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Resistance of the Subaltern Characters in Parijat's *Anido Pahad Sangai*
and Rajan Mukarung's *Damini Bhir*

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Bimal Prasad Poudel has completed his dissertation entitled “Resistance of the Subaltern Characters in Parijat’s *Anido Pahad Sangai* and Rajan Mukarung’s *Damini Bhir*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from April 2023 to July 2024. I hereby recommend his dissertation be submitted for the pre/final viva voce.

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Approval Letter

This research work entitled “Resistance of the Subaltern Characters in Parijat’s *Anido Pahad Sangai* and Rajan Mukarung’s *Damini Bhir*” submitted to the Central Department of English in Tribhuvan University by Bimal Prasad Poudel has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled “Resistance of the Subaltern Characters in Parijat’s *Anido Pahad Sangai* and Rajan Mukarung’s *Damini Bhir*” submitted to the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, is an entirely original work, and I have made due acknowledgements to all ideas and information borrowed from different sources in the course of writing this dissertation. The results presented in this dissertation have not been presented anywhere else for the award of any degree or for any other reasons. No part of the content of this dissertation has ever been published in any form before. I shall be solely responsible if any evidence is found against my declaration.

Bimal Prasad Poudel

July 2024

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Abstract

This research work explores the subaltern experiences and identity struggles in Parijat's Anido Pahad Sangai and Rajan Mukarung's Damini Bhir. Both of the novels distinctively unfold the lives of marginalized characters—such as Gorimaya, Suwani, Jamuni, Suntali, Lal Bahadur, Dhoule Kanchho, Lachhi, Hangdima, Rambha, Sani Sundas, and Ghyabring Baje—depicting their struggle against gender and racial violence in a deeply racist and patriarchal society. For Parijat and Mukarung, giving voice to the excluded and marginalized is a profound quest for self-discovery and cultural identity. The narratives reveal that while repression incites resistance, it also demands significant compromises from the subalterns, who are often silenced by socio-political and gender ideologies, echoing Spivak's assertion in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Yet, significant historical events—such as the assassination of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in Anido Pahad Sangai and the impact of the ten-year-long Maoist Insurgency in Damini Bhir—spark a newfound consciousness and resistance among these characters. Characters like Suwani in Anido Pahad Sangai and Lachhi in Damini Bhir emerge as agents of change, challenging systemic oppression. By drawing the critical perspectives from subaltern scholarship as developed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Antonio Gramsci, Ranajit Guha, and others, this study examines how these narratives amplify the voices of the subaltern characters, highlighting their sufferings, agency, and empowerment. Through a subaltern lens, this paper reaches the conclusion that the novels effectively articulate the struggles, resistance, and resilience of marginalized communities, showcasing the authors' profound engagement with themes of oppression and empowerment.

Keywords: Gender, Subaltern, Violence, Agency, Resistance

Chapter I: Voices from the Margins in Nepali Literature

This research paper examines the plights of the subaltern characters go through in *Anido Pahad Sangai* (2039 BS) by Bishnu Kumari Waiba ‘Parijat’ (1994 – 2050 BS) and *Damini Bhir* (2069 BS) by Rajan Mukarung (B.2031 BS). Madan Prize-winning writers Parijat(2022 BS) and Mukarung (2069 BS) use these texts to raise their voices against exploitation and to give space to marginalized characters. Both novels center on the narratives of suppressed characters and present their painful experiences and ceaseless struggles for identity in a racist and patriarchal society. In *Anido Pahad Sangai*, Gorymaya, Suntali, Jamuni, Chandrakanta, Suwani, and Lal Bahadur, and in *Damini Bhir*, Suke Damai, Kanchhi Damini, Lachhi, Sani, Dhoule Kancho, Hangdima, and Namdeng, embody the values helpful to understand the plights of Nepali subaltern. This study employs the ideas raised by Subaltern Studies critics to analyze the position of subaltern characters in these selected texts.

Parijat, a Tamang writer, advocates for democracy, justice, and women's empowerment in her fiction. Her novel *Anido Pahad Sangai* highlights women's liberation through characters like Gorymaya, Chandrakanta, Suwani, Lal Bahadur, and M.R., who struggle for freedom and identity. Gorymaya is deceived into marrying a mentally ill man due to feudal greed and suffers domestic violence, forcing her to run away and become a single woman. Seeing this, one village widow opines her that to a woman “her own body is the enemy of her life” (12). Why does not woman have a space of its own? In a village of a feudal like Krishna Karki and Satashi Baje how could a woman’s body have her own space? Gorymaya’s body in the village is an exploited body, as she cannot claim it as her own. She cannot marry a boy “rang sem ro” (27) her heart is one with. She eventually, moves to Kathmandu, working as a domestic servant at DSP Ale and Chandrakanta’s house.

Chandrakanta, an orphan, escapes a life of virtual sex work in Darjeeling when Bhisma B. Ale accepts her and her son, Lal Bahadur, as family. Suwani Limbu, a university leader, faces constant male humiliation but fiercely defends herself. After surviving a gang rape and hospitalization, she finds strength through support from friends and actively resists oppression against women and marginalized groups. Suwani, Lal Bahadur, M. R., and others engage in underground revolutionary activities for freedom and justice. The assassination of Pakistan's ex-President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto sparks intensified student movements for democracy. As their struggle gains momentum, brutal opposition arises, leading to the martyrdom of Lal Bahadur and Suwani.

Suwani reflects deeply on the dual oppression of class and gender that society imposes. She observes the lives of villagers, filled with unrelenting hard work, hardships, and scarcity, which they accept as an unchangeable reality (198). While working in rural communities, she critiques marriage as an institution that merely shifts women's burdens from one household to another. To these destitute women, Suwani notes, marriage means nothing more than doing domestic chores for survival—moving from one house to another for the sake of a stomachful of food (198). Suwani also questions the portrayal of women in literary narratives, which she finds irrelevant to the lived experiences of most women. These narratives, shaped by the lifestyles of the affluent, are full of illusions, falsehoods, and fictions that do not deserve recognition. She declares that such definitions of women should be discarded and replaced with a new and authentic representation. Suwani insists, "A new and genuine definition with integrated images of what a woman really is needs to be written now" (198). Due to the agency of Lal Bahadur and Suwani, Gorymaya emerges as an empowered leader of laboring women. Both the men and women in the

movement commit themselves to inclusivity, embracing diversity across race, religion, language, and geography, as they strive for a just society.

Rajan Mukarung, a Limbu writer, argues that mainstream Nepali literature hinders ethnic representation. He aims to integrate indigenous culture, philosophy, and life into literature, challenging the "generalized Nepali identity" in academic and popular texts. Mukarung emphasizes the need for indigenous people, peasants, and the disadvantaged to fight for their identity and existence. In *Damini Bhir*, Rajan Mukarung crafts a fictional narrative that highlights the struggles of marginalized communities. Rajan Mukarung, Upendra Subba, and Hangyung Agyat are key figures in the 'Shrijansheel Arajakata' (Creative Anarchy) literary movement, which advocates for the inclusion of ethnic identities within the mainstream of Nepali literature. Their efforts are reshaping the literary landscape by bringing marginalized voices to the forefront and challenging traditional narratives. The movement heightened ethnic consciousness among marginalized communities, shedding light on the complex issues of marginality. Consequently, the voices from these suppressed identities grew stronger, bringing attention to their struggles for identity and their right to self-determination.

Rajan Mukarung, from a marginalized community, sees writing as a tool to rewrite histories of injustice and resist regressive narratives (np.). For him, it is more than creativity—it challenges systemic biases that silence marginalized groups (Mukarung, back cover). His work exposes suppressed histories, amplifies unheard voices, and advocates for justice and social change. *Damini Bhir* revolves around the lives of suppressed characters such as Suke Damai, Kanchi Damini, Lachhi, Sani, Dhoule Kancho, Hangdima, and tells the experiences of gender and racial violence in their life. These characters are not as free as they aspire to be and must suppress their

desires, wishes, and dreams. They are expected to find contentment within the confines of what race and gender ideologies have imposed upon them. However, after being sexually exploited by Chetan (33), a member of a wealthy family on whom Lachhi's mother depends for survival, Lachhi defies societal expectations by refusing the suggestion of abortion (42)—an act seen as both unconventional and unfeminine in her community.

Damini Bhir weaves multiple stories without a main character, emphasizing each individual's significance. Despite patriarchal oppression, characters carve out their own spaces with dignity. Lachhi embodies resistance against violence, while Mukarung highlights the identity, culture, and struggles of the marginalized in mainstream literature. Mukarung's writing centers on racial liberation and consciousness. In mainstream literature the subaltern subjects are often silenced because their representations are severely distorted. The ruling state's power exerts hegemony over these subalterns. Hegemony is legitimized power and authority. Rajan Mukarung's *Damini Bhir* raises his voice against discrimination by vividly portraying the political, social, and physical plights of the oppressed characters. While *Anido Pahad Sangai* and *Damini Bhir* have been analyzed through lenses such as existentialism, gender studies, and Marxist ideology, this study specifically examines the marginalization, oppression, and resistance of characters within these novels. By delving into the literary representation of suppressed individuals, this study aims to elucidate their struggles through the framework of subaltern studies in the selected texts.

The research applies theoretical insights from subaltern studies to examine the representation of characters as subalterns in these novels *Anido Pahad Sangai* and *Damini Bhir*. The study postulates that these two selected novels subvert hegemonic

traditions through their creation of characters and representation of marginalized communities, challenging the monolithic literary history of Nepal. In both *Anido Pahad Sangai* and *Damini Bhir*, characters resist ideological and cultural hegemony, thereby establish strong subjective positions through knowledge and resistance. Parijat and Mukarung, authors of these works, are representative of the progressive movements of their time. The Ralpa Movement, a leftist cultural group in Nepal, emerged in 1966 under the leadership of Parijat. This movement collectively sought to challenge and resist state oppression through art, creating powerful narratives, songs, and other forms of expression. By blending creativity with political activism, the movement became a voice for the marginalized, using cultural works to protest against authoritarianism and social injustice in Nepal. Ralpa group created protest songs, poems, and novels opposing the autocratic panchayat rule. The panchayat rulers were vigilant and alarmed by Ralpa's every activity (np.). The creations of Ralpa group expressed suppressed aspirations and a strong distaste for the status quo and traditional conservatism.

Likewise, in 1999, Rajan Mukarung joined forces with Upendra Subba and Hangyug Agyat to launch the *Srijanshil Arajakata* (Creative Anarchy) movement, a groundbreaking initiative in Nepali literature. This movement aimed to elevate the culture, philosophy, and way of life of the Rai, Limbu, and other Janajati communities into mainstream literature. They marked the missing narratives of marginalized communities in main stream Nepali literature. The novels *Anido Pahad Sangai* and *Damini Bhir* challenge ideological and cultural hegemony by establishing powerful positions rooted in knowledge and resistance. Both authors, Parijat and Rajan Mukarung, hailing from marginalized communities, actively confront dominant narratives and share their own stories with a wider audience. They have endeavored

to publicize how repression and resistance of the subalterns are exposed in literary works and why they become the subalterns. They write with the mission of subalterns' liberation. They claim about how and why the ethnic communities, women, Dalit, and Madhesi become muted in society. The study investigates several research questions surrounding the selected literary texts. It first explores the factors that shape subaltern characters and examines the motivations behind their silence in the face of dominant value systems. Furthermore, it seeks to understand the reasons why subaltern voices remain muted against the hegemony prevalent in mainstream Nepali literature and culture. Finally, the study analyzes how the primary texts under scrutiny depict the repression and resistance of the subaltern characters.

The objective of this research is to examine the dynamics of resistance portrayed by novelists advocating for the inclusion, representation, and recognition of subalterns within mainstream identity. It argues that Parijat in *Anido Pahad Sangai* and Mukarung in *Damini Bhir* reveal the societal challenges faced by marginalized groups. It investigates the traditional and politico-cultural issues that lead to the silencing of subaltern characters. In the narratives of Parijat and Mukarung, subaltern subjects such as ethnic minorities, women, Dalits, and Madheses assert a strong presence. Thus, this paper analyzes the repression and resistance of subaltern characters in the selected texts and their respective contexts.

The study is limited to the novels *Anido Pahad Sangai* and *Damini Bhir* because these texts explore the politico-cultural issues faced by marginalized people in Nepalese society. The focus of the study is based on the issues of the representation of the subaltern in these selected texts. It directs its attention to the issues of domination and suppression faced by certain characters and their resistance within the society depicted in the novels.

Resistance literature address issues of marginalized people is a recent phenomenon in academic discourses of Nepal. This research has selected these two novelists from minority communities who address social issues in their novels and raise the questions of politico-cultural inclusion and gender issues. In Nepal, many authors have yet to produce such literary texts from a subaltern consciousness. Through the analysis of these selected texts, the research exposes the movements of victimized people and their resistance for inclusivity and recognition. The analysis of the novels offers new insights into the inner realities of subalterns' pain, suffering, and ignored identities within the mainstream literary discourse. It calls for a redefinition of the existing canon and pedagogy, not only in literature but also in other areas of knowledge too. The research supports to existing scholarship by examining how literature from the margin adds color to the richness of Nepali literature. In Brief, the research's findings create new possibilities for understanding Nepali Literary texts from the perspective of resistance studies.

The research employs a qualitative analysis method to conduct an in-depth study of the primary texts, aiming to gather comprehensive insights into the repression and resistance of marginalized characters. The researcher also consults the secondary and tertiary sources mediated by other authors and critics of the primary texts to analyze insights into the major features of the subaltern voice. To this end, libraries and web sources have been utilized to gather secondary sources on concepts such as the subaltern voice, cultural hegemony, identity, agency, resistance, the Ralpha Revolution, Srijanshil Arajakata, epistemological violence and more. The researcher has specifically translated quoted excerpts from both primary texts and secondary sources originally in Nepali to ensure accuracy in the textual analysis conducted for this research.

This research employs the methodological framework of subaltern studies to analyze the selected novels, that vividly illustrate the issues faced by subaltern groups in literary discourse. The study integrates critical insights from key scholars in the field to offer a comprehensive examination of these issues. Central to the analysis are the works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Spivak argues that historical narratives in India have predominantly been constructed from the perspective of the colonizers, presenting a skewed account centered on the experiences and viewpoints of the ruling elite rather than those of the colonized. She proposes that Subaltern Studies can effectively challenge these dominant narratives by addressing the patriarchal and socio-cultural biases inherent in traditional historiography. According to Spivak, the term "subaltern" refers to individuals or groups who are systematically marginalized and oppressed by more powerful entities. She emphasizes that these subaltern groups are often silenced or rendered mute, and her work seeks to amplify their voices and experiences within the framework of national discourse.

In addition to Spivak’s contributions, the paper incorporates insights from Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner’s essay “Conceptualizing Resistance.” They explore the diverse forms and manifestations of resistance, defining it as an active and deliberate effort to bring about social or political change. Their analysis helps in understanding how resistance operates in various contexts and provides a framework for interpreting the ways in which marginalized characters in the novels resist and challenge their oppression. The research also incorporates Ranajit Guha’s ideas in its analysis. Guha seeks to amplify the voices of those who have been marginalized and excluded from dominant power structures. He defines subaltern subjects as social groups that are outside the hegemonic ruling classes, emphasizing their exclusion

from the dominant historical and social narratives. Guha's perspective is integral in understanding how subaltern groups are systematically sidelined in mainstream historical accounts.

Furthermore, the research references Gyan Prakash's argument that colonialism established rigid hierarchies between the colonizer and the colonized, creating a subaltern class that continues to be marginalized (3). Prakash contends that Western perspectives on Eastern societies often reinforce these hierarchies, framing Easterners as the "other" within the context of colonial domination. This analysis highlights how these power dynamics contribute to the ongoing marginalization of subaltern groups. Overall, this research aims to offer a nuanced understanding of how subaltern issues are represented in literature and how various theoretical frameworks can be employed to analyze these representations. By integrating the insights of Spivak, Hollander, Einwohner, Guha, and Prakash, the study provides a thorough exploration of the intersections between resistance, marginalization, and historical narrative.

This research incorporates the arguments of subaltern historians and theorists to examine the silence and resistance of marginalized characters in *Anido Pahad Sangai* and *Damini Bhir*. By analyzing specific instances from these texts, it explores how fictionalized characters such as Gorimaya, Ghyabring, Chandrakanta, M.R., Lal Bahadur, Suwani, Jamuni, Suke Damai, Lachhi, Sani, Kanchhi Damini, Dhoule Kanchho, Hangdima, and others are systematically suppressed. These characters lack agency and are dominated by state mechanisms that ignore their voices and fail to address their needs. It aims to highlight how these narratives reflect broader social and political dynamics, where the marginalized are silenced and their resistance is often rendered invisible. It delves into the ways in which these characters, representative of real subaltern groups, are marginalized through socio-political structures and cultural

hegemonies. It reveals how the state and societal norms work in tandem to perpetuate the suppression of these groups, depriving them of their right to agency and voice. By closely examining the experiences and interactions of these characters, the research seeks to uncover the layers of oppression they face. It illustrates how their struggles are not just personal but are indicative of a larger, systemic issue where subaltern groups are consistently pushed to the margins. The characters' lack of agency is a manifestation of the broader socio-political neglect and exclusion that subaltern groups endure. The research aims to highlight the ongoing struggles of subaltern groups in their pursuit of recognition and justice. It underscores the importance of bringing these marginalized voices to the forefront of literary and academic discourse. By doing so, it advocates for a re-examination of the socio-political narratives that have long ignored or silenced the subaltern experience. The study not only contributes to the understanding of these texts but also to the broader discussion on social justice, equity, and the need for inclusive historical and cultural narratives.

This research is divided into four chapters. The first chapter lays the foundation for the study, detailing the research objectives, scope, and methodology. It provides a comprehensive overview of the study's blueprint, setting the stage for the subsequent analysis. The second chapter presents a critical review of foundational concepts in subaltern studies, exploring key theoretical frameworks and engaging with relevant primary texts. It includes detailed critiques and interpretations of *Anido Pahad Sangai* and *Damini Bhir*, providing context for the subsequent analysis. The third chapter delves into a detailed analysis of the texts, integrating the theoretical insights from subaltern studies to interpret and consolidate data. This chapter aims to illuminate how the texts reflect and reinforce the concepts of subaltern resistance. The final chapter synthesizes the study's findings, reinforcing how the selected novels function

as narratives of resistance for subaltern characters. It offers a summary of the key conclusions and implications of the research. It concludes with a comprehensive list of works cited, documenting all references used throughout the study.

Chapter II: Subaltern Issues in *Anido Pahad Sangai* and *Damini Bhir*

This chapter critically examines subaltern studies, drawing the various concepts from Antonio Gramsci to contemporary South Asian critics. "Subaltern" refers to marginalized social groups dominated by hegemonic power. Originally a military term, it now encompasses women, Dalits, indigenous peoples, and others excluded from power. Antonio Gramsci first used "subaltern" to describe Italy's peasant class, highlighting their lack of awareness of subordination. In *Notes on Italian History*, he defined subalterns as marginalized groups dominated by hegemonic powers.

Subaltern studies aim to reclaim the histories and voices of the oppressed, reflecting Gramsci's Marxist vision of empowering them to speak for themselves.

In the works of Parijat and Mukarung, the declaration of cultural, social, and political identities is a form of resistance. These narratives highlight the voices and experiences of marginalized groups striving to assert their presence and challenge the dominant ideology of society. Louis Althusser's concepts of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) and Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) help us understand how power and ideology operate in society. These concepts also show how subaltern groups resist these forces. Louis Althusser, a significant Marxist thinker, discusses repression and resistance among the oppressed classes through his ideas of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) and Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) in his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)" which is part of his book *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, published in 1971. Althusser explains that the state controls society using RSAs and ISAs. RSAs include institutions like the police, military, and courts, which maintain control through force or threats (both physical and mental) (142-148). In Althusser's term, repression is mainly carried out by RSAs. He says these apparatuses work to keep the ruling class

in power by forcefully maintaining law and order and suppressing dissent (137). The coercive power of the state is evident in the way RSAs function to eliminate or mitigate any form of resistance that threatens the status quo.

Althusser acknowledges that subalterns resist dominant power through counter-hegemonic acts, both overt and subtle. Parijat and Rajan Mukarung blend Marxist thought with subaltern experiences, enriching their narratives with class struggle, cultural wisdom, and socio-political critique. Their work highlights the intersection of economic oppression and cultural marginalization, advocating for holistic social justice. A number of South Asian scholars, historians, and critics, influenced by the ideas of Gramsci and Althusser, have dedicated significant effort to reinterpreting history from the margins and addressing subaltern issues. Seeking to recover "the small silenced voice of history—the voice of the subaltern" (Guha 45), South Asian intellectuals began publishing works under the series *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History*, edited by Ranajit Guha in its early days. Guha characterizes subaltern subjects as socially excluded groups. Ranajit Guha's key argument in developing the field of Subaltern Studies is that Indian history—whether during the colonial, nationalist, or post-colonial period—has largely been written by, for, and about the elite, neglecting the perspectives and experiences of the common people. This historiographical tradition has, by design, marginalized "the people," or, in Antonio Gramsci's terms, "the subaltern." Subaltern Studies derives its moral and political legitimacy from the perspectives of Third World scholars who, speaking from their diverse local contexts of marginalization, challenge the homogenizing forces of Western thought. These intellectuals question the relevance of Eurocentric, white, male-dominated frameworks and strive to create their own modes of discourse.

In doing so, they seek to break free from Western intellectual domination and give voice to those historically silenced—a move that appears both necessary and justified. Ranajit Guha, an Indian scholar cum subaltern theorist, asserts, “A notion of resistance to elite domination was one of its invariant features in spite of diversity. This followed from the subalternity common to all the social constituents of this domain and as such distinguished it sharply from that elite politics” (Guha 5). In this sense, the subaltern case is a result of elite politics, and the workers, peasants, women and indigenous groups strive to resist against elite domination. Guha observes that in subaltern politics, mobilization occurred on a horizontal level, in contrast to the vertical nature of mobilization in elite politics. Subaltern movements were often marked by intense, spontaneous action, as seen in peasant uprisings (Aspects 4). Thus, the subaltern represents a distinct political space. South Asian subaltern critics analyze the marginalization and silencing of voices under Western and European discourses, which may appear subversive and liberating but often overlook these realities. With a commitment to moral resistance, these critics strive to articulate the silenced experiences of post-colonial subjects. Bell Hooks defines the subaltern as “the most victimized by sexist oppression; women who are daily beaten down, mentally, physically and spiritually ...[and] are powerless to change their condition in life” (131). Therefore, Guha and other subaltern scholars emphasize the importance of recovering the silenced histories of subaltern groups, advocating for a "history from below" approach. This effort aims to root our political identities and institutions within a more inclusive historical narrative (Guha 45), incorporating the perspectives of Third World and subaltern intellectuals.

As Guha illustrates in a remarkable comparative study on caste resistance, “the absence of overt acts of defiance and even conscious mimicry of the material

aspirations of higher castes do not conceal the central theme of social antagonism in the religious beliefs of certain castes and tribes” (Ghosh 14). Subalterns refer to social groups that are marginalized and excluded from the dominant power structures of society. From a European perspective, subaltern subjects are seen as subordinated classes because these lower social groups lack access to hegemonic power. This concept is particularly relevant within colonial discourse. For example, if we examine the socio-economic structure of Nepal, we find that working-class individuals, indigenous groups, laborers, and farmworkers are systematically denied political power and access to state control. The elite classes maintain their dominance over these vulnerable groups through state mechanisms and political influence.

After the 1980s, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, influenced by Antonio Gramsci’s concept of subalternity, brought increased attention to the idea of the "subaltern" through her influential essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”. In this work, Spivak examines the challenges surrounding the subaltern voice and its representation in historiography. The first issue she highlights lies in the method of analysis itself: postcolonial theory often uses Western, male-dominated academic frameworks to study subaltern groups, which can unintentionally impose a new form of intellectual ‘colonization’ on the very people it seeks to empower. The second issue is the act of defining and representing the subaltern: by identifying subaltern groups and giving them a voice, they are no longer truly "subaltern" but become absorbed into the dominant discourse they were originally excluded from. The third issue involves the romanticization of the subaltern: when postcolonial discourse speaks on behalf of the subaltern, it risks essentializing their identity as purely authentic and untainted, thereby reproducing the very stereotypes and hierarchies it set out to challenge. These arguments point to an unsettling conclusion: for the subaltern to remain truly

subaltern (24), they must remain voiceless and invisible. Spivak herself, in attempting to enable the subaltern voice, risks essentializing subaltern identities—whether ethnic, racial, or otherwise—falling into the same trap of oversimplification. Spivak strongly asserts: “... the construction of a consciousness or subject ... coheres with the work of imperialist subject make-up, mingling epistemic violence with the advancement of learning and civilization” (295). In this sense, the subalterns are made muted and it is an imperialist agenda. In support of Spivak, David Richards further elaborates to clarify her position:

Subaltern identification, however compromised, is necessary to enable agency, according to Fanon’s...premise. In order to break open this dilemma, Spivak proposes a kind of compromise to enable subaltern identity and therefore agency. Her concept of ‘strategic essentialism’ argues that it is necessary to adopt certain ‘essentialized’ identities (national, ethnic, gender, racial) in order to ‘speak’ and to achieve specific strategic goals. (23)

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” challenges the concept of the colonial (and Western) “subject.” Spivak contends that European intellectuals have presumed to understand the “other” and have positioned it within their own narratives of oppression. Spivak defends this notion and comments: “Intellectuals must attempt to disclose and know the discourse of society’s Other” (Maggio 419-20). Spivak emphasizes that “Through this act of epistemic knowing/violence inevitably leads to the essentialization of the other, is always the reinforcement of the menace of empire” (20). The concept of the subaltern subject is predominantly shaped by Western discourses. Within metropolitan academia, Spivak critically examines how Western narratives construct and represent the subaltern. The issues surrounding the subaltern stem from the Western tendency to categorize

Eastern societies as the "other." In the Indian context, women are often stripped of recognition and agency, particularly when viewed through the lens of dominant Hindu cultural norms. Hindu men are frequently criticized for perpetuating and obscuring patriarchal strategies to sustain oppression. Therefore, it becomes essential to strategically simplify subaltern identities to effectively empower their agency, framing it as part of a broader humanist project. In the novel *Anido Pahad Sangai*, Parijat has adopted the essential women identity for the uneducated women of the Nepali society. In his novel *Damini Bhir*, Mukarung also embraces the essential Dalit and indigenous identities of the untouchable castes and minority communities in eastern Nepal. Recognizing their ethnic identity is crucial for amplifying their voices in a society plagued by racial and caste hierarchies. With a view from margin to intervene the center, Dipesh Chakrabarty emphasizes the importance of documenting the histories of subaltern groups. However, he carefully avoids essentialism in his efforts to recover subaltern voices within these histories. In his essay "Radical Histories and Question of Enlightenment Rationalism: Some Recent Critiques of 'Subaltern Studies'", he reflects:

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

Thus, the form of subaltern historiography is flexible and not limited by the rigid frameworks of dominant historical narratives. Similarly, Gyan Prakash, an Indian historian and critic affirms that modern colonialism founded permanent "hierarchies of subjects and knowledge" (3). We often see a dichotomy between the colonizer and

the colonized, the Occidental and the Oriental, the civilized and the primitive, and the developed and the underdeveloped. These distinctions represent nothing more than a politics of difference, where grand narratives function to establish hegemony. Gyan Prakash argues that colonial power shapes subaltern identities through binary logic, creating superiority over the marginalized. He challenges the notion that colonial outcomes follow Western-dominated hierarchical knowledge. Instead, he argues that colonialism actively rearranges and renegotiates these binary oppositions (3-4). While Western domination influences hierarchies of knowledge and identity, the resulting narrative often deviates from expectations. While subaltern historiography is vital, creating a distinct language for the subaltern risks essentialism. Elite and imperial discourse often overlap in subaltern narratives, yet the subaltern identity remains rooted. In *Anido Pahad Sangai* and *Damini Bhir*, Parijat and Mukarung acknowledge this complexity. Thus, subaltern historians should remain neutral, avoiding specific positions or jargon.

In colonial discourse, subaltern subjects are distinguished by how elite groups rule, oppress, and discriminate against them. Following this line of thought, Gyanendra Pandey notes that the term "people" typically refers to working men and women. These subaltern individuals include the unemployed, the disadvantaged, and those marginalized by society—essentially, anyone who does not belong to the elite or dominant classes (411). Pandey identifies three key aspects in the understanding of subalternity. The first emphasizes the significance of collective identity and the importance of communal bonds among peasants. The second arises from a deconstruction of long-standing nationalist discourse. The third highlights the fragile, unstable, and changing nature of people's various community affiliations. These affiliations reflect a range of diverse, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting

networks, solidarities, and aspirations. This multiplicity fosters conversations and negotiations among different religious and cultural communities and the state (412). However, in Indian national historiography, peasants who held significant positions have often been categorized as part of the subaltern class, yet their contributions, struggles, and roles have been largely overlooked in official histories and archives.

In this regard David Richards in his essay “Framing Identity” argues “subaltern study is concerned with the rewriting of history... not as the traditional narrative of elites engaged in a heroic struggle with... but as small-scale local insurrections (often failing) enacted by groups and individuals- workers, peasants, women- ignored or ‘written out’ of the historical grand narrative” (23). His assertion clearly shows that the term "subaltern" includes all groups and individuals—such as workers, peasants, women, and others—who are ignored by conventional elitist colonial historiography. So radical politico-cultural movement of subalterns is essential to raise level of consciousness to the level of resistance. In colonial discourse, Europeans perceive subaltern subjects as subordinated classes that lack socio-political access to hegemonic power. The Subaltern Studies Group (SSG) critically examines and challenges this patronizing perspective. To reclaim the histories of subalterns and articulate their collective political and cultural agency in opposition to elitist nationalist discourses, the SSG was established in India by South Asian intellectuals and academics.

Partha Chatterjee, a key figure in the Subaltern Studies Group, further articulates the project by stating that “the task now is to fill up ... the emptiness, that is, the representation of subaltern consciousness in elitist historiography. It must be given its own specific content with its own history of development” (62). He notes that the socio-political conditions of the nation influence the identity of subaltern classes in

contrast to that of the ruling classes. Consequently, the primary aim of subaltern historiography is to represent subaltern consciousness while expressing the new forms of political and cultural agency of these groups. When examining literary texts to uncover subaltern voices, it is crucial to consider how characters are represented, the author's role and perspective in discussing these subaltern figures, and how the characters evolve in their awareness of their subordination and subaltern identity. Additionally, their agency in shaping their lives and their conscious resistance to overcome their subaltern status are vital elements to explore. In her essay "In Search of Subaltern Consciousness," Margery Sabin emphasizes the importance of analyzing the writer's position, stating, "In searching for subaltern consciousness through writing, the projection of the writer's own social position and values is always discernible" (178). According to Sabin, writers may consciously choose to either suppress or amplify subaltern voices in their work. Similarly, Tara Lal Shrestha, in his book *Shakti, Shrasta Subaltern*, argues that subaltern characters can only express themselves freely through their oral folk traditions and oral literatures, as most mainstream cultures and literatures often marginalize and silence their voices. Shrestha contends that privileged individuals have responsibility to write about those people from marginalized backgrounds, regardless of their gender, class, or caste. Therefore, the concept of subalternity is closely tied to issues of domination, power, identity, resistance, and transformation. The aim of the proposed study is to promote subaltern studies as a comprehensive methodological framework capable of effectively analyzing the silenced voices present in both global and local texts. The initial phase of the Subaltern Studies Movement was shaped by Mao's political influence and the academic concepts of Antonio Gramsci. So it is considered as a left movement.

Partha Chattarjee an advocator of Subaltern Studies Group highlights the necessity of collective movement of subalterns to fulfil the expectation of the marginalized people. An individual from marginalized community is attacked from the mainstream politics and look helpless, so s/he tries to create a forum for collective movement to defend that. Writers like Parijat and Mukarung have critically examined and resisted these social injustices through their literary works. They have amplified the voices of the oppressed, using literature as a medium to confront the racial and caste-based biases prevalent in Nepalese society. Their advocacy for social equality and inclusion, particularly through movements such as 'Ralpha' and 'Shrijanshil Arajakata', reflects a commitment to fighting for the rights and representation of marginalized groups. These movements have sought to empower the subaltern and challenge the entrenched hierarchies that have historically excluded them from state representation and socio-political power. To resist against the domination of mainstream Nepali narratives Parijat and Mukarung also realized the necessity of collective struggle and formed a forum for literary movement like the 'Ralpha Andolan' and 'Srijanshil Arajakata' respectively to raise their voice on behalf of sidelined people of the society. Mukarung explains the need of the Srijanshil Arajakata movement:

We aimed to bring the culture, philosophy and lifestyle of Rai, Limbu and Janajatis to mainstream literature. Because, as readers, even in academic books and popular literature books that people recommended as must-reads to each other, our identities' narratives were missing in those stories, our experiences had no mentions—the result was a generalized Nepali identity, pushing our community further down. And this wasn't just about our

representation; it was about the need to work on literary works that accepted diversity. (Bajracharya, para.6)

Parijat and Rajan Mukarung integrate Marxist philosophy with indigenous pragmatism, urging Nepali literature to advocate for vulnerable communities—women, Dalits, indigenous minorities, and Madhesis—by creating counter-hegemonic spaces.

In 1966, Parijat led the Ralpha Literary Revolution. The Ralpha movement can be taken as a progressive movement to give space for representing the subalterns in Nepali narratives. It inspired to produce various songs and literary works to resist the tyranny of the Panchyat government. In the beginning, figures like Parijat, Rameshwor Shrestha ‘Ramesh’, Narayan Bhakta Shrestha ‘Rayan’, Manjul, Ganesh Rasik and others worked as a politically neutral group under the Ralpha Movement, aiming to resist Radio Nepal over issues of unpaid royalties. However, later gradually this movement evolved into a cultural uprising that generated protest songs, poems, and novels challenging the autocratic regime of the Panchayat. The Ralpha movement can be seen as a beacon of hope and a platform for marginalized voices in Nepali society. It provided a unique opportunity for subaltern groups to express their struggles, aspirations, and resistance through art and literature, making the cultural uprising both an artistic expression and a significant political act. This movement highlighted the plight of those oppressed by the state's mechanisms and brought their stories to the forefront of national consciousness (np.). The creative expressions of the writers and singers within the Ralpha movement performed a crucial role in acting as agents for raising the voices of the voiceless. These works helped to ignite the political movement of 2036 BS (1979 AD) in Nepal.

The Ralpa movement, was instrumental in challenging the status quo and advocating for the rights of the oppressed. It underscored the importance of cultural and artistic expressions in the fight against autocracy and highlighted the transformative power of resistance literature in reshaping societal narratives (np.). The Movement's focus on repression and resistance of subalterns against the Panchayat is a central theme in Parijat's novel *Anido Pahad Sangai*. In the novel, Parijat encapsulates the essence of the Ralpa movement by depicting the challenges faced by subaltern characters under the Panchayat regime. The novel serves as a microcosm of broader socio-political struggles in Nepal during that era. Through her vivid storytelling, Parijat illustrates how art and literature can serve as powerful tools for social and political change. The characters in her novel symbolize the resilience and determination of marginalized communities striving for justice and recognition.

'Parijat,' the pen name of Bishnu Kumari Waiba (1937-1993), was a strong advocate for justice and independence. Through her writing, she questioned domination and exploitation, empowering women and marginalized groups. As a member of the non-Nepali-speaking Tamang community, she played a key role in the progressive movement of Nepali literature. As a founding member of the Pragatishil Lekhak Sangh, she challenged the traditional definitions of women's role. Beginning right from her first novel *Shirisko Phool* (1966) to the *Anido Pahad Sangai* (1982), Parijat is engaged in the question of subversion of dominant traditional values that perpetuate class and caste discrimination as well as gender opposition.

Abhi Subedi provides an insightful evaluation of Parijat's *Shirisko Phool* analyzing it through the perspective of existentialism and absurdity. He views both male and female characters in the novel survive in emptiness of their life. Sakambari embodies the absurdity of existence, presenting herself as both a frail and enigmatic figure. She

reminds him an 'archetypal woman'. He further says, "She is not beautiful but she has an aura about her that attracts men towards her and they cannot see beyond her.

Suyogbir falls in love with her. Suyogbir is an ex-army man who had fought many battles and had slept with many women. After her death he does not see any meaning in life He becomes like an agnostic Buddha" (120-21). Similarly, Murari Aryal emphasizes that the themes of absurdism and nihilism in *Shirisko Phool*, reflect Parijat's understanding into the devastation caused by the Second World War on human existence (59). Michael James Hutt explores the psychological dimensions and complexities within the novel *Shirisko Phool*. He highlights how Suyog's memories of sexual exploitation during his military service, his unspoken, reckless love for Sakambari, and his awkward attempts to express his feelings—ultimately leading to her death—are key elements for a psychological analysis of the narrative.

Furthermore, Hutt suggests that the novel holds deeper meanings beyond its superficial appearance. His extract goes as:

Suyog's infatuation remains almost wholly unimpressed and Sakambari dies. Her death is not the melodramatic demise of the traditional Nepali heroine, however: there is an underlying suspicion that Suyog's single clumsy attempt to reveal his feelings to her is in some way responsible. (214-15)

The psychological foundation of the novel is rooted in Suyog's recollections of sexually exploiting Burmese tribal women during his time in the military.

Subin Sahu recalls Parijat's interview in which she expressed her fondness for *Anido Pahad Sangai*. As a left-leaning activist, Parijat's political beliefs are reflected in the novel, which supports the anti-regime movement of the late 2030 BS. Sahu describes the novel as "bold," given the era's restrictions on freedom of expression. Rajendra Subedi reviews *Anido Pahad Sangai* from socialist realist novel which is related with

the students' agitation of 2036 BS (49). Ashes Malla, commenting on Parijat's novel writes, "the writings of Parijat which are spread from the woman's unconscious state to the whole of nation's socio economic structure are yet to be read in that line. Now, it is time that we got to do that" (164). Malla ascertains the influence of Parijat's writing on the whole of Nepalese socio-economic structure of that time. In similar vein Rudra Kharel is very outspoken about the need to bring in change in the patriarchal attitude to women's writing in Nepali literature. With reference to essays in *Adhi Akas*, he writes, "the essays in *Adhi Akas* are able to expose the age – old patriarchal violence and suppressive attitude to women" (190). Kharel observes, the essays strongly oppose the male writers' aesthetics through which they view women writers' writings and the essays demand that women writers be viewed in their own contexts and not on face value. Hem Bhandari observes the novel *Anido Pahad Sangai* as "an excellent example of the progressive consciousness of the then Nepali society where the conflict between the powerless and the power bloc of panchayat authority is successfully analyzed" (385-86). Bhandari interprets the novel as a political novel.

In a letter to Mahesh Maske, Parijat writes, "I very well know what controversy my life and my writing have become in the history of Nepali literature. After my death, if there be need, you may do justice to this documentation" (9). In another letter she writes, "... being terrorized by the idea of home, family, husband and submission, I could not love the man that I so much liked" (12). Keeping these personal and social aspects of Parijat's life Maskey opines, "it is necessary that we become sensitive about the interrelationship between the aspects of her personal life and social life" (15). Raamesh wished, "Didi (Parijat) would live as the power of the distressed, poor, helpless, powerless and voiceless" (53). In this remark Raamesh is right, Parijat

always wrote as the voice of the voiceless. For Parijat, literature signifies the voice of the voiceless, a means of expressing what remains unspoken, and a platform for representing those who are not represented. In his article “Remembering Parijat” Mahesh Kumar Maskey also contends, “She distinguished herself as that rare breed of writer who used literature as a weapon against all kinds of oppression, injustice and tyranny of patriarchal society” (n.p.). For Caroline Criado Perez, the issue does not lie in the female body itself but rather in “the social meaning that we ascribe to that body, and a socially determined failure to account for it” (xiv). It is evident that even in our highly rational world, women continue to resemble de Beauvoir’s concept of the Second Sex. For Parijat the woman’s suppression and suffering is too private for the patriarchal aesthetics. Ingrid Kreidl also observes, “the meaning of life and the purpose of suffering in life were questions with which Parijat was confronted in a very direct personal way” (171). Thus, the language of women’s freedom and independence from the traditional domineering patriarchal values is identified as the foundation of Parijat’s aesthetics.

Miguel Tamen’s concept of resistance in literature revolves around how literary texts resist simple interpretations and challenge readers to engage deeply with the text (220). He emphasizes the idea that literature often resists being reduced to a single meaning or message, instead encouraging multiple interpretations and critical thinking (35). Parijat makes a telescopic view in a panoramic style of different sites of the subalterns’ condition across Nepal’s geography- Himal, Pahad and Terai-Madesh, cultures, groups and communities in her novels.

Rajan Mukarung’s *Damini Bhir*, winner of the Madan Puraskaar in 2069 BS, has received critical attention for its portrayal of ethnic and indigenous issues, as well as its use of fiction techniques. Many critics focus on its political themes, such as

identity and inclusion in mainstream politics. Achut Ghimire views it as a socio-political novel set in an underdeveloped village in Eastern Nepal, where indigenous people struggle to influence political power in Kathmandu, only to return home without significant change (np.). Sunil Parajuli notes that Mukarung's left-wing ideologies are evident in the novel, which successfully depicts Nepal's social strata (np.).

In an interview with Sirja Bajracharya, Rajan Mukarung emphasized that Nepali literature should explore the richness of all cultures, asserting that marginalized communities must write their own culture and identity (np.). He aims to integrate the culture and experiences of 'janajatis' and marginalized groups into mainstream literature, highlighting how rising indigenous consciousness can inspire resistance. Yash Kumar, with reference to the novel points out that Dalit women, the most oppressed group in Nepal, suffer from both gender and caste discrimination (np.). Mukarung's *Damini Bhir* portrays characters who share stories of suffering, resistance, and discrimination across all backgrounds. Similarly, in a reader's comment, Sangram Tharu in *Mulyankyan Mashik* writes "Damini Bhir symbolizes the socio-political power within the nation" (front cover).

Rajan Mukarung, a key figure in the Creative Anarchy movement, challenges the inclusivity of mainstream Nepali literature. Focused on representing marginalized groups, he rejects writing about heroism, seeing his characters as the true strength of his novels (np.). He critiques Nepali literature for reflecting elite ideology and argues that it remains incomplete without acknowledging the cultures and practices of ethnic identities (13). Mukarung advocates for recognizing marginalized writings as an essential part of national literature. Nepali literature from marginalized groups has sparked both praise and criticism. Abhi Subedi highlights how post-conflict Nepal

ignited debates on rights and equality, influencing ethnic consciousness among marginalized writers (3). Sanjeev Uprety notes that such writings challenge traditional forms by reflecting indigenous symbols and advocating for difference (134).

Madhusudan Giri observes that contemporary literature voices the struggles of lower-class, downtrodden, and indigenous people in caste-driven society (38), focusing on their resistance and fight for identity recognition.

Marginal writers are also attacked as racist, separatist and loutish in their expression.

For instance, Byarhasastri tweets: “Brahmins should be exiled to Kashi! Racist literature. # dollar” (@Dpsdg). His anger represents the common psyche of a

dominant group who regard the emerging trend of marginal literature of marginal writers as a part of separatist project pertaining to dividing the nation in the name of caste. Byarhasastri uses the hashtag ‘dollar’ to criticize the expressions of marginal writers, framing them as a foreign aid project. The dominant group characterizes the movement as extremist and racially conspiratorial, suggesting it undermines national harmony and unity as if it expatriates them. This reinforces the prevailing beliefs of the dominant psychology. Writers from the margins, like Rajan Mukarung, Hangyug Agyat, and Upendra Subba, embrace criticism as part of their creative challenge to mainstream Nepali literature. Their movement, Srijanshil Arajakata, aims to highlight Nepal’s cultural diversity (Agyat 53). Sushant Gurung praises Mukarung’s work for representing marginalized cultures, languages, and religions, particularly through the use of ethnic dialects from the Rai and Limbu languages. This approach not only aligns with the aesthetics of mainstream Nepali literature but also integrates ethnic symbols, myths, and expressions into the dominant language, fostering a sense of anarchism that they argue is inherently creative (qtd. in Mishra 43). Similarly, Rajan Mukarung states: “whenever I go, I’m followed by only one allegation of being racist

writer. However, I take it for granted because such mindsets stem from monolithic ideology fed back by state mechanisms from the ages against which we are waging literary war” (06:56:07:17). Mukarung’s words challenge the rigidity of mainstream Nepali literature.

Hangyug Agyat in his article “Srijanshil Arajakata ko Tesro Varsha” aligns with Mukarung’s contention as he justifies: “Identity is not separatism. When we began the movement, we had a slogan – Nepali, the common identity. We advocated for the inclusion of language, culture of marginalized communities, but our issue is misinterpreted” (53-54). Agyat challenges the misconception of identity literature, advocating for an inclusive approach that unites all identities under the umbrella of Nepali culture. In his article “Chintanko Halchal,” G.K. Pokhrel supports Mukarung’s assertion and views the movement as a progressive force. He contends that expressing identity through the concept of Srijanshil Arajakata represents a progressive thought. He points that claim of subalterns’ identity and voice of voiceless are the features of Post Modernism; and these features are clearly visible in Mukarung’s writings. In his article “Sahityama Sthan Ko Sarta,” Rajan Mukarung echoes Pokhrel's arguments, asserting that his writing aims to affirm the identities of marginalized individuals and to highlight the suffering of the deprived. Mukarung further emphasizes that those who have been neglected must actively claim and assert their identity (n. p.). This research work opens the door to study the selected texts from the aspect of resistance literature. It reveals how the fictional representation of Parijat’s *Anido Pahad Sangai* and Mukarung’s *Damini Bhir* are resistant to subaltern characters.

In the selected texts, the resistance of marginalized characters symbolizes their struggle to gain inclusion in mainstream society and to advocate for human rights and equality. These characters use their resistance as a way to fight for their rightful place

within social and institutional frameworks. Their efforts highlight a broader quest for recognition and justice, aiming to challenge and transform existing power structures that have historically excluded them. While previous analyses have explored various aspects of these texts—such as cultural contexts, political histories, absurdism, nihilism, patriarchy, and ethnic sensibilities—there has been a noticeable gap in detailed studies focusing specifically on the experiences and resistance of subaltern characters. This oversight means that a crucial dimension of the texts remains unexplored. To fully understand how ideology and cultural hegemony shape subaltern identities and consciousness, it is essential to investigate how these factors contribute to the formation and expression of subaltern agencies within the literary narratives. The concept of subaltern consciousness, as developed in postcolonial theory, has been supported by scholars such as Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Partha Chatterjee. They argue that subaltern studies offer valuable insights into how marginalized groups navigate and resist dominant power structures. However, despite their contributions, there remains a significant need for research that applies the theoretical frameworks of subaltern studies to these texts. Such an approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how subaltern characters resist and how their resistance is portrayed in literature. Without a thorough investigation of these issues, the meaning and significance of the selected texts will remain incomplete.

Chapter III: Resistance for Recognition in *Anido Pahad Sangai* and *Damini Bhir*

In contemporary Nepali literature, subaltern studies have shifted focus to amplify marginalized voices. Writers like Parijat and Rajan Mukarung have used both fictional and non-fictional works to highlight the struggles of subalterns. Their writings give voice to issues often overlooked by mainstream scholars, with a strong presence of marginalized groups such as women, ethnic communities, and Dalits. Parijat and Mukarung write with a focus on the struggles of socially marginalized and oppressed individuals, exploring their pursuit of resistance and paths to empowerment. Parijat's novel *Anido Pahad Sangai* characterizes struggle between women and men of different culture, janajati, terai madhesi, subaltern and other groups across Terai-Madhes, hills, and mountains, on the one hand, and the autocratic state power, on the other. The different groups have raised their voices for self-esteem, and identification. Parijat explores her ideas from women-centered perspectives to refresh the memory and history of social dogmatism. She has given vital space and role to the female characters which represent contemporary Nepali society of 2030s B.S. In the then contemporary social structure of Nepal, women were under the shadow of patriarchy and most of the literary characters of that witnessed that ethos of the society. In *Anido Pahad Sangai*, the female protagonists claim for their human rights, empowerment and social mobilization. Gorimaya, is a character who faces several sufferings and discriminations created by subsisting patriarchal society. She is deceived by Krishna Karki. Krishna Karki forces Gorimaya to marry with a mentally ill boy by taking a good amount of mediation fee from the boy's parents. Gorimaya is compelled to accept the domination silently. She is muted. She is beaten by her husband without reason and forced to bear the insults made by her mother in law. Characters such as Chandrakanta, Suwani, Lalita, Ghyabring, Lal

Bahadur, M. R., Pradip, Jamuni, and Suntali all endure marginalization and oppression. Suwani, for instance, plays the role of agency to raise hope and consciousness on poor and working class people, especially women in the society. Similarly, in Rajan Mukarung's *Damini Bhir*, Suke Damai runs away from the village leaving his newly married life alone because of racial domination of the society. Lachhi is a character of the Damai family which is a Dalit caste of Nepali society. Lachhi in her early age is physically exploited by Chetan, the son of the Kaji family of the village. Lachhi get pregnant but Chetan is not there to accept her. Other characters, such as Sani, Hangdima, Kanchhi Damini, Birman, and others from Dalit and marginalized ethnic communities, endure not only gender discrimination but also the harsh realities of class and caste oppression. Their struggles are compounded by the intersection of these multiple forms of discrimination, leaving them doubly marginalized and vulnerable. They are not given respect, freedom and rights. They are compelled to do what they don't like to do. They have to move according to the interest of state politics. In the novel, the Maoist movement has played the role of an agency to change societal perceptions of Nepali women and ethnic communities, as well as their roles within society. Thus, the present study attempts to argue how the subaltern characters of the selected texts resist to free themselves from the boundaries of domination by establishing their identity in the society.

Damini Bhir highlights caste discrimination, male domination, and the marginalization of Dalit women in a patriarchal society. As part of the 'Srijanshil Arajakata' movement, Mukarung critiques the lack of inclusivity in mainstream Nepali literature. In an interview with Milan Kumar Yonghang, he expressed his deep influence from subaltern studies, relating to its concerns due to his own background (np.). Mukarung rejects writing about heroism, instead focusing on marginalized

people's stories to bring their identity, culture, and struggles to mainstream literature.

The novel features multiple characters, all equally important, and portrays resistance and dignity in the face of oppression.

Nivedita Majumdar defines resistance as challenging past biases that silenced Dalit and Janajati identities (np.). *Damini Bhir* comments on the socio-cultural evolution of Nepali subaltern society, where caste discrimination calls for resistance through reinterpretation, bringing the marginalized to the center. Mukarung raises his voice against discrimination by portraying the psychological, social, and physical experiences of the oppressed. *Damini Bhir* gives voice to the marginalized, particularly Dalit women, who suffer in silence due to their caste and untouchability. The novel portrays their struggles through the setting, language, and everyday activities of the oppressed. In the "Aadhar Katha," Suke Damai's wife, tired of being exploited by Kaji Kali Bahadur, ends her life by jumping from Damini Bhir, unable to resist the prevailing feudal culture. Mukarung poignantly highlights the plight of the marginalized, exposing how the state and politicians have failed to address their issues.

Mukarung argues that subaltern discourse is not a product of the subaltern themselves, as they lack access to representation. *Damini Bhir* reflects the violence and resistance of Dalit women, showcasing the socio-economic conflicts caused by caste and class discrimination. The novel follows characters like Suke Damai and his wife, Kanchhi Damini, Lachhi Damini, Dhoule Kanchho, Hangdima, Nabin, Sani Damini, Nissam, Mekhmaan, Rambha, and others, illustrating the victimhood and marginalization resulting from caste, gender, and class oppression faced by the subalterns. *Damini Bhir* addresses the violence faced by the Dalit community in eastern Nepal, focusing on how female characters like Kanchhi, Damini, and Lachhi use agency to redefine

their identities and challenge gender and racial violence. The novel portrays their evolution beyond victimhood, making it a powerful text of resistance for Dalit women.

While research on gender violence in Nepali literature exists, little attention has been given to caste-based violence and resistance in works by indigenous authors. This study expands the analysis of gender relations by focusing on Dalit women's resistance in *Damini Bhir*, using subaltern theory and the concept of resistance as the primary framework. Kasper Masse defines resistance as a cultural phenomenon that arises from the conflict between the dominant and the suppressed groups (45). It focuses on the cultural dimension and oppositional practices aimed at empowering the oppressed. Masse's framework is useful in understanding the resistance against the hegemonic cultural power of the upper-caste aristocracy, represented by Bista 'Kaji' in *Damini Bhir*.

Damini Bhir shows a picture of the dominated people depicting them as wretched and victimized people without an inner life. Just after a month of Suke Damai's marriage, Kaji Kali Bahadur appears to his house on a horse. Suke bowing his head does 'Jadou' for Kaji. Kaji scolds Suke's wife and she too greets him as her husband. Kaji throws lusty looks to Suke's the newly married wife and says, "ramri raiches! Bahuni jasti" (you look like a Brahmin woman (my trans. 16). Kaji reminds Suke of the loan he still owes. Desperate, Suke begs for an additional month to repay it, but Kaji responds with a brutal kick, leaving Suke in unbearable pain. He collapses, weeping. Suke's wife, in a state of helplessness, pleads with Kaji, joining her hands together, asking for just one more month (16). Kaji, however, casts a lustful gaze at her before walking away. Leaving his newly married wife alone at home Suke Damai leaves the village. After a month again Kaji comes and asks for money. Damini is stunned. She

is speechless. She weeps. Kaji comes near her, catches her chin, looks at her, and says “Do not to weep, do not to weep! I will wait for one more month” (17). Suke’s wife touches his feet to express her gratefulness for that time. Kaji takes her inside the house and bolts the door. Suke’s wife cries but nobody is there except the horse (18). Women of the Dalit community lead a very unsecured life which is because of the economic scarcity, the caste and the gender issues. Kaji enjoys the power of hegemonic masculinity and takes advantages of his wealth to dominate and exploit the poor. Suke is the representative of marginalized masculinity like “skeleton body with pathetic eyes” (16) living with suppressed mentality in front of Kaji family. *Damini Bhir* reveals the evils mainly rooted in caste discrimination. The Dalit characters in *Damini Bhir* endure multiple forms of violence—physical, emotional, psychological, economic, and sexual. They are economically deprived, culturally dominated, and dependent on the ‘Bistas’ houses’ for survival. Suke Damai’s resistance by leaving his home and his wife’s suicide are self-destructive acts, reflecting their lack of agency, forced to compromise and abandon their personal dreams.

Resistance is linked to subaltern consciousness, where people often appear passive unless they visibly resist violence. This challenges Hollander and Einwohner's view that resistance doesn't need to be visible and can be conscious or unconscious.

Stephen Patterson argues that for women, resistance often means exiting abusive relationships, and it can take many forms—violent, non-violent, active, or passive.

This concept is key to analyzing how Dalit women in *Damini Bhir* confront violence.

In this study, resistance is understood as any action by Dalit women characters that represents an effort to cope with or counter violence. In the novel Chetan (son of a rich family of the village) visits Lachhi’s house in the absence of her mother (Kanchhi Damini) and sister Sani (33). He rapes her. At the moment Lachhi cannot protest

against Chetan's sexual violence to her. Lachhi is depicted as silent and submissive in nature. Lachhi weeps and Chetan emotionally blackmails her saying "do not weep, I will not betray. I will marry you. Do not tell anyone about it" (my trans.34) and goes. In the evening after the arrival of her mother and sister, Lachhi weeps with her mother and reports the event done by Chetan to her. Kanchhi Damini expresses a deep sense of anger and curses him. Kanchhi Damini becomes Furious and taking a sickle at her hand goes to the 'Pradhan Ghare' to revolt against the exploitation of her daughter. She is angry with Chetan and says "I will cut his ... by this sickle" (my trans.36). But later being alcoholic intoxicated she returns without the sickle on her hand. The next morning, she says her daughter Lachhi, "they are 'Bista' family. They are powerful. What happened forget it and do not tell it to others" (my trans.36). Lachhi remains silent. It shows the condition of the society where most of the Dalit women are obliged to make compromise with the situation and give up their desire for justice. Lachhi's silence reflects the compulsion of down trodden people for acceptance of exploitation as a system and destiny of women.

After Chetan's sexual violence causes Lachhi's menstruation to stop, Kanchhi Damini weeps, accepting the situation as the fate of poor people. Chetan's sister, Radha Miss, plans to take Lachhi to the city for an abortion, which Kanchhi consents to (38). Kanchhi represents a generation that quietly submits to the caste system. Lachhi, unaware of the plan, follows Radha Miss (39). The deep social conditioning in Nepali society leads women to uphold patriarchal norms, even perpetuating domination over each other. When Lachhi learns of the abortion plan, she resists and decides to give birth, declaring, "I will give birth and raise the child, even if it means working hard to support it" (my trans. 42).

Lachhi's resistance challenges the gender-dominated society, despite Kanchhi Damini's fear of societal condemnation and the harsh treatment Lachhi will face.

Lachhi embraces motherhood before marriage, ready to endure ridicule. She gains support from other marginalized women like Hangdima, Paruma, and Sani (43).

Fanny M. Cheung defines rape as a form of gender-based violence where women are forced into sexual intercourse against their will (139). It reflects men's control over women, with victims often ignored, facing physical, sexual, emotional abuse, and oppression across all social structures. Chetan's mother, Radha Miss, and others try to force Lachhi into marrying a man chosen by the 'Pradhan Ghare' (44), but Lachhi rejects the proposal, refusing to hide the shame of her life. In contrast to Kanchhi's acceptance of the societal system, Lachhi, Sani, and Hangdima actively resist the entrenched inequalities.

In the novel, Ratmate Jethi's discrimination against Lachhi in 'pandhera' (48) symbolizes ongoing racial violence and caste-based marginalization, despite laws against it. Dhoule Kanchho's resistance with Ratmate Jethi's behavior highlights the awareness of oppressed people about their rights (48). Lachhi's fight for her son's rights reflects her struggle for justice and identity. The novel also critiques male dominance and gender hegemony through characters like Rambha, a commercial sex worker who rejects traditional patriarchal control by leaving her abusive husband, Namdeng (73/74). Rambha challenges the misconception that wives must submit to their husbands' authority.

Resistance is linked to subaltern consciousness, a concept introduced by Subaltern Studies in 1982, emphasizing "history from below" to highlight marginalized groups. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak defines the subaltern as those of low status, powerless and vulnerable. She critiques traditional feminism for overlooking the struggles of

poor, third-world women, incorporating class, caste, and culture in her analysis.

Subalternity has since become a significant literary theme, with writers focusing on activism and creating works to amplify the voices of the oppressed. Similarly, Tara Lal Shrestha in his classroom presentation suggests that the term "subaltern" can serve as an umbrella concept for all marginalized, underprivileged individuals who lack a voice. According to Varghese, subalternity has emerged as a significant theme in literature. Motivated by the social movement of the subalterns, writers began to focus their works on activism, creating literature from a subaltern perspective to amplify the voices of the oppressed in society.

Damini Bhir serves as a powerful agency for subaltern voices, highlighting the oppression faced by marginalized characters like Nabin, Nissam, Sani, Lachhi, Dhoule Kanchho, Paruma, Namdeng, and others. These characters actively participate in the Maoist movement, which aims to end all forms of oppression. The movement empowers women from lower classes, like Sani and Lachhi, by awakening political consciousness and building confidence. As Li Onesto observes about women in Maoist strongholds, the revolution ignites their passion for change (166), a sentiment reflected in the novel. Lachhi, alongside others, travels to Kathmandu to support the movement, where she is confronted by the presence of Chetan as a popular singer on the stage (238), intensifying her emotional struggle. Lachhi, fueled by anger toward Chetan, drinks alcohol (241) and later reveals her son Amit's identity to Naamdeng. The next day, Namdeng brings Chetan to Lachhi and his face in front of Lachhi looks like a "defeated soldier's face" (my trans. 243), Chetan apologizes and expresses his willingness to accept Lachhi and her son. However, Lachhi rejects him, asserting her independence: "I survived without him, and I can continue without him" (243). She embraces Dhoule Kanchho, who supported her during difficult times, and together,

they begin a new life by opening a shop 'Janamukhi Sajha Pasal' in Samabesi Danda, Dilpa (283) representing the strength and resilience of the Dalit community through their actions.

At the beginning of the novel, Lachhi is depicted as a subaltern destitute. However, by the end, she occupies a position that was previously deemed ideologically and socially restricted for her. Mukarung makes the relative recovery of the subaltern consciousness through the character of Lachhi and Dhoule Kancho. Therefore, through the analysis of the novel *Damini Bhir* from the resistance of oppressed women perspective the researcher argues that by debunking the traditional notion of feminine, Rajan Mukarung's novel explores themes of subaltern resistance, portraying the struggles and resilience of marginalized communities in eastern Nepal. To examine this aspect of his work, it is useful to apply theories from subaltern studies, a field that critiques the marginalization and voices the resistance of those who are socially, politically and geographically outside the hegemonic power structure.

Resistance takes many forms across different settings. Hollander and Einwohner argue that domination and resistance exist in a cyclical relationship, where oppression provokes resistance, leading to further exertion of power (548). In subaltern contexts, marginalized voices adopt various resistance tactics to navigate oppression. Their framework highlights multiple resistance modes, with material or physical resistance—such as protests—being the most examined (535). Resistance studies focus on marginalized groups affected by socio-economic, patriarchal, cultural, or racial factors, emphasizing their struggle for identity and change. Parijat, a leading Nepali novelist from an ethnic community, critiques manipulation, authoritarianism, and repression in her works, advocating for women's liberation and marginalized voices. Gayatri C. Spivak's concept of "subject-effect" highlights how identity is

shaped by politics, ideology, history, and language (223). This perspective applies to Parijat's *Anido Pahad Sangai*, where marginalized characters' identities are deeply influenced by socio-political and historical contexts, emphasizing the complexities of their experiences.

Anido Pahad Sangai portrays the suffering of the poor and oppressed. Parijat introduces characters like Ghyabring and his daughter Gorimaya, who endure extreme poverty in Chinde village, Nuwakot. Exploited by feudal figures like Krishna Karki, Gorimaya is forced into marriage with a mentally ill man to secure financial support for her father. Ghyabring recalls receiving sixty rupees and wine at her wedding, believing she would return for Dashain (6). However, Gorimaya faces relentless abuse, lamenting to her father: "Father, you have thrown me into hell! My husband tried to throttle me. His mother is cruel, taking my belongings and forcing me into harsh labor while I suffer alone" (my trans.7/8). In the feudal village, Krishna Karki arranges Gorimaya's marriage for financial gain, not love or honor. Trapped in poverty and oppression, Gorimaya endures relentless abuse, reflecting the silenced role of women in a male-dominated society. Her husband's and mother-in-law's violence sparks her resistance, leading her to confront her father: "You should have thrown me in the Trishuli Ganga rather than sell me for sixty rupees and two bottles of alcohol. You have drunk my blood like liquor, haven't you?" (8). Gorimaya's words expose the suffering of marginalized ethnic women, denied basic rights and subjected to trauma, discrimination, and humiliation.

Despite living in a male-dominated society where women are manipulated and oppressed, Parijat's works highlight marginalized women raising their voices. Though traumatized, Gorimaya openly shares her suffering, gaining sympathy from villagers while facing ridicule from some young men. In this society, women's emotions are

ignored, and they are expected to endure silently. An old widow encourages Gorimaya at the village tap, saying: "Krishne Karki deceived you and your father for his own gain. But don't despair—you have a whole life ahead. Women are capable of much more than they realize" (12). Her words empower Gorimaya, reinforcing the potential for women's resistance. The widow's words make Gorimaya realize that feudal society treats poor women as worthless. With a strong feminist consciousness, the widow challenges patriarchy, echoing Mary Wollstonecraft's warning against women being reduced to mere amusements for men (qtd. in Tong 16). Reflecting on this, Gorimaya recognizes the exploitation of subalterns, where a woman's worth is tied to her beauty and youth. In a society driven by greed, men can purchase wives, reducing subaltern lives to nothing more than stone and mud (13).

Gorimaya cannot forget Krishna Karki's flirting with her life. She tries to define his conspiracy and intentions. There are many maidens of marriageable age within his family circle, but that fraud chooses her to treat like a dog. Gorimaya trembles with rage as she remembers Krishne Karki and spits on his manhood with contempt (13). As a subaltern, Gorimaya faces all the oppression, humiliation, and pain inflicted by the ruling classes. Parijat endows her characters with a special strength with which they can break the shackles and try to normalize their life. In Parijat's narrative, in the process of narrating their pains the subalterns also reflect their power and challenges, they take by successfully handling the traumas and oppressions. Returning home, Gorimaya tells her father, "Let's buy a goat" (13), surprising him. She insists that subalterns must struggle to survive. When her father doubts securing a loan, he laments, "I don't think the teacher would give us a loan. It's really difficult to get a loan from these people. All are the same" (14), exposing the hardships and lack of support faced by the oppressed in Chinde village.

Though the New Muluki Ain of 1963 (2020 BS) legally abolished untouchability, the Panchayat regime maintained social and economic hierarchies. Dalits and indigenous groups remained excluded from state mechanisms, education, and land ownership. Women continued to be sidelined politically, with patriarchal norms dictating their social roles. Under Panchayat policies, marginalized voices were systematically suppressed, and the homogenizing narrative of Nepal as a Hindu state erased the diversity of its population. Subaltern groups increasingly recognized the need for organized resistance, paving the way for grassroots movements advocating for inclusion and equality. Parijat's writings challenge mainstream Nepali literature, which portrays the oppressed as uncivilized and inferior. Soumya Nair describes subaltern literature as "complaint literature" that shapes the social identity of the marginalized (np.). Subaltern narratives assert cultural, social, and political identities as resistance. Parijat, as a feminist scholar in an interview critiques Nepali literature for maintaining ruling-class hegemony and neglecting Dalits, women, and the oppressed in historical and literary discourse (np.). Parijat's *Anido Pahad Sangai* portrays Gorimaya's struggle in a society that marginalizes her, depicting her journey toward self-reliance. In Chinde village, subalterns endure constant hardships. For Ghyabring's family, Dashain brings no joy due to persistent poverty (14). One day, a soldier, Sainla (Gorimaya's cousin), offers Gorimaya work in his boss's house in the city (15). Subalterns are forced into such labor due to lack of education, skills, and financial stability, restricting their upward mobility.

Following her cousin Sainla's proposal, Gorimaya contemplates leaving for Kathmandu, recognizing her powerlessness in the village dominated by figures like Krishna (17). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak highlights the systemic silencing of subaltern women, emphasizing that their marginalization extends beyond simple

differentiation, requiring deeper critical inquiry as Jonathan Culler implies (*Subaltern* 295). The intersection of subalternity and femininity renders women like Gorimaya doubly oppressed, as patriarchal structures constrain their agency. Lacking the means to challenge societal norms, Gorimaya endures domestic violence from both her husband and in-laws, embodying the pervasive victimization of women within deeply entrenched patriarchal systems.

Seeking security and survival, Gorimaya agrees to work as a house servant in DSP Ale's home, resigning herself to a voiceless existence. Her cousin Sainla takes her to Ale's bungalow in Kathmandu, where she sits silently, haunted by her past and poverty (20). Mrs. Chandrakanta Ale instructs her: "Come, Gori. Bathe, change, and keep yourself clean. I will train you. Work hard—one dies of starvation, not labor. Don't be lazy or steal, and you may eat as much as you like" (21). Gorimaya's condition reflects how subalterns are judged by appearances rather than their struggles. In Kathmandu, DSP Ale's wife, Chandrakanta, welcomes Gorimaya and advises her to work hard and seek permission if she wants anything. As a domestic worker in their home, Gorimaya begins a new life under Chandrakanta's guidance. Pointing to a cactus flower, Chandrakanta shares that her husband named it after her, symbolizing her past struggles and resilience (27).

Parijat's novel highlights the suffering of women under patriarchy, portraying them as victims of gender-based violence. Mrs. Chandra Kanta, a resilient woman, endures hardship from a young age. Born in 1933 in eastern Nepal, she migrates to India, facing exploitation and isolation. At 21, she becomes a mother in Darjeeling, but the child's father, a strict police officer, refuses to marry her. These struggles shape her into a bold and shrewd survivor, navigating a world where destitute women are often

objectified. Constant threats and exploitation force her to become strong and resourceful (22).

Parijat's narrative continues as ChandraKanta tells Gorimaya, "You have not seen the world yet. I had already suffered a lot when I was your age. I was an unfortunate woman in the eyes of my husband" (27). In response, Gorimaya shares her own awful story, revealing every painful details of her past. After listening, ChandraKanta grumbles, "Why didn't you drag such a mischievous man to the police station and break his head into pieces with stones?" (33). Gorimaya, however, cannot bring herself to explain to ChandraKanta that informing the police would have made no difference because the police of the nation do not serve the destitute - they serve those in power. Gorimaya keeps this realization to herself, thinking, "Rowdies, conspirators and the police are all the same for poor people" (33). Through her narrative, Parijat highlights the challenges faced by women within a hegemonic power structure. She depicts the oppression and discrimination women endure, emphasizing the urgent need for social change and gender equality.

Thinking her past, Gorimaya feels just bad. Gorimaya also recalls her father lamenting the village's corruption, where the Pradhan Pancha, suspected of murder, collaborates with Krishne Karki, while the police remain silent (34). Gorimaya is heartbroken over the Ghising family's tragedy, given their close ties. When she encounters the Pradhan Pancha, she immediately senses his intentions from his lustful gaze and remark, "You white Bhoteni girl! So you have found a nice house to live in" (35). She boldly responds, "Not everyone is as wicked as you, Satashi Baje!" (35). The Pradhan Pancha arrogantly comments, "So you've pleased your master by living in his house there!" (35). Gorimaya retorts, "A poor girl has to work everywhere. There's no tradition of polygamy like in your family" (35). His anger grows, and he

insults her, saying, “You, vulgar girl! That’s why you got a lunatic husband!” (36). He continues, “Women are just toys for money. I could easily sleep with that low-born girl if I wanted” (36).

Gorimaya questions how the Pradhan Pancha can attack her reputation simply because she is poor, reflecting on her vulnerability as a subaltern (37). Parijat highlights how poverty and lack of skills force marginalized characters, like Gorimaya, into exploitation and oppression. Ranjit Guha’s analysis of elite and subaltern politics explains how subalterns often resist and assert their agency, even within movements led by elites (*Subaltern Studies 6*). Characters like Gorimaya, Ghyabring, and ChandraKanta face obstacles and societal noncooperation due to their marginalization. Gorimaya curses her fate, believing that the rich live carefree lives, while she is condemned to suffering (51). Parijat’s *Anido Pahad Sangai* portrays the journey of marginalized individuals from suffering to awareness, calling for change and justice in their lives.

Anido Pahad Sangai portrays the struggles of marginalized individuals against hegemonic power. Suwani, a Limbu student, moves to Kathmandu in 1976 to pursue higher education, insisting on living independently as an act of resistance (42). However, as a student leader, she faces hardships. One day, while walking in Chhetrapati, she encounters a group of young men making obscene remarks – “... to such a girl!” (39). She realizes that in a patriarchal society, men openly discuss and objectify women without consequence (40). Suwani endures such insults simply for being a beautiful woman, highlighting the normalized oppression women face. Suwani criticizes patriarchy for its hostility toward women, where biased gender roles enable male dominance and gender-based violence. As part of the subaltern class, she faces verbal and physical assault. Unable to tolerate the harassment, she slaps one of

the youths with her notebook, knocking him off balance (40). Her defiant act symbolizes resistance against societal norms that oppress women.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" explores how marginalized groups are silenced by power structures, making true resistance difficult. Spivak argues that these groups are often silenced by both colonial and postcolonial power dynamics. This silencing makes it difficult for the subaltern to resist and express their own experiences. She highlights that even when they attempt to speak, their voices are often misinterpreted by those in power. Consequently, true resistance and self-representation by the subaltern remain challenging. Even when they speak, their voices are often misinterpreted. Suwani's act of defiance against harassment is met with laughter and blame from bystanders, including women. Two women witnessing the scene, one comments, "The girls of today are such teases, going about in such manner, so who is to blame?" (40). Hearing such unsympathetic remarks from women themselves, Suwani becomes infuriated. Losing her temper, she moves over to confront them. Parijat narrates an incident where Suwani intervenes to stop a drunk man from brutally beating his wife, despite others fearing to interfere. The abused woman, however, pleads for her husband's forgiveness (43). Suwani's bold action highlights her unwavering fight against patriarchal oppression, emphasizing resistance as a tool for justice.

Spivak argues that the subaltern's voice is often unrecognized within hegemonic discourse, leading to the assertion that "the subaltern cannot speak" (308). Spivak emphasizes the importance of intellectual responsibility in mitigating epistemic violence and engaging ethically with subaltern voices, noting that subalternity is a position without identity (280-281). Suwani expresses her frustration to student leader M. R. She complains, "I suppose, boys will be boys, but even a woman standing

there labelled me as a coquette” (41). Trembling with anger, she refuses to live in a society dominated by ruffians, feeling humiliated and betrayed (43). Student leader M.R. encourages Suwani to remain strong, reminding her that struggles are inevitable in the fight for justice (44). He urges her not to let minor insults weaken her resolve, emphasizing resilience and perseverance. M. R. motivates suwani,

You are rational, and a lot of impediments have to be faced in life. You know it is no bed of roses for a man marching a head to achieve his goals. A person seeking the best way to live must struggle along through difficulties.

Becoming deflated by such minor events and shunning your duties, your high-spiritedness may become paralyzed, just because of such trifling things. Don't allow your principles to be tarnished by gloom. Emotion can be a weakness of human beings and never helps a person reach a correct decision. Don't avoid life - but learn to cope with its adversities. (45)

His words serve as a powerful agent, inspire Suwani to rise above adversity, symbolizing hope and resistance for the subaltern community. Through this, M. R. seeks to empower the subaltern community to unite in their fight for justice and challenge the systems that perpetuate their marginalization.

In *Anido Pahad Sangai*, Suwani, inspired by student leaders M.R. and Lal Bahadur, discusses a student unity movement against the Panchayat government with her friend Lalita. While Suwani follows Marxist ideals, Lalita believes philanthropy is the solution. Rejecting Suwani's proposal, Lalita argues that students should focus on education rather than politics, warning against dividing them with political agendas (60). Suwani defies Lalita's approach that students should only be concerned with educational issues. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her work "A Critique of postcolonial Reason", discusses the ways in which intellectuals can resist by engaging

critically with their own positionality and the systems of knowledge they inhabit.

Spivak writes, “Resistance, then, is not only a question of an external adversary but involves a critique of the self and the positionality of the intellectual” (33). Suwani argues with Lalita,

All right, so you think that students are just politicizing scarcity and inflation, just making it up, but I strongly protest. These things have become real problem for students, and I want to make more aware of their rights. The time has come to give everyone a lesson in national politics. Students need to play a pivotal role in all of it. (61)

Suwani asserts that students are educated and have the ability to communicate the subalterns’ struggles to a broader audience. Students can help the people by spreading their voices and fighting for their rights. Ranajit Guha’s work “Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India” delves deeply into the mechanisms and manifestations of collective resistance among the subaltern, particularly focusing on the pleasant uprisings against British colonial rule. Guha argues that the peasants’ resistance was not sporadic or isolated but rather a unified systematic opposition to colonial oppression. A critical element of this collective resistance was the shared consciousness of exploitation and injustice among the peasants. Guha points out that, “the consciousness of being exploited and oppressed unified the peasantry fueling their collective resistance against the colonial regime” (55). It means the peasants’ awareness of their exploitation under colonial rule fostered a collective identity and purpose, driving them to resist together. Parijat’s novel *Anido Pahad Sangai* contends with Guha’s idea. The novel vividly reflects the student movements against the Panchayat government in Nepal. The Panchayat system, established in 1960s by king Mahendra, was an autocratic political system that suppressed democratic freedoms

and marginalized many voices within Nepali society. Parijat, through her narrative captures the spirit and struggles of the student activists Lal Bahadur, Suwani, M. R., Pradeep and others who rose against this repressive system. Lal Bahadur and Suwani, both student leaders, with their guide M. R., get organized into student movement underground and open people's rebellion against the suppressive system. Lal Bahadur's craving for intellectual things has increased intensely after his release from jail in the students' movement of 1975 (2032 BS). He believes that everyone has the right to fight against the corruption and evils that is existed in the community (30). Lal Bahadur encourages Gorimaya to use her time wisely, urging her to learn to read and write instead of idly chatting with Sahebni (54). He offers to suggest schooling but advises self-learning at home due to her age (55). After this inspiration, Gorimaya begins her journey toward literacy.

In their article "Conceptualizing Resistance", Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner classify resistance as overt (visible and direct) (538) or covert (hidden and subtle) (540). In *Anido Pahad Sangai*, Suwani, Lal Bahadur, M.R., and Pradeep engage in covert resistance against the oppressive government, awaiting the right moment for open action. Parijat uses the execution of Pakistan's ex-president Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as a catalyst for student activism in Kathmandu. Intellectuals express outrage, condemning dictator General Zia-Ul-Haq and discussing human rights violations. Everyone is eager to listen to comments from foreign broadcasters (70). After hearing the news of Bhutto's execution M.R., Lal Bahadur, and Pradeep gather at Puspa Ratna's furniture shop on Naradevi, where Puspa Ratna, though not a student, supports their cause. He predicts inevitable revolts against injustice, lamenting the lack of political activism in Nepal (70). Puspa Ratna's remarks align with Spivak's idea that the subaltern struggles to speak and be heard (Spivak, 1988).

He criticizes the Panchayat government for silencing dissent through fear, making resistance dangerous. He laments, “This is a country of dead people who accept tyranny without complaints” (71), highlighting societal passivity for the past nineteen years. M.R. concludes, “Only awareness of struggle can bring change” (72), emphasizing the need for revitalized revolution. As M.R., Lal Bahadur, and Pradeep leave Puspa Ratna’s house late at night, their shared struggle reinforces Guha’s idea of collective resistance against oppression.

General Ali Bhutto’s execution sparks intensified student activism in Kathmandu against the Panchayat government, demanding democracy. Newspapers report clashes, arrests, and protests (74). In *Anido Pahad Sangai*, students organize meetings, distribute pamphlets, and display posters to rally support. They capture the attention of people everywhere (76). Their anonymous leaders refuse to surrender as their movement grows more aggressive. In response, police tighten surveillance, patrolling campuses and roads to suppress the movement. Parijat highlights the role of educated youth in spreading socialist ideas and resisting oppression. Student protests represent overt resistance, directly challenging power structures. A high-ranking officer, known for his brutality, reacts to the movement, saying, “At least twenty-five of them should be shot—then let their ideals survive. It seems that they are tired of life” (77). His statement intensifies the state’s use of violence to suppress the movement, reflecting Gramsci’s idea that hegemony is upheld through both ideological means and coercive force (80).

Parijat portrays Suwani as a leader in the student movement against the government. Amidst chants of “Down with the fascist Panchayat regime!” and “Long live student unity!” (79), she delivers a speech urging students to stay united and committed to their struggle until they achieve success (80). Suwani’s call for unity highlights the

power of collective resistance. As students deliver passionate speeches, the campus echoes with applause. The oppressed, burdened by inflation and poverty, see hope in the student movement. The revolt spills into the streets, expressing decades of frustration (80). The students' speeches and public reaction mark an effort by the subaltern to assert agency. Suwani and other student leaders act as organic intellectuals, as described by Gramsci, articulating the struggles of the oppressed (Gramsci, 5). By channeling discontent into organized resistance, they help sustain the movement for change.

Parijat portrays the police as loyal to the Panchayat regime, ready to suppress protests with violence. An officer's hostile remarks -The rotten bastards! How many are they? They are more rebellious, so what? The rotten bastards are only here to squander the money of their parents. We are in power – We have to disperse these people – shoot them, if necessary (81) - reflect the ruling class's reliance on coercion to maintain control. As Gramsci argues, power is upheld through both ideology and force, and the police's brutality exemplifies this oppressive strategy. The execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto fuels the student movement in Kathmandu against the Panchayat regime. Parijat highlights the escalating conflict as DSP Ale is killed during the landless movement, and Lal Bahadur becomes a martyr in the Patan uprising. These sacrifices reveal the government's brutal grip on power and the rebels' relentless fight for justice.

Parijat's narrative in *Anido Pahad Sangai* portrays the predicaments of women within a patriarchal society through the distressing experience of Suwani. Parijat vividly illustrates how women are often vulnerable to violence and exploitation in a patriarchal society. Suwani's assault by Prawesh Subba and his accomplices (184) is a grim reminder of how women can be targeted and violated simply due to their gender.

The attackers, driven by a sense of male entitlement and revenge for the insult and contempt (184), embody the toxic masculinity prevalent in patriarchal structures. Suwani's initial high spirits, great enthusiasm and courage in her heart for the revolution contrast sharply with the brutal reality she faces, underscoring the precariousness of women's safety. In the narrative, Suwani is described as “high-spirited” with “great enthusiasm and courage in her heart for the revolution” (182). This characterization starkly contrasts with her subsequent brutal assault, highlighting the volatility of a woman’s safety within a patriarchal context. The attackers’ motivation, particularly Prawesh Subba’s desire for revenge due to a perceived insult, reveals the toxic masculinity that fuels such violence. His masculinity, described as “challenged” by Suwani (184), illustrates how patriarchal societies often link male honor to control over women’s bodies. Suwani’s rape by a gang led by Prawesh Subba symbolizes the brutal enforcement of this patriarchal control. It is not just an act of violence but a deliberate attempt to demoralize the spirit and will of a woman who defies traditional gender roles. Moreover, the societal response to Suwani's assault reflects the pervasive victim-blaming culture. A government official’s comment, “If women here were to walk about exposing their bodies and alluring men, then men would never be able to control their passions (185),” highlights the deep-rooted patriarchal mindset that excuses male violence and holds women responsible for their victimization. This is a clear manifestation of the patriarchal ideology that seeks to control and subjugate women.

Parijat’s feminist voice is evident through Suwani’s resilience and the collective outrage of students. After Suwani’s assault, furious students clash with police, facing arrests for their protests (185). This resistance symbolizes a broader fight against systemic oppression. Despite her trauma, Suwani’s pursuit of justice, supported by her

peers, emphasizes the need for solidarity. Parijat critiques patriarchy by portraying both its brutality and the courage of those who resist it. M.R. visits Suwani in the hospital, urging her to remain steadfast, fight injustice, and not let oppression break her spirit, reinforcing the necessity of resilience in revolutionary struggle (188).

M. R.'s words to Suwani resonate with feminist ideals of empowerment and resistance, urging her to not be defined by the assault and to continue fighting against systemic injustices. His encouragement reflects ideological resistance against patriarchy, emphasizing the need to transform power structures. Suwani's experience exemplifies the silencing of marginalized voices, as discussed by Spivak in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and Guha's concept of subaltern agency. Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" discusses how the voices of marginalized individuals, particularly women, are often silenced within dominant discourses. She argues that the subaltern cannot speak within the structures of power that consistently silence and marginalize them (Spivak 271-313). Suwani's assault and the subsequent attempts to suppress the student protests exemplify this silencing. The narrative describes how "police surrounded the hospital" and "public meetings were not allowed" (185) as authorities sought to quell dissent and silence Suwani's story. However, Parijat also portrays the resistance of subaltern subjects. The student community's outrage and their efforts to seek justice for Suwani demonstrate the potential for collective action and resistance. This aligns with Guha's concept of subaltern agency, where marginalized groups assert their agency and resist oppression. In *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, Guha highlights how subaltern groups resist their oppressors through various forms of rebellion and insurgency. In Parijat's narrative, the students' determination to seek justice for Suwani and their clashes with the police reflect this spirit of resistance. In the novel Suwani's experience serves as a

microcosm of the broader struggles faced by women in a patriarchal society. The interplay of suppression and resistance in the text reflects the complexities of subaltern agency, as articulated by scholars like Spivak and Guha. Suwani's story, while tragic, is also a powerful call to action, emphasizing the need for solidarity and unwavering resolve in the fight against systemic injustice.

Parijat's narrative further offers a deeply felt depiction of the struggles faced by subalterns and their fight against oppression. After Lal Bahadur's death, Suwani adopts the name Sumati, decides to leave Kathmandu, and moves to a village of Sarlahi, dedicating herself to serving the poor. In the Terai-Madhesh region, she witnesses extreme poverty among marginalized groups like the Magar, Tamang, and Kami (194). Mothers with tuberculosis struggle to feed their babies, and the elderly suffer from starvation (196). Their voicelessness reflects Spivak's assertion that the subaltern cannot speak (Spivak, 271). Viewing their suffering through class and gender lenses, Sumati educates villagers about their rights, recognizing that they accept hardship as an inevitable part of life while the comforts of the wealthy seem like a distant dream (198).

The subalterns in Parijat's narrative face severe socio-economic and political repression, reflecting their marginalized status. The villagers live in extreme poverty and face brutal oppression from the state. State violence further exacerbates their plight, illustrated by a brutal attack on the village by the army: Three houses were already on fire when Sumati arrived at the orchard. Sunti's thatched hut was engulfed in bright red and blue flames. Women and children were screaming outside their homes, but there was not a single man in sight (205). Parijat further highlights the brutal attack on the village: A few days after the fire incident, Sunti and Jamuni's entire village was brutally attacked and terrorized. The unarmed dissident group had

sought refuge in the forest but was surrounded and relentlessly massacred by the army. Three innocent villagers were martyred. The soldiers burned the bodies of the martyrs, using the wood and foliage of the forest (206). This brutality enhances Ranajit Guha's concept of subalterns as victims of state power, where the ruling elite employs violence to maintain control (Guha 8). The wrongful arrest of villagers, such as Suntali's husband during the recent movement (197) exemplifies this repression. This aligns with Antonio Gramsci's idea that the state uses both coercion and consent to maintain its dominance, often resorting to violence when control is threatened (Gramsci 263).

Despite these severe challenges, the narrative emphasizes the subalterns' agency and resistance. Sumati tirelessly works to raise the consciousness of the village women, educating them on their rights and emphasizes the importance of unity in their struggle against patriarchal oppression and government injustice (197). Her efforts to raise political awareness and advocate for social welfare reflect Antonio Gramsci's idea of creating counter-hegemonic practices within civil society (Gramsci 333). Parijat narrates the event; "Oh no! My father is going to burn to death!" wails Suntali, her voice filled with anguish. She embraces her daughter tightly and lays down on the smooth, trodden earth, overwhelmed with grief. Sumati fears the worst. Suddenly, she dashes into the hut, running through the blazing fire before the terrified villagers. Moments later, she emerges, carrying a half-dead old man in her arms. The other villagers look on in amazement at her courageous and selfless act (205). Sumati's brave act of saving the old man from the fire symbolizes the subalterns' courage and solidarity. This act of defiance against the dangerous circumstances highlights the subalterns' ability to resist and challenge their oppression.

Parijat, being a leftist intellectual presents Sumati as spokesperson in her novel. Sumati's critique of romanticized womanhood and her efforts to empower village women illustrate the development of subaltern consciousness. Suwani observed that marriage posed a significant problem for many women, as their oppression merely shifted from one home to another. The meaning of marriage for the village women, living in destitution, was simply to do domestic chores, moving from one house to another to stay alive with a little food (198). Suwani grew increasingly critical of how women were and still are perceived in a dichotomy as either devi or witches. She found these images detached from reality, describing them as "illusions," "fictions," and "nonsense." She stressed the need for a "new and genuine definition of what a woman really is" (198). Through her actions and words, Suwani resisted the patriarchal mindset, challenging these entrenched stereotypes and advocating for a redefinition of women's roles and identities. Sumati urges village women to fight for their rights, highlighting the stark inequality between the rich and poor. She recalls a child's preventable death due to poverty, contrasting it with the wealthy who receive treatment abroad. While they live in abundance, the poor endure hunger. She emphasizes that even in developed nations, the poor receive social security, unlike in Nepal, where demands for fair wages are suppressed. Sumati calls for unity, urging them to resist exploitation and demand a welfare state (199-200). Sumati's speeches to the village women about their rights and the need for social reform highlight her conscious efforts to awaken their political awareness. Sumati's direct engagement with the subaltern people challenges Spivak's notion that subalterns require mediation to voice their concerns, demonstrating their capacity to articulate grievances and aspirations (Spivak 275).

The narrative also shows the subalterns' collective resistance. When government detectives enter the village, the people react with a blend of fear and defiance, understanding the state's intentions to suppress their movement (201). The villagers' vow to fight against the exploiters until their last breath signifies their deep-seated resistance and refusal to accept their subjugation (207). This echoes Guha's idea that subaltern insurgency is often a reaction to the failures and injustices imposed by the dominant classes (Guha 40). The subalterns' struggle is therefore not just a spontaneous revolt but a conscious and organized effort against their marginalized status, fueled by a deep understanding of the inequities they suffer. Parijat's portrayal of the village women's lives also highlights their resilience. Women like Suntali and Jamuni, despite their personal losses and hardships, show remarkable strength. Suntali, suffering from tuberculosis and dealing with the imprisonment of her husband, continues to fight for her survival and the wellbeing of her children (197). Jamuni, despite her own struggles, supports Sumati's mission and commits to the cause (202), demonstrating the subalterns' solidarity and collective agency. Parijat's *Anido Pahad Sangai* effectively mirrors the profound sufferings of subaltern characters under patriarchy and the government while presenting their remarkable agency and resistance. Through Sumati's transformative journey, the narrative emphasizes the resilience of the subalterns and their ability to challenge and disrupt oppressive power structures.

Chapter IV: Subaltern Consciousness in *Anido Pahad Sangai* and *Damini Bhir*

Society is typically divided into three socio-political classes: higher, middle, and lower. The high class controls and manipulates state politics and the economy, constructing narratives of power and reality to their advantage. Conversely, many communities within a nation, such as peasants, the working class, scheduled castes, and the poor, are marginalized and disadvantaged. Among these are the indigenous, Madheshi, Dalit, and women—socially excluded groups often silenced and unheard. These subordinate groups represent the Nepali subalterns. The selected novels, *Anido Pahad Sangai* and *Damini Bhir*, explore the experiences of women and men across high, middle, and lower classes, illustrating the pervasive class and gender discrimination within these strata. For Parijat and Rajan Mukarung, exploring the voices of the marginalized and excluded represents a profound quest toward personal discovery and restoration of cultural identity. Their writings delve into the narratives and struggles of those on the fringes of society, reflecting a deep-seated commitment to understanding and articulating the complexities of Nepali identity and societal structures.

In *Anido Pahad Sangai*, Parijat uses her experience as a woman in a patriarchal society to highlight the struggles of marginalized women. The novel focuses on their inner lives and shows how these women resist societal pressures, offering a deeper look at their emotional and psychological battles. Parijat's understanding of the social and political changes in Nepal in the 1960s shapes her portrayal of this resistance, especially from a gendered perspective. In *Damini Bhir*, Mukarung, as a member of the marginalized indigenous community, writes about the resistance of subaltern characters in both individual and collective ways. His focus is on how these characters fight to keep their culture, language, and traditions alive against outside pressures,

especially from the mainstream society. The novel deals with issues like land rights, cultural survival, and social justice, giving voice to the struggles of indigenous communities. Both writers' backgrounds—Parijat's as a woman and Mukarung's as an indigenous person—deeply influence how they depict the resistance of marginalized characters. Their own experiences make their representations more genuine, detailed, and empathetic.

In Nepal, the concept of subalterns encompasses a varied spectrum: those who are muted, unheard despite their efforts, and completely overlooked. The state plays a pivotal role in these dynamics, actively silencing some groups while neglecting others. Firstly, there are subalterns who are literally muted by state policies and structures. These individuals or communities are systematically denied a voice, often through legal or bureaucratic mechanisms that restrict their participation in decision-making processes or deny them access to essential resources and opportunities. The elderly widow of Chinde Village, Puspa Ratna's wife, the bedridden old man, Nayan Tara, Pradeep's wife from the village in *Anido Pahad Sangai*, along with Suke Damai, Deuhang, Suke's wife, Sante Darji, Harihang, Makana, Chame Damai, Radha Miss, Dhiten, and Dhiwang in *Damini Bhir*, are all unheard subalterns whose voices are ignored by the state's system. Secondly, there are subalterns who struggle to make their voices heard despite their best efforts. These groups attempt to assert their rights and raise awareness about their issues, but their calls for attention fall on deaf ears within the corridors of power. Their narratives and concerns remain marginalized and sidelined in broader societal and political discourses. Thirdly, certain subaltern communities simply go unnoticed by the state apparatus. Dalit, Madheshi and Janajati communities in the Nepali society serve as poignant examples. Despite their significant presence and contributions to Nepali society, they are consistently ignored

by governmental policies and development initiatives. This lack of recognition perpetuates their marginalization and exacerbates socio-economic disparities within these communities. Parijat's narrative about the lifestyle of the people in Terai-Madhesh and Rajan Mukarung's narrative about the lifestyle of indigenous people in Eastern hill region of Nepal is an example of this.

Parijat's novel *Anido Pahad Sangai* vividly portrays these dynamics through its characters. Gorimaya symbolizes the frustration of having a voice that remains unheard despite her assertiveness. Chandrakanta's struggle for recognition as a full-fledged citizen reflects broader systemic biases and exclusions faced by subaltern groups. Meanwhile, Suwani embodies the larger indigenous and subaltern narrative, highlighting the systematic marginalization and exploitation experienced by these communities. Beyond the main characters, supporting figures like Ghyabring, Lalita, Nayan Tara, Jamuni, and Suntali further illustrate how subalterns are systematically subordinated and exploited within the societal power structures. Their stories underscore the pervasive inequalities and injustices faced by marginalized communities in Nepal. The concept of Nepali subalterns encompasses a complex interplay of silencing, neglect, and marginalization by the society and the state at large. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for addressing systemic inequalities and fostering inclusive development and social justice initiatives across Nepal. Parijat and Rajan Mukarung, in their selected novels, strongly protest against exploitation, tyranny, and the suppression of the powerless, muted and excluded people. They advocate for the liberation of the subalterns and the relief of human suffering. Their writings depict intense conflict, class struggle, and vivid images of widespread inconsistency and perversion in Nepali society. Parijat's novel *Anido Pahad Sangai* centers around the student movement and the national referendum of 1979 in

Nepal. Likewise, Rajan Mukarung's novel *Damini Bhir* is based on the 10-year-long Maoist insurgency and its effects during and after the movement.

Parijat's *Anido Pahad Sangai* is a moving story that portrays the personal tragedies and hardships experienced by female characters such as Gorimaya, Chandrakanta, Suwani, Suntali, and Jamuni. Their lives are intricately connected and interwoven with the larger revolutionary struggles in Nepal during the late 2030s BS (1980s AD). The novel highlights the lives of these women, showing how they are connected through their relationships with other characters like Ghyabring, Bhisma Bahadur, Lal Bahadur, and M.R. These connections are further deepened as the students and labor movements gain widespread momentum. Suwani, one of the central characters, is portrayed as a passionate, outspoken feminist. She tirelessly advocates for the educational and social status of women. Suwani stands at the heart of the revolutionary activities, fighting for women's rights and equality. Her character represents strength and resilience, constantly pushing for change in a male-dominated society.

Behind the stories of protests and revolutions, there are quieter, more desperate stories of women like Chandrakanta and her domestic helper Gorimaya, along with Nayan Tara, Pradeep's wife, Suntali, and Jamuni. These women struggle to survive in a harsh and merciless world. They find solace in one another as they cope with the physical abuse and psychological trauma they endure. Their stories reflect the harsh realities faced by many women in the poor and working-class segments of society. The novel blends fiction with historical events, creating a vivid portrayal of life during this tumultuous period in Nepal. The characters' experiences feel incredibly real, capturing the complexities and struggles of the poor and working class during times of social and political upheaval. The novel provides a piercing look into their

lives, depicting not only their external battles but also their internal struggles and the emotional scars they carry. Overall, *Anido Pahad Sangai* offers a powerful and poignant exploration of the impact of revolutionary movements on individual lives, especially those of women. It shines a light on their resilience, their fight for survival, and their quest for dignity in the face of overwhelming adversity.

Simultaneously, *Damini Bhir* by Mukarung is an exploration of the social, political, and cultural dynamics within a rural village in Eastern Nepal, set against the backdrop of the 10-year Maoist insurgency. The novel intricately portrays the lives of the subaltern characters, highlighting their repression and resistance under a patriarchy and political domination. The characters' struggles reflect broader issues of identity and powerlessness within the mainstream state politics. Lachhi's life exemplifies the gender and caste-based repression in the village. As a woman, she faces the double burden of patriarchy and racial marginalization. Her struggles are emblematic of the broader plight of women in rural Nepal, where traditional gender roles and expectations severely limit their autonomy and opportunities. Dhoule Kanchho's experiences reflect economic and social repression. As a lower-class individual, his economic hardships are compounded by the social hierarchies that dictate his place in the village. His daily struggle for survival underscores the systemic inequalities that keep the subalterns in perpetual poverty. Kanchi Damini's character highlights the intersection of gender and social repression. She faces not only the societal constraints imposed by her gender but also the stigmatization and ostracism that come with being a part of the subaltern class. Her narrative sheds light on the compounded nature of oppression faced by women in marginalized communities. These characters collectively represent the various facets of patriarchy and political repression.

Despite the societal constraints, Lachhi's journey is one of subtle resistance. She challenges the traditional roles assigned to her by asserting her agency in small yet significant ways. Her resilience is a testament to the quiet forms of rebellion that women often employ to navigate and resist patriarchal oppression. Dhoule Kanchho, Som Kumar and Dugan's daily efforts to secure a livelihood for themselves can be seen as a form of resistance against economic repression. Their perseverance in the face of systemic obstacles is an act of defiance against the forces that seek to keep them marginalized. Characters like Nembang, Nabin, Rambha, Deuman, Sani Sundas, Namdeng, Maakum, Regan, Kanchhimaya, Birman, and Hangdima exemplify collective resistance against social and political repression. Their support to the Maoist insurgency, whether voluntary or coerced, represents a broader struggle for justice and equality. Through their participation, they challenge the mainstream state politics and assert their right to be heard and recognized.

The novel *Damini Bhir* serves as a powerful narrative that brings to the forefront the voices and struggles of the subalterns in rural Nepal. It not only depicts their repression but also celebrates their resilience and resistance. The Maoist insurgency provides a critical backdrop, highlighting how periods of political upheaval can both intensify and motivate the fight against oppression. Through its diverse collage of characters and their interwoven stories, *Damini Bhir* calls for a greater awareness and recognition of the subalterns' place in state politics. It underscores the importance of their agency in resisting suppression and striving for a more just and equitable society. The novel ultimately serves as a strong appeal for social change, urging readers to acknowledge and address the systemic injustices that continue to marginalize the subalterns.

Efforts by literary figures and grassroots movements like the Ralph Movement, Women's Movement for gender equality, Shrijanshil Arajakata Movement, Adivasi Janjati Movements, Dalit Movement, and Madhesi Movement have highlighted the systematic discrimination faced by marginalized communities and women in Nepal. Despite these efforts, the practical realization of diversity remains disappointing. This is because these movements are not uniform; they are fragmented by political ideologies and internal hierarchies. While there have been legal reforms and increased representation in recent years, Dalits, women, and indigenous groups still face deep-rooted societal prejudices and structural inequalities.

Nepalese literature has played a significant role in shedding light on these struggles. Writers like Parijat and Rajan Mukarung have become powerful voices against social exclusion. Parijat's work focused on gender inequality and societal oppression, critiquing the patriarchal and caste-based systems in Nepalese society. Similarly, Rajan Mukarung, a leading figure in contemporary Nepali literature and a supporter of the Janjati movement, advocates for the representation of marginalized groups. His work, alongside the contributions of earlier writers like Parijat, amplifies the voices of those historically silenced, underscoring the enduring need for justice and representation in Nepal's evolving political landscape. Both Parijat and Mukarung have used their writing to challenge the status-quo and push for a society rooted in equality, inclusion, and justice. Their works reflect the persistence of these issues and highlight the need for continued advocacy and inclusive policies to ensure that Nepal's marginalized communities are fully integrated into the political and social mainstream.

Borrowing ideas from major subaltern scholars, I believe that domination and othering are central to subaltern politics. In Nepal, indigenous people, Madhesi,

Dalit, and women have been oppressed and denied their identities throughout political history. Studying subaltern studies and historiography helps us understand how Nepali subalterns are portrayed in literature and politics. This research can make a significant contribution to future studies, despite the existing debates surrounding subaltern issues in South Asian studies. In the same manner, Parijat and Rajan Mukarung, through their powerful narratives, highlight the significant struggles faced by marginalized groups as they seek identity and self-determination. Their novels, *Anido Pahad Sangai* and *Damini Bhir*, serve as strong reminders of the ongoing fight for cultural preservation, freedom, and the right to self-expression in the face of systemic oppression.

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