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Absence of Dalit Women's Agency in Rajan Mukarung's *Damini Bhir*

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Abstract

This research paper aims to examine the absence of Dalit female characters' agency in Rajan Mukarung's Damini Bhir. The investigation of the absence of agency of Dalit female characters is important in order to understand the clear difference between the socio-cultural and economic status of women in general and Dalit women in the text. Fundamentally, the novel depicts the circumstances, psychology and practices of Nepali society during the ten years long Maoist insurgency in Nepal. The paper mainly analyses the social status, living condition, roles, and attitude that the author has assigned to the characters to understand the effect of lack of agency of Dalit female characters. Due to the lack of agency, Dalit women are unable to express their opinion and feelings. They are unable to act against the injustice they encounter. However, the ten years long maoist insurgency contributed to the empowerment of Dalit women to some extent. Also, it played a significant role in reducing untouchability to a very little extent. In comparison to non-Dalit women, Dalit women are doubly marginalized: on the basis of their caste and patriarchy.

Key words: Dalit, Subalterns, Caste, Representation, Discrimination.

Absence of Dalit Women's agency in RajanMukarung's *DaminiBhir*

This research examines the absence of agency of Dalit female characters in RajanMukarung's *DaminiBhir*. Basically, the novel depicts the circumstances, living conditions, psychology, and practices of Nepali society during the ten years long maoist insurgency in Nepal in unique and very practical manner. The novel won the MadanPuraskar in 2069 B.S. In *DaminiBhir*, Dalit female characters are shown to be the victims of rape by non-Dalit men and their infidelity. They are vulnerable so as to be always easily used, harassed, and oppressed by non-Dalit men. This shows that these characters do not resist because they don't have any agency. They are the objects for non-Dalit men to fulfil their sexual desire. During that time, there was feudal system which primarily affected Dalits. There are many instances where non-Dalit men physically abuse Dalit women. They do this act only with Dalit women as Dalit female characters are marginalized on the basis of their caste, patriarchy, and feudal system. There are other female characters that don't belong to Dalit community who face less oppression compared to Dalit women as they are victims of only patriarchy.

RajanMukarung's *DaminiBhir* is set in the rural hills of the eastern part of Nepal. The novel revolves around the social lives of characters that stay in the village of DaminiBhir. The story sets itself during the 10 year insurgency period of Nepal. The story revolves around the lives of different characters such as Lachhi, Kancho, KanchiDamini, Nembang, Birman, Hangdima etc. The author presents the present and past stories of different characters by weaving them in a simple but artistic plot. This research paper examines the ways in which Dalit female characters are represented in RajanMukarung's *DaminiBhir*. Fundamentally, the novel depicts the circumstances, psychology and practices of Nepali society during the ten years long Maoist insurgency in Nepal. This paper investigates the ways in which Dalit women are

compelled to tolerate sufferings and oppression due to lack of their agency. It examines why and how Dalit women lack agency and the consequences of it they encounter in their daily lives.

For instance, the title character Damini is a victim of rape, likewise another female Dalit character Lachhi has also been shown as a victim of rape who is betrayed by Chetan who belongs to a high caste. Nowhere in the novel, are Dalit women portrayed as an educated, intellectual, sober, well-disciplined, and well-mannered. They have all been shown to be victims of infidelity of non-Dalit men. They are portrayed as the most vulnerable being of society who is most of the time vulnerable to oppression by non-Dalit men. They have been targets of non-Dalit men as these characters lack agency and power. Other characters Deuki and Rambha also get pregnant by non-Dalit men. Deuki who is mother to Rambha gets pregnant by a man from high caste. Nowhere in the novel, Dalit women's oppression by Dalit men has been shown but only by non-Dalit men. It shows that absence of agency of Dalit women is the result of feudalism, their caste, and patriarchy. This makes them compelled to tolerate non-Dalit men's infidelity, harassment, and oppression. It shows that any non-Dalit men can do anything with Dalit women as they don't have any agency and power. Further, Kanchhi Damini, a mother to Lachhi has been represented as a drunkard. As the line suggests, "Kanchhi Damini arrived in the evening. She was quivering. Her breathe had a bad smell of drink. She cried out loud sitting in front of the hearth. Said to her both daughters, "I could not provide the happiness to you both my daughters. I failed"(37). Representing Kanchhi Damini as drunkard generalises Dalit women as drunkard, weak, and dirty. They don't have any agency to express their voice against the injustices and sufferings they encounter. They are voiceless and they cannot act against injustices.

Likewise, another character Padma, also called Rambha, a daughter to Deuki is ill-treated by her step mother whom her father marries after his first wife dies. She works in a restaurant at night and serves drink to men. Even Rambha gets pregnant by Namdeng who is a non-Dalit. This research primarily focuses on the representation of the Dalit female characters. Thus, the question that strikes my mind is why the novel shows the absence of agency of Dalit female characters. They are portrayed as voiceless, helpless, and identity-less. Throughout the novel, there are examples of victimization of Dalit female characters due to the lack of their agency:

'What happened?' Hangdima scolded, 'Tears in your eyes? You are a man. What have you tolerated that you have tears in your eyes? I cannot believe it'. Namdeng tried his best to hide his tears inside his eyes. It didn't stop, after all it is liquid. Tears rolled down his cheeks and fell down on the floor. Said, 'Yes, men have stone heart. We don't have stone heart. We don't have heart. We don't have feelings. We don't feel pain. We don't get hurt. Men don't cry. Isn't it? This is what you are trying to say?' (93)

Hangdima expresses strong patriarchal values deeply rooted in her mind as it is deeply rooted in Nepali society. She has to face the atrocity of patriarchal values. She believes that men must not cry. Men have no right to cry. Men have nothing to cry about. They don't tolerate any suffering in life. This shows that even men have to face negative effects of patriarchal society. They cannot even express their pain through tears as the patriarchal society expects them to be strong. The society believes that men must not cry. They don't have any outlet to express their pain. They are considered as heartless.

The research focuses on how Dalits, also known as the subalterns are marginalized in society in every sector. They are backward in terms of economic,

knowledge, status, living condition, culture, and many more social aspects. The research also focuses on writer's attitude towards Dalits and their social status. The overall aim of this research is to examine the instances where Dalit women characters have to face the effects of feudalism, casteism, and patriarchy to show women caste subalterns who are marginalized, oppressed, and suppressed. The objectives that have been identified of paramount importance in helping to achieve the aforementioned aim are: to identify the techniques the novelist has deployed to show prejudices against Dalit women characters who lack the agency, dissect each chapter into parts and examine the reasons and consequences of lack of agency of Dalit female characters, find out how each chapter supports the main argument of the research, examine critically the ways women caste subalterns are made voiceless, helpless, and identityless.

Self destructive actions of the subalterns are reflected in the text as Dalit male are shown to be drunkards and aggressive. Dalits are in first place the victims of tradition of caste system which results into them being without agency. Especially, Dalit females have to tolerate the atrocities of tradition, casteism, feudalism, and patriarchy in the contemporary society. They drink a lot without caring about their health. Women are commodified as part of the patriarchy, "In second photo, Rambha was playing with tide nearby the ocean beach. She is wearing bikini. Tight chest. Slim waist. Big hips. Grey hair. Wearing black goggles. She is the same person" (259). The words used to describe Rambha's appearance is quite vulgar and disrespectful. She is treated as a commodity. This is the effect of patriarchy. Rambha does not have any agency to speak against this as she is a women caste subaltern.

This research aims to show the absence of Dalit women's agency and its effects on Dalit women's daily life and caste subalterns in general. It also aims to

show that an outsider cannot represent true voice and identity of caste subalterns. Especially, in this context the writer is firstly a male and secondly a non-Dalit men. Hence, the true voice, identity, and actions of Dalit women are missing in the text as they lack the agency. Especially, the research aims to investigate the effects of absence of agency of Dalit women in their socio-economic and cultural status. Female characters except Dalit female characters at least have agency to speak up and to act whenever required. But, women caste subalterns completely lack the agency. They don't have capacity to speak and act.

The methodology I have used to meet the research aim is through the extensive study of relevant literature and review of relevant literature on same topic. The research paper is based on the analysis of various theories on representation and subaltern studies. This research paper primarily uses the concepts from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concepts of subalternity to examine in the text how caste subalterns (Dalits) are deprived of their voice for the sake of the interest of social hierarchy. Secondly, this paper also draws on the ideas from Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, a series of essays. Particularly, the paper uses the concepts from the chapter entitled "On the Margins of History, History of Subaltern Groups". In addition, it also brings the ideas from Stuart Hall's Theory of Representation to analyse how representation connects meaning and language to culture in the context of Dalit women's representation in the novel. Also, Hall's concept of representation helps this paper to pinpoint the binary created in the novel between Dalit and non-Dalit women in terms of their status, and roles in a society structured on grounds of caste system. The concept of representation has come to occupy a new and important place in the study of culture. Representation connects meaning and language to culture.

While reviews on Rajan Mukarung's *Damini Bhir* deal only with the socio-political

aspects of the society during Maoist insurgency in Nepal, this research paper scrutinizes ways in which Dalit women lack agency and its effects in their daily living condition. This research scrutinizes the absence of agency of Dalit women in the novel. Hence, this paper points out that missing perspective on the novel. In *DaminiBhir*, Dalit female characters are the victims of rape by non-Dalit men and their infidelity throughout the novel. But, they can't raise voice against it as they don't have any agency and power. This shows that Dalit women do not resist and easily get oppressed due to the absence of agency. They are represented as objects for non-Dalit men to fulfil their sexual desire. Throughout the novel, there is not a single instance where non-Dalit men dare to physically abuse non-Dalit women. They do this act only with Dalit women. Not much time has passed since the book was published, therefore a very few reviews have been written on *DaminiBhir*. The present reviews focus only on socio-political aspects of society during transitional phase. There is not a single review on the book till date that focuses on the plight of the Dalit female characters and absence of their agency. They seem to have been completely ignored by all reviewers and critics. The blog *Nepali Novel Lovers* writes:

This is his second novel as a socio-political fiction which is mainly written on the backdrop of underdeveloped village of Eastern Nepal where some of the ethnic and indigenous people unite and try to pressurize the capital, Kathmandu which is the center of political power, where their voices are heard once but fade away again without any fruitful achievement and those characters were compelled to go back to their village and accept the slow paced development. (6)

The above quote suggests that in the novel some of the ethnic and indigenous people unite to pressurize Kathmandu, the center of political power to make their voice

heard. They succeeded but only for short period of time. They don't have any fruitful achievements. Especially, Dalits had hope that their life will be easy now. But, sadly, it could not happen as they again had to live with the same political system as earlier.

Further, very few discussions and writings have come out about this novel. In previous reviews, the novel has been interpreted and discussed just as a novel about transitional phase and its impacts on the then communities and societies. It just tells about how that particular period helped in social transformation.

Sangram Tharu in *Mulyankan Mashik* writes, "In the novel, '*DaminiBhir*' is a symbol of socio-political regime". It does not bring about the issue of violence and oppression faced by the title character Damini, who is not given any formal name and has no voice and identity. Hence, I am particularly interested in this paper to examine the novel keeping at centre the absence of agency of Dalit female characters who are oppressed by non-Dalit men during transitional phase. The present paper makes a point of departure from previous research and articles on the novel. It shows the pathetic situation of caste subalterns who are defeated, muted, silenced, and powerless due to the lack of agency. The novel shows that the effect of civil war harms subaltern group more than non-subaltern group.

Rajan Mukarung's *DaminiBhir* begins with the historiography of Maoist revolution and impact of civil war in the contemporary society. In the first few paragraphs, there is a description of rural picture of the local villages of Dhankuta District of Eastern Nepal. The village was pin drop silent during the civil war as the army used to visit each house and select sons and daughters for taking them and use for war. The novel has portrayed the true geographical location of the subalterns in rural setting in Nepal. The geographical structure of subalterns is quite risky. The present research paper aspires to undertake the representation of the subaltern voice in

RajanMukarung's*DaminiBhir*.The paragraph below shows the class struggle:

Miss Radha arrived. Grey long hair. Black goggles. Black hand bag. Black shiningSaari with dark black blouse.Black sandal. She roamed around for a while. Lacchi offered stool to sit. Radhasat down being conscious of as if her clothes will be dirty with the dust from the stool. Keeping herself safe from the dirt. She asked Lachhi about her health. Lachhi sat beside her. Radha Miss caressed Lachhi's hair and face. (38)

The above quote clearly shows the class struggle between Dalit and non-Dalit women. The appearance and dressing pattern is completely opposite. Radha Miss, a so called upper caste woman has worn a clean, and stylish dress which looks expensive too.It is clear that she belongs to high class. She has a sound economic status. She keeps herself clean and is also quite conscious of maintaining her class.This is how the writer has shown the class struggle between Dalit and non-Dalit women.

This study examines whether Mukarung raises issues of subaltern or not. Mukarung exposes prejudice of the society to focus on the role of intellectual to make the subaltern people conscious. On top of all these, Mukarung shows caste subalterns who are marginalized and suppressed. However, the elite intellectual speaks for the right and existence of suppressed subalterns, which gives the glimpse of hope in hopelessness. A docile and obedient subaltern lady changes into revolutionary figure and silently speaks for equal right. In this way, to a very little extent, writer represents the voice of subaltern people.However, civil war also helped indeconstructinguntouchability:

Lachhi and Kanchhi Maya were forced to enter inside the home. They really worked hard. Actually, they were cook.Everyone ate food made by them. Nobody said anything. May be people were scared of gun. There must be

something big to break the tradition. This is what Kanxa thought at that time. Kanxa said, 'remember what Nabin did last year? Everyone was compelled to obey.' (48)

During Maoist insurgency, armed force used to visit every house of the village. They used to make the members of house cook meal for them. Lachhi, a so-called low caste woman involved in cooking. But, nobody said even a word. They could not reject the food made by her as there was armed police force standing with a gun. This shows how Maoist insurgency helped in deconstructing caste based discrimination. Of course it can be seen as an example of deconstruction of untouchability but it is temporary. This is how the novel shows instances of construction and deconstruction of caste hierarchy along with the absence of Dalit female characters' agency.

DaminiBhir is Madan Puraskar winner Nepali Novel by Rajan Mukarung. This is his second novel as a socio-political fiction which is mainly written on the backdrop of underdeveloped village of Eastern Nepal where some of the ethnic and indigenous people unite and try to pressurize the capital, Kathmandu which is the center of political power, where their voices are heard once but fade away again without any fruitful achievement and those characters were compelled to go back to their village and accept the slow paced development. Most of the characters in this fiction look real and the way Mukarung has written makes us easy to understand but it leaves some serious meaning at the same time. *DaminiBhir* is taken as the literary document of post Maoist War in Nepal where all of the suppressed groups tried to get their rights and the mainstream power always tried to end in consensus, so the transition phase has been presented in detail. The writer has justified the title of the novel through the quote, "During the night, a bird cries on the cliff. The children in the village are fearful of this noise. Various types of sad and nostalgic sound come out

from that cliff during the night. Villagers say that the soul of Damini cries out on the same cliff"(15). This means that the soul of Damini is not happy and satisfied. She wants to say something. She wants to express her grief but she is not heard. She was unable to express her grief when she was alive. And, now her soul tries to express its grief by crying out loud during the night on the cliff. This quote clearly says that subalterns are voiceless and they have no any agency to express their voice. There is an instance which shows the derogatory status-quo about Dalit women as the line suggests, Kaji thought Chhetrini is like Damini. Kaji says, "You are beautiful like a Bahuni"(16). This shows that the Nepali society has set a derogatory status-quo about the appearance of Dalit women. It is believed that Dalit women are not beautiful. And if any Dalit woman is found to be beautiful, she is not considered as Dalit. She is considered as a woman of high caste or non-Dalit. The following paragraph shows patriarchal values prevailing in Nepali society:

I think you don't speak, do you? Sister put on plastic gloves and brought some stuffs in a plastic plate. Then she took a long breathe. She said, 'Men are always like this. Quite difficult. First, they roam around you and sucks all your juice like a bird. Then they run away. And, it is always women who face the consequences. (41)

There is an expression of unhappiness, oppression, suppression and dissatisfaction about being marginalized as women in society. The Nepali society has deeply rooted patriarchal beliefs and values. Men are always free to do whatever they want to do in their life. They treat women as material. They treat women as public property.

Whenever they want to use women they use, and whenever they get tired of them, they abandon them. They don't care about consequences. Only women have to face the consequences. Lachhi gets pregnant by a non-Dalit men. He betrays her. Now, he

has run away. Lachhi is the one who has to face pain, disrespect, and social stigma of the society. Male characters are shown as carefree who don't care about anything in life. They just focus on how to impress female and how to convince women for physical pleasure. They damn care about women after they fulfil their wish. Women are shown as always and easily available being in Nepali society.

Similarly, the novel also shows the extremely poor economic status of Dalits as the character Suke is in trap of loan that he has taken from kaji, a higher caste man who is extremely rich and has a higher status in the village. Suke leaves home the night before Kaji comes his home to take money from him. Suke gives up and leaves home leaving his wife Damini alone in the house. Next morning, Kaji comes and tries to console Damini who cries out of fear. He touches Damini everywhere and physically abuses her. But, she does not even dare to make a noise. She is completely silenced. She is muted. And, she is completely defeated. This is where the novel shows powerless and voiceless nature of the subaltern group in Nepali society. Kaji consoles Damini who is crying and says, "Don't cry, I will wait for one more month to take the loan money" (17). This line explains the idea of hegemony. He shows sympathy and pity by doing this. On surface level, it looks like he is quite sad about her pathetic situation and supports her but in reality he is dominating her in emotional way. He presents himself as superior. He is a Chhetri, a so-high caste man. Lachhi is the victim of casteism, feudalism, and patriarchy.

Kaji finally rapes her but nobody listens to her noise. She is completely silenced. She lacks agency to express her voice against this. Afterward, she commits suicide on the same night by jumping down from the cliff. This cliff named as 'DaminiBhir' in the memory of Damini. The land of Dalit and non-Dalit has been compared to show the structure of their land. The location and land of Dalit is on cliff

which is geographically challenged but land of non-Dalit is located in quite easily accessible area. This shows how Dalits are discriminated everywhere and in all sectors. Dalit female characters are presented as nameless such as 'Kanchhi Damini' and 'Sani'. They lack identity. They are represented as voiceless, nameless, and identityless. They don't have their own separate identity as they don't have agency.

A subaltern study is of someone with a low ranking in a social, political, or other hierarchy. It can also mean someone who has been marginalized or oppressed. The word 'subaltern' usually meant a junior army officer in the vocabulary of Indians till the 1980s. At best the meaning was extended to the alternate or subordinates. Then, Guha and a team of scholars linked with him presented their series of academic essays. These essays came out in book-length volumes, virtually each year between 1982 and 1984 and then with a reduced frequency which were eagerly awaited by younger scholars in social sciences. The volumes were entitled as Subaltern Studies. Reading through the volumes one can make some sense of what the subaltern perspective stands for, what kind of research falls within the ambit of subaltern studies and what is out of it, yet, to provide a hard definition for it is impossible even after two decades of this perspective coming into existence it retains an inchoate quality. There is a clear instance in the novel where we can understand that subalterns cannot speak and hence, they are voiceless:

People in society started back biting about Lachhi. She was extremely angry to know all this. But, she could not do anything. She is helpless. Only alternative she had, was to be quite. Sometimes she thought of committing suicide.

Sometimes she thought it would have been better if she had aborted the baby.

(43)

Women, especially Dalit women who are also subalterns, can't speak. They are

indecisive. Lachhi gets to know about all the bad words and disrespectful words people use for her. This makes her extremely angry. But, she is helpless. She cannot do anything. She is compelled to tolerate all this. She cannot speak even a single word to revolt. She is a silenced subaltern. She is voiceless. She lacks agency.

Furthermore, caste based discrimination Dalit women face is clear as the line suggests, "Oh my god !oh my Lord Shiva! RatmateJethi threw away her Doko. Turned the gagari upside down and threw water. Cleaned gagri with titepati leaf. Pushed Lachhi back and said, 'Just go away!'"(48). Dalit women are suppressed and discriminated in two ways: First as Dalit, and second, as women. They are doubly victimised in Nepali society. Dalit women faces many types of discriminations. They are oppressed by men on the basis of patriarchal values. Again, they are oppressed and suppressed by non-Dalit women on the basis of their caste. The following paragraph shows the Subalterns belief and hope in God:

'AyaaniAma!' She felt a pain in her belly. Her vision got blurred. 'What happenedLachhi?' KanchhiDamini arrived hastily. Provided support to Lachhi. Hugged her tightly. 'Ama' started to feel more pain. Head got hot. She was sweating all over her body. Lachhi could not tolerate the extreme pain. She said, 'I am dying, Mom!' 'Don't say it. I am with you', KanchhiDamini turned towards east and did Namaskar. She prayed to God, 'Oh my Sun Lord, please provide her energy to tolerate this extreme pain!' (45)

The caste subalterns have huge belief in God as they think that they are helpless and God is the only one who will save them. This shows the example of fatalism. God is the last hope for them. They do not have courage to speak up and raise voice against the suppression and discrimination. They have accepted the fact that they are meant to tolerate this pain . They believe that this is the reality of their life. They cannot change

the situation. All they can do is to pray to god to provide them the energy to tolerate the extreme pain. He has shown the social strata of Nepal.

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, also known as Babasaheb Ambedkar, was an Indian jurist, economist, politician and social reformer, who inspired the Dalit Buddhist movement and campaigned against social discrimination towards the untouchables (Dalits). B.R. Ambedkar's passion for the abolition of untouchability and the eradication of caste is as relevant today as it was 75 years ago. He wrote *The Annihilation of Caste* for the 1936 meeting of a group of liberal Hindu caste-reformers in Lahore. After reviewing the speech, conference organizers revoked Ambedkar's invitation. He then self-published the work, which became an immediate classic. The caste subalterns have a false consciousness about their being and identity as the line suggests, "Unlucky people always have suffering..." Lachhi stopped. She could not speak even a word. Tears rolled down her cheeks. She said, 'I am unlucky because I was born in Damai's home. Became untouchable'(49). This is status-quo ideology of caste subalterns. They believe that they are unlucky people. All they can do is cry and become silent. They regret for being born as subalterns like Lachhi believes that she is most unlucky for being born at Damai's home. She regrets for being untouchable.

Among the numerous writings and speeches of Ambedkar that run into thousands of pages, *The Annihilation of Caste* is indeed his magnum opus. Judged by any criterion such as content, logic, argument, language, diction, exposition, urge and, above all, the force, it is a manifesto of social emancipation, and occupies a place similar to what *The Communist Manifesto* once did in the world communist movement. Since the book is polemical in nature, Ambedkar did not elaborate much on the agonies, indignities, humiliation and overall sufferings of the Shudras, and

particularly the untouchables. He only gave illustrations of how they were deprived of education and freedom of occupation and were subjected to stigmatised manual labour, all resulting in their virtual economic slavery, how they were segregated and deprived of basic rights such as drinking water even from public wells, and above all how they were made victims of social persecutions.

Most importantly, according to Ambedkar, caste destroyed the concept of ethics and morality. To quote him: The effect of caste on the ethics of Hindus is simply deplorable. Caste has killed public spirit. Caste has destroyed the sense of public charity. Caste has made public opinion impossible. A Hindu's public is his caste. His responsibility is to his caste. His loyalty is restricted only to his caste. Virtue has become caste-ridden, and morality has become caste-bound. Ambedkar ultimately suggested that inter-caste marriage is the only remedy to destroy caste. In *The Annihilation of Caste*, Ambedkar's critique of the Hindu social order was so strong that Mahatma Gandhi, in *Harijan*, described Ambedkar as a challenge to Hinduism. Ambedkar replied to Gandhi in his usual uncompromising manner.

Ambedkar did not spare the socialists or the communists either. He vehemently attacked the communists for their doctrinaire approach to caste in treating it as the superstructure and argued that unless they dealt with caste as a basic structural problem, no worthwhile social change, let alone a socialist revolution, was possible. From the beginning Ambedkar was convinced that political empowerment was key to the socio-economic development of the untouchables. Ambedkar thought the abolition of untouchability and the eradication of caste would make India an emotionally strong and unified country. His thought and passion are as relevant today as they were 75 years ago. Ambedkar suggested inter-caste marriage as the remedy to destroy caste. Today, marriages are preferred not only within castes, but also within

sub-castes. "Don't shout, you bastard!" Paruma took out dry leaf. Said, 'Maili is a woman who has tolerated a lot of sufferings. It is a woman's heart. It will melt. It loves again and again'(118). This has generalised women as emotional and weak being. They have a very kind and soft heart. A woman's heart is forever ready to pour love. Women have been represented as a fragile being. Another instance of representing women as emotionally weak is when Maila Dewale says, "There is always cry and tears wherever there are women..." (200). Women are always considered as synonyms of tears. Maila Dewale generalises women as fragile and weak being who always cry and always have tears in their eyes. This thought motivates men to oppress women more. At the same time Lachhi is a strong lady as the following paragraph suggests:

Don't worry Kanchha, whatever you think will not happen" Lachhi was quite confident. Maili was combing her hair at that time. She was trying to set her messy hair. May be her heart was also free. She was watching Kanchha with eyes full of love. She almost said-I am yours. But, said something different, "I have not given up for quite long years. I didn't run away from society. I kept standing in my place. I did quite good in life. How can I give up now?(242)

Lachhi has tolerated lots of sufferings in life as Dalit woman who gets pregnant by a non-Dalit man. He deceived her and ran away. But, this made her stronger. She alone faced the consequences of being pregnant. She alone gave birth to her child without father. She raised the child alone. She alone tolerated the harsh words said by people in society. This shows how a woman has to face various types of suffering just because they are woman.

The research paper mainly scrutinizes different angles of suffering of Dalit women. They are discriminated, oppressed, and suppressed in on the basis of

patriarchal values, their caste, and for being just a woman. Although Dalit female characters are victims of infidelity, rape, caste-based discrimination, and poverty, they are quite. They cannot speak even a word against the atrocity they face in life. "I lived without Chetan. I can easily live without him. The person who loved my body but not my caste has lost today. I am happy with this..."(243). This shows that non-Dalit men use Dalit women just for physical pleasure. They love their body only. They hate their caste. They consider them as untouchables except when they want to make physical relationship with them. People think that caste subalterns are not meant to be happy, "Our ancestors say untouchables should not dance"(82). They cannot be engaged in entertainment and any types of fun activities. They have no right to be happy. This is how caste subalterns are discriminated.

Stuart Hall's Representation theory is that there is not a true representation of people or events in a text, but there are lots of ways these can be represented. So, producers try to 'fix' a meaning (or way of understanding) people or events in their texts. Representation is not about whether the media reflects or distorts reality, as this implies that there can be one 'true' meaning, but the many meanings a representation can generate. Meaning is constituted by representation, by what is present, what is absent, and what is different. Thus, meaning can be contested. This theory applies in the novel as the representation of Dalit women is distorted in the text. All Dalit female characters have been represented as victims. They are weak, fragile, and easily available for non-Dalit men. But, in reality it is not so. Not all Dalit women are victims and weak. There are Dalit women out there who are educated, wise, intellectual, brave, strong, opinionated, and rebellious. Therefore, there is not true representation of Dalit women in the novel. Rambh is muted, silenced, and beaten by Namdeng. This is the plight of subalterns. This is the plight of women:

Maybeit was an announcement of a horrible accident. It happened. Rambha did not utter even a word. Rambha cried out. She did not produce even a sound when she cried. She put on make on her face. Wore clothes. She walked straight away, where, god knows? Namdeng did not even stop her. Male ego did not let him do that. His Pride did not let him do that. (73)

Women belong to subaltern group in society as they are marginalized, discriminated, and silenced as GayatriChakravartiSpivak argues, "Subaltern cannot speak".

Similarly, women cannot speak. They are forced to become voiceless. They always fail to raise their voice against any type of oppression and brutality. Rambha is beaten by Namdeng. He also verbally abuses Rambha. She tries her best to hide her scar and pain as she put on makeup on her face. Rambha is the victim of casteism and patriarchy.

A representation implicates the audience in creating its meaning. Power – through ideology or by stereotyping – tries to fix the meaning of a representation in a ‘preferred meaning’. To create deliberate anti-stereotypes is still to attempt to fix the meaning (albeit in a different way). A more effective strategy is to go inside the stereotype and open it up from within, to deconstruct the work of representation. Any time a producer of a text tries to ‘fix’ a meaning of a person or event – this will usually reveal viewpoints and bias (political or otherwise) – usually newspapers attempt to demonise groups of people. However, anti-stereotypical representations also try to fix meanings too.

Subaltern Studies is a series of publications in Indian history that was begun under the general editorship of RanajitGuha in the early 1980s. Its explicit aim was to write the subaltern classes into the history of nationalism and the nation and to combat all elitist biases in the writing of history. These original intellectual ambitions were

political; but they did not necessarily come from the lives of the subaltern classes themselves. Looking back, however, there is a problem of "subaltern pasts" dogging the enterprise of Subaltern Studies from the very outset: indeed it is arguable that what differentiates the Subaltern Studies project from the older tradition of "history from below" is the self-critical awareness of this problem in the writings of the historians associated with this group. The declared aim of Subaltern Studies was to produce historical analyses in which the subaltern groups were viewed as the subjects of history. Dr. Tara Lal Shrestha, in his book *Shakti Shrestara Subaltern* argues that subaltern characters can only speak freely through their oral folk traditions and oral literatures, and that most mainstream culture and literatures involuntarily de-centralise and stifle their voice. Shrestha argues that the privileged subject should write about marginal ones regardless of gender, class, and caste categories.

Shrestha also argues that if subalterns can't speak then someone ought to speak for them. Especially in a country like ours, the majority of women—symbolically if not economically—are marginal and subaltern. And despite their political awareness, most men and women believe that women's issues are of concern only to women, just as how many believe that the concerns of the subaltern need not bother those who are not. That it is possible to have a stronger impact on society when men address women's issues, for after all, society is governed by men, is a possibility overlooked. This is perpetuated by female academics and activists too, who criticise men taking illegitimate jumps into unknown terrains when speaking about women. May be such worries exist because of the stereotypical gender representations in men's writings. But these biases exist in the writings of women as well, as being conditioned into the patriarchy; they produce texts that are not too different.

Subaltern as a concept is related to issues of domination and power, democracy and

citizenship, resistance and transformation. DipeshChakravarty argues:

Subalternity is a position without identity, a position “where social lines of mobility, being elsewhere, do not permit the formation of a recognizable basis of action.” The concept originally is used from a strong political perspective against subordination, to understand the mechanisms of subordination better, rewrite history so that subaltern groups are seen to be part of it, and contribute to the development of strategies to further a postsubaltern society or at least to outline the conditions under which subaltern studies can avoid a too strong or naive use of them by hegemonic powers. Subaltern does not have a voice. (93)

Indeed, technically, once a subaltern has a voice, they are no longer the subaltern. They become other. One example in the history is the colonial example. In the British colonization of South Asia, or India those who are othered by both the British and the Indian elites are the subalterns. Those in the margin are further marginalized towards invisibility. Groups like girl, women, the hijras, third gender, untouchables are pushed further into the margin by colonialism. Part of the problem to attempting to find the voice of the subaltern is that may be its impossible to really communicate between the subaltern and rescuers.

The History of the Subaltern is always the records of oppression and exploitation. It may be one of the most unfortunate factors that we have still not succeeded in bringing them towards the main stream even though there are a lot of efforts for that. The book 'Selected Subaltern Studies' penned by Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak throws light on the historical aspects of the subaltern studies right from its origin and development. The very word Subaltern has got a lot of significances and the writers have made an attempt to trace the reasons and causes for their plight. For Gramsci, the ruling class-individuals in positions of power and

influence, use hegemonic ideas to gain domination over the subjugated classes.

Consent and coercive force are interrelated. Gramsci argued that, although it may not seem like the ruling class is using force to maintain the dominance; nevertheless force underwrites the appearance of consent. Gramsci argues that because of the experiences and conditions under which subjugated classes struggle, this tension may push subjugated classes into struggle against ruling class ideas. To represent something is to describe or depict it, to call it up in the mind by description or portrayal or imagination; to place a likeness of it before us in our mind or in the senses. To represent also means to symbolize, stand for, to be a specimen of, or to substitute for. All sorts of objects, people and events are correlated with a set of concepts or mental representation which we carry around in our heads.

Subaltern Studies emerged around 1982 as a series of journal articles published by Oxford University Press in India. The notion of the 'subaltern' was first referred to by the Italian Marxist, political activist Antonio Gramsci in his article "Notes on Italian History" which appear later on as part of his most widely known book "Prison Notebooks" written between 1929 to 1935. The subaltern classes refer fundamentally in Gramsci's work to any "low rank person or group of people in a particular society in a domination of ruling class that denies them the rights of the participation in the making of social history and culture as active individuals of the same nation. According to Ranjit Guha, Subalterns are not the passive or subject of history rather they are makers of history. Subaltern historiography treats people as autonomous who are not dependent on elite. A group of Indian scholars trained in the west wanted to reclaim their history. Its main goal was to retake history for the under classes, for the voices that had not been heard previously. Scholars of the subaltern hoped to break away from histories of the elites and the Eurocentric bias of current

imperial history. In the main, he wrote against the "Cambridge School" which seemed to uphold the colonial legacy, it was elite-centered. Instead, they focused on subaltern in terms of class, caste, gender, race, language and culture. They espoused the idea that there may have been political dominance, but that this was not hegemonic. The primary leader was Ranajit Guha who had written works on peasant uprisings in India. Another of the leading scholars of subaltern studies is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. In the text "can the subaltern speak" she tries to overthrow the binary opposition between subject and object, self and other, Occident and Orient, center and marginal and the majority and minority. She introduces the question of gender and sexual difference in the work.

She draws on a number of theoretical positions in her analysis of Indian history: deconstruction, Marxism, feminism etc. She was highly critical of current histories of India that were told from the vantage point of the colonizers and presented a story of the colony via the British administrators (159). What she and other historians (including Ranajit Guha) wanted was to reclaim their history, to give voice to the subjected peoples. Any other history merely reconstructs imperialist hegemony and does not give voice to the people who resisted those who supported, those who experienced colonial incursion. According to the Subaltern Studies group, this history is designed to be a "contribution made by people on their own, that it, independently of the élite" (160). Regarding to the concept of subalternity, David Arnold makes the following commentary. The term subaltern defines and describes the man, the woman, and the social group who is socially, politically, and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure. In describing history told from below, the term subaltern derived from the cultural hegemony work of Antonio Gramsci which identified the social groups who are excluded from a society's established structures for political

representation, the means by which people have a voice in their society. (12)

Regarding this content Arnold explains about the context of subaltern. Subaltern denotes the colonized people of South Asia. It explains the new concept of marginal people who are suppressed in society. This concept already had been explained in Marxist historians as a colonial history from the perspective of the proletariat.

Similarly Dipesh Chakravarty is an eminent theorist of India. He explains the concept of the core content of the history of oppression. Those whose voices are not heard should be enabled so that they begin to ask for their self-esteem and recognition. Without recognition and identity how can the subaltern feel freedom in their life? In most of the cases depressed class people face their problems from the higher class society. In Chakravarty's points of view:

Subaltern is not just a classy word for oppressed, for [the] other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie. In post-colonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern – a space of difference. Now, who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed it's not subalterns. Many people want to claim subalternity. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being a discriminated-against minority on the university campus. They don't need the word subaltern. (30)

Chakravathy, in his book, *Subaltern History as Reflection*, argues that the concept of subaltern is not a classy word for the oppressed class because all are the members of living being in the world. In that case we can say that everything is limited in the world. The working class is oppressed; not subaltern. Subalterns are those who are backward and dominated class of the community.

Similarly, a postcolonial thinker Spivak also advocates on the issue of women suppression where voiceless has been silenced by the male dominated society. Spivak in her essay *Can Subaltern Speak?*, argues, "An object of colonial historiography and as a subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as a female is even more deeply in shadow (287). In *Can Subaltern Speak*, Spivak employed a deconstructionist tactic which reads the objects offer criticism against themselves. She introduces the question of gender and sexual difference in the work. Subaltern according to Spivak is those who belong to third world countries. It is impossible for them to speak up as they are divided by gender, class, caste, region, religion and other narratives.

Spivak criticizes Foucault and Deleuze for committing 'epistemic violence' - that is projecting Eurocentric knowledge on to the third world countries. She is of the view that Western Academic thinking is produced in order to support their economic interests. Thus the knowledge is like any other commodity that is exported from Europe to third world countries. Knowledge is never innocent. It expresses the interest of its producer. This westernized knowledge tends to construct our identities and for the third world people, Europe becomes the ideal. These divisions do not allow them to stand up in unity. Her contribution with this essay is to politicize Derridian Deconstruction in order to elaborate a method for emancipator readings and cultural interventions. Subaltern refers to the study of the social groups excluded from dominant power structure. She also presents differences based on class, caste, age, gender and any other way. Spivak tells us about the gaps between subaltern and ruling class. She focused on the subject and object, majority and minority.

According to Spivak, those who belonged to third world country cannot speak

for themselves because they are repressed. Spivak tried to challenge the legacy of colonialism. She refused the idea which shows that the western world is more civilized and superior. She talks about subaltern and their place in the society because they are also active part of the society. The first part of the essay presents the ethical problems of investigating a different culture based on "universal" concepts and frameworks. The basic claim and opening statement of the essay is that western academic thinking is produced in order to support western economical interests. Spivak holds that knowledge is never innocent and that it expresses the interests of its producers. For Spivak, knowledge is like any other commodity that is exported from the west to the third world for financial and other types of gain. Spivak points to the fact that research is in a way always colonial, in defining the "Other", the "over there" subject as the object of study and as something that knowledge should be extracted from and brought back "here". When Spivak examines the validity of the western representation of the other, she proposes that the discursive institutions which regulate writing about the other are shut off to post colonial or feminist scrutiny. Spivak is hardly impressed with western efforts to speak for the other or try to "present his own voice". She believes that the west is obsessed with preserving itself as subject, and that any discourse is eventually about the discoursing agents themselves. Spivak is opposed to the western attempt to situate itself as investigating subject that is opposed to the investigated non-western object. Spivak's answer to "Can the Subaltern Speak" is no, they cannot, not when the western academic field is unable to relate to the other with anything other than its own paradigm. Spivak argues that there are two problems in writing the subaltern: a logocentric assumption of cultural solidarity among a heterogeneous people, a dependence on western intellectuals to "speak for" the subaltern condition-not allowing subalterns to speak

for themselves. She analyses the PoMo effects to politicise Derridean deconstruction with aim of elaborating a technique for emancipator readings and cultural involvements.

The subaltern studies have immense possibility of projecting, constructing and analyzing the people's lives, institutions, problems, movements, values and processes of their formation, structuralization and restructuring at local and regional levels. The meanings thus need to view from Marxist perspective and from Indian historiographical and culturological perspectives. In fact, at theoretical and ideological levels, it can provide the basis for explanation of social existence of Indian people and the way people managed their lives. The Indian culturological perspectives constructed at ideological, theoretical and empirical levels in terms of continuity and change through analysis of classical texts and folk-rural commonality of existence. The relationship between the two provides significant framework to understand the Indian social, cultural and personality systems, at local micro level and trans-regional macro level. It further provides a scheme to relate past with present, empirical with ideological, segmental with pluralism and mundane with transcendental. (139)

The main characters are from the Dalit community who are represented in the book and they are subaltern characters in the Subaltern society. In every sector of the society, Dalit become victims of difficulties and they are under hegemony of the higher class ideologies. The concept of the subalterns is throughout the book in which Dalits were being exploited, dominated and marginalized, discriminated and so on. They have been subalternized often in their own society. Our society defines the Sovereignty but the condition of the people does not have equality in all levels of the society in the country. Guha's quest for a history in which the subaltern was "the maker of his own destiny" brought into focus the question of the relationship between

texts and power. Historical archives are usually collections of documents, texts of various kinds. Historians of peasants and other subaltern social groups have long emphasized the fact that peasants do not leave their own documents. Historians concerned with recuperating peasant “experience” in history have often turned to the resources of other disciplines for help: anthropology, demography, sociology, archaeology, human geography, etc. To speak, the subaltern must be considered not just from the lens of postcolonial theory, but from the lens of feminist theory as it intersects with pos-colonialism.

In the text, Dalit women have been presented with a derogatory status-quo. Kaji (a high caste man), in the second paragraph of the initial chapter demeans Damini (a Dalit lead character) by saying that she is as beautiful as ‘Bahuni’ (so-called upper caste women) (1). This gives the impression that Dalit women are perceived as ugly in Nepalese society. This shows the judgemental attitude of upper caste people towards lower caste women. Also, this shows the rude behaviour of upper caste men towards lower caste women. The pathetic situation of caste subalterns is clearly visible in this context. Kaji is rich, and SukeDamai, Damini’s husband is poor. He has taken loan from Kaji but he couldn’t pay back the loan on time. This is the effect of feudal system. Hence, SukeDamai left home leaving Damini alone in that house. And, this is when Kaji gets opportunity to rape Damini when she is alone at home. She can’t tolerate the pain and she decides to kill herself as she thinks she now lost her dignity. Damini jumped down from a hill (Bhir in Nepali) and that hill in present is called ‘DaminiBhir’ which is also the title of the novel.

In the novel, there is a comparison between economic status Dalit and non-Dalit. The lands of Dalit and non-Dalit have been compared to show the huge gap in economic status of Dalit and non-Dalit. Dalit’s poor economic status is shown in the

text. There is an enormous difference between living conditions of Dalit and non-Dalit. There is identity crisis of Dalit women in the novel as they can't speak up and act to show their real identity. They are nameless. They don't have fixed identity. They are fully dependent upon non-Dalit men for economic and other things. Mostly, Dalit women in the novel are uneducated, disempowered, helpless, voiceless, unopinionated, and poverty-stricken. They are doubly discriminated: first, discriminated by patriarchal values, and second, discriminated on the basis of their caste. They are presented as indecisive. They are silenced and voiceless. They can't complain about injustice openly. They can't express their pain. They don't have any agency to express their feelings or pain. Hence, they just keep quite.

The novel has intensely raised the issues of hegemony. Antonio Francesco Gramsci, an Italian Marxist philosopher and communist politician, is best known for his theory of cultural hegemony, which describes how the state and ruling capitalist class – the bourgeoisie – use cultural institutions to maintain power in capitalist societies. The bourgeoisie, in Gramsci's view, develops a hegemonic culture using ideology rather than violence, economic force, or coercion. Hegemonic culture propagates its own values and norms so that they become the "common sense" values of all and thus maintain the status quo. Hegemonic power is therefore used to maintain consent to the capitalist order, rather than coercive power using force to maintain order. This cultural hegemony is produced and reproduced by the dominant class through the institutions that form the superstructure. Hegemony was a term previously used by Russian Marxists such as Vladimir Lenin to denote the political leadership of the working-class in a democratic revolution. Gramsci greatly expanded this concept, developing an acute analysis of how the ruling capitalist class – the bourgeoisie – establishes and maintains its control. In the novel, non-Dalit have

controlled Dalit in every aspect. Non-Dalit have voice and opinion whereas Dalit don't have so.

In postcolonial studies and in critical theory, the term subaltern designates the colonial populations who are socially, politically, and geographically outside the hierarchy of power of a colony, and of the empire's metropolitan homeland. In describing cultural hegemony as popular history, Antonio Gramsci coined the term subaltern to identify the social groups excluded and displaced from the socio-economic institutions of society in order to deny their political voices. The terms subaltern and subaltern studies entered the vocabulary of post-colonialism through the works of the Subaltern Studies Group of historians who explored the political-actor role of the men and women who constitute the mass population, rather than re-explore the political-actor roles of the social and economic elites in the history of India. KanchhiDamini expresses her plight saying that she could not give the happiness to her daughters. She cries and confesses that she lost the battle to life (37). Similarly, we can clearly see the class conflict between Dalit and non-Dalit characters in the novel. This shows the complete absence of agency of Dalit women.

There is clear evidence of class conflicts. Their eating and wearing habit is completely different. Women of upper caste wear expensive and beautiful outfits whereas women of lower caste wear simple, cheap, and dirty clothes in the novel. This is how lower caste people have been presented and stereotyped in terms of their living conditions. Women of lower caste are presented as the victims of patriarchy and social stigma. They have been represented as the victim of caste based discrimination and patriarchy that can't revolt against such injustice. There is huge difference between the outfits of Radha Miss (an upper caste woman) and Lachhi (a lower caste woman). Women in Nepali society always have to face various types of

social stigma. Likewise, Lachhi faces the social stigma about being pregnant before marriage:

What will you do by carrying other's sin? Radha Miss gets tired slowly.

Finally, she said to Lachhi, 'Life is quite long, Maili. How will you raise the child without father? Who will you say the father is if somebody asks? How many people will you give response to about it?' (42)

The above quote explains about the social stigma the pregnant women without the father of the child faces. Lachhi is alone facing the consequences and social stigma. People do backbiting about her saying that she is a characterless woman who got pregnant before marriage. The man has run away. Lachhi is facing both physical and psychological torture. Nobody blames man. It is Lachhi who is blamed. She has to tolerate all the harsh words people throw to her. She is alone to answer to people's disrespectful and rude words. If this incident had happened to any non-dalit women, they would not have to face such atrocities. Just because Lachhi belongs to a low caste, she faces more sufferings in society.

Women in general have agency but Dalit women specifically don't have any agency in the text. Mostly, Dalit women are portrayed as weak, vulnerable, indecisive, fragile, helpless, voiceless, nameless, and identityless because they lack agency. Dalit female characters in comparison to non-Dalit female characters face more atrocities as they are the victims of feudalism, casteism, and patriarchy. But, non-Dalit women encounter the effects of patriarchy only.

Moreover, non-Dalit female characters are portrayed as educated, smart, clean, opinionated, and emotionally strong. The way of dressing and speaking is completely different between Dalit and non-Dalit women. In reality, there is diversity among women and Dalit women in Nepali society. Not all the women are same as shown in

the novel. There is hope and hopelessness of subalterns:

'Oh no! all messed up!' Lachhi became conscious. . . she closed the previous topic, 'I am determined to provide Amit his right!' . . . 'I will provide him the right, Maili. I will provide him son's right!' Lachhi glanced at Kanchho. No need Kanchha! Other's possession,' Kanchho had already become hopeless. She said, 'The love you do is true and unforgettable. But, Chetan must pay for what he has done.' (50)

Lachhi has a hope that she will manage to provide her son the right to everything a child deserves. But, at the same time she becomes hopeless as she realizes that there is nobody who is willing to understand her situation and support her as she belongs to a low caste. Likewise, Kanchho dares to fight with society to provide Amit a son's rights by accepting him as his son. But, he becomes hopeless as he thinks about the society which is not ready to accept her because of her caste. On the other hand, this also indicates that Kanchho is also guided by the deep rooted patriarchal values as he says that he will accept Amit as his son and be his father. He shows kindness to Lachhi and Amit for their helplessness. But, in fact, it is also the symbol that men think they are the only help and support to women. They think women are weak and are not able to fight against any type of discrimination.

Dalit women include a section of women who belong to the so-called lower castes within the Nepali Hindu caste hierarchy and are being treated as untouchables. Dalit women are at the bottom of caste, gender, and class hierarchy in Nepal. Dalit women are Dalits of Dalit. They are "doubly Dalit" because they face both the caste discrimination and gender discrimination. As members of impoverished underclass, they suffer most severe forms of deprivation compounded by violence, sexual assault, and humiliation. Especially, Madhesi Dalit women endure additional forms of

exclusion-based lingual, identity, and regional disparities. Dalit and women put together condense and portray multiple forms of discrimination, violation of human rights, and inequality in Nepal. Within the larger women population, the segment of Dalit women continues to experience severe and multiple forms of discrimination. Dalit women are the most vulnerable group who face untouchability and gender-based discrimination in compounded ways.

Due to the enduring practices of untouchability on the part of so-called upper caste men and women, the Dalit women are barred from accessing water, public space, temples and others. They are excluded in social processes and prevented from freely marrying with other caste. The untouchability also affects Dalit women's access to education, healthcare and services for overcoming poverty. Gendered untouchability is impediment to attain right of equality of Dalit women in Nepal. Dalit women are represented weak from all angles and in all aspects. They are the victims of patriarchal values and poverty. The novel has shown the extreme plight of Dalit women in Nepali society. Kanchhi Damini expressed her anger and raised her voice:

'May god destroy him!' Kanchhi Damini cursed Chetan. Her heart broke. But, she could not cry. Tears did not come out of her eyes. She became even more ferocious and aggressive. She became ferocious like a tigress. She tightened her teeth. Stood up. Moved her sarong a bit up. Tied up shawl. Took out knife. Said, 'I will cut his!' (36)

Lachhi's mother Kanchhi Damini gets extremely angry when she finds out that Lachhi is pregnant to Chetan's baby. He deceived Lachhi. He broke his promise of marrying him. He ran away. This makes Kanchhi Damini ferocious. And, she wants to kill him. This shows the expression of anger of caste subalterns. This also shows the subaltern consciousness. This is how caste subalterns react when they are extremely

oppressed. But, sadly it is temporary. Sometimes, caste subalterns express their pain and anger by crying out loud. But, they again become silent as they don't have any agency.

To sum up, this research paper scrutinizes ways in which the agency of Dalit female characters are absent in Rajan Mukarung's *Damini Bhir*. This paper examines the effects of absence of agency of Dalit women. They don't have any agency to express their voice. They are the victims of double marginalization; firstly, victims of caste-based discrimination and secondly, victim of patriarchy. The novel shows the absence of agency and power of Dalit women in the text by showing them being unable to speak up against injustice and to express their pain. Dalit women are more marginalized in comparison to other non-Dalit women due to their lower social and economic status. Dalit women in the text are the victims of casteism, patriarchy and feudalism. The novel is unable to represent the true voice, identity, and actions of Dalit women due to the absence of their agency.

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