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Voice of the Voiceless in Mutuzeli's *I Speak to the Silent*

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This thesis, entitled “Voice of the Voiceless in Mutuzeli’s *I Speak to the Silent*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Kamala Pradhan has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

This research aims at exposing how the voices of the excluded subaltern people of South Africa are silenced and suppressed by those elitists who have full control and command over the rising anti-apartheid movement. In Mutuzeli's *I Speak to the Silent*, Kondile, a subaltern man, is never encouraged to raise his voice and opinion on the burgeoning issues of the society. He is told that remaining silent is always in his best favor. Such hegemony of the elitists like Mbete block the dissemination of the voices of subaltern. It is on this ground that the novel *I Speak to the Silent* critiques the exclusionary and repressive politics of callous and insensitive elitists. The researcher comes to perceive several evidences about how the so-called elitists like Mbete used their power and influences to cover their mistakes, and atrocious practices. While mounting the campaign for equality and egalitarianism, Sindiswa dies. Her father is seriously affected by the death of his daughter. Her father is not assisted by anybody to know the root cause of Sindiswa's death.

Introduction

Voice of the Voiceless in Mutuzeli's *I Speak to the Silent*

This research probes on the subaltern issue of voicing the voiceless.

Mtutuzeli's *I Speak to the Silent* represents how the elitist narratives and mainstream historiography sideline and subdue the contribution of the subaltern groups. To put an end to apartheid system, many excluded and marginalized subaltern groups have made tremendous contributions. But their sacrifices, contributions and martyrdom are not acknowledged. Their contributions are pushed to the background. Rather their contributions, their views and opinions are forgotten. Only the contributions and sacrifices of elitist freedom fighter are highlighted. Some of the terrible errors of that public figure are kept in the mystery.

Unlike her father Walter Hombile Kondile, Sindiswa is assertive, vociferous and rebellious. Kondile is indoctrinated to obey everything that occurs in his life. But Sindiswa is just the opposite. Both Kondile and Sindiswa are the members of subaltern community. Sindiswa fiercely opposes apartheid. The then government cannot endure her rebellion. Another leader Raymond Mbetse is also a struggle activist. He is also opposed to the apartheid system of South Africa. In the anti-apartheid movement different kinds of struggle activists are involved. Some are subaltern people whereas others are members of dominant elitist class. Sindiswa and Mbetse are exiled. They, including other activists and freedom fighters go to Lesotho which is a free territory where freedom fighters and refugees can take shelter.

The voices, realizations and agony of subaltern people like Kondile, Sindiswa and others are not raised. Because the subaltern people do not have access to the discursive power and the text producing power, their contributions and their sacrifices are rarely mentioned. The dominant discourse is exclusionary. That is why the

subaltern groups hardly get a forum and space to raise their voices. In the novel *I Speak to the Silence*, the excluded and silenced people like Kondile and Mrs. Mbete are compelled to remain silent. Mrs. Mbete, the wife of Raymond Mbete knows about the dreadful and callous activities of her father. But for the fear of being either divorced or killed by her husband, she does not communicate the truth. In the patriarchal sphere, women are subaltern group.

Mtutuzeli is a South African writer who is committed to the purpose of bringing into light the contributions of those marginalized people who are forgotten and ignored in the dominant discourses of national historiography. Most of his writings have subversive spirit. He interrogates some of boastful assumptions and pretensions of those people who belong to the mainstream. Mtutuzeli sees none of the substantial difference between colonial narratives and nationalist historiography. Many excluded and marginalized people fought for liberation from colonialism and apartheid. But only the contributions of the elites and people who have access to the power are recognized and highlighted.

The novel, *I Speak to the Silent*, is the most audacious novel of Mtutuzeli Nyoka. Nyoka puts the entire gamut of his literary skill to represent the voices and views of the excluded groups. The novel, *I Speak to the Silent*, has been widely approved and analyzed by a large number of critics and reviewers. Rodwell Makombe, the leading critic of the South African literature in English, makes the following remarks about *I Speak to the Silent*:

I Speak to the Silent makes a powerful commentary on how callous human indifference is. The trend to listen to the voice of the dominant class creates an incurable wound in the psyche of those who have made crucial contribution to the progress of the country. Walter Hambie

Kondile comes to know that the tendency to respect the contribution of Raymond Mbeté has done a great deal of injustice to those who were willing to sacrifice their lives for the betterment of society beset with various hurdles and setbacks. (23)

Makombe is of the opinion that Mtutuzeli wants to extend sense of sympathy to the main character Kondile. Kondile comes to be aware of the horrifying reality. But he is too helpless to do anything that heals his wounded heart. He is deprived of social justice. He does not have any strength to retrieve what he has lost. He is utterly incapacitated by the plight that is created by the situations through which he passes.

Josine Overdeest is another prominent critic. He too is interested in examining the portrayal of fresh issues in the literature written by African writers. He points out the difference between subdued silence and spontaneous silence.

According to Macomb, Nyoka portrays subdued silence as the means to deception and dispossession. His additional view regarding *I Speak to the Silent* is cited below:

Most of the characters in *I Speak to the Silent* are compelled to remain silent. Mrs. Mbeté is forced to remain silent. Kondile is trained and brainwashed to remain silent. Kondile is indoctrinated to remain silent. He is so trained that it is sinful to raise voice of disobedience and defiance. He takes submission and silence as his foremost duty as the decent member of society. Mrs. Mbeté is intimidated to remain silent so that truth regarding Raymond Mbeté could not come out and blacken his reputation. (75)

In this way, the silence portrayed is the means to dispossess and denude those who have no access and approach to the position of power. Despite the spontaneous and spiritual nature silence, the silence portrayed by Nyoka is deceptive and callous. The

callous and harsh activities of Raymond Mbete are brought to the fore. It has facilitated the common conviction of subaltern people.

Gaurav Desai is the noted subaltern critic. He notices the danger which occurs to women when they choose to work in the external world. The journey of women from the domestic periphery to the outer professional periphery is also not as much secure as it is claimed and assumed. The following lines evoke Gaurav's sense of sympathetic subalternity:

The journey of Kondile from South African to Lesotho is the most poignant and pensive event in the novel, *I Speak to the Silent*. Out of genuine concern he goes to know about the reality regarding to the untimely death of his daughter. Sindiswa is a female who is ignored and neglected despite her crucial contribution and altruistic deeds. Mrs. Mbete is forced to remain silent about her husband's misdeeds and callous murderous acts. The lot of women remains the same if they reach the outer space or not. (57)

The free world of professional and political activities is not safe for women. Whether women are married to men of elitist access or political reputation, their plight remains the same. The absence of drastic change in the power structure and viewpoint of men is largely accountable for the growing dread and danger. Most of the female characters in this novel are portrayed as the subaltern people who have fallen prey to the oppressive factors.

Nawal El Saadawi focuses on the insufficiency of political campaign to introduce individual freedom. When society or country moves from one stage to the next progressive stage, the same corrupted class succeeds in entering into the position

of prestige, privilege and power. Saadawi makes the following commentary with respect to this issue:

When South African passed from apartheid to the liberal democracy, the common people had expected lots of things. They had expected that freedom, security and civil rights will be guaranteed, practiced and extended even to the grass root level. Soon this expectation evaporated. The majority of suppressed and subdued people sank into despair. Walter HambileKondile and his miserable quandary typify this condition. The end of apartheid is supposed to herald his freedom. But he has to pass his whole life in imprisonment. (71)

If it is ironical to expect minimum security and freedom by the excluded people, it would be then acceptable. At the time of great historical upheaval and political transformation, it is customary to break down this sort of expectation. But if those who have sacrificed the significant years of their lives for that freedom and transformation are again chained and then confined, what would be the worth of fighting for freedom. Kondile is trained to be obedient. He takes silence as the most precious virtue. But when he knows that silence is the means to suppress the genuine voice, his awareness itself becomes the source of pain and agony.

Michael Mahon, a prominent critic and social activist, valorizes man's struggle against state totalitarianism and apartheid. The common man's power to resist against the totalitarian forces of apartheid stands at the center of this novel. Mahon lists thoughts about this novel in the following way:

I Speak to the Silent uses these paradoxical moments as a way to depict the struggle of the common man against the forces of totalitarianism in the struggle activists. To the enlisted men, Croft's

gunpoint intimidation bears too close a resemblance to the leadership techniques of fascist Japan. In *I Speak to the Silent* characters attempt to find the point at which one can resist unjust authority without increasing one's own suffering. (64)

Haphazard suffering is the root cause of the problem. Certain framework and map should be constructed in order to promote the spirit of suffering. Unplanned struggle and resistance bring additional misery. It has to be driven by ethical conviction and prudential power. If no prudence is exercised, there would always be danger in an individual's struggle against the oppressive forces of totalitarianism. The tyranny and dehumanization of apartheid is the cancerous to the society that has gradually acquired the quality of freedom and egalitarianism.

Although different critics and reviewers examine the novel *I Speak to the Silent* critically from different angles and arrive at different findings, none of them raise the subaltern issue of voicing the voiceless. Kondile's search to know the truth about his daughter Sindiswa makes him fearful. He is face to face with the horrible reality. He at last comes to know about the disadvantage of being silent, submissive and subdued. The moment he knows about the reality, he is put in the prison on the charge of spying on the activities of freedom fighters and struggle activist. His vision of liberation ends and aborts. Despite his innocence and awareness he is doomed to suffer. There is nobody to take care of him, to stand for his cause and to vindicate for his justice. That is why the present researcher aims at probing and then testing this issue from the perspective of Subaltern studies.

The terms subaltern and Subaltern Studies entered postcolonial studies through the works of the Subaltern Studies Group. who explored the political-actor role of the men and women who constitute the mass population, rather than the

political roles of the social and economic elites, in the history of the Indian Subcontinent. Marxist historians had already been investigating colonial history as told from the perspective of the proletariat, using the concept of social classes as being determined by economic relations. In the 1970s, subaltern began to denote the colonized peoples of the Indian subcontinent and described a new perspective of the history of an imperial colony as told from the point of view of the colonized rather than that of the colonizers.

Subaltern Studies began in India with an explicitly but not exclusively Marxist and Gramscian focus. It analyzes and advocates for the "bottom layer of society" by challenging capitalist logic (Spivak, 2000, p. 324); thus it has both a negative task of undoing capitalist assessment of the underclass as well as a positive task of describing acts of agency and independence and resistance. Inspired in part by the work of E. P. Thompson, and carried on by the work of scholar and editor Ranajit Guha, the publication of the nine-volume series *Subaltern Studies* comprises a great bulk of the theoretical and topical work. Subaltern Studies began in the late 1970s and early 1980s with Indian, European, and American scholars who turned toward understanding peasant consciousness in India, in so far as any and all consciousness was a product of material conditions. Consciousness, here, is broadly viewed by Subaltern writers in the traditional Marxian sense as a manner of thought determined by one's place in the production system; yet at the same time, these writers also view consciousness as a form of subjectivity which can and does develop modes of resistance to that system. Since then, the concerns of Subaltern Studies have blossomed into a global phenomenon with strong institutional support from mainstream academia in Africa, South America, Ireland, and China, as well as India, Europe, and America. Moreover, Subaltern Studies' focus is no longer exclusively

South Asian, but spans communities around the globe, and scholars in the field produce articles written in a large variety of vernacular languages besides English.

Mtutuzeli's novel *I speak to the Silent* deals with socio-political upheaval in South Africa prior to the advent of the end of apartheid. Violent social upheaval, foreign invasions and the conflicting colonial interests of England jointly harmed the integrity of South African families. Because the society of South Africa is caught up in the politico-cultural turmoil, Chinese people had to fall victims of several unknown catastrophes. The whole novel moves round situation in which a woman, betrayed by her husband, is forced to become a concubine of an activist, Raymond Mbete.

In this situation, she is really worried. More than the lecherous advance of Raymond Mbete, it is the insecurity of her son that troubles and torments her. Finally she becomes ready to be the concubine of Raymond Mbete on the condition that he would provide the entire essential fund for the upbringing and education of her family. She wants to secure her family from any harm and hazard. Raymond Mbete agrees to do what she demands. And finally she lives with him. Several years she lives with Mbete continues to exploit her. He does not give her the respectable status. He just treats her as though she is an object of sexual consumption.

During that time her family lived in Johannesburg, received a good education, befriends several important people of South Africa and finally began to work as a detective. In the early phase of his career he makes good progress in the field of forensic investigation. He meets his distant uncle named Philip and comes to know that he is funded by Raymond Mbete who is exploiting her continuously. Philip furthermore says that his mother had become ready to live as Mbete's concubine on the condition that he would provide abundantly for your education and upbringing in London. Christopher Bank is profoundly affected by this message about his mother's

condition. He goes to meet her in the neighboring country of South Africa. The following lines show how much silent and subdued his mother is due to decade long detachment from the outer world:

Mother, I said slowly, it's me. I've come from England. I'm really very sorry it's taken so long. I realize I've let you down badly. I tried my utmost, but you see, in the end, it proved beyond me. I realize this is hopelessly late. I must have started to cry, because my mother looked up and stared at me. Then she said: 'Do you have toothache, my man? If so, you'd better talk to Sister Agnes. No, I'm fine. But I wonder if you've understood what I'm saying? It's me. Christopher.' She nodded and said: 'No use delaying it, my man. Sister Agnes will fill in your form. Then an idea came to me. Mother, I said, it's Puffin, Puffin, and Puffin. She suddenly became very still. (187)

Christopher Bank comes to meet his mother only after uncle Philip tells him everything that happened between his father and mother. Uncle Philip also tells Bank that his mother is living a pathetic life. When Bank comes to know the horrible reality that his mother is living as a concubine of a war lord so that he could get proper fund for his education, he is profoundly shocked. His heart flows with affections, feelings and love for his wife. He goes to meet her in Shanghai. With extreme difficulties and exhaustion, he finally gets a chance to meet her. He calls his mother several times but she does not recognize him. By that time she has already fallen into the state of retrograde amnesia. Her mind is already so traumatized several times that she has no recollections of her past. When Bank touches her loving, she avoids him warning him not to touch her. Bank persistently pleads with her to recognize him, but she mistakes him as a man who is ill and who comes for cure of his tooth ache. Son is intensely

asking for recognition, but mother is in turn responding if he has come for the treatment of his ached tooth. Bank's mother is totally oblivious of her past life. She was sexually exploited by Wang Ku almost a decade. She mistakes her son's loving touch as the sexual assault. She is so affected by trauma that it is difficult for her to find out the difference between the touch with evil intention and the loving touch of son.

Etymologically, subaltern means a person in lower rank or subordinate. It was first used to denote a commissioned officer below the rank of captain in British Military. The term subaltern is used in postcolonial theory. The exact meaning of the term in current philosophical and critical usage is disputed. Some thinkers use it in a general sense to refer to marginalized groups and the lower classes- a person rendered without agency by his or her social status. Others, such as GayatriChakravortySpivak uses it in a more specific sense. She argues:

Subaltern is not just a classy word for oppressed, for other, for somebody who is not getting a piece of the pie. In postcolonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism in subaltern- a space of difference. The working class is oppressed. It is not subaltern group in the real sense of the term. Many people want to claim subalternity. They should see what the mechanics of the discrimination are. They are within the hegemonic discourse wanting a piece of the pie and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse. They should not call themselves subaltern. (271)

In this way Spivak differs the term from the postcolonial view as well as Marxist view that everything that is oppressed is Subaltern. It is simply unheard voice; if a person's voice is not heard, it is subaltern situation. A person without lines of social mobility

is subaltern figure. Subalternity is not vague and limited like the Marxist or other political ideologies.

In the last moment in which Hombile Kondile talks continuously with his mother, he does not find any symptom of change in his mother. Past, past relation, and personal past are all unknown to her. After much more repeated efforts of Bank, she addresses him as a boy. No motherly affection, no compassion and no symptom of identification are found in her face. She just stares at him with astonishment. She looks at him with exotic gaze. The inability of motherly affection to get reflected in his mother's face troubles Christopher Bank. He is saddened at this traumatic plight of his mother.

Terrifically she is confounded and puzzled. Still she takes Bank as an outsider and unknown man who has come to meet her with evil intention in his heart. Flicker of recognition comes shortly in her face. She utters the word 'puffin' and soon this flash of identification evaporate. The following lines suggest how Bank's mother expresses unexpressed sense of puzzle after Bank tries his best to normalize his mother's traumatized psyche:

Puffin, she repeated quietly to herself, and for a moment seemed lost in happiness. Then she shook her head and said: "That boy. He's such a worry to me. Excuse me, I said. Excuse me. Supposing this boy of yours, this Puffin, supposing you discovered he'd tried his best, tried with everything he had to find you, even if in the end he couldn't. If you knew that, do you suppose . . . do you suppose you'd be able to forgive him? My mother continued to gaze past my shoulder, but now a puzzled look came into her face. Forgive Puffin? Did you say forgive Puffin? Whatever for? Then she beamed again happily. That is a boy.

They say he's doing well. But you can never be sure with that one. Oh, he's such a worry to me. You've no idea. (188)

Bank's mother finally utters the word 'puffin' to respond to him. Then she says she is worried for him. Thereafter her mind move into oblivion. The painful wound and traces pushed her awareness to the corner of oblivion. Only the puzzling look and confounding gaze are seen in her face. This condition of his mother makes Walter Kondile deeply gets injured. He feels ashamed of his own masculinity. For not being able to do anything for his mother when she is in trouble, he feels increasingly guilty. Bank calls her several times, acts as a son does before a mother. But his mother displays the same attitude. Hallucinatory responses and amnesia are effects which have haunted her.

The subalterns, by definition, are groups who have had their voices silenced; they can speak through their actions as a way to protest against mainstream development and create their own visions for development. Subaltern groups have been creating social movements which contest and disassemble western claims to power. These groups use local knowledge and struggle to create new spaces of opposition and alternative futures. This also attains females who have been silenced to voice themselves by the male dominated society. Initially, the term enters postcolonial studies through the work of the Subaltern Studies Group, a collection of South Asian historians interested in exploring the role of non-elite actors in South Asian history. In the 1970s, the term began to be used as a reference to colonized people in the South Asian subcontinent.

It provides a new perspective on the history of a colonized place from the perspective of the colonized rather than from the viewpoint of the colonizers. Marxist historians have already begun to view colonial history from the perspective of the

proletariat, but this was sometimes seen as unsatisfying as it was still a Eurocentric way of viewing the globe. Subaltern Studies began in the early 1980s as an intervention in South Asian historiography. While subaltern began as a model for the Subcontinent, it quickly developed into a vigorous postcolonial critique. Subaltern is now regularly used as a term in history, anthropology, sociology, human geography and literature.

About the subaltern, Ranjit Guha writes “Subaltern” is “a name for the general attribute of subordinate, whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any way” (27). Explaining the aim of Subaltern Studies in Subaltern Studies, Guha writes, “The aim of subaltern studies is to promote a systematic and informed discussion of subaltern themes in the field of South Asian Studies”(48). Guha focuses the South Asian Subject matter as the subaltern studies. Similarly, his large category of studies such as gender, caste and ethnicity leaves a multiple dimension in the study which is much applicable in the case of Indian scenario. Because, all the dimensions of study such as caste, gender, ethnicity could be found in South Asia.

From moment to moment, the mood of Konidle’s mother shifts. Sometimes she laughs hysterically. Soon she sings. She sings melodiously. Bank remembers that his mother sings when he was still a child. Even at that time her voice was melodious. While singing she does not hesitate to warn her sir to stay back and not to come closer. In the moment of convulsive laughter she soon gives vent to her anger.

Thinking that he is taking her as an odd woman, she demonstrates the impression that nothing has happened to her. Such a shift from laughter to fury and from fury to self-consciousness is the distinguishing characteristic of her silence. The

following paragraph cited from the text illustrates how violently her mood swings and how swiftly she is infected by anxiety attack:

For the next few moments I continued to watch her. Then my mother began to sing. She sang quietly to herself, almost under her breath, as her hands went on picking up and placing down the cards. The voice was faint I could not make out the song she was singing - but it was effortlessly melodious. I reached forward and gently touched her hand. Instantly she pulled it away and stared at me furiously. 'Keep your hands to yourself, sir!' she said in a shocked whisper. 'Keep them right to yourself! I'm sorry. I moved back a little to reassure her. She returned to her cards and when she next glanced up, she gave a smile as though nothing had happened. (187)

Quietness and outburst occur at the same time in Kondile's wife. She takes everything and everyone in a hostile way. In the past she was exploited several times by war lord. She was kept under coercive surveillance. More than a decade she was cut off from the outside world. The lingering traces of all those events and incarcerations inflicted excruciating pain in her. That is why it is natural for her to act and react in this way. But that does not mean she has degenerated into insanity. She is sane enough to maintain self-consciousness. Yet she does what her own fearful psychology tells her to do. The lingering traces of trauma and growing oblivion have incapacitated her in an incredible way.

Kondile really knows how much his mother had to suffer for his sake when he meets Uncle Philip. Philip is not the real uncle of Christopher. He is a distant uncle of Bank. It is Philip who tells Bank how much trouble Bank's mother endured for the sake of his education and good future. When Kondile knows that his daughter became

Mbete's concubine in order that Bank could get financial provision for his uninterrupted education, he happens to realize how much traumatized and tormented his mother really is. Prior to meeting uncle Philip, Christopher Bank used to think that his father is held captive by kidnapper and his mother is living a morally loose life. Now it is Uncle Philip, who removes haze from his mind and makes him aware of the ground reality. The following lines describe how Christopher happens to know the ground reality.

You see, until I saw her that time, she'd been utterly cut off from the outside world. For seven years, she'd only heard what Wang chose to have her hear. What I mean is, she didn't know for certain that the financial arrangement was working. So when I saw her, that's what she wanted to know, and I was able to reassure her that it was. After seven years of torturous doubt, her mind was put at rest. I can't tell you how relieved she was. That's all I wanted to know, she kept saying. That's all I wanted to know. He was watching me now very carefully. After another moment, I gave him the question for which he was waiting.

(179)

Philip tells Bank that Walter's sister is really noble and great. There is reason to be the concubine of Mbete. After his father left his mother, there was nobody to look after Bank. So his daughter is not as worried about the failure of her marriage as she is about Kondile's helplessness. The helplessness of Bank and the lack of financial prospect to educate him trouble her. But that time, the war lord Wang Mbete puts extreme pressures on her to be his concubine. Had she not agreed to be his concubine, he might have forcibly held her in his custody and made her a concubine. That is why she expressed her willingness to be his concubine.

Subaltern studies come as a social theory to speak against colonialism and bourgeois nationalism. The focus of Subaltern Studies is on the consciousness of the subaltern classes. Gayatri Spivak's introduction to selected Subaltern Studies IV cites about subaltern consciousness and the colonial subject as the basis of theorization perceive there as making "a theory of consciousness or culture rather than specially a theory of change"(4). Postcolonial Cultural Criticism and literary theory has embraced subaltern studies endeavor in deconstructing historiography, Spivak writes:

Subaltern consciousness is subject to the elite that are never fully recoverable that it is always asked from its recovered signifiers indeed that is effaced even as it is disclosed that it is irreducibly discursive. Negative Consciousness is conceived of having historical stage peculiar to subaltern rather than grounding positive view of consciousness, should not be generalized as the group's methodological presupposition. (339)

Negative consciousness, for instance, sees it as the consciousness not of being subalterns but that of the oppressors. Subaltern provides the model for a general theory of consciousness. Subaltern consciousness is unavoidably a past phenomenological and not psychological issue. Some elitist objectify the subaltern and are caught in the game of knowledge as power. So, subaltern studies seem to suggest that its own subalternity in claiming a positive subject position for the subaltern might be re-inscribed as a strategy for time.

The death of Sindiswa overpowers Kondile incredibly. Since then she began to feel lonely and haunted by unimaginable things. That is why a maid named Sister Belinda is hired to look after her and to give her company. Belinda takes the behavior of Bank's mother normally because she is habituated to face her haphazard outburst.

But Kondile is really troubled and pained to see the plight of his mother. At the first sight of his mother in the lodging of Raymond Mbete. He finds his mother playing a card. She is already baptized as Diana.

Walter Kondile carefully observes his mother from distance; then he sees her physically emaciated and enervated. She deals out cards. That means she is interested to play card. While playing card she acts in a normal way. Kondile himself says “I looked carefully at my mother as she dealt out her cards. She was much smaller than I had expected and her shoulders had a severe hunch. Her hair was silver and had been tied tightly in a bun” (186). Only in card game Bank’s mother acts out of regard for sanity and normality.

This research uses Subaltern Studies for the theoretical modality. Although Subaltern studies cover a wide range of postcolonial ideas, I have been specific on the aspect of woman as subaltern and the interconnection with other theoretical insights particularly in the Indian subcontinent. In African, chiefly South Africa, though it is easy to associate subalternity with the lowest socio-economic classes, social castes, and peasantry, social expectations of women allow for the presence of subalternity in all classes. Theorists of subaltern studies have noted that gendered subalternity is particularly complex, as often, the restraints of gender transcend class, allowing subalternity to exist outside of the lowest socio-economic sections of society.

The subaltern is a person or a group of people that have been excluded from society. They do not have a voice, they are lost in the world due to assimilation of colonialism. In other words, “Subaltern” is a term applied to those who exist at the bottom of a hierarchical power system without any means of improving their social condition. In Africa, this often relates to members of the lower economic classes, social castes, and peasantry as these are often the marginal, illiterate, and

dispossessed, though social expectations of women allows for the presence of subaltern peasants in all classes. Theorists of subaltern studies have also noted that gendered subalternity is particularly complex, as often, the restraints of gender transcend class, allowing for subalternity to be free from pure association with socioeconomics. Since this trend in Indian historical and social studies has been so influential, modern Indian literary, dramatic and cinematic texts have reflected a strong interest in the suffering of the subaltern classes. The present novel also strongly raises the voice for the subaltern women to come forward because they are the subaltern of the subaltern.

In the patriarchal society of South Africa prior to the outbreak of the socio-political unrest, women were treated as objects to be held under strict control. When Kondile's daughter is abandoned by his father, several people try their best to possess her. Philip, whom Bank's mother holds in high respect, does not hesitate to cast covetous glance on her. Mbete is ready to go to any extent in order to possess her and make her his concubine. The head of opium trade compels Philip to use Kondile's daughter as the bargaining object for freeing huge quantity of opium from seizure. This trend to calculate helpless women as the bargaining chip is also traumatizing situations. Kondile's daughter falls victims to this sort of patriarchal trend to use helpless women as bargaining chips. The following lines describe how Philip is compelled to use Bank's mother as the bargaining chip:

But the important thing was to stop the imports. To make the trade unprofitable, unfortunately, that day Wang Ku came to your house he said something that for the first time made clear to your mother the reality of his relationship with us. My guess is she felt foolish. Perhaps she'd suspected it all along, but hadn't wished to look at it, and was as

angry with herself and with me as she was with Wang. In any case, she quite lost her temper, actually struck him. Only lightly, you understand, but her hand did touch his cheek. (179)

If Mbete is assisted in his effort to get Diana as his sex partner, it would be possible for Philip to bring the huge quantity of seized opium back from government customs. Mbete is the most powerful figure of South Africa. He is the popularly known war lord. So Philip thinks that even if he is not able to win Diana, he would not lose any moment to take advantage of the helpless life of Diana. But Philip covers his selfish motive with the rhetoric of Diana's inevitable destiny.

According to GayatriChakravortySpivak, subaltern women are subjected to oppression more than subaltern men. They do not have proper representation, and therefore, are not able to voice their opinions or share their stories. No one is aware of the daily struggles they face; subaltern women are ghosts in society: "I think it is important to acknowledge our complicity in the muting, in order precisely to be more effective in the long run" (2207). It is not only colonialism that silences the subaltern, but also those of us who are watching the oppression taking place around the world, and not doing anything about it. Most importantly, the long established male hierarchy and the social dogmas of males being superior have paved the way to the victimization of the women too.

According to Philip, Diana "everything she had to say to his face. I knew then some terrible price would have to be paid. I tried to sort the thing out then and there. I explained to him how your father had just left, that your mother was really upset, I tried to convey all this to him as he left"(177). The lengthy talk between Philip and Christopher Bank is not just a formal conversation. Bank is eager to know the reality. But Philip does not seem to be conveying truth. He rather seems to be confessional.

Had he not inwardly guilty and tortured, he might have come to meet Bank and tell everything that has to be told.

David Ludden says that the meaning of subalternity in Subaltern Studies has shifted as the framework of study increasingly stressed the clash of unequal cultures under colonialism and the dominance of colonial modernity over India's resistant, indigenous culture. According to Ludden, "Subalterns in India become fragments of a nation; their identity and consciousness reflected India's colonial subjugation. This approach has organized an impressive collection of enduring scholarship on colonial texts"(87). It has also enabled Subaltern Studies to speak as India's subaltern voice. Methodologically, recuperating subaltern subjectivity entails the analytical and rhetorical liberation of Indian culture from its domination by the colonial archive and by modernity. Ingenious methods for uncovering fragments of subaltern nationality became the project's particular specialty. Critical readings of colonial texts, oral histories, and ethnographic techniques are employed to reveal India's cultural roots in subaltern subjectivity. Subaltern Studies thus becomes a post-colonial critique of modern, European, and Enlightenment epistemologies. A new kind of cultural essence for India is found in iconic residues of hidden identities, expressions of difference, and misunderstood mentalities (12).

The narrator has taken a great risk to come to meet his mother. He has crossed several areas prone to constant conflict and confrontation. It is risky to undertake such a journey. But the narrator faces all such challenges so that he could safely get to the residence of Mbete. He sees a plump man accompanying her. She is loudly crying and cursing her father that he is a traitor and she would never excuse him. The narrator says that Diana has lost complete control of her life. In a solitary condition, she often mumbles and utters those words hardly expresses understandable truth. In her

traumatic mood, she appears to be consumed by self-hatred. The following lines exemplify this point:

I had been trying to convince myself it was just the same voice she used when angry with me or our servants, but by the time my mother's figure appeared below me, her every word now clearly audible, the effort became pointless. There was something about her that had lost control, something I had never seen before and yet which I at once registered as something I would have to accept in the wake of my father's disappearance. She was yelling at the plump man, having actually to be restrained by Uncle Philip. My mother was telling the plump man he was a traitor to his own race, that he was an agent of the devil, that she did not want help of his sort, that if he ever returned to our house, she would 'spit on him like the dirty animal. (69)

Diana curses her husband. She is consumed with vindictive sense. Proudly she rejects any offer of help towards her. She knows that selfish purpose always lies behind any pretentious offer of help promised by any man. Self-hatred, fury and revenge overpower her completely. Due to his betrayal that she had to throw herself on Mbete's rakish embrace. It is through her subversive husband that she had to worry about her son. The pressures of real life inflict unbearable pain. One after the other she comes under the huge and heavy traumatic constraints. The narrator is puzzled to know whether she lost control of her own life out of the mounting pressures or not in his first meeting of his mother.

When the narrator comes to talk to Diana, she advises him to put on proper shoe and a jacket. She is totally unable to understand the situation in which she is forced to live and how broken hearted her son is having seen her in this condition.

Only a flicker of reminiscence comes over her mind and she begins to advise him to put on a jacket and a shoe. This is clear and convincing evidence that her condition is provocative of compassion on the part of the narrator. She perceives the serious things in a light hearted trivial way. It is there where the widening incompatibility between the narrator's perception of reality and the victim's reaction lies. The following lines are illustrative of how excruciatingly subdued and subordinated Diana is:

I rushed to the doorway and again my mother laughed. Then she told me I would have to put on proper shoes and a jacket. I remember thinking of protesting about the jacket, but then deciding not to in case the adults changed their minds, not only about the accordion, but also about this whole lighthearted mood we were enjoying. I waved casually to my mother as Uncle Philip and I set off across the front courtyard. Then several steps on, as I was hurrying towards the waiting carriage, Uncle Philip grasped me by the shoulder, saying: 'Look! Wave to your mother!' despite my already having done so. (72)

The plump man is none other than Mbete. He has kept Diana as his concubine. In the novel, it is not mentioned if Mbete's sole purpose of using Diana sexually adds traumatic torture to Diana or not. Although it is not mentioned clearly that Mbete treated her harshly under coercive surveillance, there are evidences in the text that it is Mbete who detached her completely from the external world. The complete detachment of Diana from the outer world and Mbete's frequent sexual assault undoubtedly exerted pressures on her. Mbete is often found accompanying her. No matter how much devoted Mbete is towards her, it is selfish and pretentious devotion only. He treats Diana as no less than just a concubine. Throughout the novel, it is obviously clear that what shocks, troubles and haunt her is not the ignominious fate of

being Mbete's concubine but the jolt of betrayal which her husband had mounted at her.

Academic work on subaltern themes quickly detaches subalternity from its various inventors. Migrations of reading dispersed research on subaltern themes connected by circulating terminologies, arguments, and texts. Outside forces contract the project itself, and its own institutional boundaries have always been permeable. Its internal coherence has been less intellectual than personal and more formal than substantive. Intellectual cohesiveness is seldom a project priority, and it has appeared primarily in solidarity against critics. Outsiders have built outer walls for Subaltern Studies and landscaped its environment to dramatize its distinctiveness. As Eric Stokes claims "Respondents, interlocutors, interpreters and translators have worked with Subaltern Studies material. They redefined it by writing about it differently. Insiders have become outsiders"(71). Outsiders have become insiders. Outsiders doing independent work on subaltern themes have embraced Subaltern Studies as a kindred project.

Diana's impulses know no bound. Her behavior turns from hysterical laughter to pathetic sobriety. Within a fraction of second her hysterical laughter changes into moral uprightness. She giggles in an incredible way, cracks jokes and expresses her giddy feelings. In the same situations she is laughs and suppresses her laughter. Her son is painfully awake to her indescribable suffering. Joking, laughter, sobriety and sudden outburst have become the inseparable characteristics of Diana in distress.

Mei Li knows the reality about his mother's condition. But he never reveals this truth to him. Had Mei Li, the colleague of Uncle Philip, tells him the truth about his mother he might have done something to save her. But now situation has undergone so much change that it would be totally impossible to bring his mother

back and track. The following lines throw light on the fury and guilt of the narrator for being utterly unable to handle tragic and torturous destiny:

She was sitting very upright and as I appeared in the doorway, she looked at me and made another giggling sound, as if she were enjoying a private joke and trying to suppress her laughter. It dawned on me then that Mei Li was weeping, and I knew, as I had known throughout that punishing run home, that my mother was gone. I now realized was an impostor: someone not in the least capable of controlling this bewildering world that was unfolding all around me; a pathetic little woman who had built herself up in my eyes entirely on false pretences, who counted for nothing when the great forces clashed and battled.

(74)

The narrator comes to conclude that great forces clash and battle. Those forces are so overpowering and overwhelming that individuals have no power to gain control over them. The narrator goes on to ask question to himself who has access into the heart of another person. His mother does not know that his father could be so deceptive and treacherous. She has to pay price for the treacherous activity of his father. Mbete turns out to be so brutal. There is no chance to escape from his grip. Except surrendering to the temptation and coercion, she does not have any option. That is why she does what the circumstances compel her to do. The narrator thinks upon the pressures of circumstantial parameters.

The social dogmas have not only made illusions of the illiterate and lower class women but also the educated and economically sound. They are to be called hegemonized if readers take the words of Antonio Gramsci (6). Gramsci comparatively familiarizes the history of the subaltern groups as being as complex as

the history of the dominated class and their struggles. Even when they raised their voices against the complacent elite group, the subaltern were still subject to the activities of the elites. He opines that the history of subaltern class have less excess to the means and social and cultural institutions by which they can construct their representation.

To make Kondile aware of his daughter's sacrifice for his sake, Philip hints at the moral audacity of his mother. Philip frankly says that after her father abandons her, it is he who had also sought to marry her. But she treated Philip out of respect. Philip then altered his way. Philip makes a forceful but right claim that if she need not have thought about Bank, Bank's education, and his upbringing, his mother might have died by her own hand prior to Mbete lays his hand on her. The following lines throw light on this aspect:

Uncle Philip, what financial arrangement?' He looked down at the back of his hands and studied them for a time. 'Had it not been for you, her love for you, Puffin, your mother, I know, would have taken her own life without a moment's hesitation before allowing that scoundrel to lay a finger on her. She would have found a way, and she would have done it. But there were you to consider. So in the end, when she saw the situation for what it was, she made an arrangement. (180)

Philip convinces Kondile that his mother goes to this extent of selling her moral purity and grace not for the sake of her delight and contentment but for the sake of her son's well being. Philip's poignant words and sincere way of revealing reality touch Kondile's heart. That is why he puts an end to his wrong assumptions and pursues the path of reality, ground reality and the reality of reality. Christopher Bank asks the

head of detective department to extend his tenure and send him to Johannesburg. Only after meeting Uncle Philips, Christopher Bank finds himself on the path to awakening.

Uncle Philip works as the person who connects the missing link. He too is full of patriarchal biases. After his father's betrayal, it is Uncle Philip who has cast leering glance on Sindiswa. But before Mbete's power and strength he had to cast his desire aside. Uncle Philip is involved in opium trade.

To put pressures on Kondile's daughter, he usurps all the opium of Philip's corporate head. Uncle Philip's timidity and fear are also responsible for the ignominious plight of Bank's mother. But he argues convincingly that the fate that Walter's daughter had to encounter is inevitable. Such a deterministic and fatalistic mindset cherished not only by men but by women also set the traumatizing state for women at large. The following lines reveal true facts about Uncle Philip's so-called sincerity:

So much so that he wished to take her back with him as a concubine, back to Hunan. He proposed to tame your mother, as he would a wild mare. Now you must understand, Puffin, the way things were then, in Shanghai, in China, if a man like Mbete decided on a course like that, there was little anyone could do to stop him. That's what you must understand. Nothing at all would have been achieved by asking the police or whoever to guard your mother. That might have slowed things down a little, but that's all. There was no one who could protect your mother from the intentions of a man like that. Your mother's fate was inevitability. But for you, there was something to plead for. And that's what I did.' (179)

It can be said that there are various other factors that contributed to the traumatic quandary of Kondile's daughter. Of course, deceptive act of betrayal inflicts traumatic onslaught on her. This is just the beginning only. The brutal lust of Mbete is another traumatizing factor. The clash of conflict between several colonial agencies is another equally important factor.

The narrator's daughter, a pathetic victim of indifference and atrocity, takes her sickle and jumps upon a boy holding a kitchen knife. The boy is playing with his kitchen knife. But Diana interprets the situation differently. She thinks that the boy is coming to mount an assault on her. So she takes sickle out of her last effort to defend herself. The repressed memories come out forcibly and then compel her to act in such a rash and reckless way. The following lines show how helplessly rash she is in her own defense:

Rising, I looked through the crowd, and then gestured to a young boy holding a kitchen knife to come closer. When I took the knife from him, the woman with the sickle moved threateningly towards me, but I raised the revolver and shouted to her to keep her distance. Then kneeling down again beside Akira, I went about cutting his bonds. I had imagined Akira had said 'string' because of his limited English, but I now saw he was indeed tied with old twine that yielded easily under the blade. 'Tell them,' I said to the old man, as Akira's hands came free, 'tell them he's my friend. And that we're going to solve the case together. (153)

Diana's aggression grows in an irresistible way when she sees a boy holding kitchen knife. The war lord Mbete had to compel her, frightened her and then held her in captivity before she finally buckles to his rakish approach. Those bitter memories are

repressed by her. Now when an object suggestive of violence is seen by her, she could not control her anger and aggression. The sort of aggression which she displays is the outburst of her repressed memories. Since she is utterly crushed by the burden of repressed memories, her acts and responses are not as co Subaltern Studies occupies a subject position inside India, but is written for readers everywhere. Outside India, it is often the only brand of Indian history that readers know by name.

National narratives, orientalist images, ethnic stereotypes, and Hindu fundamentalism are vastly more influential. In opposition to these, subalterns have made little headway. Peter Gran says that “Readings of the Indian history contained in Subaltern Studies are inflected variously by national contexts in the world of globalization” (125). Peter Gran argues, for instance, “that in India, Subaltern Studies is read against liberalism, Marxism, and religious fascism, whereas in the US, its principal novelty is its ability to represent India by being read into ideologies of difference and otherness” (13). Though globalization circulates texts and ideas around the world, it nonetheless divides reading environments.

In this way, it can be postulated that Diana is a helpless and betrayed woman who has to encounter several hostile factors. Mbete’s ruthless lechery, her exposure to violence, bloodshed and murder in the conflict prone zone, her moral degradation and ignominy are some of the factors which hastened her traumatic condition. Violent mood-swinging, hysterical laughter, arid jokes, outburst of anger and aggression and the premonition of being assaulted by a man of bad intention are the characteristic features of her disturbed psyche.

This research proves to show how the excluded groups suffer disastrously and how truths regarding to their sufferings are hidden and detached from public access and understanding. In the novel, *I Speak to the Silent*, the major character Sindiswa, a

female committed to the promotion of equality and friendship, happens to meet disaster. As a result, she loses her life. But the truth about how she meets a tragic end is kept hidden by those who are in the position of power. Mbete is the leader of those who are trapped in tyranny and social oppression. Many people find him messiah in Mbete because of his decade long involvement in the liberation movement. He is assisted in this movement by other activists like Sindiswa and other veteran leaders. It is the moral obligation of Mbete to conduct an inquiry over the sudden demise of Sindiswa. But he does not dare to expose the reality. Rather he continues to show indifference towards the matter.

Because he has had involvement in this disastrous end, he always sheds crocodile tears. His show of difference is dehumanizing. Mbete is not completely clear in leading the political movement. He is actually living a shameful life. He sleeps with several girls. The displaced and homeless people believe in Mbete as the emancipator of excluded people. He is fast and furious in taking an advantage of the situation. Having seen the helpless plight of the young girls, Mbete takes advantage of them. His sexual depravity and moral ignominy are not exposed to the public. In case his immoral acts come out, his reputation will be damaged. So he suppresses the truth. When Sindiswa's father comes to know about the reality regarding his daughter's sudden demise, Mbete does not bother to tell him reality. He just tries to put him under illusion. Kondile remains frustrated and disillusioned.

Although he is married twice, her marriage crashe disastrously. Fed up with the restrictive measures of marriage, Mbete chooses to live in a different way and with different purpose. Without marrying third time, He lives with various girls in an isolated part of South Africa. But that man betrays her. From every corner of

traditional patriarchal society she has to face challenges. People with a narrow perspective and rigid mentality produce hostile and harsh remarks.

The society laughs at the chronic failure of Mbete's private life and marriage. The society prides not on her success but on her self-destructive and humiliating failure. For how long could she stand up to such social treatment? All these responses begin to inflict humiliating injury in her mind. Sindiswa does not produce a child. She is still single. She takes as wastage of time and energy the task of leading the local political movement. Dissatisfied with the traditional gender role, Mbete chooses to live this sort of life. For his vicious deeds, he is vilified. This kind of harsh denunciation and lacerating remarks depress and humiliated him. Mbete takes marriage as a restrictive institution. He feels that marriage restricts her inner longings and unidentifiable urges.

Haunted by alienation, emptiness and enervation, Kondile is unable to revitalize his life. At last he turns out to be a pathetic figure groping his space in the hostile platform of society driven solely by the interest and power of patriarchy. One has to be tactful and prudent as well to manage all the challenges that come on the way to freedom. While seeking freedom, it is necessary to abide by certain normative principle. Except lamentation he has no option. One should be bold enough to remain unwavering in the wake of disaster and mishap.

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