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Subaltern Consciousness: Awakening of Black Self in Paul Beatty's *The Sellout*

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Abstract

This thesis entitled "Subaltern Consciousness: Awakening of Black Self in Paul Beatty's novel The Sellout" focuses on the strategy of the author to reinstate slavery system and segregation for revitalization of the past black history of slavery and segregation; which is bitter but an agency to resist against remaining forms of new-slavery. There is not legally slavery system but black people are marginalized and harassed by white people. Even though, they are not legally slave but in the mindset of the white people, black are racially discriminated and still remains slavery system. The conscious characters in the novel revolt against the racial discrimination. It portrays the issues of black subaltern people like racial discrimination, police violence, loss of history and their black identity. It explores the problem of black people through the eyes of protagonist, the marginalized unnamed black narrator. The major characters of the novel belong to the dominated class where the unnamed narrator has lost his father at the hands of Los Angeles police; his hometown city Dickens also deleted from the map. Hominy Jenkins is the star in the local ethnic T.V. show Little Rascals and his cultural identity is lost due to the disappearance of the city. Beatty's novel reveals the awakening consciousness of black people towards racial discrimination, cultural identity and resistance as a strategy to re-establish cultural and historical way of black history which is lost in America. The narrator realizes about the identity of black people and wants to revolt against the system ruled by white supremacy. He uses the strategy of keeping slave and segregating the public bus and government high schools to get the identity of Dickensianhood or blackhood.

Key Words: History, Subaltern consciousness, Awakening of black self, Race,

Identity, Hegemony and Strategic essentialism

This research explores Paul Beatty's *The Sellout* as a revival of the black history through the strategic use of reinstating slavery and segregation. The novel presents the struggle of the black marginalized characters who are dominated and their struggle as a black subaltern while adjusting in the white hegemonic society. Beatty's *The Sellout* deals with the problem of the black subalterns where blacks are taken as marginalized group. It surveys the problem of black people through the eyes of the protagonist, the marginalized unnamed black narrator. Blacks are suppressed in each and every situation in their life; they also didn't know the reason behind their death. Without any reason they have to sacrifice their life. Likewise, in the novel, the narrator's father is shot by Los Angeles police without no reason. It shows the pathetic condition of the black people and at a same time extreme level of brutality of elite people. This is how black people are treated in white hegemonic society. Even the narrator's name is not given; he is unknown black. It demonstrates the repression and suppression of black people by white ruling class. It is a great satire to the post-racial America, where white dominant class treats them as inferior group.

The present story of Beatty's *The Sellout* is based on the subaltern hero, the unnamed black narrator who plays very important role to fight against bourgeoisie domination. The narrator is raised by a single father who saw his son as a social experiment rather than a son. The narrator's father sees racism prevailing over everywhere. So, he decides to educate his son in homeschool rather to attend white's public school. Despite his father's argument about racism, at first the narrator believes that there was no real widespread racism anymore. He also believes that not taking advantage of the opportunity was only the thing holding back black people but later he becomes conscious about racial discrimination in the society when his father is killed by Los Angeles police and their hometown city Dickens also deleted from the

map. Therefore, the narrator initiates the most outrageous strategy reinstating slavery and segregating the public bus and the local highschool to gain the city back which lands him on the supreme court.

The novel reveals the issue of race relations in the United States which revolves around the black narrator, coming before the Supreme Court on the charges of slave holding and reinstating segregation. Through the description of different characters Beatty puts his full effort to depict the contemporary picture of the United States and the marginalized black people. The protagonist of the novel, along with other significant characters, are shown to be tackling against the exploitation, suppression and the social injustice. The narrator becomes conscious about his identity when his father is killed and the city Dickens also disappeared from the map. Then he united the people from diverse fields to protest against the white supremacy. Hominy Jenkins helps to the narrator by being the slave of the narrator. Along with the help of the other characters like, Marpessa drives city bus and she helps the narrator to separate the public bus. Likewise, Charishma is the co-ordinator in the Chaff Middle high school and she helps the narrator to separate the government high school. This is the reason that the narrator takes the action to regain the black identity and their history.

Beatty, in this novel, demonstrates his hero, black narrator in the quest of re-establishing historical identity, right and consciousness. The narrator approaches the action to get back the city Dickens by using the agency like slave holding and segregation. The city Dickens is deleted from the map due to its large black population. The narrator is a revolutionary character who gathers the different characters from the different field to revolt against the dominant class. At the end of the novel the narrator becomes successful in his attempts of regaining back the City Dickens.

The narrator and Hominy are conscious characters who use the agency to resist against the existing forms of new slavery. Beatty, very interestingly shows the protest and resistance of his character against the societal plight. He presents courage and conscience to his characters in order to provide them the social justice. His deep instinctive insight into subaltern's problem and dilemmas help him in drawing the realistic portrait of contemporary oppressed black people in United States. The glory of black history is subverted by the dominant class. The marginalized characters are resisting against it to revitalize past in order to celebrate the glory of blackness. This text is also the representation of marginalized black history that highlights the subverted role of minority group that shows the departure from the mainstream American history. The black characters are very conscious towards the domination they face in their lives from the ancient time and they temporarily essentialise the segregation and slavery system to create the solidarity, sense of belonging and identity to a minority black race which they lost in their own society. Their awakening to the black self leads them to revolt against the white supremacy which only treated black race for its benefit.

The concept of the subaltern refers to any person or group of lower status due to the race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and religion. As Gramsci used the term 'inferior rank' for the proletariat or working class and claimed that the subaltern classes has a complex history as the dominant classes. The characters in *The Sellout* are from working class background and have different history. However, this "unofficial" history of American subaltern in the novel has been fragmented and broken up as the characters unnamed narrator, Hominy since even when they start to revolt. The subalterns are always subject to the activity of the ruling classes. However in Gramsci's theory, the term 'subaltern' is coordinated with the subordinated

consciousness of non-elite groups such as narrator and Hominy.

The novel also focuses on the issues of re-writing the history of black people. Foy Cheshire is the character who rewrites about the book related to the issues of black by removing the words 'er' in a 'nigger'. He wants to rewrite the history from the subaltern perspective. Subalterns history is always in fragmented form. The story in the novel concerns on the subject of the black fragmented history.

This book highlights the satire to the post-racial America where white and black are taken as equal but in the America until the present time, racial discrimination is prevalent. Initially, he is unaware about the injustice towards the black race but later he encounters discrimination based on race when he buys the Coke, he asked to pay fifty dollar where its price is seven cents across the road. He has to pay black price for it. The narrator experiences discrimination in his own home. It shows the pitiable condition of the black people in the United States.

The novel, *The Sellout* has received wide range of critical reviews from the different critics of various fields. Paul Beatty's contribution of writing such a novel is in fact the glory of black people. Since the publication of this text, it has received many criticisms of different perspectives from diverse sources. Critics have examined different possibilities in various aspects of the novel. Likewise, this novel is examined as post racial, search of identity and the praise for the comic racial satire of the novelist. Beatty's portrayal of the narrator and other characters are insignificant till the present time shows racial discrimination is still prevalent in the most developed country United States.

In a review of *The New York Times*, Dwight Garner remarks the idea, "most basically *The Sellout* is about a young black man born in the "agrarian ghetto" of Dickens, a neighborhood on the Southern outskirts of Los Angeles who becomes an

artisanal watermelon and weed dealer.” The story of the novel is revolving around, the life of the unnamed black narrator. He is a poor black farmer who sustains his life by farming in Dickens. He suffers from many things like he lost his father and the farmland too disappeared from the map. He is the representative of historically ignored person.

The theme of novel revolves around the issues of racial identity and injustice. Alexandra Alter in his review in *The New York Times* proposes *The Sellout* is all about, “A raucous tragic comedy that explores the legacy of slavery and racial and economic inequality in America. The novel felt deeply resonant at a moment when police violence against African-Americans has incited protests around country and forced Americans to confront the country’s history of racism.” For Alexandra the novel is written from the perspective of black marginalized people who are suppressed and oppressed by the police violence and the white’s hegemony. Kevin Young, in his review in *The New York Times* writes, Beatty’s *The Sellout* as:

The Sellout is more a Your Daddy joke. At its heart (if satire can be said to have one) is the Narrator’s relationship with his dead father; with his father’s cronies and frenemies; and ultimately with Dickens, his Los Angeles hood that has been “disappeared”: “there is no loud send-off. Dickens didn’t go out with a bang like Nagasaki, Sodom and Gomorrah, and my dad (killed by police). This tragedy is milked for comedy, in the tradition of the blues, and Dickens takes.

His ideas are very convenient in the sense that the blackhood has been destroyed. It is not simply disappeared, but the history and culture of the black people are destroyed along with the deletion of the city Dickens. Their culture is suppressed by the mainstream ruling class people.

In a review in *National Public Radio* Michael Schaub proposes “Post-racial America or not, its hard to see how anything funny could come out of slavery, police violence, gangs, and racial discrimination, all subjects beauty tackles in his fourth novel.” The novelist shows the realistic picture of the Twenty-first century of America. Michael further adds, “After the narrator’s father, a psychologist is killed by police officers, he inherits the older man’s land-and not too long after the town of Dickens removed from the map.” The city were disappeared in the past because of the embarrassment of its population and policies, but the novel whispered the racism in a post-racial world or attempt to push the hot button of racism in the United States and rub it in everyone’s faces. It is not only the satire, but also all the ideas are represented as suppression of the black people who are ignored from its ancestral time.

Sameer Rahim in his review in *The Telegraph* unravels the idea, “*The Sellout* is an outrageous racial scattergun satire taking aim at racism and what racism has done to black Americans.” Of course, the idea of the critic is very right. His ideas are agreeable. Due to the color or the race the blacks are always remained out from the mainstream spheres. They are not given the sufficient opportunities as equal to white people. In the novel, Beatty’s narrator is also unknown about his racial identity before his father’s death. He thought blacks are back because of not utilizing opportunities. But, he came to face the racism and later knows about the racial discrimination. Sameer further adds, “Beatty’s sharp humour challenges pieties from all sides, while never losing sight of the fundamental issue: America’s racism and the legacy of slavery.” The racism and slavery system is directly or indirectly prevailed in the American society. His ideas clarifies that America’s legacy of slavery is still in the mindset of people.

Above mentioned critics have analyzed the text from different perspectives but

the present researcher finds the issue of subalternity quite interesting and relevant for present research which is not explored yet. Beatty presents a different socio-political events that were always presented in dominant way through white mainstream American histories. The voice of the marginal people who are directly and indirectly impacted by those socio-political events never be heard. For those unheard voices, Beatty has provided the strategy through this novel. The race relations among the people is main problem in the contemporary America. *The Sellout* reveals the consciousness of marginalized people who uses the strategy of reinstating slavery system and separating everything in the society to regain their black identity, values and norms which is lost in the America. Beatty presents the rebellious character who revolts against the white supremacy for the re-establishment of the black history. It explores the subaltern consciousness and their resistance against the domination to build their own identity, which has not been explored yet. Without a proper study of this issue, the meaning of the text will remain incomplete. Having this fact into consideration, this researcher proposes to carry out research from the standpoint of subaltern consciousness and resistance in different manners to revitalize the past black history.

In Marxist theory, the civil sense of the term subaltern is first used by the Italian communist intellectual Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci adopted the term “Subaltern” to describe those groups in the society who are subject to the hegemonic exploitation of the ruling classes. These subaltern class includes marginalised groups such as peasant workers and others, who were forced to stay away from the Germanic power. Subaltern studies are to write a history against the grain and restore history to the subordinated. In other words, it means to give the common people back their agency. Subaltern Studies Group emerged around 1982 as a series journal article

published by Oxford University Press in India. It mainly focuses to recognize the historical subordinate position of the lives of various groups of the people. The main objective of this study is to give them a voice and an agency. Thus, subaltern history helps to explore previously covered histories, ignored events and purposeful hidden secrets of the past.

Subaltern studies is a new theory which rise as a theory of change, which sustained strong political commitment. Subaltern studies in disciplines as diverse as history, anthropology and literature to recognize the force of recent post colonial criticism. The challenge it poses to the existing historical scholarship has been felt not only in South Asian Studies but also in the historiography of other regions and in disciplines other than history. Subaltern studies has committed itself “to rectify the elitist bias characteristics of much research and academic work in particular area” (Guha 7). The act of refinement sprang from the conviction that the elites has exercised dominance, not hegemony, in Gramsci’s sense, over the subalterns.

Subaltern consciousness is hot debated issue in subaltern studies. Spivak, in her essay “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography” gives a deconstructing reading to the activities of Subaltern Studies Group. She tries to evaluate their work in her writing. Like other many critics, she too finds a problem with their view of consciousness. While evaluating their work, she comes to realize that it somehow resembles deconstruction, which puts the binary oppositions like elite/subaltern under erasure. Spivak, however, thinks that “consciousness, here, is not consciousness-in-general, but a historicized political species, subaltern consciousness” (338). Spivak uses “Strategic essentialism” term to refer to the nationalities, ethnic groups, minority groups can use to present themselves. There is sometimes a political and social need for what she calls “strategic essentialism” (260).

According to Spivak, this temporary essentialism helps to create solidarity, sense of belonging and identity to a group, race, ethnicity for social action. She, therefore, regards their effort to recover peasant consciousness as strategic use of positivist essentialism in a carefully visible political interest. She suggests, “It’s own subalternity is claiming a positive subject-position for the subaltern might be reinscribed as a strategy for our times” (345). For Spivak, marginal are the people whose voice is subverted by the dominant class. Subaltern requires some strategy through which they convey their voice. The novel *The Sellout* is strategy for the subalterns. The voice of subaltern characters like unnamed black narrator and Hominy Jenkins who are socially and politically marginalized as narrated by Beatty. The narrator and Hominy uses the approach like reinstating slavery and resegregation to reach their goal in the search of cultural and historical identity. Taking marginal characters the author attempts to provide agency to the voiceless subalterns. Black narrator is a marginal black farmer who lost his father because of police violence and after the death of his father the city Dickens is deleted from the map. Hominy feels disappointed by the loss of his cultural identity due to the deletion of the city.

Subaltern writers attempt to establish the subaltern people as the subject of insurgency. This is the reason that they propose to focus on subaltern consciousness as their central theme, otherwise, the subaltern people’s experience of revolution would be turned into a history of events without a subject. Dipesh Chakrabarty in his essay, writes:

The central aim of the subaltern studies is to understand the consciousness that informed and still informs political actions taken by the subaltern classes on their own, independently of any elite initiatives. It is only by giving this consciousness a central place in historical analysis that we the subaltern as

maker of the history s/he lives out. (374)

Subalterns are also the people who can create the history by taking political action against dominant class. They use the strategy to revolt against the hegemonic control of the dominant class.

Paul Beatty as a black writer presents the issue of black who are in need of freedom and search of identity. Beatty, provides voice for voiceless. The narrator and Hominy take the action as they awaken for the black liberty and gain a history of black people by revolting against the mainstream America. The city Dickens which is surrounded by the black people is disappeared from the map. By instating Slavery and segregating public bus, government high schools and almost everything in the society they want to re-establish their own history. In this way, the narrator is helped by the Hominy Jenkins, who becomes slave of the narrator; Marpessa, who drives city bus and helps to segregate the bus; Charisma, principal in the school and helps to segregate the school. In this way, all these subaltern character help from diverse field to take political action to the dominant class and make their own history. Thus, this novel is the agency to all black subalterns to present their history in the reader.

The plot of the novel is in the fragmented form rather than in conventional order. With the fragmented form of story, Beatty uses the reflective tone and semi-regular narrative to certain scenes: Childhood experiments, daily farm life, local black and intellectual meetings. Beatty deliberately brings such fragmented plot in the novel to present the fragmented lifestyle of the subaltern. The fragmentation regarding subaltern history is explained by Gramsci in his masterpiece as:

The history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic. There undoubtedly does exist a tendency to unification in the historical activity of these groups, but this tendency is continually interrupted by the

activity of ruling groups; it is therefore can only be demonstrated when a historical cycle is completed and this cycle culminates in success. (35)

For Gramsci, history of subalterns is not in a linear pattern as the official history rather it is always in the fragmented form. Therefore as Beatty, Gramsci also gives the idea on the addition of the subaltern historiography in the process of making mainstream history. Subaltern should be provided with appropriate positions and significant as they are also the part of the society, performing their vital role in the historical events. The life of characters like unnamed narrator and Hominy Jenkins should bring into the association with mainstream history. In this way, the subject matter in the novel which are not in chronological order also highlights the subalternity.

The researcher also finds Paul Beatty challenging the mainstream official history and including the subalterns life as the subject matter. The major characters of the fiction belong to the dominated class: black narrator is a poor farmer who lost his father by the state violence and his hometown city Dickens is disappeared from the map due to its largely black population; Hominy Jenkins is also distressed by the deletion of the black surrounded city. He feels as he lost his cultural identity of black people. The novel presents the struggle of a black subaltern character while adjusting in the American racist society. Beatty, highlights the subverted role of subalterns in the American society by revealing out the story of black character of a small place in Los Angeles, conditions of civil right movements and role of margins in various historical-political incidents in America. At the same time writer's concern is to provide voice to overall voiceless subalterns whesre they lost their identity and communitarian values.

Hegemony as a term reveals the important factor for the domination of

subalterns. Baeg Hyug Im in his journal defines, Gramscian hegemony as, "The main theoretical concept he elaborated in prison was the notion of hegemony, he found that in the west the dominant class, the bourgeoisie, had ruled with the consent of the subordinated masses, that is what he called the hegemony of bourgeoisie" (123). For Baeg, hegemony is the subordinated masses who always ruled by the dominant class without caring the consent of the common people. Thomas R. Bates clarifies the concept of Gramscian method of hegemony in his journal as:

Public opinion is strictly linked to political hegemony. It is the point of contact between civil society and political society, between consensus and force. The state, when it wants to initiate an unpopular action, preventively creates the adequate public opinion; that is, it organizes and concentrates certain elements of civil society. (360)

At this point, Bates simplifies that public opinion is connected with the political hegemony. When the state wants to initiate an unpopular action, it takes the way of adequate public opinion and concerns on certain elements of civil society. Government is always a concern that the civil society may revolt against the actions that are to be initiated.

Paul Beatty, is an African-American writer has explored the conflict between black and the white ruling class people in American society. The novel not only talks about racism but also represents the sufferings and plight of the subaltern people in the United States. The novel also tries to reveal the consciousness of the suffering people about the dominating ideologies and as well as their right. The major characters protest against suppression for their rights and act with conscious agencies from the very beginning to till the end. This research explores the subaltern consciousness awakening of the black self and their resistance in different strategical

way. It attempts to speak on the behalf of the common and suffered people. Though, some critics think that subaltern can not speak but here in this novel, Beatty presents the characters like unnamed narrator, hominy Jenkins, who are not only conscious but also speak against the ruling ideologies.

All these characters are conscious about the ruling people's suppression over them. The narrator, the protagonist and the most rebellious character, always resist all kind of authority. He works as a farmer in Dickens, California. Initially, the narrator disagrees with the prevailing black cultural mindset among people. His father and Foy Cheshire see racism as prevalent everywhere. When his father is murdered by white police and his hometown city is deleted from the map the narrator takes responsibility himself to gain back the city and goes against the ruling class people. He takes the Hominy as his slave and uses the strategy to reinstitute the slavery system that he may uses racism to make people less racist. Blacks have their own values, systems but they are suppressed and marginalized by white ruling class people. He is able to spread "peasant consciousness" among the black subaltern people working in their respective field.

The novel revolves around the issue of search of black identity. The characters in the novel are very conscious to get back their communitarian values which is lost due to the disappearance of the city Dickens. The narrator is in the supreme court with the charges of reinstalling the slavery and segregation. He reinstated slavery to get back the city Dickens which is eliminated from the map and to resist against the existing forms of new-slavery. Dickens is the main center of the black people. It is deleted from map due to its large black population. The novel started with the great distressing tone as:

This may be hard to believe, coming from a black man, but I have never stolen

anything. Never cheated on my taxes or at cards. Never snuck into the movies or failed to give back the extra change to a drugstore cashier indifferent to the ways of mercantilism and minimum wage expectations. I've never burgled a house. Held up a liquor store. (3)

It shows how the upper class people are not giving space to the Afro-American black people. Black peoples are not taken as equal to the white. This opening paragraph of the novel shows the deceit from white people and at the sametime, it also shows the anger towards the elite people. The narrator further says:

But here I am, in the cavernous chambers of the Supreme Court of the U.S.A, my car illegally and somewhat ironically parked on constitution Avenue, my hands cuffed and crossed behind my back, my right to remain silent long since waived and said goodbye to as I sit in a thickly padded chair that, much like this country, isn't quite as comfortable as it looks. (3)

This represents the actual situation of the black people in America. As the narrator utters their rights remain soundless and they are not treated equally as the white. These black peoples are subaltern who are dominated since long time. Those subaltern black peoples identity is in crisis. Unnamed black narrator is in the supreme court as he uses the strategy of reinstating slavery in the search of identity. He is very conscious character, who uses the trick and revolt against the system. He unites people from diverse field to support him to get back their city which is omitted from the map. Dickens is the city surrounded by the black people. When the Dickens city is omitted, their agrarian values and ghetto communities identity is also deleted. They have their own historical values and beliefs, which can be disappeared due to the deletion of the city.

Beatty as an African-American novelist presents the issues of minorities; the

subaltern unnamed black narrator who is in the search of black history and identity which is lost . The story of the novel revolves around the unnamed, black narrator who is in the Supreme Court with the charges of slave holding and reinstating segregation. The narrator as a resident of Dickens, California, was born to a single father who is professor of psychology. The father saw the narrator as a social experiment rather than son “I was his Anna Freud, his little case study and when he was teaching me how to ride,he was replicating famous social science experiments with me as both the control and the experimental group” (29). These lines prove that the narrator is brought up as a social experiment for his father. Narrator’s father saw racism all around him. So, he decides to educate him at home school rather than attending white’s public school. Racism is prevailed everywhere and black people are not able to get social equality. Narrator and his father lived in the Dickens city, as he says, “We lived in Dickens, a ghetto community on the southern out-skirts of Los Angles, and as odd as it might sound, I grew up on a farm in the inner city” (27). The narrator lives in the agrarian city where he is a farmer. Ghetto community is the group of the black people where they are farmer since their ancestor.

Working class people are dominated by dominant class. Their voice are never heard by the elite ruling class people. The dominated class is marginalized, and do not have access to the mainstream level. As Guha says, “In short the price of blindness about the structure of colonial regime as dominance without hegemony” (307). Narrator’s father is from working class people who is dominated and shot by police directly. He is the ‘Nigger Whisperer’ who can talk to the sense of the black people and helped them in their need. He is the founder of the Dum Dum Donut group of black intellectuals which helps to the black people in their need. The narrator’s father is shot by the Los Angeles police. This shows the violence of elite class towards

working class. The working class psychologist is dead at the hands of Los Angeles police. The ruling class people dominate the subalterns who does not have access to the mainstream level. It also shows the brutality of the dominant power. The narrator explains in anger as, “you’re supposed to cry when your dad dies. Curse the system because your father has died at the hands of the police” (43). The narrator reveals his anger against the police domination. He further thinks that his father died of being colored and lower-middle-class but if he was from rich white class, he would be protected by the white class.

Racism is dead but untill the present date black people are not given value as equal to the white people. Narrator’s father is dead due to the police violence. The police system that is very prejudice towards the black people. Antonio Gramsci emphasizes that subaltern classes have less access to the means by which they can control their representation. Gramsci asserts that, “subaltern is concerned with the intellectual role in the subaltern’s cultural and political movement into hegemony” (78). Thus, in the process of social and political development subalterns are important parts for the society but they are taken as the less prominent in the mainstream history. As well as they have a smaller amount of right to entry in the resources by which they can have their depiction on social and cultural institution which is the important center of representation. The only way to get rid of subordination is the permanent victory over elite groups who have been controlling every important social and cultural institution, it requires a lot of patience and consciousness.. The narrator explains being black his father is shot. The police violence is clearly seen as, “Bemoan being lower-middle-class and colored in a police state that protects only rich white people and movie stars of all races, though I can’t think of any Asian-american ones. But I didn’t cry. I thought his death was a trick” (43). Aforementioned lines

shows that narrator's father is smart black man who is dead because of the Los Angeles police without any reason which shows the pathetic condition of the black people.

Blacks are suffered by white ruling state in their own society. They are really subalterns in the American society. After the death of the narrator's father, the city surrounded by black is also disappeared from the map. The narrator was later shocked, when to boost the property values in the area, the city of Dickens was eliminated from the map. Not too long after his father's death the city is also omitted from the map. The narrator states as:

you won't find Dickens, California, on the map, because about five years after my father died, and a year after I graduated college, it, too, perished. There was no loud send-off. Dickens didn't go out with a bang like Nagasaki, Sodom and Gomorrah, and my dad. It was quietly removed like those towns that vanished from maps of the Soviet Union during the Cold War, atomic accident by atomic accident. (57)

The narrator becomes conscious about his identity and of his race. The identity of the Dickens's people is lost. If the city does not have any identification then how people can have identity? The narrator turns into conscious about the problem of the black race and awakens to fight against its brutality. The narrator declares that it is the conspiracy to remove Dickens from the map. They easily removed it without any consideration what will happen to the people of the city. The powerful people dominate the lower class people who does not have access to the mainstream level. This is the reason that the narrator swears to bring the city Dickens back.

The narrator's black self stimulates him in search of black identity. The history which gives the solidarity, sense of belonging, identity, that is lost because of the domination of white supremacy. He is the farmer in the Dickens city. He is born in

the 'agrarian ghetto' of Dickens on the southern outskirts of the Los Angeles. He is in illusion after the death of his father and the loss of the city Dickens. Indeed, the narrator awakens himself as a guardian of the ghetto community. His consciousness awakens and who wants to live with own identity in the society. In this context, Mridula Mukherjee in his journal "Peasant Resistance and Peasant Consciousness in Colonial India: 'Subalterns' and Beyond" defines subaltern consciousness:

As pointed out by Antonio Gramsci whom Guha is fond of quoting, is that the subaltern classes are hegemonized by the ideology of the dominant class, and that this 'elite' ideology is part of their consciousness, through this consciousness is broader and includes elements contrary to, contending with, and antagonistic to elements of ruling class ideologies. (2118)

Subaltern classes become conscious due to the dominating ideology of the dominant class. The ideology of 'elite' dominated the subaltern people. The dominated class revolts against the ideology of elite class or they become the antagonistic to ruling class ideology. Likewise, in the novel narrator does not accept the death of his father and the loss of his hometown rather he revolts against it. His consciousness towards the humiliation of his father and the loss of city leads him against the system, his consciousness awakens as:

so introspective questions like "who am i? and how can I be that person?" didn't pertain to me then, because I already knew the answer. Like the entire town of the Dickens, I was my father's child, a product of my own environment, and nothing more. Dickens was me. and I was my father. Problem is, they both disappeared from my life, first my dad, and then my hometown, and suddenly I had no idea who I was, and no clue how to become myself. (40)

The narrator feels nothing without his father and the hometown city Dickens. The conscious part of the narrator awakens and he wants to re-establish his own identity and identity of black history. He is deceived from the system along with the people of the city. His identity is lost as his own home is snatched from the nation. His goal is to search of identity as he narrates, “who am I? And how can I be that person? how to become myself” (40). This line proves the most awakening part of the narrator as he wants to re-establish his own history by strategical use of different resistance. He is worried by the loss as he faces but he does not easily surrender because he is a subaltern hero that he wants to revolt against it for betterment of the society. The narrator have been asking this question for a long time as it establishes a sense of identity. He wants to make his own identity in the racial world of the United States.

Black people are dominated from the white’s hegemonic power. The state does not have equal behavior towards the black and the white people. As well as subaltern studies established subaltern people’s everyday resistance against elite classes. Spivak suggests Subaltern Studies Group as, “off the dangerous hook of claiming to establish the truth and knowledge of the subaltern and his consciousness” (356). The narrator becomes conscious towards the condition of the black people. He declares to regain the city back at the meeting of the Dum Dum Donut, which is the old intellectual circle of the black people, founded by the narrator’s father. Then the narrator begins to reconnect with the old college friend named Marpessa, who drives a city bus. Hominy Jenkins is also broken hearted by the loss of the city Dickens. The narrator started to connect with the people who are directly and indirectly affected by the loss of the city. Hominy Jenkins is the star of the TV show ‘Little Rascal’. He is badly affected by the loss of the city as he is less visited by his fans and due to the deletion of the city, it lost its cultural identity. Hominy, who worked on films portrayed in

racist scenes on the TV series, Little Rascals has lost his cultural identity and attempts to suicide. As narrator says, “Dickens’s evanesce hit some folks harder than others, but the citizen who needed my services the most was old man Hominy Jenkins” (66). Then the narrator keeps Hominy as his slave. The narrator exercises the strategy of reinstating the slavery system and separation in the twenty first century by keeping Hominy as his slave.

The characters presented in the novel such as protagonist unnamed black narrator and Hominy seems to be conscious of their right and resisting the bourgeoisie’s prejudice and exploitative behaviours. So, there are evidences to prove that subaltern characters in the novel coming with their consciousness to establish them as subject by challenging elite’s domination and creating own social identities. Similarly, Gautam Bhadra is focusing on subaltern characteristics and states, “defiance is not the only characteristics behaviour of the subaltern classes but also submissive to authority is equally important feature of their behavior” (63). The subaltern people do not have their voices so they can not protest the domination and exploitation imposed upon them. They also do not have access to the hegemonic power the way ruling people or bourgeoisie have. They can only resist to bourgeoisie people and their domination simply disobeying their orders and being submissive to the bourgeoisie.

The narrator decides to co-ordinate with the Hominy to resist against the state policy which removed the city Dickens from the map. Hominy wants to become the slave of the narrator that can attract the attention of the state which is mainly dominant by the white ruling people. Hominy says the narrator that:

sometimes we just have to accept who we are and act accordingly. I’m slave.

That’s who I am. It’s the role I was born to play. A slave who just also

happens to be an actor. Lee Strasberg could teach you how to be a tree, but he couldn't teach you how to be a nigger. This is the ultimate nexus between craft and purpose, and we won't be discussing this again. I'm your nigger for life, and that's it. (77)

In this dialogue, they started to exercise revolt against the white supremacy by reinstating slavery system. To attract the attention of the mainstream America as blacks also need freedom, needs to celebrate their ownness, they use the agency. They use this strategy to revolt against the fine system of the United States which only dominate and suppress them.

Those black people are really the subaltern people who challenge the mainstream ruling class by segregation as an agency to protest the available forms of discrimination. They spread racism or use the concept of taking slave to make the people less racist. Hominy becomes the slave of the narrator and accepts that blacks are taken as slave by born. The narrator re-institutionize the slavery, narrator states, "The Sunday after installing the roadside sign I wanted to make a formal announcement of my plan to reanimate the city of Dickens" (94). The narrator and Hominy use the right place to protest against what happen to them. They segregated the public bus where Marpessa used to drive a city bus. The narrator allowed seat of bus for white girls and attached stickers saying the first third of the bus seats were to be given to whites and hired a white prostitute to complete the illusion. The way they segregated the bus by giving priority to the white people. They reserved the seat for the white people. As narrator utters Hominy Jenkins give up his seat to white person:

That wintery day in the segregated state of Alabama, when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man, she becomes known as the "Mother of the Modern-Day Civil Rights Movement." Decades later on, a seasonally

indeterminate afternoon in a supposedly unsegregated section of Los Angeles, California, Hominy Jenkins couldn't wait to give up his seat to a white person.

(127)

The narrator uses the strategy of segregation which reminds all the people to fight for their rights. To regain the city back they use the agency to resegregate. Hominy wants white people too feel black as the equivalent race. Both the race needs equality rather than reservation.

The narrator started taking action against the white bourgeoisie ideology. They provide seat for white ladies in the bus not because she is white, pretty but gave up she is fine. More he says, "It wouldn't be hard to argue that Hominy gave up his seat, not because she was white, but because she was fine, and that notion had me reassessing the entire civil right movement. May be race and nothing to do with it" (133). Hominy's birthday is celebrated in the bus and they have posterred many written signs like, "PRIORITY SEATING FOR SENIORS, DISABLED AND WHITES" (128). In order to protest the white ruling people who omitted the Dickens city because of its large black people they painted all over the cities. Charisma, the assistant principal of Chaff Middle School, believed this was because the signs reminded blacks of how far they had come and how far they still had to go. It reminds people of the past how far they have come in the world from slavery. The narrator then suggested segregating Chaff Middle School, which charisma agreed to do. The result was to orientate black kids to learning and getting ahead seen in narrator and Charisma's conversation:

"Charisma, I thought of a way to get the kids to behave and respect each other like they do in the bus."

"How?"

“Segregate the school.” As soon as I said it, I realize that segregation would be the key to bringing Dickens back. The communal feeling of the bus would spread to the school and then permeate the rest of the city. Apartheid united black South Africa, why couldn't it do the same for Dickens?

“By race?you want to segregate the school by color?” (167)

The narrator is very revolutionary character who wants to establish the lost black identity. The narrator and Hominy apply the Strategy of bringing Dickens back by painting the boundaries of the place, seeking a sister city and putting the segregation signs all over the place. The strategies they use help them to challenge the established mainstream history by re-establishing their own black history.

Similarly, D. N. Dhangare in his journal "Subaltern Consciousness and Populism: Two Approaches in the study of Study of Social Movements in India" identify historiography as, "The whole thrust of subaltern historiography is an reconstructing the 'other history' i.e. history of peoples politics and movements and their attempts to make their own history" (20). The subaltern characters in the novel struggle continuously to make their own history. Foy Cheshire re-writes the book which is related to the issue of black pepole by removing some words from it. He wants to create the history of subaltern black people by doing it. To establish their identity, the narrator and Hominy fight against the mainstream level which only dominated the people from lower class. They revolt for getting their ownness, black identity.

The unnamed black narrator have faced discrimination because he was from the marginalized black race. Black people are discriminated since long time. White ruling class people use the black people for their benefit. Blacks are taken as slave by whites from their ancestral time. Black peoples serve white people in the various field. They are suppressed in their own society by white hegemonic power. The black

narrator experiences discrimination once and said, “I’ve experienced direct discrimination based on race only once in my life. One day I foolishly said to my father that there was no racism in America. Only equal opportunity that black people kick aside because we don’t want to take responsibility for ourselves” (174). The narrator believes not taking opportunity that takes the black people back. his belief is proved almost wrong when he experiences it. Blacks are dominated and suppressed by white people since long time. He unfolds how he is discriminated when he buys the Coke he have to pay black price for it and further says,

My bladder about to burst, I asked black Kasparov where the bathroom is located.

“Restrooms are for customers only.”

“But my dad just purchased some gas....”

“And your father can sit here until his heart’s content. You, on the other hand, are drinking the white man’s Coke like his ice is colder than ours.”

I pointed to the row of seven-ounce sodas in the cooler. “How much?”

“Dollar-fifty”

“But they are seven cents across the street.”

“Buy black or piss off. Literally.” (179)

The black narrator encounters discrimination in his own society. He is cheated and dominated due to the race. To prove the aforementioned idea, Ashcroft in the book *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*, states:

Race continues to be relevant in post colonial theory for two reasons; first because it is so central to the growing power of imperial discourse during the nineteenth century, and second because it remains a central and unavoidable 'fact' of modern society that race is used as the dominant category of daily discriminations and

prejudice. (207)

Race is still used in the post-racial world, where it is remaining in the mindset of the white people in the form of daily discrimination and prejudice. Black are back because of white's attitude and behavior towards them is very prejudicial. The narrator is not given to use bathroom. If he wants to use it, he has to buy something. When he wants to buy Coke he is asked to pay price of Fifty dollar where it comes in seven cents across the road. So, black race is biased in United States in the age of modernism where all peoples are equal.

The unnamed black narrator takes the most significant action to get back the Dickensianhood. Narrator does not segregate for holding the power, he separates it for the access of the black people in the mainstream level. He wants to create the history which is not prejudicial. His awakening of the identity for black people leads him to revolt against the mainstream white ruling people. The question of the Hominy started to bring back Dickens and the narrator answers as:

We separate the wheat from the chaff. I'm not Rudolf Hess, P.W. Botha, Capital Records, or present-day U.S. of A. Those motherfuckers segregate because they want to hold on to power. I'm farmer: we segregate in effort to give every tree, every plant, every poor Mexican, every poor nigger, a chance for equal access to sunlight and water; we make sure every living organism has room to breathe. (214)

The narrator separates to reveal the suffocation of the black people who are subjugated from the white people. Farmers are natural segregationist who separate for living the life. But people who are in power they separate for holding the power. He gives the example of many people who segregate for reaching in the utmost power level and dominate the others. He increases effort to segregate to give the equivalent

access to the every poor nigger, to the Mexican for their identity in the society. Blacks are tortured, they are not given the equal rights, they are taken as a minor race or they are uses by whites due to their unequal treatments in the society. This is the reason, the narrator separates the city Dickens by keeping slave and by segregating public bus and high schools. Moreover narrator segregates each and every sector.

The narrator and Hominy segregated the city's each and every sector endlessly. They are getting much strength by separating all things. Hominy also focuses on the endless help to bring the Dickens back. They are pretending being powerless but they have got much empowering for getting the black values and norms. The narrator and Hominy's revolt against white supremacy is continuous as narrator articulates, "Unlike Hominy, I've had a real job, and even though it didn't pay, driving around town with Hominy as the African-American Igor to my evil social scientist was sort of empowering, even though we were mocking the notion of being powerless" (224). They revolt against the system which did not include black and their surrounded area which is excluded from the society by eliminating it from the map.

Along with other characters who become sad by the exclusion, the narrator takes the action to disorder against the bourgeoisie who are in the majority level. They separate every sector like restaurant, beauty shop, hospital and so on. The narrator adds, "Then, as if it were part of the act, he'd stick a COLORED ONLY sign in the storefront window of a restaurant or beauty shop. No one ever took them down, at least not in front of us; he'd worked too hard for it" (225). Hominy stuck colored sign everywhere. Their strategy is going too far in opposition to mainstream America. Their aim of separating everything among black and white leads them to reach their goal and dream of equal society.

The narrator meets the director of Hospital's Dr. Wilberforce Mingo who gives permission to the narrator to segregate the hospital. The narrator painted the boarderlines, put up the exit sign and narrator says, "Then we drilled a plain black-and-white metal placard into the middlemost concrete pillar. It read, WHITE-OWNED AMBULANCE ONLY" (229). Their resistance is not in favor of America moving forward by separating the hospital. They are in the climax where they have separated almost everything in the society. They are thinking about white people what they can feel about black race.

After five years of going through the legal system, the narrator's case ended up at the Supreme Court. Back in the present, the narrator does not know whether he will go to jail as he waits for the Supreme Courts Judgement. The narrator attends a black comedy night nearby, at which a black comic angrily chases out the lone white couple in the audience, telling them this is "our thing". The narrator feels bad about remaining silent, not because he wants to defend the white couple or protest the comic but to ask the comic what he means by "our thing". This "our thing" shows the search of identity and narrator's constant question "who am I? " question. In this way, narrator's re-establishment of black history, which is dominated, by mainstream history is vividly portrayed in the novel. Finally, the novel ends with the, narrator is being happy to see Dickens has been listed again in the map. Thus, narrator's consciousness to revolt against dominant class becomes success.

In this way, Beatty presents the self-awareness of black peoples identity regarding race and color. The characters are often dealing with loss and failures in life where they seem to have a moment of clarity only for it to disappear an effective or powerlessness to articulate the battle. The narrator is focusing the identity of black people by using the strategy of reinstating the past. When Hominy asks to be his

slave, narrator recognizes that Hominy needs his past identity to find stability in himself. It also reminds people need freedom of choice as they are always dominated by the mainstream level or their freedom of living a respected life is snatched by the country and they become subaltern in their own society. Narrator raises segregation on a bus which reminds people, all they fought for the civil rights movement to get to the present. When he resegregates education it is the white people that want to get into the black school, there is no other choice except going to the black school. The novelist further presents the issues like, loss of freedoms, loss of identity, loss of respect for each other. Subaltern people are always dominated by dominant class as the black narrator who is subaltern conscious hero who revolts against the mainstream America to get the identity of the black people. Ultimately narrator's losses and failure climax at the Supreme Court. He does act in the end and makes a point of finding himself and meaning on the world.

To sum up, the novel *The Sellout* presents the strategic exercise of reinstating slavery system and segregation as a mission to revive past history of the black people. The novel also demonstrates the awakening self through the unknown black narrator in white hegemonic society. It is also about the marginalized black people who dare to raise their voice in racist society. Black peoples consciousness towards their dignity, life, liberty and pursuit of happiness helps them to regain their lost identity. Beatty's novel *The Sellout* plays the important role of agency to present the voice for voiceless people. Through the characters like unnamed black narrator and Hominy Jenkins, this novel tries to evoke the consciousness of marginalized people who are suffering from the domination of elite class and they are able to take action against those hegemonic discourses. The fragmentation in plot too portrays the fragmented history of the black people. So, consciousness of black self leads black marginalized characters to revolt

against the dominant class for the re-establishment of the history of the slavery; which is bitter but an agency to resist against persisting forms of new-slavery.

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