordinary citizens who donot have food to eat though they work hard. The government cannot rescue the flood victims. Among the country's six hundred thousand villages, one third donot have arrangement for pure drinking water. Fifty percent of Indian people live below poverty line there are less primary schools but every year government is spending thirty five thousand crore of rupees on armaments. Therefore, "Indian peace activists urged politicians to keep their thoughts and their national budgets focused on the issues of poverty, food, education and housing" (Dr. Kapoor 3) . If politicians pay attention on the issues of poverty, food, education, the status of subaltern people will rise slowly. In India "the proportion of illiteracy in the adult population is about 40 percent" (Sen, n.pag.)

Amitav Ghosh compares the nuclear awareness of the people in 1998 and 1974. On 6 August, Hiroshima Day, Ghosh was in Calcutta. More than one hundred thousand people marched in the streets in protest against the nuclear tests of 11 May 1998 where as the voices of dissent were few for the India's first atomic test which was conducted in 1974. Goerge Fernandes, a parliamentarian was one of the very few political figures who sounded a note of criticism against the nuclear test of 1974 which was done by Indira Gandhi's Congress Party. Amitav Ghosh is an anti-nuclearist like Ram Vilas Paswan and George Fernandes. By supporting Fernandes's anti-nuclear attitude Ghosh writes, "Fernandes became a kind of beacon. I began to think of him as one of the few political figures in the country of whom I could say, without shame, that he spoke for me and my opinions" (*Countdown* 14). Fernandes was the light in the darkness because few people had opposed the nuclear test of 1974. Amitav Ghosh a journalist of *Indian Express* in the above extract praises George Fernandes, for his anti-nuclear attitude. Ghosh, an intellectual anthropologist is pouring out his anti-nuclear attitude indirectly by giving the reference of George Fernandes. Ghosh by using first person "I", is speaking against the nuclear programmes of the government and is giving moral support to the anti-nuclear leaders like Ram Vilas Paswan and George Fernandes. To support George Fernandes is to stand for the common villagers who get only disadvantages from the nuclear tests. Thus, Ghosh by supporting anti-nuclear leader George Fernandes, is able to speak on behalf of the subalterns.

Amitav Ghosh makes the readers clear that Fenandes was rebellious from his teenage. As a teenager Fenandes had harboured ambitions of becoming a Catholic priest. At the age of sixteen he rebelled against his father and joined a lay order seminary. Fernandes got the consciousness of rectors behave in seminary. Ghosh

writes Fernandes memory, "He remembers being appalled that the rectors ate better food than seminarians and sat at higher tables. It seemed intolerable to him that such divisions should exist among those who were trying to create a community centered around alteri Christi, the body of Christ. At the age of nineteen he left the seminary" (17). George Fernandes did not find equality between rectors and seminarians in the seminary. The rector who appeared as alteri Christ did the discriminatory behave, such behave was intolerable to Fernandes. Religion made Fernandes conscious and left the seminary at the age of nineteen. Partha Chatterjee in his essay "Caste and Subaltern Consciousness" takes "religion as a constitutive force in subaltern consciousness" ("Subaltern Studies: Caste and Subaltern Consciousness" 169). Religion, a dominant and universal code for society as a whole, can be looked from two different perspectives. On the one hand, for dominant groups , it offers the necessary ideological justification for existing social division and has potentiality to hold society into a single whole. On the other hand, religion makes the subordinate realize the oppression of the priest. The one religion will function from different standpoints for the people of different social group and strata.

The Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed Emergency in 1974.

George Fernandes a peace activist who was in opposition of nuclear test of 1974 was put in cell. Indira Gandhi called the fresh election. George Fernandes contested the election from the cell and won it. On the other hand Indira Gandhi and her party defeated the election. A new government was formed by a coalition of parties. Fernandes became a Minister of Commerce in a new coalition government in 1976. Though there were many ups and downs in his political career, he became Defence Minister in the government of Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1998. In the elections held in February 1998, Fernandes Samata Party succeeded in winning two seats out of a total

five hundred and fifty. Amitav Ghosh the journalist of the *Indian Express* went to see Fernandes in his office. During his meeting with Fernandes, Ghosh wanted to understand Fernandes response to the recent nuclear tests. Infact, Fernandes was not in the favour of nuclear test. He said that an atom bomb was morally unacceptable to him. Though the bomb was unacceptable to Fernandes, the B.J.P. government did the nuclear tests. Fernandes was serious while talking with Ghosh. In his somber mood Fernandes said to Ghosh, "I don't think many Indians care about the country. By Indians I mean those in highest places. If they cared they wouldnot have been looting to treasuries as they are and they wouldnot be allowing the crooks of the world to treat this country as a grazing ground" (20). The Indians who are in the highest places do not care the people. They loot the treasury of the country and they allow the crooks of the world to treat this country as a grazing ground. If they care the country and its people, people should not suffer from the nuclear tests and other problems. Amitav Ghosh by showing the weakness of the Indians elites tries to speak on behalf of the subaltern.

As Amitav Ghosh was rising to leave Fernandes office after the lunch, Fernandes told him that he was scheduled soon to visit certain military installations in the embattled state of Kashmir. From Kashmir he planned to fly further north, to Ladakh, and the Siachen glacier in the Karakoram mountains. Fernandes told Ghosh that to let his office know if he is interested to visit with him. Though this tour was a tour of inspection, Fernandes had planned to address some political meetings also George Fernandes along with a party of journalist including Amitav Ghosh flew to Kashmir on the morning of 24 August 1998. In this trip Ghosh was interested to learn of senior officer's view about the nuclear tests and soon came to understand the diverse views of officers on the nuclear tests. They had lunch at a large military base

in eastern Kashmir. After lunch they went by helicopter to Surankote, an army base located on the neck of territory that connects Kashmir to India. In Surankote Ghosh was riding in a vehicle with a young major. Fernandes had mounted a podium with several other politicians and local dignitaries. A crowd of few hundred people had gathered to hear them. Politicians were delivering the speech. The major by indicating the indifference of the politicians to the war said to Ghosh, "The politicians talk so well. But what we have here is a war. Does anyone know what's happening here ? Does anyone care ?" (24). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak asserts in an interview published in the US journal *Polygraph* that, "I like the word 'subaltern' for one reason it is truly situational ... That word, used under duress, has been transformed into the description of everything that doesnot fall under strict class analysis. I like that, because it has no theoretical vigor" (141). Gayatri Spivak likes the term 'subaltern' because it is situational. Generally the rank 'major' which is considered great in the army in this non-fiction is a subaltern. Amitav Ghosh through the mouth of major is expressing the selfish manner of politicians who donot care the misery of soldiers, officers and donot try to solve the problems of Kashmir. Amitav Ghosh through the mouth of major is able to speak on behalf of the officers, majors and soldiers of war inflicted area like Kashmir.

Next day they flew to Leh, the principal town in India's northernmost district, Ladakh. Leh's altitude is twelve thousand feet. On landing Leh, they got pills to prevent altitude sickness and warned of short-term memory loss. In the afternoon they went to Siachen glacier in the karakoram mountains where Indian and Pakistani troops have been exchanging fire everyday since 1983. The life of officers and soldiers in the glacier is not easy. Because of the environment soldiers are getting weak and suffering from dementia. Fernandes, Ghosh and other journalists stopped to

visit a dimly - lit hospital ward. There were some dozen men inside the hospital. No enemies injured them, it was the terrain that was their principal adversary. The patients were in their twenties, but most were older, some possibly in their late thirties and perhaps even early forties. By remembering the visit of hospital ward Ghosh writes, "They stared at us mutely and we stared back, trying to think of something cheerful to say. One of them had tears in his eyes" (28). Amitav Ghosh an "intellectual elite" by visiting the hospital ward in the glacier with minister and other journalists is showing the critical situation of patients. Among the patients one of them had tears in his eyes, without suffering nobody sheds tear. Amitav Ghosh by showing tears of a sick soldier is able to speak on behalf of the subaltern.

Amitav Ghosh in this non-fiction clearly writes the investment of Indian and Pakistani government in Siachen conflict. Officers had the consciousness of Siachen cost but on the other hand most of the Indian and Pakistani people were using old cooking stove. Regarding the expenditure of Siachen a senior officer says to Ghosh:

The Siachen glacier costs India the equivalent of about 20 million U.S. dollar per day: this adds up, in the course of a year, to about one billion dollars about one tenth of the country's entire defence budget.

Pakistan's costs are much lower but still substantial. The total cost of the Siachen conflict is probably of the same order of magnitude as that of the nuclear programmes of India and Pakistan combined. If the money spent on the glacier were to be divided up and handed out to the people of India and Pakistan, every household in both countries would be able to go out and buy a new cooking stove or a bicycle. (30)

Most of the Indian and Pakistani people are living miserable life. They are not able to change their stove or bicycle. They have compulsion to use old stove or bicycle but

India and Pakistan spend billions of dollar in the glacier. If the both governments stop spending money on the glacier and divide that money to the people of India and Pakistan, these people will buy a new cooking stove or a bicycle. Amitav Ghosh through the mouth of the senior officer is able to speak on behalf of the subalterns who donot have new stove or bicycle.

George Fernandes was the first Defence Minsiter to visit the glacier. Before him, no Defence Minister had ever thought to pay the glacier a visit. In Siachen officers had arranged khana in Fernandes honour. George Fernandes instead of having food, left the officer's table and "began to serve the other ranks, taking the dishes out of the hands of the kitchen staff" (31). Fernandes by serving dishes to the other ranks from the hands of kitchen staff, showed affection to the soldiers. Because of his love the men were visibly moved. Amitav Ghosh creating loving environment to the military personnels in the Siachen through Fernandes, is able to speak on behalf of the subalterns.

Amitav Ghosh asked Fernandes whether the soldiers of India and Pakistan could be withdrawn from Siachen or not. Fernandes responded that nobody really wants a solution and things will just go on like this. Really till 1983 upto today both India and Pakistani soldiers are taking the duty on the Line of Control in Siachen. Furthermore, Ghosh writes his meeting with defence-affairs specialist, Shirin Mazari in Pakistan. During the meeting Shirin Mazari said to Ghosh "The feeling about Siachen in Pakistan is that we're bleeding India on that front. So let them stay up there for a while and bleed. But Pakistan is bleeding too surely. Not as much as India; they are bleeding more" (32-33). Ofcourse military life in Siachen is not easy, soldiers are suffering from altitude sickness and dementia. Though Mazari told to Ghosh that Pakistan is bleeding more in Siachen, my point is that both military personnels from

India and Pakistan are bleeding more or less. Nobody can exactly measure the sufferings. Ghosh by showing the plight of the Indian and Pakistani soldiers, is able to speak on behalf of the subalterns.

Amitav Ghosh visited Kashmir, Leh and Siachen with Fernandes and other journalists. After visiting those places Ghosh flew to Lahore from New Delhi. It was his first visit to Pakistan. It so happened that a week before America had thrown the missiles on Southern Afganistan but some missiles had gone astray and landed south of the border therefore Pakistani people were also affected. Pakistani people protested the American hegemony and nuclear tests of Indian government by burning the Indian and U.S. flags. In this context, Ghosh writes, "The week before, eighty U.S. Tomahawk missiles had rained down on southern Afganistan. Some had gone astray and landed south of border. There was outrage in Pakistan. There were daily reports of Indian and U.S. flags being burned in the streets of Pakistani cities" (38). As the subalterns resist elite ideology and dominance, in the same vein Pakistani people resisted the U.S. dominance and nuclear tests of Indian government by burning the U.S. and Indian flags in the cities of Pakistan.

During his stay in Pakistan Ghosh went to see Mr. I.A. Rahman, Director of the Human Rights Commission, Dr. Akmal Hussain, an industrialist and London - trained economist. Dr. Hussain tells Ghosh about the economy of Pakistan which was already under pressure, the economy of Pakistan was degrading after the Indian nuclear tests of 1998. As a response to Indian nuclear tests Pakistan also carried out its own tests; that tests kept the economy alive. Similarly Amitav Ghosh went to see Qazi Hussain Ahmed, the leader of the Jam'aat -e-Islami, the principal religious party in Pakistan. Qazi Hussain Ahmed was dismissive of Nawaz Sharif proposed constitutional amendment because Sharia, the corpus of Islamic law, would replace

the country's current legal system. Ahmed by commenting on the nature of politicians including Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said to Ghosh "These are all corrupt people. What they've done is loot and pillage and that's what they're still busy doing" (41). The politicians who get the chair by distributing the slogans of nation development are corrupt. They cheat the people and make the country bankrupt as a result people are facing economic crisis in Pakistan. Amitav Ghosh by showing corrupt nature of politician, is supporting ordinary people and is able to speak on behalf of the subalterns.

While talking to Ghosh Qazi Hussain Ahmed clearly expressed people's anti-nuclear attitude. Regarding this Qazi Hussain Ahmed said to Ghosh:

We are not for nuclear weapons. We are ourselves in favour of disarmament. But we don't accept that five nations should have nuclear weapons and others shouldn't. We say let the five also disarm. If those five want to keep their weapons, then we say others also have a right to do the same. In the matters of science, technology and knowledge we cannot accept that any nations have a monopoly. (41)

Amitav Ghosh expresses his peace - keeping views through the mouth of religious leader Qazi Hussain Ahmed. The pronoun 'we' refers to the subalterns. Subalterns do not want the hegemony of five countries America, England, Russia, China and France and they want to disarm the five countries. Otherwise, they also want to keep the weapons like five countries. Moreover subalterns can't accept monopoly of any nation in the matter of science, technology and knowledge. In this way they defy the dictatorship of five countries as Gautam Bhadra calls "defiance" as "the subaltern mentality" (63). Amitav Ghosh by showing the subaltern consciousness against the hegemony of five countries, is able to speak on behalf of the subaltern.

In Lahore Amitav Ghosh wanted to meet a bold prominent person Asma Jahangir, Pakistan's leading human rights lawyer and a figure of legend among democratic activists. One evening Ghosh found himself at a dinner party where Asma was expected. Asma arrived at the dinner party about ten. Ghosh first saw and listened her in the dinner party. Asma was small women with the crackling intensity of a high-tension cable. Though she was small, her voice was loud and beautiful. On that evening she held them spellbound with stories about the courts and about her cases. A few days later, a friend of Ghosh managed to talk to Asma Jahangir at length. Ghosh felt shocked because on that very morning the Pakistan government had issued a circular listing the names of three people whose lives were believed to be most at risk: Asma was one of them. The news made others alarm but Asma had not so much as bothered to read article. Asma further said to Ghosh about her own death threats:

I should make it clear that I enjoy what I do and death threats are a part of the work. I've had attacks on my person; I've had people coming in to my mother's house to kill me. They've taken my brother and his family hostage. I've had a man arrested from the courtroom with a gun, I've had my car broken by a mob while defending a Christian in a blasphemy case. I've had other death threats like slogans written on buses, saying kill her, we are your maut [death] Asma Jahangir.

(Countdown 49)

Gayatri Spivak in her seminal essay "Can Subaltern Speak ?" presented women as subaltern from the perspective of gender. In the same essay Spivak writes, "The subaltern as female cannot be heard or read" (103). But Amitav Ghosh an "intellectual elite" by going to the threshold of Asma Jahangir is presenting the voice of subaltern women. In the above extract Asma joyfully told Ghosh that death threats are part of the work. Her opponents tried to kill her. They kidnapped her brother and

his family to threaten her. Many times they tried to kill her. Asma had other death threats like slogans written on buses saying kill her we are your maut [death] Asma Jahangir. Though Spivak writes subalterns "cannot speak", here in this non-fiction Asma Jahangir is speaking through the strategic position of the intellectual that's why subalterns can speak. Furthermore Spivak opines, "The oppressed, if given the chance, and on the way solidarity through alliance politics, can speak and know their conditions" ("Can Subaltern" 78). Spivak's point is that oppressed or marginalized person can speak if an intellectual gives them chance to speak.

People who wanted to kill Asma Jahangir had misconception that Jahangir wanted women to become behaya (licentious). They got this perception from some mullahs, by two or three lawyers, by one newspaper. Slowly the people who wanted to kill her realized their mistakes. Ghosh was interested to know Jahangir's formative years and how she became human rights activist. Jahangir's household environment made her human rights activist. Jahangir's father was in politics and he was always in the opposition of the government so Jahangir had seen him going in and out of the jail. During Ayub Khan's time Jahangir's father was in jail for many years. Jahangir's family didnot get any help from anyside, she was also a teenager, her mother couldnot do anything and they didnot have a political party to fall back on. In such critical condition, Asma Jahangir a courageous figure organized a procession of women to oppose Ayub Khan government. Regarding this she said to Ghosh "It was at the end of Ayub Khan's period that I got really motivated. I began as a campaigner when I organized a procession of women during Ayub Khan's time" (*Countdown* 50). In the above extract Ghosh shows procession of subaltern women, definitely it's a unity of the subaltern who were "deeply in shadow" by tyrant rulers. ("Can Subaltern" 82).

Amitav Ghosh strategically by showing the unity of the subaltern women, is able to speak on behalf of the subalterns.

Though Jahangir's father was released from the jail in the period of Ayub Khan again he went to jail during the period of Yahya Khan. He was released but the first day Mr Bhutto came to power he arrested him again. Being dissatisfied with her father's arrest she filed petition against his arrest at the age of eighteen which became a very celebrated case in India and Pakistan. The case started in 1970 but the judgement was in 1972. Judges declared Yahya Khan's government illegal and consequently the martial law orders under which her father was arrested were also illegal. This made her very interested in law because she was very much involved in the case as a petitioner. Asma Jahangir remembers the moments that her father never wanted them to come and meet him in the jail. They only saw him when he was present in the court of Lahore. So Asma told Ghosh that courts became a place where she met her father and where justice was given out. Because of this perception, she determined to be a lawyer and took her law degree from Kinnaird college Lahore and became a lawyer. Asma Jahangir a veteran lawyer though she has no misconception about the courts of Pakistan. She realizes the necessity of knocking the courts of Pakistan, in this context she says to Ghosh, "These institutions are made with our money and we have to keep knocking. Every knock must be a knock at their conscience. And we must keep knocking and keep knocking until their conscience responds" (*Countdown* 52). Asma Jahangir points out that judiciary institutions are made with the money of us and we have right of knocking. The pronoun 'we' refers to the subalterns. We have to knock at their conscience and must keep on knocking until their conscience responds. If the judges use the conscience, they decide the case free of biasness. Amitav Ghosh an "intellectual elite" through the mouth of Asma Jahangir

requests subalterns to knock constantly to the judiciary institution. Thus, subalterns speak through the strategic position of the intellectual.

Amitav Ghosh a versatile journalist wanted to know the future of the Mohajir movement in Sind which was believed as a terrorist movement. Jahangir opines that though there is disagreement between agitators and government in Sind movement, that disagreement should be solved through the dialogue. Asma Jahangir being positive towards Mohajir movement says to Ghosh:

In every movement there are all kinds of people, and you want to bring a dialogue forward in order to encourage those people who want a peaceful settlement. I think there has not been enough reaching out. You can't kill a movement through state terrorism. If I may use that word, because then you're really strengthening the movement. (54)

Jahangir says to Ghosh that there are all kinds of people in every movement and so is the case of Mohajir movement. There should be dialogue between the people and government. In that movement government gave the tag of "terrorist" to the participants of the movement, Jahangir does not like such policy of the government. She opines that such policy of the government strengthens the subalterns movement. As Guha opines subalterns mobilization was horizontal in contrast to the vertical mobilization of elite during India's struggle against the British rule. The instrumentation of the subaltern horizontal mobilization relie[s] on "the traditional organization of kinship and territoriality or on class associations depending on the level of consciousness of the people involved" (On Some Aspects ... 40). The subaltern's mobility is more "spontaneous" and "violent" and can make them the participants in a movement to overthrow the political and cultural forces that subordinate them.

Amitav Ghosh wanted to know the solution of Kashmir a disputed territory where Pakistani and Indian army are standing on the Line of Control. Indian NGOs report that in past two, three years Indian armies have raped the number of women, have killed number of people in the Kashmir valley. Such types of monstrous activities add fuel to the fire. Asma thinks victimized people should come to the process of the dialogue for long-lasting solution of Kashmir. Regarding this, she says to Ghosh:

I have read, particularly in the past two, three years, a number of reports, even by the Indian NGOs about the kind of intervention the [Indian] army has had in the valley, and you can't expect people not to be antagonistic-the number of people that have been killed, the number of women that have been raped. These are not exaggerated figures, because they have come from Indian NGOs themselves. Unless those people themselves are in the process of dialogue you will not able to have long -lasting solution there. (57-58)

Because of the monstrous behaviours of Indian army in Kashmir valley is enhancing the violence. For the long-lasting solution of Kashmir, these victimized people should come to the process of dialogue. By ignoring the demands of subalterns, long-lasting resolution seems impossible. Thus, Ghosh through the mouth of Jahangir is able to speak on behalf of the subalterns.

The prominent problem between India and Pakistan seems Kashmir because the Indian government doesnot wish to see any part of Kashmir leave India's hand. Ghosh assumes and asks to Jahangir whether the problems between India and Pakistan remain without Kashmir. Jahangir responds that if the Kashmir issue is solved tomorrow they would still have many problems, like water disputes, foreign

policy and religious riot. Therefore, she says to Ghosh both countries' leadership must sign an accord protecting minorities. In this context Jahangir says to Ghosh:

We have a large Muslim minority in India. And you have Hindus in Pakistan. And the question of minorities will always remain the agenda of India and Pakistan. When the Muslims in Bombay are hit, it hurts the Muslims in Pakistan; When the Hindus in Sindha are persecuted, it annoys India. So that again will be a point of friction. If there is keen interest in ending this animosity - and I would say this is very much linked with the Kashmir issue-both countries leadership must sign an accord protecting minorities. (60)

In the above extract through the mouth of Jahangir Ghosh raises the issues of minorities in the sense of Muslim and Hindu who are living in India and Pakistan. My point is that whether they are Hindus or Muslims they are subalterns Asma Jahangir suggests the leadership of India and Pakistan to sign an agreement to protect minorities to end the animosity between India and Pakistan. Amitav Ghosh strategically, through the mouth of Jahangir says to the leadership of India and Pakistan to sign an accord to protect subalterns. By doing so Ghosh is able to speak on behalf of the subalterns.

Amitav Ghosh wanted to understand Jahangir's response about the Indian nuclear tests of 11 May. Definitely Jahangir was not happy with the nuclear tests of India. She also didnot like "tit for tat policy" (Sen. n. pag.) of Pakistan. She said to Ghosh that Pakistan should have taken the moral high ground for the nuclear tests of May 28 but couldnot take. On the other hand she said to Ghosh because of people's ignorance they distribute sweets in the joy of nuclear test. Jahangir points out that we have to make the common people understand how nuclear issue is linked to their little kitchen at home. Due to their ignorance people are celebrating the nuclear tests as

festivals. She further says to Ghosh, "Look at the education of our people in terms of what a nuclear bomb is. If we knew what a nuclear bomb was we would not have people on the road distributing sweetmeats. We wouldn't have people celebrating and dancing" (61). After the nuclear tests of 1998 B.J.P. members came to the road, organized festivities, and handed out celebratory sweetmeats on the street. Along with the leaders most of the people celebrated nuclear tests joyfully as the greatest festival. People distributed sweets after the nuclear tests because of illiteracy.

Amartya Sen in his essay "India and Bomb" writes, "The proportion of illiteracy in the Indian adult population is still about 40 percent, and it is about 55 percent in Pakistan" (Sen, n. pag.) The illiterate people do not know what is right and what is wrong. Politicians easily motivate the illiterate people and they appear on the road, support the programmes which do not benefit them. Asma Jahangir feels necessity to educate those people about nuclear bomb. Similarly Dipesh Chakrabarty in his essay "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History" quotes Partha Chatterjee's opinion about the importance of education to the subaltern classes, "It was the peasants and the workers, the subaltern classes, who were given to bear the cross of 'inadequacy' for, according to this version, it was they who needed to be educated out of their ignorance, parochialism, or, depending on your preference, false consciousness" ("Subaltern Studies: Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History" 270). According to Partha Chatterjee also education is necessary for the peasants and the workers to be out parochialism and false consciousness.

Amitav Ghosh asked Jahangir whether nuclear war between India and Pakistan is possible or not. Jahangir points out the possibility of anything between these countries because of both countries' irrational policies and ad hoc decision makers. Moreover, few opinion-makers decide everything on both sides, they do not

listen the voice of an ordinary woman who lives in the village of Bihar. Regarding such policies of leaders Asma Jahangir says to Ghosh:

Our decision -making is done by a few opinion-makers on both sides. It's not the ordinary woman living in a village in Bihar whose voice is going to be heard, who is going to say, for God's sake I don't want this nuclear bomb, I want my cow and milk for my children. She is nowhere, she does not figure anywhere. It worries me. It really worries me. (*Countdown* 62)

Amitav Ghosh in the above excerpt presents the consciousness of the subaltern woman who does not want the nuclear bomb rather wants her cow and milk for her children. But the leaders do not listen the voice of the subalterns. Gayatri Spivak states in an interview, "The subaltern cannot speak means that even when the subaltern makes an effort to the death to speak, she is not able to be heard" (29). For this reason also "there is no unrepresentable subaltern that can know and speak" (*Can Subaltern* 80). That is to say subalterns need to be represented by the elite intellectual.

Ghosh's stay in Pakistan ended with his visit to Wagah border post with a group of actors from Lahore based company called the Ajoka Public Theatre. Then Ghosh came to Nepal and met Kunda Dixit, a Kathmandu based journalist and ecologist. Kunda Dixit explained to Ghosh that India's military planners launch a nuclear strike against Pakistan in the monsoon months. Throughout most of the year the wind blows from west to east, from Panjab plains towards the mountains of Nepal. With the blow of the wind, radioactivity will spread up to Nepal. Regarding this Kunda Dixit said to Ghosh, "In Nepal you would have radioactive snow" (*Countdown* 70). Ghosh an intellectual anthropologist is expressing his concerns about the impacts of nuclear tests which will arrive up to Nepal. Thus, Ghosh by taking the nuclear issue

and its impacts, he is able to speak on behalf of the Indian, Pakistani and Nepalese people also.

Thus, Amitav Ghosh has recovered and represented subaltern consciousness against nuclear tests and expenditure on armaments through the mouths of Manohar Joshi, a young clerk, Ram Vilas Paswan, a senior officer, Asma Jahangir, Qazi Hussain Ahmed and Kunda Dixit. As the subalterns cannot speak and they are represented by intellectuals or other power holders. While doing so there is obviously misrepresentation of subalterns but representation depends on the strategy of the speaking elite. Amitav Ghosh, an "intellectual elite" meets and talks to them himself: by doing so he is able to speak on behalf of the subalterns.

III. Need for Positive Essentialism

This project has analytically explored the non-fiction, *Countdown*, by Amitav Ghosh, from the perspective of subaltern studies. This project has presented the nuclear consciousness of the subalterns and the voice of the subalterns through the strategic position of the intellectual. After three months of the Indian nuclear tests in Pokhran in 1998, Amitav Ghosh has visited Pokhran, Khetoloi Village, Kashmir army camps, Siachen glacier, Pakistan and Kathmandu in order to recover the subaltern consciousness regarding nuclear programmes and expenditure of the government in armaments and Siachen glacier. Subalterns members of non ruling class cannot raise their voice due to having no power and no agency of speaking in the history. As the subalterns have "no history and cannot speak" in such condition they "must be represented" by the intellectual elite. While representing the subalterns intellectual uses their voice and vision, so representation willnot be fair but the researcher's claim is that true recovery as well as the representation of subaltern consciousness depends upon the strategy of the speaking elite. Amitav Ghosh an "intellectual elite" to speak on behalf of the subalterns reaches to the thresh hold of the victimized people in Pokhran and Khetoloi and presents their voice. After returning from Pokhran, Ghosh has met the people of different walks of life and is strongly able to speak on behalf of the subalterns through the mouth of Manohar Joshi, young clerk Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan, officers and lawyer.

Amitav Ghosh has clearly expressed that rulers ambitions for nuclear weapon makes their own people sufferer. People have been suffering from the cancer, skin disease in Pokhran since the test of 1974. The agony of Khetoloi villagers is also sensational where ten to fifteen people died of cancer, people gave birth to some twenty deformed children, cattle also gave the deformed calves since 1974. Khetoloi

villagers had the growing consciousness about the impacts of the nuclear test in such condition B.J.P government tested nuclear devices in Pokhran, that tests made cracks on the walls of their houses and their underground tanks were split. To make the villagers calm, government offered a little compensation but the villagers refused that little sum of money and were ready to complaint to the media about the impacts of nuclear tests. Thus, Ghosh presents the growing consciousness and resistant psyche of the Khetoloi villagers.

Amitav Ghosh presents his concerns for the subalterns through the mouth of Mr. Paswan a parliamentarian who opposed the nuclear tests of 1998 in Lok Sabha. Through the mouth of Mr. Paswan Ghosh presents that government should pay concentrate for the basic needs of ordinary citizens like food, pure water and education rather than armaments. Ghosh's hidden motive is that the amount which the government spends on armaments can be spent for the basic needs of the common people. Similarly, Ghosh presents the expenditure of Siachen glacier of India and Pakistan through the mouth of the senior officer. Amitav Ghosh through the mouth of the senior officer reveals that billion of expenditure which India and Pakistan spend in the glacier change the status of the subalterns of India and Pakistan with a new stove or bicycle.

Amitav Ghosh further clarifies his support for the subalterns by meeting Pakistani religious leader Qazi Hussain Ahmed and a lawyer Asma Jahangir. Through the mouth of Qazi Hussain Ahmed Ghosh presents the resistance of the subalterns against five countries America, China, Russia, France, England who themselves keep nuclear weapons and want to disarm others. Ghosh strongly presents that if those five want to keep their weapons in that situation others also have a right to keep the weapons. Ghosh an intellectual, a veteran journalist has asked many questions to

Jahangir. Asma Jahangir fearlessly and logically answers Ghosh's questions and reveals that she had no fear of death threats from her opponents. Through the mouth of Asma Jahangir Ghosh presents that subalterns should be educated about the impacts of and the expenditure of nuclear bombs. If they get the knowledge about the nuclear bomb how it affects the economy of the country and livelihood of the subalterns then they would not come to the road after the nuclear tests of the country. Ghosh presents the condition of the victimized in Kashmir by Indian armies who have raped the number of women and have killed number of people through the mouth of Jahangir. Ghosh's focus is that the violence will not stop until government calls the victimized people for the dialogue. During this meeting with Jahangir Ghosh as an impartial subaltern writer has included the voice of the female also. Ghosh presents the possibility of anything between India and Pakistan through the mouth of Jahangir because the policy makers and decision makers of both countries are irrational. They do not listen the voice of woman of Bihar who does not want nuclear bomb rather she wants her cow and milk her children. Thus, Ghosh presents the consciousness of the ordinary woman.

To sum up, Amitav Ghosh an intellectual visitor presents that subalterns have nuclear consciousness and expenditure consciousness about armaments in India and Pakistan. Ghosh by assuming a strategic position, presents that the amount which the government spends in nuclear tests and armaments can be used for the common people who have no food and are deprived of getting even primary education. That's why, Amitav Ghosh an "intellectual elite" is able to speak on behalf of the subalterns.

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