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Gendered Subaltern in Atwood's, *Cat's Eye*

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Abstract

This research on *Cat's Eye* aims to show the marginalization of feminine gender, which had been facing underestimation in every opportunity. The concept of masculinity discourse in the novel relates to males and females in terms of the binary opposition where the males are defined as the absolute perfect vanguard of Canadian society, in contrast to the females. Women are inferiorized and pressed down domestically and publicly, not despite being incapable, but due to the manipulation of patriarchal bias. The relegation of the females in the lower strata of the society dramatizes the notion of gendered subaltern. The facts associated with passivity and submissiveness of females that American democracy internalized is directly, masculinity hegemony. The control of socio-economic and religious spheres, by the males, shown in the novel unfolds the real reality, of female's deterioration, in Atwood's *Cat's Eye*. Female characters are all marginalized by male i.e. seduction of Susie, suicide attempts of Elaine, bitten to Cordelia by her father and many other domestic violence upon females, open the concept of gender subaltern in the novel. In order to assert the superiority of masculinity over femininity in the society Jon does not assist his wife Elaine and sick daughter, rather he indulges in sex with another woman in the next room, which is the open practice of gender stereotypes. The males as powerful, strong and determined in contrast to the submissive, meek and docile females have been illustrated in the novel in the relationship between Jon and Elaine, Hrbik and Susie; which uncovers the genderly biased nature of masculinity discourse.

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I. Atwood as a spokesperson of the subaltern voice in *Cat's Eye*

Cat's Eye is a novel by Margaret Atwood. The book tells its story by alternating between two narratives. The first is that of the young Elaine, the black girl or the protagonist of the novel, growing up in a neighborhood in Toronto. The second is that of an older Elaine, visiting Toronto after living for decades in a self-imposed exile. The older Elaine must obviously be remembering the account of the young Elaine. It is important to remember that we are seeing the world of young Elaine through the eyes of the older Elaine. So here, Atwood is rich in mirroring the upheavals of feminine gendered from different levels of narrations. Thus, the novel is also rich in its style and structures.

Cat's Eye, deals with the specifics of females, analyzing the strategies of the black women character employ in their quest for identity. The female character in the novel represents the feminine self whose identity has been under dogged and manipulated by the masculine society. The female gender has been made subaltern due to the relative domination of men. Elaine, the black protagonist as well as the representative of the feminine self from the novel, receives the extremity of the physical and psychological domination not because of her inferiority but due to the play of coercive patriarchal rules and regulations, supported by capitalism. This relative domination upon the feminine gender despite having the equal capacity opens the door of, century-long domination inflicted upon the females; in addition double marginalization to the black women. Thus, the novel is rich in reflecting the identity seeking tendency of females thickly in the patriarchal power structures.

Elaine, the black girl is both protagonist and narrator in *Cat's Eye*. The entire setting of the novel is in Toronto, Canada. In the first part, Elaine Risley, a black woman painter, returns to

Toronto after many decades for a retrospective exhibition of her painting. While preparing for the opening, she gradually opens the chapter of her tormented childhood. She remembers that those heading days towards Toronto, was a war time, the II World War. The family crew were listening the war's impact on radio from London. Stephen was her younger brother and his own favorite game was 'War Play'. Concerning the fights, she says: "...I want to play with him more than he wants to play with me" (25). The final subjection of the "chapter four" is one line: "Such are my pictures of the dead" (CE 26). The statement adds poignancy to the chapter.

Elaine's childhood schooldays were full of miserable time. Girls were not allowed to wear pants like boys. The assembly zone of boys' and girls' were kept separately. All the girls should hold their hands and boys do not. School ground was also different for boys and girls. Her own brother, Stephen was also too unfamiliar in the school, like feeling odd, unknown and timid to talk and stay with her. In public place like school, the boys seem "Superman". Gender subordination was supported by school administration instead dismantling it. Mostly all the girls were silently subordinated before the unspoken rules of the boys.

Elaine's first friend in the schooldays was a girl named, Carol Campbell. Carol talks about the Sunday church whereas Elaine's idea about church was totally empty. She visits the Carol's house and saw so many girls' clothes, sophisticated rooms, and piano etc. but in return, Carol was surprised observing the Risley's room and kitchen and questioned, "This is the place, where you sleep? Where you live? These are your clothes?" Carol tells "Everyone at school that our family sleeps on the floor." (CE 57)

Elaine's other friend from her first winter in Toronto was Grace, who was more cruel than Carol. The greatest difference between Grace and Carol is; Grace was more dominating.

Grace uses “illness” as her weapon and makes her friends forcibly what she wants to do. Elaine monotonously played with both girls, moreover, with Grace’s ideas. Otherwise, she caught with ‘headache’, sometimes ‘stomachache’, immediately. Most and often in holidays, they used to play in Grace’s house. Frequently they play the game-school: “Grace is always the teacher.” (CE 61)

The third friend of Elaine was Cordelia. The girl, whom she meets during her second year in Toronto, this new girl particularly, in comparison to the two former girls, was crueler. She is now the leader among the girls. Now a shy and timid girl, Elaine became the victim of three classmates: Carol, Grace and Cordelia respectively. Cordelia was particularly a cruellest girl, who constantly mimicking adult behavior, paralyzed Elaine by making her aware of “Otherness”. In one instance, the three girls accuse Elaine of laughing at her. Cordelia’s group throws Elaine’s hat on thin ice in a ravine (stream) in which evil men are said to be wander. They leave her alone. Cordelia orders Elaine to fetch the hat in alien, evening falling graveyard zone. Elaine, a forlorn girl was fainted there in the dark evening; is mocked, tortured and stupefied by the three classmates, nearly died in the ravine due to the chilling cold and frozen atmosphere.

Margaret Atwood’s novel *Cat’s Eye* is intended to indicate how damaged self of the protagonist Elaine Risley, in her childhood has led to her trauma and affected her till to later life. How damaged Elaine’s self deal with her identities are analyzed with the help of characterization concerned with some psychological theories in this thesis. In this point Julian claims:

In the story, Elaine has undergone unpleasant childhood because of being tortured by her friends so that she cannot build her self-confidence. Yet, the most important point to be stuck out in this study is the way to master and banish the

trauma. On the one hand, running away from trauma is only meant to delay the trauma not to haunt for a moment. Taking revenge on the cause of the trauma on the other hand is merely to get a pseudo-satisfaction on one's self which is also obtained for a moment. Fundamentally, the best solution to drive away the trauma is by coping with it; and more importantly, making peace with the cause of it. (47)

Thus, it is evident that Elaine receives the traumatic experiences in her childhood and even in her adulthood. The psychological mechanism in the protagonist has been destroyed due to the abnormal treatment from the social, familial and cultural network. So the century long dominating ideology of patriarchy is existing through different applicable agents.

Many critics have analyzed Atwood's *Cat's Eye* in many ways. They have focused on the social condition, gender issues and the struggle for the survival. In this connection, one of the prominent critics of twentieth century, Rita Felski in the article, "Feminist aesthetics and the new realism", opens that this novel is very much to excavate the gender issues, representing multiple realities. She says:

The definition of "Feminist Literature" reads as "all those texts that reveal a critical awareness of women's subordinate position and of gender as a problematic category, however this is expressed." Hence it is a type of literature- where *Cat's Eye* is positioned – that discusses patriarchal structures (women's subordinate position) and questions of gender from a critical point of view. (12)

The pinpoint of the above statement about *Cat's Eye* is immensely strong in its portrayal of marginalized gender i.e. femininity. So Atwood's novels are examined in a cultural context in

this study, which explores the victimization of women, especially, victimization through physical, psychological and economic manipulation.

In the adulthood of the protagonist, Elaine, her art teacher Mr. Hrbk (also Josef) passionately kissed her inside the class. Later he took her into his apartment and raped her. Again this man raped the Elaine's friend Susie too. After the pregnancy of the Susie, he flees from that city unnoticeably. In *Cat's Eye* Atwood is able to show that how the females are commodified by the agents of patriarchy.

Elaine's marital relationship ends in divorce. Her husband Jon was also a painter but "a free painter". This conjugal life ends when their daughter 'Sarah' born. Most of the time Jon was outside, most often he used to come home late with many other women, whom he sleeps. These unbearable waves of distress triggered Elaine, the suicide attempt once. In the extremity of frustration, she attempted suicide by cutting the wrist in the kitchen. Observing upon the major events of Elaine's life one of the renowned critics, Thomas Larson highlighted:

First, her girlhood in the late 1940s; in which she is terrorized by the "whispering indirectness" of her girlfriends, meanest of which is the precociously aggressive Cordelia, second, her adolescence, in which she fights back, spurred by a talent for fainting and her own "mean mouth", and discovers the wonder of time from her time-obsessed brother Stephen. Third, her art school years, which feature an affair with her student seducing teacher Josef and marriage to the mercurial avant-garde 60s artist Jon. The marriage results in a child, a suicide attempt, a divorce and triumphs and bouts with in the movement of 70s. (6)

The treatment of these themes will probably make the novel a good representation of the gendered subaltern. Atwood reveals that the former husband of Elaine, Jon, married another woman named Marry Jean but later divorced her too. This instance shows clearly that how the men and their power have great role to ruin the life of the women. Atwood codes women as “beautifully dead, like someone in the poem.” (CE 360)

Although she is a successful artist, all her works are critically misinterpreted. *Empire Bloomers, Nightshade, Half-face, Fallen Women, Virgin Marry* etc. are some genuine series of paintings. But unfortunately, the contemporary male artist does not digest it with a distinct value. Mysteriously, Elaine’s series of these all paintings reveals the suffocation of the women from different time and locations. In another line of argument, a renowned post colonial critic Verena Buhler Roth in “*Wilderness and the Natural Environment. Margaret Atwood’s Recycling of a Canadian Theme*” argues that:

Cat’s Eye is not a “portrait of the women *artist* as much as it is a portrait of a “woman and a subject in relation to society.” (18)

This critic has analyzed this novel by linking with social realism. It is clear that the problem in the novel is not only the problems of protagonist artist, a black woman Elaine, but it reveals the century long domination upon feminine gender, despite being capable. So, Atwood clearly portrays the politics of patriarchy that how females are thwarted away from the social mobility.

In this situation, the genderly marginalized people are forced to bear the discrimination from the elitist people. One of the famous feminist, Judith Grant in *Fundamental Feminism contesting the core concepts of Feminist Theory*, lists some of the classical divisions of femininity and masculinity:

-) Women are sexually attracted to men and vice-versa (The sexual practices and reproduction are considered the most normal).
-) Women are more passive than men.
-) Women are smaller than men.
-) Women are not as good at thinking abstractly as men.
-) Women are more emotional than men.
-) Women are nurturing, caring, generally most fit to parent. (27)

At the end of the novel, Elaine's parents, brother Stephen and some more friends died. She is neither a hero nor a tragic figure that is doomed to fall. She is made silent and misunderstood. But she screams loudly through her art, paintings. The art of colors and the colors of suffocation, distressed and subordination is the marginalization of women.

As Spivak argues, marginal voices are muted by the power locations. Again, she argues that through the means of literary works, arts and creative agencies, Subaltern exposes their suffering, torture and loneliness. So, the prominent living feminist figure Margaret Atwood, represents the gender dominated voice i.e. voice of downtrodden females, voice of subalterneity.

II. Theoretical Tool: Subalterneity

For the innumerable era, the history of the 'Subalterns' is swept away with a long domination of elite bourgeoisie. But the 'Subaltern Studies' was started in England at the end of 1970s, when a small group of English and Indian historians led a proposal to launch a new journal in India. The journal "Subaltern Studies: Writing on south Asian History and Society", which was published by Oxford University Press in New Delhi, edited by Ranajit Guha. So, formally from 1982, Subaltern Studies group emerged in India with the aim of rewriting the history of ignored people by the colonialists and elitist historiographers. The group of seven scholars enlisted by Ranajit Guha since 1982 were, Sahid Amin, David Arnold, Bhadra Gautam and Gyanendra Pandey. Subalterneity thus, became a nomenclature 'agenda' which gave old terms new meaning and started a new beginning for historical studies. So, this group which was led by Ranjit Guha tried to provide the subaltern people with their own voice, promoting a systematic discussion of subaltern's themes in the South Asian Society.

The word, 'Subaltern' itself has a long past. If we trace the word Subaltern back to the medieval age, this term was applied for vassals and downtrodden peasants. By 1700, it was denoted towards the 'lower rank' in the military suggesting peasant origins. By 1800, some authors published novels and histories 'From Subaltern perspective' about military campaigns in India and America. For instance, G.R Gleig (1796-1888) wrote the biographies of Robert Cline and Thomas Munro, following the subaltern's trends.

Lastly, Italian Neo-Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) soon after the Russian revolution, colors the ideas about subaltern identity into the theories of class struggle. After a

Marxist touch immensely, the word 'Subalterns' became very popular which refers to 'inferior rank' or "those groups in the society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes".

Therefore, 'Subaltern' integrated the excluded people, groups, gender, tribes, races, profession, class and colors thwarted from the central flow of the society and state affairs. As a Marxist, Gramsci was very much concerned with the proletarians, whose voices remain 'dead' in the entire elitist history.

The main mission of the 'Subaltern Studies' was to rebound the historical analysis from the Subaltern's perspectives in which subaltern groups were taken as the 'subjects' of the history. So, this phenomenon opposed 'much', the prevailing academic practices in historiography; the practice of subalterns to make their own destiny, domination, subordination, hegemony, resistance, revolt and different numerous old concepts could be now subalternized. National narratives, orientalist images, ethnic stereotypes and Hindu majoritarianism etc. get innovative term and definitions from subalterneity.

Before 1985 there was no concrete shape and definition of subalterneity emerged in the rewriting as historiographical project. Experiment was ongoing. Then, in 1985, the series of Subaltern Studies IV introduced the reshaping of the subaltern tendency from the cultural perspectives by the prominent two US based scholars, Bernard S. Cohn and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. At the same time the respective scholars explored the languages and textualities of discursive power from the point of post-structuralism. In the same series of Subaltern Studies IV, Dipesh Chakraborty, one an renowned founder too, in the closing essay defines subalterneity as a colonial cultural phenomenon as 'the composite culture of resistance to and acceptance of dominant and hierarchy'. Subaltern studies is the historiographic agenda. So, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in SS IV entered with a new domain; Feminism. Up to the first three

volumes, subaltern studies did not take the women's issues, much distinctively. Spivak's first essay; *Deconstructing Historiography* was included in Subaltern Studies VI (1986) introduced with the excavating the absence of 'gender' questions in Subaltern_studies series. She intervenes the SS with the sensitive issues of feminism from the post-structuralism perspective. Therefore a brilliant feminist and deconstructionist scholar, Spivak, clearly mentioned that subaltern studies was unable to demonstrate the true condition of subaltern women in the vicious circle of patriarchal social structures. The subaltern has been now understood as synonymous with marginalized women, children, colonial subjects, the poor, the illiterate, the proletariat or the religious and ethnic minority in different historical context. Now the study of the subalterneity has been affiliated with the post structural phenomenon, including Marxism, Feminism, Deconstruction and Post colonial theories. Beginning with Ranjit Guha and continuing on through Spivak, Amitav Ghosh, Partha Chatterjee, and others, Subaltern Studies has restricted 'specific_events' of individuals; the stories of widow and women, peasants, proletarians and numerous minorities whose action and activities, life and stories are deadly lost in the entire bourgeoisie (elite) history.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak steered a literary turn in the mid 1980s, on the Subaltern project. After a critical essay, *Deconstructing Historiography* in 1986, again in 1988, Spivak published her widely discussed essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* In this ground breaking essay, she widely discussed with the discourses of 'representation' of women, in the hitherto history and claim that the 'Space' of woman despite being capable, women are genderly subordinated. Talking of the sati custom (Eastern culture), she reveals how the white men and the brown men reduces the brown women into the subject of the male's desire. The pinpoint of this essay is that the elite intellectual or historiographers represents the subaltern voice is just filtering through an

elitist-perspective. Moreover I would be discussing the moving issues of subaltern women, 'Bhubaneswari Bahaduri's death', in the coming chapter of the thesis. This critical and challenging essay of Spivak; not only depicts the problem of representation, space of marginal women and voice of subalterns, but touching Foucault and Deleuze twisted the SS towards the cultural studies and take it as an integral part of post colonial subject too.

In 1988, an anthology entitled *Selected Subaltern Studies* was published by Oxford University Press in New York and Oxford, edited by Guha and Spivak with a foreword by Edward Said. David Ludden in the *Reading Subaltern Studies* writes, "Edward Said forwarded to 'Selected Subaltern Studies' described an academic tendency outside India, in the world of global circulation, which was being embraced by the project, saying, this group of scholars is a self-conscious part of the vast post-colonial cultural and critical efforts that would also include novelists like Salman Rushdie, Garcia Marquez and others, as well as poets like Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Mahmud Darwish, Aimé Césaire, theorists and political philosophers...and a whole host of other figures"(18). In the same year (1988) Ranjit Guha retired from the editorial team of *Subaltern Studies*. But due to the affiliation and attachment of Edward Said, Spivak and other numerous cultural critics and scholars, "Post-colonial Cultural Criticism and Literary Theory" had embraced SS. Since then many scholars have tried to take these criticisms into their works. *Subaltern Studies* thus, becomes a post colonial critique of modern, European and Enlightenment epistemologies.

By the 1990s, the cold war came to an end. Global capitalism entirely dominates the world. Socialist regimes said to be became 'failure'. The world entered into the new era; the era of cultural studies. Critics valorize the cultures of the poor and marginalized. In this new context, national boundaries were collapsing under transnational flows. The concept of 'nation' was

being reconfigured, reimaged and re-theorized. The intellectual streams of globalization rejected official nationalism. The rapid growth of science and technology, rapid emergence of 'Gunculture', mal-practices of space colonization, population growth, concept of market value and consumer's health, post-industrialization, polarization of different civilizations, explosion of cultures and so many other factors dominate the globe, in vast ranges. People's movements in African and South Asian countries, valorization of democracy (as supported by capitalism), downfall of conventional autocratic regime, mass destruction, oil war (conflict in gulf), axis of numerous religions etc. creates a vast range of consciousness globally. Movements of identity crisis, redefinitions of sex and genders issues, increase of mass-media and communication, vast publication of journals and papers brings the drastic downfall of old ideologies and orthodox practices. These rising multidisciplinary subjects connect the people from different time and locations. Now every human are like 'cog' of post-capitalism and post-industrial's world. In each and every matter of the world-affairs, the capitalism encroachment goes beyond. The deterioration of the communist blocks, they just remain silently only on the defensive pole.

The fragmentation of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans were widely said to be the failure of Marxism, communism and socialism. Therefore, new approaches to nationality came forward. Modernity, positivism and the enlightenment came under the verdict of the intellectual court, extremely. Social theory took a linguistic and literary turn. Cultural criticism became Cultural criticism cultural politics old empirical certainties of modernization, capitalistic development and national progress were fragmented in the radicality of post-modern and post-colonial writing. So ultimately the deadline of twentieth century and the natal stage of twenty first century is the 'transmogrifying' phase of multicultural ethos, transcend interdisciplinary wings, transcontinental cultural practices, with including numerous

environmental crisis and human wars. The very morning ray of the twenty first century begins with the innumerable global problems. Therefore, South Asian Studies (SS) and its ideas are complicatedly interwoven in recent world trends, no any exception for subaltern studies.

The work of Gyanendra Pandey, Partha Chatterjee and Sahid Amin in the 1990s traces the ideas of fragments over the whole or totality. Pandey's *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India (1990)* and his another essay, *In Defence of the Fragments (1992)*, Amin's, *Event, Memory, Metaphor (1995)* and Chatterjee's *The Nation and its Fragments (1994)* all question on both archival and epistemological grounds. Ajaya Skaria, Shail mayaram, Gyan Prakash and others have made massive contribution to widen the space of Subaltern arena. Bhadra's Iman O'nishan is the prominent writing upon the peasant society in eighteenth and nineteenth century Bengal India.

Thus, the above mentioned works of different critics and scholars valorized the influence of deconstruction and postmodern thought in Subaltern Studies. They questioned all, hitherto archival and 'documented' claim of totality and its trustworthiness. Rosalind O'Hanlon published essay in the journal *Modern Asian Studies* in 1998 and criticize Subaltern Studies. In a same row of Spivak, O'Hanlon too, buttresses the issues of gender inclusiveness in the project.

Vinay Bahl, another prominent critic of subaltern studies, questions the utility of SS.

She argues for the need to locate subalternity inside the history of global capitalism. K.

Balagopal is both activists and scholar of subaltern studies, who focus his research on everyday subaltern politics. Another scholar name, Fredrick Cooper wrote his essay for the forum in the *American Historical Review*, governing the subaltern studies in the context of African history. In a same line, Florencia Mallon did the same for Latin America. Therefore, subalterneity becomes

a flexible forum where numbers of critics and scholars get room for their review and discussion, in the *Reading Subaltern Studies*, writes, “dispersion and convergence, migration and assimilation, have made subalterneity a moveable feast with jumbled tracks leading in many directions” (26).

There is sharp ongoing debate between Marxists and Subalternist, Marxists and Postmodernists (because of massive influence of Spivak, Homi k. Bhabha and New Historicist M. Foucault). As Dipesh Chakrabarty writes in the book, *Habitation of Modernity*, “Indian Marxists charge that the postmodernist valorization of the fragment in Subaltern historiography hurts the cause of the unity of the oppressed and helps Hindu extremists. Many of the Marxist opponents of subaltern studies believe that such unity is aided by a social analysis that helps brings the different publics of the oppressed together by finding global and totalizing causes behind their oppression” (18).

Defends of subaltern studies point out that the Subalternist are rethinking the history from genealogical perspective ‘History from below’ approach. Marxist tradition of history generalized the history of proletarians. It is the history of class-struggle and history of dialectical materialism. In this post-cultural modern era the controversial issues of the society like gender, castes, tribes, ethnicity, sex etc are not well defined and addressed by the Marxist philosophy. Now, the whole society cannot get the perfect definition, under only the umbrella term, ‘class struggle’. Subalterneity is therefore, restudying the bygone buried voices on the basis of gender, castes and tribes, religions, geography, haves and haves not, colonial and colony, ethnic groups, languages etc in a distinctive way. So that Marxism celebrates modernity whereas, subalterneity is the branch of post colonial subject matter bounded by the postmodern thought. It is a new project of writing historiography of silent mass rethinking Marxism too.

Project of 'History from Below'

Subaltern Studies overlapped with different postmodern thought and Cultural studies, genuinely assimilating the Michel Foucault's geneological concept. So, academic movement of rewriting and readdressing 'History from below' is also followed by the Foucault's 'New Historicism' concept [i.e. discourse, power and truth]. This is why Subaltern studies marches ahead to excavate the 'deaden voice' of marginality. Before the birth of subaltern studies, there was a influenced and existence both with the aimed of studying the history, is only the antheming of nationalism and elite hegemony. Subalternists, severely attacked from the very 'front-line', upon the claim of those English historiography.

In 1963, one of the leading figure of English Marxist Historiographer, E.P. Thompsom wrote a book called, *The Making of the English Working Class*. As their claim, this book is taken as a master piece of history from below approached. In a same approach, another historiographer, Eric Wolf published '*Europe and the people without histor*'(10). Wolf too claim as Thompsom, his book is taken as 'global' history from below. In 1976 Eric Stokes, another English historiographer were Christopher Hill, E.J, Hobsbwan and Eugen Weber. Weber in his writing, *Pheasants into Frenchmen*, studied the rural France. In this way different historians and critics forcely joint in the English historiography with the mission to point out exactly the bottom class history. For Subaltern historiographers, they are only the 'agent' of Elitism.

More interestingly, subalternists rejected this claim of English Marxist historians. For the subalternist, peasants do not speak directly in archival document, produced by the elite classes. But, as we are the reader of subalterneity, we can find the similarity between 'Metropolitan Marxist Historiography' and 'Subaltern Historiographer' in their subjects matter of rewriting

history of downtrodden, bastard and marginality. Guha, totally rejecting the claim of those elitist historians in the first volume of Subaltern studies say that, “we are indeed opposed to much of the prevailing academic practice in historiography...for its failure to acknowledgement the subaltern as the marker of their own destiny. This critique lies at the very heart of our project. In this way subaltern studies bifurcated distinctively towards the real rewriting marginal history”(23)

Therefore, Subaltern studies; takes the turning point from the hitherto elitist history and historiography. SS takes the subject matter that is thwarted away from the mainstream location, power and politics, who are the real owner of the history. Subalterns are the owner of the hitherto human civilization. Corrupted elitist mentality of very few unfortunately is able to make deaden the sound of the entire mass for innumerable era. But now, Subaltern Studies became a dynamic forum, accepted globally with numerous critics, scholars and theorists. It is celebrating the triumph with successful publishing more than the twelve series or volumes of ‘subaltern studies’ collection, collaborating with different renowned International press and publications. Thus, subaltern studies does not exist only in the rewriting history of South Asian Subalterns, in this cultural explosion era, it is taken as a transcontinental project creating numerous discourses on colonial and past-colonial elucidation.

Gendered Issues

Only after the integration of Gayatri Spivak from *Subaltern Studies VI (1986)* with her renowned essay *Deconstruction Historiography*, Subaltern studies group widely geared up with the discourses of feminist issues. The intervention of the Spivak in subaltern studies with a feminine domain, takes the project to a new height to tackle with the gendered questions

simultaneously, women are also the freedom fighter and contributor of their whole potentiality for liberty, equality and justice like men. But as a subaltern, they fail to complete this mission. So, from the very beginning of the human civilization, there was the trend to dominate the feminine gender thickly by the patriarchal social structures. They are marginalized on the basis of the gender. Hence, liberty, equality and freedom are beyond their access. Their voice of equality and freedom has been vanished as the voice of lamb vanishes in the mouth of tiger.

Spivak clearly mentioned that Subaltern Studies itself is a discourse to speak on favor of marginalized groups which do not accelerate the Women's *issues* as it should have. So Spivak can be said to the first colonial theorists with a fully feminist agenda. According to her, the women of the colonized space are doubly subalternized. Suppressed as 'colonized subject' and on the other, their own male partners domestically dominate her according to the contemporary ideological trends.

Similarly, Spivak analyses the problems of the subaltern by examining the position of gendered subjects. Colonialism appears to be more complexities to the females than male of the colonized space.

Spivak bitterly disagreed even with the subaltern studies group, who totally ignored the women's space, issues and gendered questions. In her extremity she says, "The figure of woman is pervasively instrumental in the shifting of the function of discursive system, as in insurgent mobilization. Questions of the mechanics of this instrumentality are seldom raised by our group" (356). For Spivak femininity cannot be ignored in anthropological history, because it is rooted in the very beginning of human development like as a religion. She keeps the statements that,

“femininity is as important a discursive field for the predominantly male insurgents as religion” (356). So, she denies each and every kind of discourses which denied the feminism subjectively.

For Spivak, the colonialist and bourgeoisie nationalist historiography deaden the voice of subalterns. Moreover, the history of subaltern women’s voice and deed is totally swept away by those elitist historians. In her prominent essay, “Can Subaltern Speak?” (1988) raised a remarkable discussion of women’s representation. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx claimed that the proletarians cannot represent themselves, they need to be represented. In the same line of argument, Spivak claim that subalterns also cannot speak and represent (not of any language) themselves; they got to be represented by the sophists. Again, she is worried because the exact voice of Subaltern may have chance to be replaced, with the investigator’s voice. Therefore, representation of subalterns, sometimes, merely be full with elitist perspective. So for Spivak there is all chances of violence in the representation.

Talking of the 'sati-custom' in the essay *Can Subaltern Speak?* she reveals how the white men and the brown men reduce the brown women into the ‘object’ of the male’s desire. How her subjectivity gets ignored. Whether it is the West or East, the women are denied the position from which they can speak, on their own, as both spaces are patriarchies. Spivak says, “both as an object of colonized historiography and as a subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant” (32). Both, regarding with the history and representation women are meek, docile and humble. She claims; “in the context of colonial production the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (32). “Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject constitution and object formation,” in Spivak’s words, “the figure of women disappears....” (36)

After examining the case of Bhubaneswori Bhaduri's suicide, Spivak concludes that, "the Subaltern cannot speak". "The subaltern as female cannot heard or read". The subaltern women therefore emerge as an epitome of 'subaltern'. And all these issues regarding women's mobility is well address by 'gendered subaltern'. In the same line of argument Ranjit Guha also contributed in his moving essay, "Chandra's Death" which attempts no demonstrate the nature of women's subordination within the patriarchy. In the same space, Susie Tharu, Tejaswini Niranjana, Kamala Visweswaran and Rosemary Sayigh have greatly carried in women issues in the subsequent volumes. Kamala Visweswaran says, "Women are not accepted as proper subjects but it is register and seek to contain their agency." (124). She says, it is in this tension, this moment of oscillation, I would argue that, we recognize the effect where the gendered Subaltern is felt "women as subalterns; Subalterns as women" (SS IX, 125). So the women position appears to reflect the meaning of the subaltern at best. This is one of the reasons why the women issues are so widely discussed in Subaltern Studies.

Spivak in her scholarly commentary essay '*A Literacy Representation of the Subaltern: Mahasweta Devi's Standayani,*' in SS V (1987) argues; how women are denied their subjectivity, and their voice. To make the concrete claim of bourgeois nationalist historiography failure, she resurrected the Devi's *Standayini* (Breast Giver) and interpret how the women are looked 'from above' as merely a sexual object or 'from below' as a form of goddess. In her witty commentary she has been turn into an object of the male's desire, on the other she has been worshipped as goddess who feeds milk to the children. Here, the male wants to see the women as a sacrificial being. So that he could fulfill his various desires from her. Spivak remarks; "Through a programmed confounding of the two kinds of gaze, the goddess can be used to

dissimulate woman's oppression" (129). So, by representing as goddess, the male's eyes have tried to hide the injustice and oppression, it has inflicted upon women. Spivak further says;

As long as there is this hegemonic cultural self representation of India as a goddess mother, (dissimulating the possibility that this mother is a slave) she will collapse under the burden of the immense expectations from that such as self-representation permits. (96)

So, Spivak posits women are in the role of the subaltern, questioning the male constructed voice of women within the patriarchal society. Therefore for Spivak; women are perceived, she gets reduced down to an object of the male's desire.

In nutshell, Spivak claim that women of colonized space are doubly marginalized. In the context of colonial production or not, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak. Subaltern as female is even deeply interwoven in the shadow. So Spivak posits, women are 'genderly subalternized', questioning the hitherto male constructed voice of women. Both the spaces of colonized and colonizer is male oriented society. Despite being capable, the representation of the feminine race gets severely victimized in the entire history. The century long domination upon the females in terms of the gender has been still in practices. Therefore, it tempts the critics of gender subaltern.

III. Women as a Subaltern: Textual analysis

Cat's Eye revolves around the life of Elaine, a poor girl which tells the tale of exploitation and struggle, and above all, of survival. The main protagonist Elaine is a long suffering woman repressed by the gender, race and class. The struggle for existing becomes forever poor; in spite of her hard work. It is because of the power centered structure of the patriarchal society. Due to the control of social economic and religious aspects by the males, the protagonist of the novel had to bear all the suffering and pain firstly, as being female and secondly being 'black' women more, in the contemporary American society. Issues of subalterneity, raciality and femininity are emphasized to strongly in the novel '*Cat,s Eye*'.

When her father was appointed as an entomologist in the Toronto, then the novel unfolds the Canada of the mid 20th century from world war II to the late 1980s. Now after many decades later, she returned to Toronto for her art exhibition, she gradually remembers her tormented childhood and adulthood. She started narrating her story like an unclear picture of old photograph. "Sometimes this comes to the surface, sometimes that, sometimes nothing" (1).

Gender is the social construct, which is used to describe the socially constructed differences between men and women interwoven by cultural practices and stereotypes. Therefore, the definition of gender encompasses a great deal.

Overestimation, underestimation and the gaze of the feminine self as a docile, meek and subordinate in the novel uncovers the issue of gender subaltern. Atwood, masterfully demonstrates that women are systematically victimized in the novel. Due to the mobile job of her father before, they used to live in numerous places, temporarily. While heading towards the new city Toronto from the south of the

Canada, it took many days in car. During this period Elaine feels awkward to be a daughter and to travel in the car. How the strongly rooted patriarchal ideology successfully creates biasness between son and daughter within the family can be examined by the following:

I sit by myself in the back of the car, among the suitcases and the cardboard boxes of food and the coats, and the gassy dry-cleaning smell of the car upholstery. My brother Stephens sits front seat, beside the partly open window. (23)

In many different societies, women, like colonized subjects, have been relegated to the position of 'other' by various forms of patriarchal domination. Men are from the very beginning of their life described as aggressive, assertive, independent and competitive and so on. Nature makes us male or female, it gives us our biological definition, but it is a society, which makes masculine as superior and feminine self as inferior. Our society is predominated by patriarchal norm and values. So any gender identity is influences and created by the individual's immediate societal and cultural context. From the conscious and subconscious level, patriarchal norms are always in the dominant location. While narrating the game, 'war play' with Stephen, how she was being made humble creature in the childhood.

This was his favorite game. I am the infantry, which means I have to do what he says. He waves me forward, motions me back, tell me to keep my head down.

'You're dead', he says 'No I am not.' Yes you are. They got you lie down, 'I have to lie down on the swampy ground.' (27)

This instance also clearly illustrates that the patriarchal ideology and norms is successful to create the hierarchy based on gender. The activities of the children are the reflection of the contemporary existing practices of the society, under controlled by males. Elaine further adds, "Such are my pictures of the dead" (28).

After the settlement in the Toronto in the dilapidated house, Elaine was admitted in the Queen Marry Public School, which looks very old. The entrance ways for boys and girls were different, separate lines and separate doors were made.

Instead, school is house of wisdom; just it becomes the location that creates biasness between girls and boys. So state suppresses the voices of women thus, they are subaltern in Atwood's Cat's Eye. Obviously being a black girl, she feels awkward within the school premises. She knows the unspoken rules of boys in school. Her first friend in school was a girl called, Carol Campbell. Though they were together at home, school, Carol was a rich and stubborn. Carol shows her different pair of clothes, colorful gloves, piano and so on at her home. But in return when Carol visited Elaine house with unpainted walls, dangling wires, unflourish floor and so on, she comments:

This is where you *sleep*? She says, this is where you *eat*? These are your *clothes*?

Many *This, that* questions. Carol tells everyone at school that our family sleeps on the floor. (57)

Gender, race and class discrimination is clearly shown in the Atwood's Cat's Eye.

Those who are comparatively from low class and from black family, they have no space in the society. Capitalism snatched their voice. Elaine is ignorant about the urban life, which have nothing to show others. The same class-mate treated her inhumanely. The protagonist of the novel doesn't have access for resistance in the society. Hence she cannot speak. Grace was another best friend of Carol. But, now, they all become friends, then. Grace Smeath was older and senior too. So both

Elaine and Carol used to be victimized by Grace, Elaine portrays here, how the trio-girls used to play:

The things we play was mostly Grace's ideas , because if we try to play anything she doesn't like she says she has a headache and goes home, or else tells us to go home (61). In one instance, Elaine says, "I want to play with her more than she wants to play with me; she gets her way in everything" (61). Cat's Eye is a brand of marbles. Elaine used to play at home and at school alone with it. Her favorite one is blue. It's a clear glass with a bloom of color petals in the centre. Gathering in her outspread skirt, the cold marbles rolling in between her legs, calling out *Cat's eye, Cat's eye* in a regretful tone, feeling nothing, She have no any friend to play with at school. At home Stephen would play sometimes. His target was deadly but he never taught how to charge it. Elaine never plays with her best, blue one. She keeps it very safely. This belongs to the childhood memory. Later, she paints the self-portrait picture named, *Cat's eye* too.

The protagonist of the Atwood's novel, Elaine, is tortured by her two so called friends. Grace and Carol are rudely behaving with Elaine. They are reflecting typically the capitalistic culture. Elaine vividly mentioned that how Grace goes beyond rude and superior:

We play school. Grace has a couple of chairs and a wooden table in her cellar, and a small blackboard and chalk. Grace is always the teacher, Carol and I, the students. We have to do spelling tests and sums in arithmetic. We can't pretend to be bad, because Grace doesn't like disorder (61).

Numerous feminists agreed that to strengthen patriarchal structure of society their own feminine race also is responsible thickly or thinly. They are actively participating to promote male's behavior, language, norms, and values. Also they inherited the patriarchal natures and manipulated it entirely upon the poor, black and weak women, subaltern women, creating class, color and racial hierarchies. So under the multi-dimensional nature and complexities of society,

to mute the women, numerous circumstances play a vital role. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak presents women as

Subaltern group in her essay, “Can the subaltern speak?” published in 1998. According to Spivak, “Women are subaltern because their voices are overshadowed in the patriarchal society” (33). It is clear that the steer of the society is in the hand of males.

The third girl whom Elaine meets in school was called Cordelia; tall, lanky with dark-blondes hair, with long face. Now the Cordelia is the leader of other three girls, Elaine, Carol and Grace. They walked home together, four instead of three.

She is the cruelest among the grace and Carol. They started frequently teasing Elaine at school, at home and on the way unnecessarily. Mostly they imitate her walking style, moving body and so on.

Once, Grace’s mother Mrs. Smeath wants to take Elaine in the Church. She had never been before in her life. As being a black girl with low status she never gets chance. They need to wear hat to cover their head in the church. Elaine narrates her first visit of church sharing the old hat of Grace in the following ways:

Mrs Smeath, standing in the hallway, considers me as if I’m an orphan left on her doorstep. She sends Grace upstairs to search for another hat, for me. We don’t go into church with our head uncovered, she says. She emphasizes our, as if there are other, inferior, bareheaded churches. (114)

Culture determines our behaviors. The inferior rank people are compelled to imitate the elite cultures. Slave doesn’t get frontier space in the history. They need to follow because they are hegemonized and made meek, humble and docile. Therefore, in every act and action, Elaine is victimized. Elaine symbolically sinks before the norms of patriarchy. As a ignorant black girl she

need to struggle for the religious and cultural roles. For the social, legal and cultural freedom and equality she faced numerous trouble and suffering.

Discrimination is rooted deeply in the religious rituals and practices of Christianity. The biggest, fine and beautiful church's Jesus have haloes. On the other side is a woman with no halo and white kerchief partly covering her face? This religious symbol also denotes that female race is taken as a slaves and secondary object from the very beginning of the human civilization. During the praying ceremony, Elaine imitates what Grace does "I watch what Grace does, and stand up when she stands up, sits when she sits. During the songs she holds the hymnbook open and points, but I don't know any of the tunes." (115)

The cultural, economic and educational disabilities of black people, mostly the black girl and women is due to the patriarchal society, dominated by white men, that they have prevented women, from realizing their productive and creative abilities. Grace, Carol and Cordelia are expert in religious pray, academic activities because they get space and opportunities in the society. But the other classmate, at the same age, Elaine is inferior because of not lacking in her potentialities, but who doesn't get proper platform in the society. Always Cordelia took leadership. Always Cordelia, Grace and Carol maintain their axis, only to dominate Elaine. At school, at home and on the way Elaine was victimized. This victimization goes beyond, during playtimes and at school time. One day while playing at Cordelia's house, they make a large, square hole by a pointed shovel. Elaine doesn't know their mission. But she expressed their rude nature like this. Cordelia and Grace and Carol take me to the deep hole in Cordelia's backyard. They pick me up by the underarms and throw me into the hole. Then they arrange the boards over the top. The daylight air disappears and there's the sound of dirt hitting the boards, Shovelful after shovelful. When I was put into

the hole I knew it was a game; now I know it is not one. Then I feel the darkness pressing down on me; then terror. (125)

Elaine is poor, helpless and loveless. She is being mistreated. Such mistreatment upon the inferior person, by those cruel trio-girls is the inherited nature of patriarchal characteristics. They left her there and run away. Later she was rescued by other neighbors. She nearly had died, due to the suffocation. This act and activities represent the century long domination of patriarchal stereotypes and cruelty. Friendship, morality and punctuality remain empty in the novel, which depicts the male bias society. Therefore subaltern existence is suppressed as much possible, manipulating power upon them.

The job of Carol and Grace is to report Cordelia. What Elaine did and say all day. They comment bitterly on the kind of lunch. She have, how she hold sandwich, how she chew. She says:

On the way from school I have to walk in front of them, or behind. In front is worse because they talk about how I'm walking, how I look from behind. 'Don't hunch over says Cordelia. Don't move your arms like that.' (141)

Power is always horrible. Creating psychic terror, Cordelia, Grace and Carol creates themselves powerful. Elaine is an object for them, where they could mock, shout, and command and authorized their wish. Elaine is a breathing object with the sense of death, but, these bullying lessons of three girls is the reflection of their family's attitude. Especially the Grace's family knows her as a low standard human, a black girl; from heart they didn't like her. Frequently, the Grace's Aunt Mildred a nun, used to visit Grace's house to teach bible. In one instance, while playing in Graces house

Elaine listen the conversation between Mrs. Smeath and Aunt Mildred regarding her race, color and class as a God's punishment. "What can you expect with that poor family?" says Mrs. Smeath. The Other children sense it. They know her as black. It's God's punishment. It serves her right." (213)

One of the critics of the racialism; Tzvetan Todorok, on the critical essay, "On Human Diversity: Nationalism, Racism and Exoticism in French Thought," mentioned that:

The word 'racism' in its usual sense, actually designates two very different things. On the one hand; it is a matter of behavior usually a manifestation of hatred for individuals who have well defined physical characteristics different from our own; on the other hand, it is a matter of ideology, a doctrine concerning human races. (212)

Racism is thus a doctrine of collective psychology, and it is inherently hostile to the individualistic ideology (215). So, our subjectivity is the collection of ideologies.

Ideology shaped our habits and behavior. Race based discrimination is the politics of whites. There are hints of horror and violence in the white's politics. The doctrine concerning human color is a key spectrum; mould by the white patriarchy to fragments the society for prolonging their rules. Gender subaltern, race subaltern, class subaltern are the some instances of fragmentation of humanity, strengthen by capitalistic ideology.

Human attitudes, action and activities and moreover our 'self' is shaped to whom we concern, whose cultures we follow. Interestingly, hitherto history and cultures is the cultures of male; patriarchy. The chain of events in the novel unfolds the chain of dominating upon a meek character. Time and again the immoral treatment upon Elaine does not stopped, instead geared up extremely. Once, in a chilly and snowy evening, while returning from the school, Cordelia

along with Grace and Carol throw her knitted hat from the bridge, in the ravine, near the graveyard. Elaine narrates this brutality in a poignant way:

‘There is your stupid hat; why don’t you go down and get it?’ says Cordelia. I start down the steep hillside. The path isn’t even a real path, it’s just a place worn by boys, men. Not girls. My blue hat is out on the ice of the creek. Cordelia is right, it’s a stupid hat. I step out onto the Creek, reach for the hat, picked it up. I’m up to my waist in the creek, slabs of broken ice up-ended around me. My overshoes are filling with water. I clutch the hat and look up at the bridge. Nobody is there. They must have walked away, run away. It’s true dusk now and the snow on the ground is bluish-White. (223)

The down trodden people struggle for their existence. Nobody is there to listen their screams, and nobody is there for subaltern to share the sympathy. They cannot be heard. They are made silenced. There is no limit of humiliation upon the meek. Subaltern’s death is not a death because their death doesn’t carry any value. ‘Friendship’ is a word that, to most, echoes harmony and mutual trust but here friendship with trio-girls for Elaine, became fatal. The Patriarchal power structure is internalized in the female characters to dominate other but same sex race; female. This power is inherited from patriarchal values and norms. The entire domination upon a single girl, Elaine, by a trio-girl’s alien is the modification of their behaviors inherited from patriarchal ideology. Behavior is the reflection of action of concerns ideologies of the contemporary trends and politics. Our habits, act and activities; gestures, postures etc are all a part of subjectivity. Then, subjectivity is thus, a collective entity of all the ideologies, which we carried deeply. Everything what we practices exists on ideology, that we innate.

One of the most influential and distinctive Marxist thinker of twentieth century, Louis Althusser works upon the term 'ideology' and analyzes how dominant social system enforce their control subtly molding human subjects. Although ideology he explores the relation of ideology and ideology and politics. In his most influential essay, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus" he reveals that, "an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice or practices" (1500). He again adds that "any kinds of ideas or representations or ideology do not have an ideal or spiritual existence, but a material existence" (1500). Therefore our cultures, norms, values, behaviors etc. are a disguised reflection of political ideology. The entirely social structures are trained patriarchially including religions, legal, political and literary institutions. So in nutshell, the domination upon the Eliane by Cordelia, Grace and Carol knowingly or unknowingly is patriarchal design, deeply rooted on patriarchal ideology. There trio-girls internalize the males traits and discourses directly or indirectly.

Violence upon the women is a strong theme in Atwood's novels. Physical violence upon Elaine by other girls leads her of psychological distortions. She needs to develop her will power to fight with society. We are very close to death where she explained her pain and suffering in the following way, when her friends leave alone in the ravine. The water of the creek is cold and it comes straight from the cemetery, from the graves and their bones. Its water made from the dead people, dissolved and clear, and I am standing in it. If I don't move soon, I will be frozen in the creek. Walking with waterlogged overshoes is hard; I could slip, and fall the way in. I grab a tree branch and have myself up onto the bank and sit down and pour out the water. The arms of my jacket are wet to the elbows my mitten are soaked. Now there are knives going through my legs and hand; and tears running down my face from the pain. I don't know how I'm going to

climb up the hill with my hands and feet, hurting like this; I don't know how I'm going to get home. (223)

The abovementioned agony is enough to know the suffering of Elaine in winter chilling evening. She was alone in the creek to fetch her hat thrown by the other three girls. Later fortunately she was rescued by her mother in the dark evening. From that terrific event, she leaves the company of those brutal three girls. In a usual way, after a year Elaine completed her school. Brother, Stephen moved away to study Science. Cordelia and Grace leave that school. Carol Campbell moves away from that place. But still there are hints of horror and violence. All these events acts haunt her frequently as a trauma.

Michael Foucault sees the exercise of power in every layer of society the emphasizes “that something called power, with or without a capital letter, which is assumed to exist University in a concentrated or diffused form, does not exist.” He continues, “Power exists only when put into action.” Foucault’s thesis is that the relations of power are open-textured: they take a wide variety of forms and are only partially co-ordinate. Therefore, culture, in Foucault’s agreement, is understood in terms of the interoperation of knowledge, power and discourse. Power is exercised from innumerable points. Power comes into play in the machinery of production, in familial limited groups and different institutions. Discourse is an instrument and effort of power which transmits and produces power. Foucault’s pinpoint of his discursive theory is that power exists into action. The heterogeneity nature of historical representation of entire human civilization is constructed by patriarchal monoculture. Rest of other contribution all are demolished by the patriarchy. It is because the steer of the society is in the monopoly of patriarchal norms particularly. This patriarchal or masculine monopolization or all kind of discourses, representation and truth favoring to its axis alienating the great contribution of the

females; the total bundle of philosophy and literature is the heap with only the males, like, Plato, Aristotle, Longinus and so on. Not female. The most highly regarded literary works focus on male protagonists like Oedipus, Ulysses, Hamlet, Tom Jones, Faust etc. Not of females. So, the total Etymological sphere is embedded, typically, with masculine traits access. Hitherto perception of humanity, discourses, knowledge, philosophy, history, representation and overall, all judgment of truth is only the monopoly play of patriarchal 'Power and Politics.' The autonomous female role and space is addressed by males, which is impossible. Therefore, all kinds of truth existing on binary nature taking males as superior and females as inferior is only the power gender biased politics.

The legitimization of the powerful monopoly filtration of inclusion and exclusion to its axis, makes patriarchy strong, who skillfully snatched the 'Power' from other entities of society, is able to hegemonized and dominate the females for the entire era. After completing the school level, as a young girl of 18, Elaine, join The Toronto College of Art. She made a friend called, Susie, a girl with yellow hair. They both are the students of night class. Mr. Hrbik, a married mid thirties was their art teacher. But was divorced his wife, after a two daughters. Hrbik himself was a foreign from Hungary. Again these two girls, falls in the hand of Hrbik, as a sexual prey. Night class is suitable time in the dark to exploits the students for Hrbik. Hrbik thinks the young girls starting college days are objects, to choose wisely for taking advantages. Elaine explains;

When I am putting away my charcoal, Mr Hrbik comes to stand beside me. I rip out the drawing. I have made, intending to crumple them up, but he puts his hand quickly on my body. You are an unfinished woman; he adds in a lower voice, but here you will be finished.' He kissed me very passionately. (321)

Later after a week Hrbik took Elaine in his apartment and exploit physically. He fulfills his desires. Desires are incomplete. He followed that. Elaine narrates his activities in the following way:

He took me in his apartment in a taxi. He kissed me standing but I felt awkward. I was afraid to take off my clothes. He would then, turn me this way and that. He makes me to lie down on the mattress. Again kiss. He was totally in the war now.
(347)

Such instances also clearly shows that even the male teachers, also are waiting to grabs the favorable opportunities for physical exploitation. Most interesting things in the novel is that Susie who was friend of Elaine and student of Hrbik was attracted towards Hrbik. So, it is very easy to exploits Susie for him. He was a supreme sensual being. He made the both girl stubborn, by not letting any hints that he was able to exploiting them, once. He was a cruel and passionate man, who loves substituting the girls. Mr. Hrbik wants to exploits both, acting as their lover. Elaine started a job at the Swiss Chalet on Bloor Street. Mr. Hrbik continuously goes on raping the Susie and Elaine. He mostly visits Susie. Time goes on. He destroys the life of Susie. This results in the following conversation. Susie phoned Elaine:

Susie's voice on the line is a soft, desperate wail.
'Elaine' she says, 'Please come over'
'What's the matter?' I say.
'I can't tell you. Just come over.'
'Are you all right?' I say
No, she says. "Something gone wrong." (374)

How the Hrbik ruin the life of Susie? When Elaine reached in her apartment, the windows are closed and there's an odd smell. Clothes were scattered here and there. None of it goes with Susie as she has imagined her. On the carpet there's a dark footprint. She's lying on the bed seriously, eyes closed. There are footprints of blood on the white and black field floor. The waste basket is full with sopping sanitary pads. Susie was near to death with low pulse. Underneath her bed, across the sheet, is a great splotch of fresh blood, spreading like bright red wings to either side. Elaine explained, "I don't know what to do next: I have an absurd idea that if she's dead I will be accused of murder. I think of sneaking out of the apartment, closing the door behind" (375). But, Elaine took her hospital rapidly, calling an ambulance. 'Don't tell Mr. Hrbik,' she whispers to me. (375)

Atwood's text described brutal and sometimes blood-dripping experiences and feeling of the females. Brutal stability of patriarchal values is exposed from the exploitation of Mr. Hrbik upon Susie. Spivak, in her essay 'Can Subaltern Speak?' claims that, "Women's interception of the claim to subalterneity can be staked out across strict lines of definition by virtue of their muting by heterogeneous circumstances" (35). Females are muted and silenced by heterogeneous circumstances, constructed by the males. The border between femininity and masculinity is in short is relatively dominated historically, socially and culturally constructed. Susie has a miscarriage. Most interesting news about Hrbik is, he already flee from that city after that miscarriage events. He escapes to America. Susie is in long bed rest at hospital, because of her pre-matured pregnancy. After a graduation from the University in Art, Elaine met a man called Jon, who was also an artist. Her father, mother and brother Stephen used to meet her in the city. Stephen was now scientist, used to live in America. Slowly and gradually Elaine and Jon becomes closer and lived together. But they don't marry. He used to work outside in the studio

and Elaine used to design the cover of the books. But Jon doesn't care her much. Mostly he was outside. They used to have a physical relationship as a usual pleasure. But when she discovered the pregnancy, she keeps her feeling in the following ways:

One day, I discover I am pregnant. My first reaction is unbelief. Finally I slink off to the drugstore with some pee in a bottle, feeling like a criminal. Married women go to their doctors. Unmarried women do this. 'Congratulations', the man in the drugstore says, with disapproving irony (393).

She is afraid to tell Jon about pregnancy. He doesn't like the burden of children.

Elaine says; He will expect me to go and have it out, like a tooth. He will say, 'It'. Or, he wants me to drink gin. Or, he will vanish (393).

Definitely, Jon doesn't notice any things. He is male, so he cannot take burden like women. But for Elaine, the time is ticking inside the womb. Pregnancy brings psychological distress to her. She is alone in the room, Jon have his own life-style.

Sometimes he vanishes for a week too. She kills her time by painting. She says:

In the daytime I go to work, come back, talk and eat. Jon comes over, eats, sleeps and goes away. I watch him with detachment; he notices nothing. My body is separating. It ticks like a clock. Time is inside it. It has betrayed me, and I am disgusted with it. (395)

Sometimes in peace and sometimes in conflict with Jon, she gave birth to Sarah, her daughter.

The relationship between Jon and Elaine doesn't gear up much. Jon was out most often. Elaine as a mother feed her, nurture her. "I wheel Sarah along the street, up the walk, groceries, department store, kitchen, work anywhere I need to go

(398).” She struggle herself in work, career and kitchen. Jon sometimes calls her mummy, while holding Sarah. Elaine doesn’t like him calling mummy:

I don’t like it when he calls me mummy. I am not his mummy, but hers. I don’t yet see Sarah as a gift I have given him. (398)

Now, most often Jon spent much of his time on fighting. Life starts deteriorating, again. What she calls, ‘Secret fights conduced at night.’ Elaine, hobby of painting stopped. She needs to give much time for her daughter. Jon was a free man. Slowly quarrel rises up and ends in the throwing materials, she says:

Jon throws a glass of milk; he knows his own strength, as I do not. He throws a box of cheerios, unopened. The things I throw miss, the things he throws hit (405).

Jon doesn’t pay any attention upon Sarah. One day Jon was busy with his friend in the living room drinking, he shouted her as a mad women, Elaine extract, and “Jon sits in the living room, having a beer with one of the painter. I am in the kitchen, slamming around the pots. ‘What’s with her?’ Say the painter. ‘She’s mad because she’s a woman’ Jon says (405). Being a black woman, a mother of a daughter, Jon claim, women are not capable to do every things. Racial inferiority and gender subordination are practices by the males in our society, makes women, docile, meek and humble. Mostly to black women, they are subalternized in each space of the world. Oyeronke Oyewumi, one of the critics writes, “The very process by which females were categorized and reduced to ‘women’ made them in eligible for leadership roles. For females, colonization was a twofold process of racial inferiorization and gender subordination” (257). So, patriarchy always takes female gender as inferior creatures, which are always incapable for

leadership roles. Females are made *women* not biologically but socially, economically and culturally.

The patriarchal system, its rules and regulations un-written or not or its consequences are distinct themes in the novel by Atwood. In her novels we find portraits of women, who are yet, remain powerless. Women oppression is therefore based on their female sex. Here, Jon represents the prime example of patriarchal agents. Jon along, like Mr. Hrbik either celebrated or exploits the females. Patriarchal structures and related value system do not encourage females but demolishes. Most-or all-places in the novel are gender marked. Now, Jon rarely only visits house. Almost totally, he doesn't keep interest upon Sarah. Even not in the cold and sickness. Elaine think, "His intention is clear, he has left me behind, in the cold" (438). One night it was different. Sarah was very ill, caught by cold. The wheezing sound of Sarah breathing, made her worried. The sound of a car and humming sound of lady catch her attention. Jon arrive room with a lady.

The silence of mid-dark is fragments with joy and laughter, in the next door. Elaine looks the beautiful face of Sarah, hearing the bursting laughter of her father, the next room. Such merry-making sound brings a cold wave of distress in the mother of the sick daughter. She says, "This is when I hear the voice in the room, clearly: *Do it. Come on. Do it.* This voice doesn't offer a chance; it has the force of an order. It's the difference between jumping and being pushed" (439). Father in next door indulges on physical joy, fetching unknown women. Doom fate of subaltern people sometimes, landed them on suicidal attempts like Bhubaneswari Bhaduri in Spiraks essay. In this extremity of her distress she too attempts suicide by slashing deeply in her left wrist by a kitchen knife at mid-night. She states:

The Exacto knife is what I use, to make a slash. It doesn't even hurt, because right after that there's a whispering sound and space closes in and I'm on the floor.

Blood is black in the darkness, it does not reflect (439).

There is a social and political reason to what we do, and to who we are. Death in Cat's Eye, from this point of view becomes gendered. Death comes but once. Elaine's attempt of suicide is not natural but social. She was like a caged bird and never hoped for a better life. Her sad and miserable life never allowed her to take a single glimpse towards happiness. The male's spectrum always hovers around her, sometimes in the form of Cordelia, sometimes in Hrbik and Jon respectively. It becomes a silent killer. There is representation of voiceless women in Cat's Eye thus they are subaltern. Their voices time and again overshadowed by the males. Women are massively tortured. They can't raise their voices against male hegemony. Arrogance of males always shadowed their identity.

According to Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'The homogeneity of women as a group is produced not on the basis of biological essentials, but rather on the basis of secondary sociological and anthropological universals' (244). So the connection between women as historical subjects and the re-presentation of women produced by hegemonic discourses is not a relation of direct identity, or a relation of correspondence or simple implication. It is an arbitrary relation set up by patriarchal cultures, particularly, the male cultures. "Men" are often said to be the operators behind the grand machinery which organizes the way women and men are perceived, how women and men act, and even how they look.

After the suicidal attempts, Elaine changed her mind and decided to leave that place and man, Jon. Next day, she manages a little money and starts packing. She bought tickets to Vancouver, a warm southern city of Canada. "I don't know where to go. All I can think of is

away. I buy us tickets to Vancouver'' (442). Then she made a sandwich, peanut butter in kitchen. She called taxi and leave the place. She is though nervous but adds, "I'm good at leaving. The trick is to close yourself off. Don't hear, don't see. Don't look back'' (442). She reached the new place Vancouver. With a very little money she started a new life. She don't buy even sleeper, to save money. She used to cry a lot but alone, in the forlorn night. She said, "I cry at night. I am afraid of hearing voices. I have come to the edge of the land. I could get pushed over'' (443). Later she got a part-time job refinishing furniture. She adds, "I like this because it's mindless and the furniture can't talk. I am thirsty for silence'' (443). Now, she starts painting to kill her leisure time and to wipe out her all the suffocation and suffering.

Gradually it is easy to express the women suffering and violence through painting, for Elaine. Inexpressible feeling and pain can be symbolically expressed through colors. Painting becomes her friend. Sarah too, goes on growing. Sometimes she used to take part in the art show also. But Elite cultures don't prefer any empathy and sympathy to her. Instead it goes on. She got married with the man called Ben, a travel business man. Soon they have another daughter Anne, who is accountant now. Ben is always outside. But he could understand her.

Cat's Eye is a self-portrait picture of Elaine. But also *Cat's Eye* represent, eye of the marble and the title of the novel. She states, "My head is in the right foreground, through its shown only from the middle of the nose up: just the upper half of the nose, the eyes looking outwards, the forehead and the topping the hair'' (481). At the end of the novel Elaine, reveals the death of her parents and brother. Stephen died in plane crashed. Now she is in Toronto after many decades for her painting show. All her figures and series of painting depict the female's suffocations. For instances, *Fallen women*, *Night Shade*, *Half Face*, *Empire Bloomers*; *Virgin Marry* are some series which symbolically try to show the pain, perils and violence upon women.

Women cannot resist the male's superiority because they are hegemonized, so they protest in the indirect way through different of art and literature.

According to Antonio Gramsci's opinion; subalterns are one subject to the hegemonic exploitation the subaltern classes have less access to the social and cultural institutions which are the important center of representation. Aschroft and Griffiths in *Key Concept in Postcolonial Studies* quotes from Gramsci that the term 'subaltern' refers to "inferior rank"; is a term which also refers to "those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of ruling classes" (215). He further said that it is as complex as the history of dominant classes. Moreover, the history of subaltern classes, in his opinion, is inevitably fragmented and episodic as they were subject to the activity of the elite groups even when they raise their voice against the complacent elite. The definition of Gramsci is applicable to analyze the condition of women in *Cat's Eye* novel. Because of the male's hegemony, females are defeated. Females are fighting a 'losing battle'. Those who are exploited mentally, physically, such people lack freedom for living, speaking and moving. They feel fear in every step. Patriarchal mobility throws the women, to the island of marginality. More, to the black women. Thus, Elaine, as a black woman with a doom fate, is a subaltern figure.

Valorizing Subalterneity in *Cat's Eye*

It is clear that sexist and stereotypical portrayals have severe negative impact and effects on women in Atwood's novel, *Cat's Eye*. Temperament, abilities and skills, activities and behaviors, sensuality and culture based essence of what is mean to be male or female, are all part of the gender constructs of the given society. More specifically, it shows how the patriarchal agent (men), norms, values and cultures dominated the women sexually and brutally in the novel. The text revolves around the central female character Elaine, who is black and doom fate defeated women. The entire novel unfolds the struggle of black women, in the patriarchal society of Mid-twentieth Canada. The entire history and existence of women is lost, remaining under the grip of oppressive male's authority, politically, culturally, economically and psychologically. The gender stereotypes, gender attitudes and the gender differences in the novel, is able to mute the female race despite they possesses equal access and capacity to males. The protagonist of the novel is doubly tortured in the novel, as being a poor women and black respectively. She cannot raise her voices against male hegemony rather attempts suicide.

When the protagonist of the novel reappears after long decades in Toronto, Canada, for her art show, she gradually revives the reminiscence of tormented childhood and adult life. She was victimized by the three classmates: Carol, grace and Cordelia. The influence of the cruel Cordelia is still on her life. Mr. Hrbik raped her. Another girl name Susie was too raped by this same sensual Hrbik. Conjugal life with Jon too, ruins her life. She attempts suicide in the kitchen. Therefore, we can claim that, the female protagonist in the novel has been represents the feminine gender whose identity has been under dogged and manipulated by the masculine society.

The female gender has been made subaltern due to the relative domination, which proves the notion of gender subaltern. The facts associated with the relative domination upon the feminine gender due to the male chauvinism open the problem of the notion of the gender discrimination, which is best addressed by the notion of gender subaltern.

The text sees the elements of how the feminine existence is always silenced in terms of the opportunities and rights. The American dream of equality remains as the soap bubble as regards in the treatment towards the female race in general. The feminine self has been thwarted with the absolute power that the male's practices. Whether the grand narrative of equity and equality of American democracy exists in utopian or the dystopian world of America? What are the hidden dialects in American society in terms of gender and race? How the miserable condition that the females undergo? These are some of the questions, the research raises to solve from the gendered subaltern's perspective. So the issue of how the protagonist has been an example of the trope of domination in terms of the gender has been basically concern here. Today, Subalterneity is a most buzzing word in the academic arena, which effectively revisits all the sociological and anthropological made entities like gender, race, caste, history, culture etc. creating new discourses. Accompanying with post structural theories including new-historicism, cultural studies and post-colonial studies, subalterneity rapidly occupy great space in every western and non western location.

The notion of gender subaltern in the text has been implementation of the theoretical modality of gender subaltern as postulated by the thinkers of gender subaltern such as Guha, Spivak, Dipesh chakravorty, Gramsci, Foucault, Althusser and other post colonial thinkers, respectively.

In the context of Nepal, the book 'Shakti, Sharsta and Subaltern' written by the author and the lecturer of CDE, TU, Dr. Taralal Shrestha, assists rapidly to increase the wave of subalterneity discourses, these days. Regarding the significance of Subalterneity and gendered questions, one of our renowned professor of CDE, Dr. Arun Kumar Gupto writes on the anthology, 'Discourses on Literature and Culture',

“Subaltern group collective and the writers of feminist historiography, for instance have influenced the disciplines of literary, history, sociology, media and popular culture because they have been able to interpret and explain facts and ideas, or in other words, have theorized issues the pains taking scholarship” (13).

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