

## **I. Recollecting History in Anh Do's *The Happiest Refugee***

The history is one of the most important things in life to every individual. No one can escape from history, whether one could dare to document his or her history or not. Anh Do, the narrator of the autobiography, *The Happiest Refugee*, has a very bitter history. During the transition and transformation in his life from becoming and unbecoming citizen, he faces lots traumatic experiences. But his bitter history as a refugee is one of the most precious things to him. He cannot forget his history; nor can he ignore it; so he celebrates his bitter history throughout his autobiography. At the end, he comes to be a celebrity in Australia; but he cannot go beyond his bitter past. In his autobiography, he celebrates his subaltern history despite the fact that many references of his history are bitter and traumatic. It is one of the models of representing the history of someone from below.

'History from below' aims to make the history of the minorities challenging the elitist conception of history known to all. It tries to promote the interest in history not only of the professional historians but also of the ordinary people by extending it up to the wide audience the possibility of the history of the subaltern groups. The impact of this movement has been growing wider, even in the Western academia. Writings on hidden history focus the ordinary people and their past.

The refugees are dominated and subordinated subalterns in term of many ways. They are not only voiceless groups of people; refugees are stateless as well. When someone is stateless, he/she becomes powerless in terms of various aspects. The autobiographical figure Anh Do through his well-known book *The Happiest Refugee* presents his near to death true story, his struggle, hopelessness and hope before

transforming himself into a celebrity in Australia. He gains agency from the voiceless state to the happiest refugee. This research analyses how a subaltern position is transformed by stepping forward on the concept of Gramsci's autonomous subaltern; it presents the process of transformation of a refugee like Anh Do into a successful figure if there is will power. It is an example that someone can rise from the bottom with their continuous struggle and hope.

'History from below' has changed the established canon of writing national history. "A major shift has been taking place in recent years in the historiography of the Indian national movements..." what Sumit Sarkar believes, "through the emergence of a kind of 'history from below'" (1). This mode of writing history is connected to the personal history writing as well that it naturally concentrates on local and regional issues that were ignored earlier and also it raised voice against the domination and subordination caused by various forms of power hegemony and elitism. To quote Ania Loomba, "Today, histories 'from below' are committed not simply to unraveling colonialism but to tracing how colonized peoples have been drawn into capitalist society and have resisted their incorporation..." (168). This concept can be applied in the case of subaltern refugee as well, who gets involved to unravel his/her bitter history as a celebration of subaltern past like Anh Do does in his autobiography *The Happiest Refugee*.

The true story of Anh Do is a source of hope to the mass of subaltern groups of people. As a refugee, with his entire family members and relatives, Anh Do runs away from Vietnam during Civil War. The overcrowded boat is robbed and women are rapped. They are rescued and resettled as refugees in Australia. The life in Australia is not easy

during the course of assimilation and transformation from refugee to non-refugees. The struggle of Ahn Do along with his family members is really remarkable in term of pursuing the process of transformation from a subaltern refugee to a celebrity. The father leaves house to get married to another woman when Ahn Do is thirteen years old. He is compelled to work to support the family. His mother works as well; the mother's sacrifice to keep on the family is a source of inspiration to Ahn Do. He works hard since his teenage years and manages time to graduate high school. He joins university and works out during his study for higher education, too. The funny as well as serious issue is that, he is working out in a corporation job for a 60-hour a week but he tells in an interview that he is assigned only a 4-hour a week job. Through the hard journey of transition, a subaltern refugee transforms into a renowned comedian in Australia as a source of inspiration to hopeless subaltern groups of people.

The word 'subaltern' is originated at the first time to address the British Military post, which is a commissioned officer below the rank of captain. The term 'Subaltern' was taken from Gramsci's euphemism for the proletariat in his celebrated book *The Prison Notebooks*. However, the subaltern studies collective used it as an umbrella term for all groups of people; they viewed subaltern in the sense as oppressed - the proletariat, the peasantry, women, and tribal people.

During the time of 19960-1980 there emerged a new thought in Indian academy, which raised the issues of common people who were suppressed by the elite. To address such people those Indian writers and critics in their writing use the term subaltern. In this regard, E.P. Thomson argues, "subaltern studies begin with the rejection of European master-narratives that have only seen derivations, little challenge or denial. The European

supreme self-confidence make it clear in the Hegelian proposition which declared India an intellectually sterile land bereft of any history” (2).

The autobiography, *The Happiest Refugee* by Ahn Do is one of the models of life writing emerged as a model of history from below as subaltern studies group members advocate ‘history from below’. An extraordinary refugee is an autobiographical personality who has articulated him as the happiest refugees by rising from the bottom. His personality opposes the elitist mode of writing history. He rises as a celebrity from the subaltern refugee position by creating a landmark history from his fragmented traumatic past. The subaltern perspective is local as well as global regarding its application despite the fact that it was originated with the contexts of rewriting South Asian history.

The book begins from the moment when the autobiographer visits his father, who has been living with the stepmother. He has not seen his father for nine years since. At that time he was just thirteen and now he is twenty-two. He recalls his past with his father as,

My father. Just as I remember him. Almost exactly the same. Skinny little face...He grabs my neck. ‘Anh! Son!’ He is beaming a huge smile. ‘Son!’ He starts to slap me round the head. ‘Look how big you are! Look how tall you are!’ He laughs hysterically. ‘My god, he’s huge’, he squeaks to the woman. He grabs the back of my head and pulls me inside. A million things are going on in my mind. *Is this baby his kid? Who the hell’s this woman? What a shitty place.* (vi)

The subaltern studies series has established itself as a touchstone for research in South Asian history, society and culture and media representation. Indian scholars show their critical mind through the subaltern studies groups which compel west to correct there past mistake. Dipesh Chakravarty one of the members of subaltern study group discusses about chronological development of the studies and its nature of thought. In this context, he asserts:

It was 1982 when historical narrative begun tasting a new side under the editorship of Ranajit Guha, who gathered a bunch of aspiring young historians and went to extract history out of the “colonialist”, “elitist” and “bourgeoisie nationalist” discourse and establish the autonomous realm of the “popular” or “subaltern mobilization” in order to rectify the elitist bias characteristic of much research and academic work. (24)

Subaltern studies intervened in 1982. Intellectually, it began on the very terrain in the contest historiography, which had its roots in the colonial education system. It started as the critique of two contending schools of history, the Cambridge school and that of the national historians. Both these approaches declared Ranait Guha in statements. Both these approaches declared Guha statement that inaugurated the series of subaltern studies. It also helps to find the symptom of history which is not capture in official document because the experiences that have faced by low level people is not included in official history and only the subaltern study can capture the pain and pleasure of low class people and their narratives like of Anh Do.

The autobiography of Anh Do concentrates on how subaltern characters struggle in their life and transform their position from a subaltern to the happiest Refugee. Anh Do

captures the subaltern's experiences in this text without any show of elitist concept. It is a history of low background refugee family who struggles numerous dangers and safely reaches to a new land. They do low level of physical work and converts them as normal people and announce them as happiest among the other refugee.

The study analyzes Anh Do's autobiography *The Happiest Refugee* and it shows the process of subaltern people being transformed to articulate their identity and celebration of subaltern history. In the sense of subaltern historians, forming agency to exist and speak is not easy. The model like Ahn Do is rear in the scene, as he transforms his life from a refugee subaltern to a celebrity in leap and bound. This text begins with the descriptions of dangerous sea travel and end at faithful life of Australia. It is a memoir that approaches the themes of loss, war and immigration in a different light. There are many memoirs that are weighty, and which focus more on the suffering and loss of self. Ahn Do's book takes on the memoir genre and it allows the reader a fresh perspective of hope within a hopeless situation for mass subaltern groups of people. It loses nothing in its approach to such a sensitive topic; in fact, readers have noted that Do's style and take on his journey from Vietnam to Australia have helped to spread the plight of refugees to those who would not have otherwise known about the issue.

The narrator of this text is a refugee family member who reaches new land, struggles hard to adopt other's culture and finally lives a happy life. This autobiography is based on the pure experiences of the subaltern people because overall narratives of the text highlights the subaltern characters that have no connection with state authority and high rank elite group of the society. Anh Do as main narrator of the text projects subaltern experiences by using first person narratives. His observation and documentation

is authentic while representing the subaltern groups of people because he is from the root of the refugee life. All the characters of this text are generally from refugee subaltern background; they are from low socio-economic background and search safe place for shelter. Ahn Do narrates the plight of relatives as:

My mother has seven brothers and sisters. She was third of the eight. When the war ended her two older brothers, high-ranking paratroopers who had fought alongside American and Australian soldiers, were put into communist 're-education' camps. The propaganda was that they would learn about the new way of life they would experience under the communist government. In truth these were more like concentration camps. Uncle Thanh jokes that it was like staying at a 'minus-five star hotel'. That brown thing on your pillow wasn't a chocolate. My uncles went in thinking they would be out in two weeks; but they were there for three years. Better than some of their mates, who never came out at all. (4)

The autobiography is based on Anh Do's family history and around his life story, starting from the description of Vietnam and then becoming a fascinating story about his triumphs and darkest hours. They go through many challenges. Characters struggle to arrive in Australia. Narrator highlights family's struggles at the early part of the text. The struggle begins from an overloaded boat in the sea; the descriptions include high predicament; they are robbed by pirates, get a lot of torture; women are raped and they under go trauma, terror and tension while drifting in the sea. Anh Do being himself the main narrator and character of the text shares a lot of pain and little pleasure that his family and other people face during the time of entering Australia. They have to face the

weather, torture, torment, rape - the worst they undergo to hell and back but still manage to overcome the challenges of being a refugee on the run. This journey transforms their lives forever. While analyzing all the events and episodes that narrator mentions, is very similar to the experiences of subaltern, who has subaltern consciousness of hope within despair; Anh Do and his relatives are the subaltern because there is full of pain rather than the pleasure and they are in bottom of the social hierarchy so; they have no alternative to escape from the homeland. The power hegemony of the state is exercised to make them refugees – the powerless subalterns.

This autobiography raises the issues of subaltern on the periphery of refugee's travel, who becomes citizen from unbecoming citizen. Anh Do, the main narrator and character of this memoir, faces a number of problems while entering into Australia. Overall narrative captures the experiences of the subaltern people though this journey is the final for the life and new life forever. The main issue of this study is how Anh Do projects subaltern experiences in journey and faces different huddles while entering into new land Australia. The study is concentrated on these research questions how the narrator projects experiences of subaltern people in this autobiography and what is the situation of writer's family, who faced harder fate while they are in the journey to Australia from Vietnam. Due to subaltern background state authority does not take care of common people during the time of Vietnam War and many people leave their homeland, set seas journey for seeking a secure place. While they are in journey they have to face various problems and struggles for life before reach safe land. They get new life after reaching into Australia though they are still living as subaltern characters and being homelessness. But they claim themselves as the happiest refugee because they are

refugee for new land not a full citizen. Their subaltern identity projects in the term refugee because they are not reached into the high rank of state.

Anh Do's childhood life is similar to the life of any subaltern characters. He has to struggle with poverty. He works in pamphlet delivery at the age of fourteen to earn money and helps his family. This autobiography projects subaltern experiences in new land and struggles for establishing identity. Anh Do confesses his family pain and struggle through narrative, which out breaks his subaltern identity. Being a subaltern character he cannot be freed from the problem as Anh Do mentions the hardship in his narrative. After reaching to Australia, they face many problems such as languages culture and systems of life style. The family struggles in life and acquires much achievement in their life. They involve in various works which the narrator mentions as, "Carrying a forty kilogram worth of pamphlets in his old school bag and 'Ten p.m. that night we slumped into bed absolutely exhausted. We still had about third to go...I'd never intended for my whole family to have to labor with me" (23).

The above lines show how the narrator feels in his life. It is reflected to respond with sympathy towards his problems of money at his young age. The narrator projects him as a subaltern character; he struggles in life for existence. In this regard, the narrator writes:

Financially...struggling desperately struggling. Anh's Mum insists to the far relative 'Come live with us' and replies 'they've got no one' and 'if they can, they will. If they can't, what does it matter?' When Anh's younger brother, Khoa, 'pipes up' asking 'are they going to pay rent and stuff?'

Through this written convention, readers are positioned to be astonished

by his Mum's generosity towards others, and react positively and favorably towards her. (21)

The above lines show the consequences of travel narrator's family faces in their early life. The experience of boat trip as experiences of subaltern people that narrator family has face during the time of escape from Vietnam, which is full of fear and suspenseful. His families are confronted with two pirate groups during their trip that steals their goods heartlessly. The pirate's brutality has been illustrated through the use of descriptive language, which is one of the examples of victim of subaltern people. Characters, events and episodes show how subaltern people face problem in life. It highlights about narrator's life uses narrative techniques and conventions to engage and encourage the readers to respond in particular ways. It focuses on the emotions such as sympathy, warmth, admiration and suspense of the characters that reflects subaltern identity in the text. This situation has been documented as, "Mum, other members of his family and the use of the pirates & their conduct. Anh Do successfully achieves these reactions through the use of narrative conventions like first person point of view, dialogue, characterization and descriptive language" (22).

The autobiography reflects the situation of a subaltern family whose family history is hidden in national phenomena. The narratives is about the family's terrifying boat journey that told by traumatized adolescence and impoverished teenage years, a partly boisterous account of an unconventional career and, against all odds, a happy life.

Narrator portrays how a subaltern family settled new life in Australia. After reaching into Australia narrator's family has to face various difficulties and they struggle for earning to survive and at last the family earns money and establishes good settlement.

Even though, life is a seemingly never-ending succession of arduous work. He has a loving extended family many friends laugh about the situation. The autobiography is an incredible but true story of a refugee. It is helpful for the motivation to a better life other refugees and subaltern groups of people who are living a helpless and hopeless life. The autobiographical figure, Ahn Do, being able to do comedy not only won him many friends, but opens up a world where he has also acted in television series and films, written screenplays and is a sought-after keynote speaker.

Anh Do uses one of the unique styles of writing in this memoir which brings life of subaltern people as real sense. Anh Do tells the story watching him on stage. The novel seems as routine version of a comedy, often digressing from the story to cover some incidental events and leading up to a punch line. In this regards, Roberta Rubenstein writes:

You get the impression that making jokes is so much a reflex, Do can't help himself. There are no poetic descriptions of the shadows of leaves on water here, no more than you would hear them down the local pub Do gives it to us direct. I found this distinctive voice to be one of the strengths of the book, although some may find it an uncomfortable reading experience. (98)

*The Happiest Refugee* brings social issues that are related to subaltern people who are being victimized of war. Anh Do captures the story of his life in this funny, uplifting and deeply moving memoir. He makes a wonderful tribute to his parents and all the other refugees who risked so much to give their children a better life in Australia or other parts of the world. Roberta Rubenstein further mentions:

As a two-year-old Anh and his family came close to dying on the perilous ocean voyage to escape Vietnam. They ward off pirates, dehydration, starvation and storms finally making it to Malaysia then Australia. The following years are no picnic. The courageous father who donned a uniform and boldly walked into a communist re-education camp to get his brother-in-laws out, then captained a tiny boat across the wild seas to transport 39 people to their new life, struggles with the demons of surviving war and tragedy and leaves the family when Anh Do is just thirteen. (88)

Anh Do mentions various accounts, which are related to the memoirs of his mother, and elder relatives present how they face harshly traumatic as well as remarkable things in their life. But there is a loving extended family, friends and play something to laugh about for Anh Do, his brother Khoa and their sister Tram. Things get harder when their father leaves home when Anh Do at the age of thirteen - they feel his loss very deeply and their mother struggles to support the family on her own. His mother's sacrifice is an inspiration to Anh Do and he works hard during his teenage years to help her make ends meet, also managing to graduate high school and then university. In this regard, he says:

The bloody legend of a mother sews night and day to feed, house, and educate three kids in private school. The three children work hard, do well and give back to their country. Anh's humor has made him a very successful comedian it weaves itself into every page of the book, you laugh out loud often. Then he twists your heart when he shares the vulnerability of an outsider trying to fit in when there is no money, life

keeps dealing blow after blow and you are not sure how it is all going to work out. (77)

The writer focuses on the word refugee in the title of the book because Anh Do projects the faith afterward the words refugee. It reflects the situation of teenager in Australia who feels pride on being refugee though he is losing identity in new land and lives as subaltern.

The event of the text covers as dramatic enough without needing further ornamentation. The story begins with the events of escaping writer family from Vietnam and the attacks by pirates on their boat and the difficulties of adjusting to a new country. The plot, which is developed with strong emotional attachment, helps to bring various references of events on the periphery of the text. The sea journey reflects difficulties of subaltern groups of people, who struggle in life for existing in new land, which is similar to the life of subaltern people who struggles in life for existence.

In the text they're found the projection of the life of subaltern people of the characters that appeals to reluctant readers to assume subaltern identities. In this regard, he says, "I have the feeling that male readers may enjoy it more than female which deals with similar territory but show that it also has wide appeal" (23). It portrays the life story of a subaltern in a distinctive voice that is all his own. All of a sudden, the book became successful and began to receive awards.

The autobiography *The Happiest Refugee* first was published in 2010. After published of the novel, many scholars have given comments and reviews on the book. Wenham David comments by analyzing the situation of narrator Anh Do as follow:

The entire family came close to losing their lives on the sea as they escaped from war-torn Vietnam in an overcrowded boat. But nothing—murderous pirates, nor the imminent threat of death by hunger, disease or dehydration as they drifted for days could quench their desire to make a better life in the country they had dreamed about. (2)

It shows the pathetic situation that Do 's family faced during the time of sea journey. Anh Do and his relatives are helpless while they have traveled through the sea and searches new land for settlement. His history is very bitter; some of the contexts are embarrassing as well. But the fragments of the bitter history of Anh Do are the main raw material – the soul of his autobiography. As subaltern historians believes, the subaltern history is available in fragments and they are bitter in form and contents, Do’s past is traumatic and embarrassing but he accumulates them and present with fun and painful aesthetics that touch to each reader. Barbara Mujica, one of the critic comments on the traumatic situating that Anh Do and his family members went through as follow:

Anh worked hard during his teenage years to help her make ends meet, also managing to graduate high school and then university. Another inspiration was the comedian context is when Anh met when he was about to sign on for a 60-hour a week corporate job. Anh asked how many hours he worked. Four the answer came back, and that was it. He was going to be a comedian! *The Happiest Refugee* tells the incredible, uplifting and inspiring life story of one of our favorite personalities. (6)

Anh Do and his family have to live pathetic life even in new land; they try to forget pain forever that they faced during the time of sea journey. They try to make themselves as the

happiest refugee in the land where they are living now though they are not freed from the traumatic passed which they face during the time of sea travelled. He even works as one of Australia's leading comedians, acts in television series and films; he has written screenplays to sooth his traumatic suffering.

In this regards, Roberta Rubenstein projects, “In a series of anecdotes that are both funny and sad, Anh Do shares his family’s triumphs and failures as they make Australia their home. It is impossible not to admire their willingness to work hard, their love for family and respect for education” (1). Above lines show the difficult situation that has faced by narrator family while travelling from home land to new land. It shows that how life of subaltern is in danger during the time of war; twice attacked by pirates and on the verge of starvation and dehydration, he and his family are rescued from the middle of the ocean, and via Malaysia, are granted refugee status in Australia. Do’s family is delighted with their new country, grateful for its kindness and undreamed of opportunities.

After arriving in new land the narrator and his people feel having an identity crisis because they are hunted by culture as, "Mahtab" uses her own cultural perspective to describe what she first sees when she arrives in Australia" (117). In a new land’s they feel strange and open but they are worried about their identity and concentrate for establishing their own identity; they get involved in work. All the refugees arrive from a country to which they first fly on fleeing their home country. The subaltern people struggle in their life in search of their identity wherever they reach.

The subaltern studies collectives project history at the heart of colonial teaching and acquiring of knowledge- the colonial archives. The procedure is “Reading the text

against the grain”, that is to point out the significant ambivalences, paradoxes, contradictions in the detailing out of history, which can alone single out the voice of the subaltern that has been so calculatedly silenced by the bourgeoisie narratives and claims. Anh Do tries to find out his voice from various funny ways since his school life, which was not an easy task in an alien country.

Thus, both semiotic and textual novels, biographies, essays written in the regional language notations are used so that the difference can be shown and the long meticulous researches in coming volumes are enough evidence for its back-up. It is a very difficult task because the working class people have left little traces of their problems, unlike their European counterpart who is conscious of the difficulties and noted them down in diaries. So, the European movements of history from below have better acknowledgment of writing desk history than providing any original voice. So, it lies at the heart of reading things anew, and in introducing new strategies. Thus, history become textual study, as any effort at exploring the “invisible” demands meticulously reading and counter-reading of the archives that have been so boastfully thrown at the colonized territories. Anh Do uses his bitter and silenced history as a foundation of his identity even when he has got an agency to speak as a celebrity in Australia.

Ranjit Guha, theorizing the project’s single, certain key difference that would increasingly distinguish the project of subaltern studies from that Marxist historiography. With hindsight, it can be said that there are three broad areas in which subaltern studies is differed from the history from below approaches of Hobsbawm and Thompson. Subaltern historiography necessarily entitled a relative separation of history of power from any Universalist histories of capital critique of the notion form and an interrogation of the

relation between power and knowledge. Here, Anh Do's history is very particular – a history of subaltern refugee to the happiest refugee. His way of celebrating his pathetic history even when he has obtained a space of an extraordinary figure is remarkable to the readers.

However, the impact of 'History from Below' collides in the Indian academy with another import from the west - post-structuralism and post-modernism. This collision produces a new and specifically Indian synthesis - the subaltern studies group. In the process of redefining of Indian history, Spivak states: "The subalterns aren't simply interested in illustrating the 'bourgeois' nature of India nationalism. They argue that movements from below have been hijacked by elite nationalism and subordinated to the nationalist project" (21). The subaltern group methodological trackers of representation cannot follow that route. It turns in large measure to autobiography and celebration of fragment. Because of the devastation of character are trying to assemble historical biography of those whose active lives are only disclosed by deliberately fragmented record produced elsewhere. As subaltern perspective is local as well as global, an umbrella term, the history captured through autobiographical narratives as Anh Do does is remarkable to preserve the subaltern history. Anh Do through his autobiography not only preserves his refugee history, he also celebrates his subaltern history with full of fun and pain.

The extraordinary true story of a subaltern, Do attempts to undo a massive historiography of Vietnam War within the framework of strategies interest in the self-alienating displacing move of and by a consciousness of collectivity, than that self-determination and an un alienated self-consciousness in *The Happiest Refugee*. In the

definition of consciousness offered by the subaltern studies group there are plenty of indications that they are in fact concerned with subaltern consciousness. In this regard, Spivak writes, “subaltern consciousness as self-consciousness of a sort is what inhibits the whole area of independent thought and conjecture and speculation [...] of the part of peasants” (109). She analyses how subaltern study is historically sound and useful for the Marxist who tries to impose Marxism in the mane of the poor people philosophy.

To investigate, discover and establish a subaltern or peasant consciousness seems at first to be a positive project a project, which assumes the freedom and success of the subaltern groups of people. This is significant in the case of recovering consciousness because within the post enlightenment that participates in as interventionist historians, and disclosures possible like in the autobiographical text *The Happiest Refugee*. In this regard, she further analyzes the problems of collective consciousness and states, “there is always a counterpointing suggestion in the work of group that subaltern consciousness is subject to the cathexis of elite, that it is never fully recoverable that it is always askew from its received signifiers, in deeded that it is effaced even as it is disclosed, that it is irreducibly discursive” (183).

The subaltern group of people through continuous struggle gains an agency to speak as Ahn Do turns as a successful refugee. They set a sort of signifiers and control the consciousness of the subaltern. The work of the subaltern studies group offers a theory of change, which reverses the colonial outlook of Indian culture. One of the pioneers of subaltern studies Spivak argues:

The work of subaltern studies group seems to me to revising this general definition and its theorization by proposing at least two things: first that

(the movements of change be popularized and plotted as confrontations rather than transition they would thus be seen in relation to histories of domination and exploitation rather than within the great modes of production narrative) and secondly, that such changes are signaled or marked by a functional change in sign systems. Most important function change is from the religious to the militant. There is however functional changes in sign systems indicated in these collections from crime to insurgency, from bondsman to worker, and so on. (96)

Anh Do performs various roles before he gains an agency as a celebrity in Australia. The change, shift and transformation are more importantly noted down in subaltern studies. The degree of hegemony is altered and a subaltern rises in a position from where he/she could speak. Anh Do receives an agency and creates an extraordinary history out of the bitter refugee history.

The subaltern studies group is a group of scholars in India, interested in the postcolonial and post-imperial societies of India in particular and the developing world in general. The term “subaltern studies” is applied more broadly to others who share many of their views. Their approach is one of history from below, focus more on what happens among the masses at the base levels of society than among the elite. It tries to attempt to formulate a new narrative of the history of India. Although, they are, in a sense, on the left, they are very critical of the traditional Marxist narrative of Indian history, in which semi-feudal India is colonized by the British, become politicized, and earn its independence. In particular, they are critical of the focus of this narrative on the political consciousness of elites, who in turn inspire the masses to resistance and rebellion against

the British. The context of reading Do's *The Happiest Refugee* is different but the content of a subaltern's struggle and transformation from the subaltern history to an extraordinary personality is remarkable to be noted, which is fit to be discussed under subaltern studies in local and global contexts.

Subaltern historians often point out of collecting the history of the subaltern groups of people while rewriting the national history. Antonio Gramsci has indicated clearly that subaltern groups of people have history in fragments and their consciousness of freedom is hidden within the fragments. So, the subaltern groups of people are always hegemonic to the ruling class. In the lack of history, they have no agency to speak. The power hegemony either in the form of force or consent dominates the subaltern groups of people and their real consciousness is hard to trace in the history. Subaltern group members try to note down their voices. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, though she said in her essay that the subaltern cannot speak and she has indicated later that the subaltern can speak if they get agency, Anh Do breaks the subaltern position and comes to be the happiest refugee. He articulates his agency through the foundation of recollecting his refugee history and proves as a celebrity in Australia.

A lot of discussion has been made regarding the life of Anh Do and his success; but it is important to make a scrutiny from the point of view of transformation of a subaltern character from a powerless subaltern refugee to an extraordinary figure, which can be a source of hope to the hopeless subaltern groups of people. The celebration of his subaltern history to form his particular identity from refugee history valorizes the history from below modes of writing as discussed in the following chapters.

## **II. Celebration of Subaltern History in Anh Do's *The Happiest Refugee***

After 1980s, the perspective to look at the margin has been changed significantly. Reconstructing the 'history from below' mode of writing has deconstructed the elitist history writing tradition from above. A trend of celebrating subaltern position is coming at the core of academic discourse. One of the models of celebrating subaltern position can be traced with reference to Anh Do's autobiography, *The Happiest Refugee*.

The extraordinary book, *The Happiest Refugee* tells the incredible, uplifting and inspiring life story of one of favorite personalities. Tragedy, humor, heartache and unswerving determination - a big life with big dreams, Anh Do projects how subaltern characters get their identity in the autobiography *The Happiest Refugee*. Narrator of the autobiography faces numerous problems during the time of Vietnam War and escapes from the homeland because they are common people state could not provide them security and shelter. During the course of sea journey, the family faces many problems what a subaltern people face day to day life. There is no option to live in their land so that they travel from their home land and become homeless. They hardly effort to come out from the situation, reach new land and success to bring happiness in their life. In this regard, narrator writes, "You play out the whole thing over and over again with different scenarios: a joyful reunion full of happy tears; an angry reunion where you knock him out. He further writes, "You drive and you cry and wipe the wet steering wheel with your flannelette shirt" (100). It shows the efforts of a subaltern family in new land for establishing identity.

Australia is new resettled country – everything new - for writers' family though they forget the pain and difficult situation which they face in their life during the time of sea journey as well their country Vietnam. The following lines highlight the pathetic situation:

I haven't seen my father in nine years. Since, I was thirteen in fact. I watched him walk out the door one night and haven't seen or heard from him since, except for one strange phone call late at night on my eighteenth birthday. He was drunk and I huge up. I hated him when he was drunk . . . I feared him even. (1)

Anh Do visits his father when he is twenty-two. He is quite a lot taller than when he left. And more importantly, he is stronger than he left. He is turn between fantasies of happy reunion with his father and fearful of beating him up. Above lines portray the subaltern position of the autobiographer, which is similar to the historiographical presentation of ordinary people.

Subaltern studies deconstruct the historiography, which can only have been intended for the committed critical theorist or for those familiar with the jargon and literary style of critical theory. It is a slightly revised the situation of writer what projects in their historiography and narratological presentation. Anh Do also projects the subaltern identity though characterization of the refugee family who can get success in their life which is similar to the idea projected in Ranajit Guha series of books entitled *Subaltern Studies* highlights the different issues of subaltern. It attempts explicitly to make the post-structural connection by examining the ideology and discursive tactics of writing history.

In this regard, Guha highlights, "Namely, who is doing it, why, how, and to what political purpose" (23).

In this autobiography, there are reflections of family history of the narrator as imbricated form of memoir, which is full of pain and pleasure, happiness, and sorrow of the victim; the fabrics could not be found in chronological historical description. Anh Do writing is related to the subaltern ideology that project how a subaltern family search their identity in new land after being succeeded in one mission of sustain. The scene that captures by Anh reflects the situation as: "The grey door opens and there's a women .She looks about twenty-five. a part of me think that maybe I've got the wrong place, but a part of me knows she probably has something to do with him . She looks me up and down nervously.' Tam!' she calls out. Then he appears" (1). These lines highlight the situation how narrator family begin their journey in initial days, which is related to the horizons of subaltern history.

The reality that writer family has faced in their life is the events of event long years back as form of memoir. In this sense Dipesh Chakrabarty argues , ". . . in recognition of this shift or broadening, the more recent volumes have brought together essays that are no longer confined to the discipline of history, displaying, as the editors of this collection describe it" (34). Do's collective memoir also a collective engagement of history which is reflects in the following lines of the novel as: "She needs to sell to support her mother and five younger sibling s as well as her father and two older brothers who are locked away in communist re-education' camps, is one than train. Her family is depending on her. She keeps sprinting and marked one last desperate attempt to grab the doorway loses her grip and her heart punishment" (3). These quotes depict the situation

of writer's family that reflects how a subaltern family have faced problem in new land. They collectively struggled to sustain in Australia for that all of them engaged in work and forget traumatic history of the past. Narrator's family is a big family so they face various problems for maintaining well life in new land. In this regard, he says:

My mother has seven brothers and sisters. She was third of the eight. When the war ended her two older brothers, high-ranking paratroopers who had fought alongside American and Australian soldiers, were put into communist 're-education' camps. The propaganda was that day would learn about the new way of life they would experience under the communist government. (5)

Above quote reflects the restoration to subaltern groups of their 'agency' their role in history as 'subjects' with an ideology and a political agenda of their own. In this regard, Guha says, "While the first objective has yielded some interesting and important insights, the second has led to results which have been, at best, problematic; and, at worst, tediously neo-antiquarian and remarkably unremarkable in their banality [...] very concept of subaltern as a socio/political category" (140).

After leaving the homeland writer family travel to new land that is unknown because they were low class people who have no access of world knowledge. Writer family lives in poverty that narrator writes: "My mother gave birth to twelve children but four had died in child birth of early infancy. Even with eight mouths to feed Grandma found it in her hurt to adopt two more boys. So, dad grew up as one of ten nine boys and one girl who was the last child; a whimsical gift to Grandma from nature" (6). Such a expression brings the economic and social position of the narrator who has faced various

problems in their life and such problem categorizes them as subaltern people of the country from where they travel in search of safe land.

He further describes the situation of his family as Uncle Hay has been in the re-education camp for three years, and during that time many prisoners die around them. Some dies of sickness, some of starvation, some are executed. Such is the situation of the subaltern people; it is a central theme that becomes not the hijacking of popular struggles in neither the interests of an aspiring new land nor the reconstruction of subaltern consciousness. In the name of 'progress' and 'modernity', the victim people try to minimize the sorrow but they are always indulged in the identity that they have faced in their life.

In this regard Anh Do says, “The day of our departure arrived and dad woke in the early hours. Many of our family members who were going on the boat had stayed at grandma’s house the night before departure, because it was near the canals. The house was stills. The house was still dark but Dad could hear murmuring in the women's room” (9). Therefore, the situation of subaltern people whose past is not so linear like high class people. They face many problems in life and struggle in life for future. They live in terror and horror while crossing the border. They go through different ups and down in their own homeland as well as in the host land. The following lines of the novel highlight the situation as:

Mum felt like blind women groping wildly amid flailing arms and knees and hair, all the sounds intensified by her loss of sight. She could hear her babies screeching with terror; others were moaning, praying, shouting;

wood was cracking under the full force of the sea smashing against our little wooden boat, always. (11)

In his quest for the search of a subaltern identity, the autobiographer's family uses great effort, struggles a lot to transform their subaltern position. As Dipesh Chakrabarty highlights on the events of related to the struggled of subaltern character in the context of Latin America, "Grapples with a number of issues, notably the 1998 debate between David Stoll and Rigoberta Menchú over her award-winning testimonial narrative" (46). It explores the concept of civil society, Florencia Mallon influential Peasant and Nation, the relationship between the Latin American lettered city. He further highlights, "And the Tupac Amaru rebellion of 1780-1783, the ideas of transculturation and hybridity in postcolonial studies and Latin American cultural studies, multiculturalism, and the relationship between populism, popular culture, and the national-popular in conditions of globalization" (46). The situation is similar with Anh Do family because long narratives of the text project overall situation of subaltern family and their high degree of struggle. In this regard Do elaborates his mother situation as, "Mum managed to keep hold of her post and her children, the boat kept pitching, the wind kept howling and people kept praying. Slowly the storm began to subside. I whimpered against my mother's chest. My brothers crying became more audible. Mum rocked us gently on her lap" (12).

Above lines show the situation of her mother which is pathetic though it encourages the whole family to sustain life by following new way. Narrator's mum carried her two ex-husband children up onto the deck. She elaborates the situation as:

It was swelteringly hot, but she needed a break from the thick stench of the hold at least the air was fresh up top. Everyone was still and silent, the

heat of the sun pushing down on us, making already hungry and thirsty human beings thirstier still, rendering us incapable of speech. (13)

He loves to form community so that she forgets everything and develop passion to resist the new hegemonic power. This has led to a celebration of local traditions for their own sake. But of course, in reality a community is not centers of resistance to an intrusive. In this regard, she memorizes the sea journey and says:

Once they had everything of value they could see, the pirates readied to leave, except for one angry mustached pirate, who called out obscenities from the back. An old lady, Bao, had a beautiful jade bracelet that was tight around her wrist. In Vietnam it is tradition for young girls to receive one of these bracelets on their eighteenth birthday. (14)

By being weak character she resists problem and success to establish her own identity as well as save her family from risk. Overall efforts portray that subaltern identity is a study of power that Ayesha Jalal says, "Who has it and who does not. Who is gaining it and who is losing its' power is intimately related to questions of representation which representations have cognitive authority and can secure hegemony and which do not and cannot" (23). He examines the relationship between subaltern and representation by analyzing the ways in which that relationship has been played out in the domain of Latin American studies which is similar to the narratives of Anh Do. He writes,

Dad, with barely enough energy left to lift the axe let alone use it properly, finally broke through the wooden hull and water began gushing in. he was the last to be taken on board and by the time he stepped off the rope ladder his dry sunburn face had cracked open into a whopping great big smile as

he tasted his own salty tears of relief. He'd delivered thirty nine lives to safety. (17)

Above lines identify the situation of a subaltern people who are influenced by the problem that is created by post modernism and post colonialism like the problems of Vietnam War. Partha Chatterjee, a key figure in the group, argues, "The Nation and its Fragments' that secularism and enlightenment rationalism is simply weapons in the armory of the post-colonial state" (320). Similarly, Dipesh Chakrabarty insists, "The very notion of a good society or of universal progress are 'monomania's' that need to be junked in the name of the 'episodic' and the 'fragment'. In this context, the community began to replace subaltern and involved in collective work" (41). The idea is similar to the writing of Anh that he presents his family situation as, "We traded punches for half a minute or so whack, whack –back and forth, and then it dawned on me that there was a searing pain in my cheek. I instinctively covered my head and stepped back, and the other boys rushed in to stop the fight .I got absolutely smashed" (20).

The narratives in autobiography are close to the main idea of subaltern which develops in south Asia during the time of discussing the issue of low class people of south Asia, Ayesha says, "subaltern studies begin with the work of Ranajit Guha and the South Asian subaltern studies collective in the 1980s. Beverley has given certain new idea about the subaltern and focus on Latin America which is almost similar with the theory of deconstruction". In this regard, he further asserts:

In assessing subaltern studies purposes and methods, the potential dangers presents, and its interactions with deconstruction, post structuralism, cultural studies, Marxism, and political theory, Beverley builds his

discussion around a single, provocative question: How can academic knowledge seek to represent the subaltern when that knowledge is itself implicated in the practices that construct the subaltern as such. (44)

Above lines show the key concept of subaltern studies that is related to the problems of low class people, search identity and existence in this world. Narrator projects his family situation, which is similar to the identity of subaltern, people and says, "One day, mum's friend told her about her about how, with just a few hundred dollars" (21). His mother is conscious about her situation and "She had bought a second –hand sewing machine and could work from home while still looking after her kinds. Of course, the following week there was an old enormous industrial-sized singer sitting in our living room" (21). It shows how narrator family struggles in their life for existing new land as *The Happiest Refugee*:

The factory had a huge industrial space that had filled with v8 sewing machines, and offices, which he turned into our make, shift home. I'm sure what he did was illegal it didn't matter. No one knew, asked or cared. We lived there with uncle two's family. When we left Vietnam to come to Australia, uncle left his family behind and came out on the boat with us (his family arrived later. (22)

Subaltern studies group see their own work of subject restoration as crucially strategic; they would not miss this symptomatic blank in contemporary western anti-humanism. Partha Chatterjee quotes Foucauldian modes of power and clears the idea, "Foucault has sought to demonstrate the complexities of this novel regime of power in these studies of history of mental illness of clinical practice, of prison, of sexuality and of the rise of the

human sciences" (348). When one looks at regimes of power in the so called backward countries of the world today, not only does the dominance of the characteristically modern modes of exercise of power seem limited and qualified by the persistence of older mode that he says "But by the fact of their connotation in a particular states and formation, it seems to open up at the same time an entirely new range of possibilities for the ruling class to exercise their domination" (348).

The narrator of the has no idea about the death and disaster that his family faced in their life as he writes, "I never knew the reason may be it was the death in the carpet or the shape of the bottle, or maybe the gods of puppy love were just messing with my young head but on this particular day Elizabeth and I kissed eleven times and I didn't get my lips near Karen once" (24). The idea is similar to the Foucauldian discourse that states,

The Foucauldian example being considered here, for instance, can be seen as making a crisis within European consciousness. Thus, the discourse of unified consciousness of the subaltern must inhabit the strategy of the historians, even as the discourse of the micro logical subject must mark that of anti-humanist on the other side of the international division of labor. (348)

Above lines highlight the philosophy of subaltern history that creates problems on power relationship between high and low class people. The narratives of Anh Do that found such demarcation that he says, "Khoa and I crawled into the back cabin of the van and squeezed into the one-foot gap left between the top of the dressing gowns and the ceiling. It was just about the most comfortable, and fun, bed you could image" (25). It

shows the terrible situation that narrator has faced in his past life without any reason. In this regards, he says, "It slapped the water and rocked the boat again, forcing two terrified little boys and wail and cling on for dear life. Then this bald, leathery head slowly emerged from out of the water and an enormous eyeball started straight at me for a second, then submerged" (27). Narrator's family wants to establish new identity in new land though they have no fixed identity and rights in this land. The following lines of the book portray the hard situation as:

My brother and I worked hungrily on the lock. We had just seen dad do it and here was our chance to perform a feat that felt like a magic trick, or at the very least part of a spy's arsenal of skills. A couple of times I could see the lock ever... so... slowly... rising. Then, before I could lift it all the way up, it'd slip and fall again. (29)

Above lines show problems have faced by narrator's family in Australia. His brother works hard for living in the land and performs extraordinary task. They have enough food and clothes for use. The situation he projects, "Dad silently used the same shovel to bury the dog in the rain, like a scene in a Stephen king movie. Mum came over and put her arm around me when she saw that I was watching thought tears of sadness and frustration" (28).

He further describes the situation as, "Dad was always building a shed, mending a fence or making an enclosure. 'Can we keep some budgies?' we asked him one day. 'okay,' he said, ' but you've got to build the cage yourselves.' This was Dad's way of training us to learn practical skill" (30). It shows how subaltern identity reflects in

narrative of Anh Do, which is similar to the context that Guha discusses on the definition of subaltern and history of post-colonial world like Australia.

Ranjit Guha discusses subaltern in the context of rewriting the history, which help to redefine the assumption of mass as well as elites. In this context, he argues that subaltern historians tries to rewriting of history mainly for two objectives: (1) the dismantling of elitist historiography by decoding biases and value judgments in records, testimonies, and narratives of the ruling-classes and to represent the narratives of the lower and subaltern classes. This is because the elitist history as a political discourse has failed to take an account of the subaltern. Such redrawing of the history is believed for representing the subaltern consciousness in the elitist historiography.

Guha's comparison between past and present assumption of society touch the heart of the emerging trend of thought which met the second objectives of the subaltern study which he mentioned in his book *Subaltern Studies* Volume I as "there's still a chance, I thought. Every now and then dad would stop at his maximum but then , just at the auctioneer was about to bang the gavel for the third time ,dad would stick up his hand and try to give the guy a wrist sprain from stopping too suddenly. I was hoping that would be the case this time" (31). Subaltern people face problems because of exploitation and violence and they struggle in life for their existence in post-colonial context. Narrator's family leaves Vietnam due to violence and struggled in Australia for establishment. The context is similar to the Guha as:

The second objective has, on the positive side, opened up a vast area of research and study generally regarded by historians as the proper sphere of anthropologists, ethnographers, and psychologists, e g, the significance of

the symbolic aspects of ritual, of the institutional codification of religious beliefs, of the nature of pre-modern forms of communication, of the density of everyday material life. See, for example, Gyan Pandey's analysis of the religious aspects of peasant demands in 'Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalist: The Peasant Movement in Awadh 1919-22. (166).

The term subaltern refers to a condition of subordination brought about by colonization or other forms of economic, social, racial, linguistic, and/or cultural dominance. In this regards, it is relevant to quote the lines as, "That was the end of the farm, and that was the end of my dad the farmer. It all went downhill after that. He and his brothers held on to the property for a while, and thought about buying more ducks. 'Otherwise' what the hell do we do with it? 'He asked" (32). It shows that narrator family is carried out subaltern identity from the beginning because they have no high profile and ambition in life. The situation Anh describes as, "Now Dad's the type of guy who can bounce back after a financial setback, but losing the trust and friendship of his brothers was crippling for him. One night I awoke to the most awful sound of swearing, breaking furniture and bodies thumping against the wall" (35). The situation is not so constrain because they are poor and helpless people of the nation. They are being victimized by war without any reason. War is going on for power but subaltern people are not allowed to participate on sharing power. The situation he projects as, "During the six years I spent at Aloysius I never quite had the right fitting uniform either. In year 7 mum bought me a jacket that was a little bit bigger to make sure it would last as long as possible. It lasted me till 9 years" (37). The situation is similar to the Guha observation of colonial history. He further relates the ideas with the intervention of colonial historiography. In this regard, he argues:

While detractors would admit that, the subalternist intervention in colonial historiography and cultural studies was both important and influential, ardent acolytes will concede that there's been a decline in both interest and interesting new work in the field. Thus, subaltern theory will be subjected to a discourse study, the assumption being that its reception and reproduction, both complex discursive processes, are (mis)appropriations of power/knowledge in globalized space. (233)

This response reflects a number of factors. Just as elsewhere in the world the late sixties see a tremendous radicalization, against a backdrop of economic and political crisis. This has its echoes in the new and expanding in the world, which found in Anh Do writings. In this regard, Anh Do says, "Borrowing text books was one thing but then there was the problem with the books that you had to write in. I would sit at my desk and pretend to be writing in Phil's book by hovering my pen about it" (71). There is no opportunity for subaltern people to endorsed colonial history as well as official post-colonial history. Narrator situation is silent in Vietnam War, which we have found in this novel. The following lines of the novel highlight the situation as: "These little windfalls of luck meant so much to us; to go from having to scrape by to all of a sudden having something in abundance made such an impression. I often asked my mom about Vietnam, what it was like being in the middle of a war, and her answers would sometimes surprise me" (70).

Above lines focus on the specific attraction of history from below was its challenge to the prevailing orthodoxy. An admixture of Stalinism and Nationalism dominated historical study, particularly of the colonial period. Nationalists view the anti-

colonial struggle. In the context of Do's writing there found post-colonial disorder because narrator family reached in new land without any writing document and earn money by hard working though they are known as refugee not a citizen. The following lines of the novel highlight the situation as:

It felt like exactly the opposite. Having these women stay with us made us feel very well off. This why my mum is a genius, she could've told us a million times that we were lucky to have what we had –three meals a day, clothes to wear , a roof over our heads and we would never have believed her because we heard these clichés all the time and they did not make us so. (73)

Above lines indicate the socio economic situation of the narrator's family who has faced various problems in their life. They are frustrated due to exhausted situation of time. The situation he describes as, "The next night Khoa, mum, tram and me hit the footpath, working like machines, this time with the car assisting us (mum locked the pamphlets in the boot so we didn't have to walk back home to get more). What seemed like an eternity we finally finished" (77). There is difficult to stay in the places that Nha says:

It turned out as far as I could. I couldn't get the ball to stay on the pitch and bowled a whole bunch of wide. The kid batting was getting frustrated because the balls were nowhere near close enough for him to hit. I turned to Phil as if to say, 'I told you so.' It was so embarrassing that even the parents watching started chipping in. (74)

Above lines show how they have faced problem in their life. Each of the minutes there is risk for travelling. Sea pirate and other sea animal attack them. Many of the

friends and neighbor who lives homeland are killed or raped on the way. The traumatic history of the refugee reflects in the following lines as:

I thought to myself. What are we learning here? He should us pictures of the posters made back in the 1850s with the exaggerated Asian man's face with buck teeth, slant eyes and racists slogans: 'the yellow peril will steal your livelihood and rape your women,' etc. was I supposed to join in or sit on a stool and pose, like it was a 'life drawing' class? (83)

Above lines show how narrator family save their life during the time of Vietnam War and reaches in safe land. Narrator mother presents the situation as, "This is when I tweaked I was being rolled. My mind spun as I mentally scoured my wallet to see if I really didn't have any money. Usually my wallet was completely empty, but every now and then I carried more money than any kid in the whole school" (75). It reflects the subalternists life which Bhabha, describes, "yet some of the authors in a Subaltern Studies Reader still seem to feel that they must impress the audience with how cutting-edge their research is" (111). In Anh writing there found certain dynamics of peasantry, which Bhabha, states as, "Delving into the dynamics of the peasantry in the 1950s; they and others also produced two generations of scholars, whose work is on a par with the Subalternists" (111). In this regards Anh says, "His theories sounded plausible enough, but he could've been making the whole thing up. One day at the aquarium we decided to test out his ideas. My brother looked for the most beautiful long-finned male, and I picked the short stumpy mike Tyson one" (77). It creates the praxis off Marxism and subaltern ideology in Nha writing. In this context, Chakrabatry states, "Marx thought that

the logic of capital could be best being best deciphered only in a society where the notion of human equality has already acquired the fixity of a popular prejudice" (263).

The situation of his family Anh writes, "I was starting to thing just like my dad fast, big and over the top. Pretty soon we had about twenty fish tanks. We didn't have enough money to by the thanks so I built a heap of them myself. Any glass that was left out on the road, I brought home" (79). Anh memorizes the colonial period of Vietnam when landlord exploit poor people by doing this or that. In this regards, he says, "As a kid there was a period when one particular landlord loved turning up to collect the late rent himself, many times was at work and I just got sick of telling this guy we'd pay him soon , knowing full well that we weren't going to be able to" (86). Ideology is that a popular prejudice, mistake itself for human nature the original mother tongue of history. Marxist historiography can be caught within a mother tongue of history and culture that had graduated to bourgeoisie individualism.

As a group, such subaltern studies collective attempt to open up the texts of Marx beyond his European provenance, beyond a homogeneous internationalism, to the persistence recognition of heterogeneity, the very goal of forgetting his original rooted, die him and testament Spruce language. Anh describes the situation, which is similar to the homogenous internationalism and says, "My grandma knew how to read palms and had taught me a few things when I was a kid. She used to look at the lines on my tattle hand and explain to me why I was cheerful but impatient, and had horsey teeth. I tried to read Suzie's palm at university one day" (80). It reflects ultra-competitive nature of subaltern people because they are hunted by the discriminative post-colonial history. In this regards, he says:

My instincts kept telling me that law wasn't for me. The ultra-competitive nature of the course was especially disheartening, and seemed to be missing the point of championing right over wrong. For example, there were times when we got assignments that required us to read say twenty pages of volume six of the law journal. (89)

Anh Do highlights the crisis that is related to Guha idea of history Dipesh Chakrabarty says, "These earlier historians were studying peasants when Guha was writing his magnificent yet highly elitist. And yet, some subalternists still seem to believe that they must impress upon the reader that their work has been changed" (23). In this context, it is relevant to quote Anh statement as, "I entered lots of comedy competitions in the beginning. One of the ones that meant the most to me was a competition in Canberra called green faces" (91). When narrators family travel sea during the difficult situation people follow the sirens and lead ahead without any supports of international community because they are subaltern so no official power is ready to help them. The situation narrator mentions as: "As sirens approached, everything settled down, and after mum was a hundred percent sure her boy was indeed unscathed, she noticed the old bus driver sitting on the footpath. He looked a mess. Sitting there, his face was as white as a sheet; his head was looking down at his trembling hands" (81).

Above lines indicate the difficult life of subaltern people who have faced in their life in the name of saving life from the war. The fact is hid in the war history of Vietnam though it reflects in the novel though first person narratives. In this regards, Anh Do states, "Minh had also escaped Vietnam as a refugee, leaving his family behind with a view to sponsoring to come over later, but he got stuck in a refugee camp in the

Philippines for seven years" (83) . Many of the families have scattered from here and there that, "By the time he got to Australia his wife had found a new husband to help care for the two young kids she had to feed" (83). After reaches in new land they partly forget the traumatic past and involves earning money and beginning to study in Australia, which is difficult task. The situation Anh Do describes:

During my studying art phase I got into the whole alternative lifestyle...I began not only creating art on canvas but wearing things to decorate myself. I had hair that went all the way down to my lower back , the flannelette shirts gave way to seventies purple paisley ones I picked up from st vines, and the thongs were thrown out to be replaced. (86)

It shows that how subaltern people struggle for their identity in new land. They acquire education and capable to earn legal money by work but they are still known as refugee. In this regard, Anh Do speaks, "I was old enough now to earn legitimate money and it was a wonderful new –found freedom for my bank balance to no longer rely on the fickle libido of my siameses fighting fish" (85). His family also gets capable to sustain, "Mum was sewing seven days a week, I had my several jobs and even khoa, at sixteen, had got a job in a printing factory" (85). Narrator tries to forget past and ready to make new history but post-colonial worldview create problem on them and they are watched by colonial mentality. The situation is as he projects:

‘No I’m not,’ I said, but in my head I went, I reckon I am. The next time we went to open mid night I signed up to do a short routine. I told a yam about a disastrous holiday I once went on and it went over really well. I

was so surprised. It was a complete and utter fluke! I'd told the story a thousand times before to friends. (89)

Above lines indicate consequences of the subaltern people have faced in Australia. They are not totally freed from the past pain because native people has given them a kinds of range as, "He gave me a range; professionals started at fifty to sixty thousand a year , some made a hundred thousand , and the big boys made whatever they wanted . But for an average headline comic, the salary was between fifty and a hundred thousand" (91). It shows the imaginative time that subaltern people express occasionally as form of narratives. The following lines further justify the situation as, "The standup comedy was starting to take off and I began getting offered little comedy spot on TV, just five minutes of stand-up here and there on obscure late night shows. Then, round about a year and a half into my comedy career I got offered my first TV hosting role" (93).

In new land narrator tries to make his own status which he express as, "I decided I had to see for myself. I went in to a newsagent far, far away from home, sneaking in wearing a hat and sunnies, to by a copy. When I opened it up, there were nude men all through it. This is not for me. I rang the producers" (94). It shows that how a subaltern character struggle in his life to establish his distinct identity. In this regards, he says, "I took Suzie out to dinner one night and afterwards we strolled down to a park overlooking the harbor and hung out for a while watching boats and eating chocolates" (96). He overlooks the harbor hung that help him to creates own identity. In this regards, he says:

I was twelve years old we would sit as a family on the farm porch on a hot summer night. Khoa and I would be lying on the ground, letting the cold concrete cool our backs. Mum and dad would be sitting on an old couch

with tram on mum's knee. Dad would have one arm around mum's shoulder, the other hand holding a beer. (98)

Above lines indicate the situation that have encountered by narrator in his life. He deeds all good work but colonial mentality of the people create problem to recognize him in new land. In this regards, he says, "Nothing wrong,' he said quickly, there was something going on but it was still too early for me to understand. Bloody hell. The guy sounded weird, so it was not really the time to launch into blame and anger, so I let it slide" (101). Subaltern ideology expended in new land with traumatic memoir, which silently appears in the life of *The Happiest Refugee*. The following lines of the novel highlights the situation as, "I realized that, when he wasn't drunk, this guy was indeed the most wonderful dad in the world. Somehow, during the past eight years I had managed to block out all the good memories and focused solely on what he'd done wrong. I realized I still very much loved this laughing, beautiful, terribly flawed man" (102).

Above lines highlight the situation of subaltern people who has led us to a theme of great richness. The crosshatching of the revolutionary non possessive possibilities in the structure of writing in general and its control by subaltern phono-centrism gives us access to the micrology or minute scale functioning of the subaltern's philosophical world or minute scale functioning of subaltern's philosophical world which Anh project in his narratives too . In this regards, he says, "The two clans faced up to each other and there was a lot of awkward smiling and nodding. It was incredibly nerve racing, partly because my mother didn't know suzie's parents. She had only met them once, briefly, at an informal afternoon tea a few weeks earlier" (104). While reached in the Australia they are behaving as Asian who is inferior to the European, "All Asian households keep a large

cleaver, like a butcher's. Aussies don't have them and my family wondered how they were going to chop up the freaking" (104). It shows how the subaltern identity project on the consciousness that informed and still informs political actions taken by the subaltern classes on their own, independently of any elite initiatives. In this regards, Guha states, "It is only by giving this consciousness a central place in historical analysis that we see the subaltern as the market of the history s/he lives out. However, this does not mean that we place this consciousness outside history, as the charge of idealism implies" (33).

The changing idealism projects in the following lines as: "My family loved suzie, and every time they knew she was coming over the would prepare a different delicacy for her. After around three-dozen such dishes, they were running out of ideas and started getting into the really exotic stuff. One night we turned up at a family get-together and uncle dung was very excited" (105).

In this context the contributions to subaltern studies makes an important point in establishing the centrality of the historical moment of rebellion in understanding the subaltern subject of their own histories. In this regard, Chatterjee states:

The traditional groups of this society in the volumes of subaltern studies we see them engaged in a struggle with courts of law with bureaucracy or the police all signs of the new forms of domination that have been established over them. The vary choice of this movement for analysis, I contend, poses a serious challenge to some of the dominant conception about tribes an anthropological theory. (34)

Above lines show the basic idea of Subalternity that Anh Do projects in his narrative as, "A number of entrees came out and I was doing pretty well, I though. I soon figured out I

should eat slowly, watch to see what everyone else was using and follow suit. A main dish came out and I was watching Suzie's grandmother" (108). His narratives bring various issues that address by subaltern studies reader. His wedding reception and engagement parties are one of the examples as, "Our wedding reception was to be held at Taranga zoo and it was going to be expensive. Suzie's father wouldn't let our family pay, especially after all the trouble we had gone to with the engagement party" (109). There we find certain cultural loss in his wedding reception party and feel some loss, which is, faced most of the subaltern people in post-colonial world. He further elaborates, "The wedding was held in my old school chapel at St. Aloysius College in Kirribilli. It was a catholic ceremony and about a hundred and fifty guesses turned up to watch us take our vows. The service was led by my muscle-tithed Jesuit priest uncle, as well as my favorite priest from school" (110).

Above lines induce the subaltern phenomena that has captured in subaltern studies and in the understanding of tribes, castes or other such groups are to restore to them their historical being. It is no longer possible to think for instance, of tribes or inhabitants of hill regions deprived of their rights of forecasts. In this regards, he says, "The ceremony was emotional and moving but the reception was one enormous party. Suzie always loves to do things a bit differently so ours was never going to be a conventional wedding" (112). The new subaltern is produced by the logic of global capital that forms classes only instrumentally, in separates urban spares, because commercial and finance capital cannot function without an industrial component. Post-Fordism has taken away the organizational stability of factory floor and thus taken away the possibility of class-

consciousness, however imperfect. International labor is racist and thus has no class solidarity as such.

In this way, Anh Do writes, "I did a fantastic gig, and dad was thrilled. We chattered away on the trip home, both us on an adrenaline height. When we got back to his place we sat back to talk over a few beers. That was the night when he finally admitted to me that he had a humor in his head" (114). The union movement in the United States is severely restricted and politically effective only in so far as it serves managerial interests. This is not the movement to find a rejoinder to class even as it must be recognized that not much can be done in its name, that it cannot produce an account of subaltern it. Indeed, there is exceptionality class mobility among aboriginal subalterns. Anh says, "I faced my own trials when I went over to Suzie's house for a meal. Dinner at Suzie's was almost the exact opposite of ours, especially when it was a special occasion. It was like a fine restaurant; you sat down and conversed" (107). Subaltern identity is projected in the narratives through the description of Suzie house's phenomena. In this regards, he projects: "He walks into his room and slammed the door. I hadn't expected this reaction from him at all. How naïve I was to forget the absolute fury I'd felt towards dad the first time I went down to see him. I didn't say anything to tram as I thought I'd have to figure out what to do with first-one at a time" (115).

Above lines highlight Suzie nature, which is similar to the nature of subaltern characters because she has faced the problems created by post-colonial thinking. In this regards, she says, "It started at a Christmas party where someone gave Suzie's cousin a pair of lovebirds. I thought they were beautiful so , just like my dad would have done , the next day I went out and bought myself a crimson ,to lorikeets , five finches , and a

corella" (116). The situation is similar to the idea of Spivak. In this regard, Spivak argues, "Subaltern studies had no need of such apologetic because they were not investigating subject formation but historical agency where the institutional valediction of something like intention is at play" (191). In the context of emergence of new subaltern, the question of subaltern consciousness has once again become important, now displaced to the global political sphere, so that knowledge can be made data and a subaltern will for globalization can put together as justification for policy. In this regards, Anh describes, "I did the show and everything was fine. On the way out, though, Suzie wanted to have a world about the issue with someone in charge. I told her not to worry about it- t wasn't worth it. But Suzie was incensed. Being blonde and blue eyed, she'd never really experienced this sort of overt racism before" (118).

After reaching in new land they have challenged various problems such as problems in thinking habit, accommodation, and dressing etc. The situation Anh Do states as, "In truth the guy would've left my head looking like Vietnamese pizza, but I loved my wife for making me feel like I could have beaten the guy if I'd chosen to" (120). She understands the situation and understands me better than anyone else in the world. She knew the bouncer's opinions didn't matter to me one bit, but what she thought about me meant everything. In this regards, she says, "I decided to bring forward all the material that would prove to them I was just an assize kid. So, I did a number of jokes about bull terriers and damsons and housing commission estates, and slowly I was getting a few chuckles" (121). By becoming subaltern character, she forgets everything and only focuses on the situation of the new life and new land. The following lines highlights as:

He was the eldest of the ten children, and according to family folklore he was the most kind and gentle person. With their father often away at war, uncle one took it upon himself to help his mother raise his nine younger siblings. He was the apple of my grandmother's eye and hand entered a seminary to study to become a priest. Everyone loved him. (123)

Above lines induce the problems have confronted by subaltern people in day today life in new land. They have confronted various problems created by traumatic history and search their own identity in post-colonial world. In this regards, Anh Do elaborates, "In 2002, they began casting for a children's show called don't blame me, a modern day take on Skippy. It was English Australian co-production and it featured lots of kangaroos, koalos, crocodiles, and the like" (124). When they reach in Australia refugee family members, they are hunted by their traumatic past though they try to adopt new culture. The circumstances Anh Do elaborate as, "Mum and dad always told us kids to 'do as much as you can to give back to this beautiful country that gave us a second chance. So we all do a fair bit of charity work" (125). The situation of Australia is different from the Vietnam but they are hunted by fear of the past because they are happy in long ago after attacks of colonial power they became refugee. The situation Anh Do present as:

I'd always had a great relationship with my brother khoa-even after his Siamese fish got mine pregnant. After working so closely with him on the film, I realized just how special a person he really was. I watched as he mentored these street kids; looked after them and took them under his wing and gave them a love and respect that they'd never experienced before in their lives. (127)

Above narrative present the fact of subaltern people who are always in the fear of colonial history that discourage the people by fantasizing the events that Anh Do projects, "These guys were all-time legends. If it had been a soccer film this would have been the equivalent of having Maradona , pele and beckham in your movie" (130).

The narrator is conscious about his situation and tries to be felt pride on the achievement, which is similar to the comedy. The narratives projects in this way, "I have always prided myself on being well prepared with my comedy material, but to go on a show watched by millions with a totally blank script was like jumping out of an Aero plane without a parachute and then prickly knitting one on the way down" (132). He prepares his comedy material, which is related to the history of refugee who is chased by war fear and settle in the new land as subaltern people rather than independent citizen. The following lines of the novel reflect the situation as, "It was roundabout week six when I went to visit some kids at the west mead children's hospital. Every celebrity on the show support a charity and mine was the day of difference foundation set up by the family of Sophie Delizio, the brave little girl who was twice seriously injured in tragic events" (133).

Above lines project the situation of the refugee people who Anh Do addressed as The Happiest Refugee. The questions come in minds as they are happiest and answers are comes in mind they are happier than the past though they are refugee. The following lines also project the same theme as:

I started dancing weighing eighty-five kilograms. Over the three months of the show, doing between four and eight hours of dance training a day, I lost a total of thirteen kilos when I'd reached seventy-two kilograms none

of my clothes fit anymore, so towards the end series I was turning up to channel 7 studios in the only thing that wouldn't fall off my waist, my year 10 school pants. (135)

It is shows that subaltern identity is confusing because they are being rootless by colonial power. Anh Do narratives symbolically project the situation by describing the history of a family who lived in Australia as *The Happiest Refugee*. In this regards, he says, "He's a dickhead, Anh.' Dad started telling me how a few years earlier grandma had seen uncle six in the street, and how he had looked down at his feet and pretended not to see her at all. He just walked right on by" (137).

In the same lines, he further describes, "It was during dancing with the stars, and channel 7 was doing a cross promotion, so they invited five of us who were already on dancing to do a week on deal, which they called dancing with the deals"(139). By celebrating festivals and participating romance they try to forget traumatic history but it is not easy to forget. In this regards, he says, "The producer was so excited, like she couldn't wait to tell Me. well the most amazing thing has happened. A totally independent body that draws the home viewer winner with a computer has Anh Do only picked a young man called Daniel martin" (140). It reflects subaltern identities in the form of narrative. The narrative is different from the history of colonial world though it is real in life. Anh describes the consequences, "I patted him on the back and walk away. It had ended okay. But there was a moment there when I thought to myself; I really could end up in a Gobi Desert jail. Then another part of me thought ... no problem, I know a bloke who'll steal some fake IDs and bust me out" (142). They are living in dream of fear though they forget everything and try to resist colonial power and attempt to write own

history. Anh Do says, “For my mother, this trip was nothing short of a dream come true. From the moment we arrive, her face lit up. She was just so happy. This trip was a walking, living vindication of all of mum’s effort. She had sweated and struggled and worked herself to the bone to get her children through those long” (145).

In above lines, writer presents the deep shadow that has faced by refugee family. The shadow is hidden in the mind though it reflects in the life of people as memoir and distorts their subaltern identity. Anh describes, "I was shopping for some socks when my phone rang. This deep voice says to me, ‘hello Anh it’s Russell Crowe – ‘my first thoughts were, nick off? Jonno! That’s the worst impersonation I’ve ever heard.’ Luckily, I didn't say those words out loud, because it really was Russell Crowe" (154).

By creating fictional world from his fact events Anh defines the marginalized people, which has not presented before his writing. In his book, narratives show that he is a subaltern character whose identity has been suppressed by the power hegemony in both way attacking in Vietnam and also has given his position to look critically as refugee in Australia. Do’s autobiography proves that one can articulate his or her identity by recollecting the past and celebrating the subaltern history, which is not inferior in rank in the contemporary changed context. His bitter history can be a good source for millions of refugees, who are living a hopeless life. Similarly, the autobiography also proves that the history, whatever bitter is it, could be presented with celebration to form identity in distinct form. It asserts that personal history recollected from the below of a subaltern can deconstruct the elitist history.

### III. Anh Do's History as a Script-therapy

Anh Do's celebrated autobiography *The Happiest Refugee* is one of the models of hope to the millions of hopeless subaltern refugees. Subaltern studies are a multi-disciplinary perspective. But, it focuses the way of rewriting the history from below, because history is one of the most important entities for articulating identity. It is said that everything can pass except the past. Subaltern historians focus on rewriting the history from the below so that the real history of the marginalized groups of people could be documented and preserved for deconstructing the dominance of elitist historiography. Anh Do through his autobiography preserves his pathetic past of becoming a refugee subaltern. He documents each and every minutes of fragments of his history that comes to be an extraordinary true story despite the fact that many events his family faced are not only funny, they are embarrassing as well. The narrative can be a model of script-therapy to millions of refugees; the book can offer some rays of hope to those refugees and subaltern groups of people, who are languishing a pathetic life everywhere in the world. It persuades to the victims that we should speak the history as a form of story telling (autobiography) by celebrating our past whatever sad or pleasant it is.

After a thorough analysis and research on *The Happiest Refugee*, the present researcher has come to a conclusion that the memoir depicts how subaltern people transform their position during the course of dislocation, resettlement and assimilation in an alien land. The autobiographer is successful to collect his fragmented history and present with high value to his bitter history as a celebration of his subaltern refugee history despite the fact that he has been transformed significantly as a celebrity. A

refugee family searches an identity in the narrative by expressing their subaltern origin. This is an autobiographical document of Anh Do whose family has been chased during the time of Vietnam War.

In Vietnam War many people lose their lives and various events occur but that have not been documented in official history. So Do writes this narrative as history of the subaltern group of people and searches subaltern identity in Australia after he reaches in the alien land. This memoir covers countless scene and events; the main scene is the sea while they are travelling when many people lose their lives. Before Vietnam War started they are happy citizen and then they are able to reach Australia. But in the long run Do successes as the happiest refugee.

Anh Do projects him as a subaltern character and justifies how the subalterns are suppressed by power hegemony in post-colonial world by erasing their self-dignity and identity. Question of identity becomes crucial in the text and the whole family goes in different sufferings. Throughout the entirety of Do's memoir, he structures the nature of his stories to ensure a blissful or humorous story follows a miserable or saddening story. By doing this, he manages to ensure the tone of his memoir stays positive therefore reflecting his optimistic personal voice. He also manages to go further than retelling a story to convey a lesson about life that everything happens for a reason.

We come to the conclusion that the autobiography is not only literary text but also historical document of subaltern people because it brings different historical reverences as well as modern problems that subaltern people are facing during this time due to colonial mentality of the post-colonial world. The narrative captures the experiences of

the subaltern group of people though this journey is the final for the life and new life forever.

The memoir gathers much information of refugee people through Do's narratives, which is still hidden in the post-colonial official history. More than that, the present text opens the avenue to the readers with the vision that the refugee also can be the important people for the development of the nation. Everybody can be the one of the entrepreneurs to create the opportunity and contribute in the prosperity of the country. Such types of contributions from the refugee can be seen in different nations and they have got success by utilizing the strengths of the refugee people. So, the autobiography is the discourse of subaltern people who travel from his homeland to the host land and struggle for rights, contribute for the growth of the state and become the happiest refugee.

In short, Anh Do's *The Happiest Refugee* is one of the models for the subaltern groups of people who have faced bitter traumatic events in life. The autobiography not only celebrates the subaltern history of the refugee groups of people to articulate distinct identity, the book can also be a material for script-therapy to the hopeless subaltern groups of people. Anh Do is successful in presenting the painful past with fun and celebration to transfigure his bitter refugee history into the happiest refugee.

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