

I. *Junkiriko Sangeet* as a Subaltern Text

The novel *Junkiriko Sangeet* by renowned Nepali writer, Khagendra Sangraula, is a tale of oppression of the social outcastes and untouchables of the Parbat district of Nepal. They are the subalterns of the society when we see them from any angles- social, political or economic. The novel encompasses the chronological development and growth of the awareness of the oppression among the dalits, Damais of the Simring Gaun, a village just two kilometers away from the district headquarter Kushma, from Panchayat through the restoration of democracy and People's War initiated by the Maoists. In the novel, without any central heroic character, the writer narrates the social discrimination, untouchability, and lack of awareness among the Damais of the village. The villagers are ignorant and dependent to the rich Brahmins called Bistas. The social outcastes are referred as 'gu ka lind', the portion of human shit or excretion by Brahmins. The women are blamed as witches and the dalits are segregated in the society. They are unable to use the tap without the permission of the women of the upper-caste. Jiri Damini, wife of Sante Damai, bears the tag of witch and lives helpless life with her little son Aite after her husband dies eating the 'sino' i. e. the rotten carcass of buried buffalo belonging to Gopinath, the ex-Pradhanpancha of the village. When Kapil and Sheshkanta, employers of an NGO, start to make the villagers aware, the oppressed villagers gradually see their hellish oppressed existence and start to protest the untouchability and other forms of the social injustice.

However the novel has multiples voices of subalterns. There is not only one central heroic characters and one single story. The relationship of the characters appear in the margin of the novel. It may be observed that the author has attempted to give

subaltern voices denying the dominant party the position to speak for their own. The secondary characters Giri, Jamuni, Some, Katwal, Hiralal, Aite are the dominated, marginalized people who are denied their own voices. The identity consciousness of Dalits in the novel is deliberately reserved and reconstructed by the author. The writer also exhibits the class consciousness, political consciousness among the subaltern people.

The major problem this research attempts to study in the novel is to examine how the voiceless subalterns of the society gradually gain the subaltern-consciousness and attempt to come out of the subalternity. The Damais of Simring village were, first, unaware of their class-consciousness but after the downfall of Panchayat regime and the intervention of the various NGOs and political thoughts, how they finally became able to gain the class-consciousness is the major aspect of study in this research. So major argument of this research is that though subaltern studies appears to evolve from the questioning of the elitist historiography and subalternity of the various marginalized group and under the postcolonial Indian context, it can be applied to question any kind of elitist discourse effecting the silence of the subalterns voices in any contexts as no society is free of the hegemony of privileged class.

The miserable condition of the social outcastes, untouchable Damais in Simring due to the elitist Brahminic oppression and the lack of awareness will be studied as the basis of their subalternity. The continual oppression of the upper-caste and the experience of their own hellish existence due to ignorance and superstition are responsible for their subalternity but when they gain hope of betterment due to the education given to them by the NGO activists and the tide of the political change nationwide, they gain their voice.

The novel *Junkiriko Sangeet* has been examined from various perspectives since its publication in 2056 B.S. Among the various critics of the novel, Pratyoush Onta and Mohan Vaidya “Chaitanya” are the most notable critics who examine the novel from totally different perspectives.

Onta is very positive to the writing of Sangraula as he sees the expression of the voice of untouchable outcastes of Parbat district of Nepal in the novel. He analyzes the novel in his essay named “Upanyasma Dalit Boli nai Nayak Ho” in this vein of thought. He writes:

Sangraula has written this novel in the setting of Parbat district after coming into the contact of the outcastes of the district and with additional study and research. The story of the novel is not woven around an individual hero. There are various individuals- outcaste males and females, non-outcastes, locals, an NGO and its activists. There are party cadres too- local persons are seen in this role continually changing their guise. On the basis of specific knowledge and experience about hellish life, the outcastes have found their voice in Sangraula’s novel. (My Translation 76)¹

Onta is critical of the so-called progressive but eventually the oppositional critics of Sangraula. He sees that such critics might blame Sangraula as a reformist rather than a progressive in the novel after reading it. Regarding this possibility Onta writes:

There is the possibility of rumor among self-acclaimed ‘progressive writers’ that Sangraula has given up the communist values as there is no single revolutionary hero in the novel. The forum of progressive writers in

¹ All the translations used in the research are my own.

Nepal (Pragatishil Lekhak Sangathan) might issue long speech about novel-writing and the officials of the organization might not feel that the novel should be given the space in the debate. . . . The ‘progressives’ who have already seen the way the liberation by the means of speeches and formulas would charge Sangraula as a ‘reformist’. (78)

As per this prediction of Onta, Sangraula has been bitterly criticized by progressive, communist bloc. Notably, the critic and prominent leader of Maoist hardliner faction Mohan Vaidya ‘Chaitanya’, in his essay entitled “Junkiriko Sangeet ma Lamkhutteka Swar ra Shabdaharu” collected in his book of criticism *Kranti ra Saundarya* i.e.

Revolution and Aesthetics, criticizes Sangraula:

Khagendra Sangraula is a famous personality in the in the field of Nepali progressive literature. . . . In terms of the subject matter his novel is probably the first novel of its kind in Nepali literature. But it is difficult to see that the ground of his ideological values and his critical line of thought. It is the matter of great worry to see this condition of a progressive writer. (208)

Chaitanya, thus, laments on the fall from the ideological values and stance of the progressive front in the writer. He sees the excessive values given to the workers of an NGO in the novel to change the society and social status of the outcastes as the problematic of the novel. He further writes:

Here, the oppressor caste, the oppressed caste, NGO workers and the cadres of various political parties are present. The major conflict between oppressor Bistas i.e. Brahmins and the outcastes and NGO workers has

been portrayed. The NGO activists are presented as the liberators of the outcastes. (211)

Thus, the contention of the politics oriented progressive writers is that there is no politics and the class conflict between the rich and poor but NGOs to liberate people of the lower level in the society is the source of despair in the grassroots people and it itself is the capitalist belief to see the NGO activists as the reformers of the society.

Pratyoush Onta in one of his essays “Revisiting *Junkiriko Sangit*” ten years later expresses his surprise as Sangraula had allied with Maoist even though he differed largely with the Maoist in the concept of liberation and development of the people. He, then, sees the intention of Maoists gathering votes using Sangraula’s fame. He writes; “Their goals are pretty much the same, but Sangraula and the Maoist leadership have differed significantly regarding the means to reach those goals” (6). He criticizes the Maoist allied critics as:

Far from celebrating the heterogeneity of dalit voices and the multiple possibilities of recognition of dalit agency in *Junkiriko Sangit*, these Maoist literary and political commentators could only imagine a society where the state was in the hands of the Maoist Party and the rest of Nepali society had to follow the party’s dictates. Their idea of democracy was locked within a framework in which their party’s vanguard role was beyond any question, just as the Shah monarch’s role in national development was beyond any question during the high days of the Panchayat era of the 1960s and 1970s. (6)

Considering all above criticisms, it becomes clear that though the text has been analyzed from various perspectives. But there is no critic who explores the subalternity of the characters and their silence in the novel. It seems that there is strong need to carry out research on this text from a new perspective of subaltern studies. Without proper study on this issue the meaning of text will remain incomplete. Having taking this fact into the consideration, the present researcher proposes to carry out the research from the theoretical strands of subaltern studies.

Subaltern means “of lower rank”. The word is still in use in British military to refer to the military officer below the rank of captain. Thus, it become the catchall term for all the subordinate groups of the society like the Dalits, colonized, women , blacks, the working class etc. The first person to use it as a terminology to refer to the peasant group of Italy is the Italian neo-Marxist Antonio Gramsci who saw them in the society without the awareness of their subordination. Since the term subaltern means the marginalized, Dalits, widow women, silenced groups of society and history, Subaltern Studies becomes the project for the retrieval of the minority, muted histories and voices of subalterns.

The subaltern for Gramsci is “The subaltern classes, by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a “State”: their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society, and thereby with the history of State and groups of States”(*Critical Theory since Plato, 946*). So With the aim to recover” the small silenced voice of history- the voice of subaltern”(Guha 45) South Asian intellectuals started to publish subaltern writings as *Subaltern Studies: Writing on South Asian History* in the editorship of Ranjit Guha. The main highlights of Guha’s argument propounding the

discipline of Subaltern Studies is that Indian history, whether colonial, national, Marxist, or neocolonial, has been written by elite, about the elite and for the elite and by definition, and intent in the process has ignore everyone else, namely, “the people” or, in Antonio Gramsci’s term, the “subaltern”.

The political and moral authority is gained by the Third World, subaltern critics from their heterogeneous local contexts of appropriation and subordination with the homogenizing tendency of western discourses. The continual play of appropriation, domination and re-appropriation is rightly highlighted in Alastair Pennycook’s *English and the Discourse of Colonialism,...*”Postcolonial writers appropriate English and neocolonial literary critics reappropriate the the postcolonial writers”(201).In this way, the questioning of the relevance of the European, white, elitist and male dominated discourses by Third World intellectuals and to attempt to develop their own modes of discourses to come out of the western appropriation and to write their own history and voice their silence appears to very plausible move. Thus Third World and subaltern critics examine the marginality and silence under the seemingly subversive and liberating Western, European discourses with the radical resistance over their moral ground to speak about the silence if postcolonial subjects and claim their participation in appropriation of neocolonial domination and perpetuation of the cultural imperialism in the name of globalization. Bell Hooks argues, “who are most victimized by sexist oppression; women who are daily beaten down, mentally, physically and spiritually... [and] are powerless to change their condition in life” (131). Thus, the call of Guha and other subaltern critics underscoring the need to recover the muted history of subalterns “in the tradition of ‘history from below’, was to ground our own political beings and

institutions in history” (475) incorporates the view of the Third World, subaltern intellectuals.

Spivak’s essay “Can Subaltern Speak?” is a classic application of Derridean analysis which looks at the problematic of subaltern voice and historiography. The first problem Spivak locates concerns the provenance of the method of analysis itself: postcolonialism applies external, male-dominated discourse from the Western academy to the question of the subaltern and therefore is in danger of reproducing a form of ‘colonization’ of the subaltern subject which it ostensibly professes to oppose. The second problem concerns the nature of what is identified by this analysis: to identify the subaltern and bring that voice out of the silent shadows of history is to render the subaltern no longer truly ‘subaltern’, but to incorporate that hidden or obscured identity into dominant discourse. The third problem concerns the valorization of the subaltern: for the subaltern to speak (or rather, perhaps, for postcolonial discourse to speak for the subaltern) as a site of true and authentic identity is to essentialize that voice, again reproducing the very attributes the project set out to challenge in the first place. The logic of these arguments seems to be leading to an inescapable conclusion: for the subaltern to be ‘subaltern’ (24), he or she must remain silent. And so, too, must the postcolonial critic. To enable the subaltern voice, Spivak acts as an essentialist essentializing the ethnic, racial or any other identities of the subaltern. Her position is thus, strategic essentialist position. In favor of Spivak, David Richards further argues clarifying the position:

Subaltern identification, however compromised, is necessary to enable agency, according to Fanon’s . . . premise. In order to break open this dilemma, Spivak proposes a kind of compromise to enable subaltern

identity and therefore agency. Her concept of 'strategic essentialism' argues that it is necessary to adopt certain 'essentialized' identities (national, ethnic, gender, racial) in order to 'speak' and to achieve specific strategic goals. (23)

The position of strategic use of essentialized subaltern identity is necessary as the humanist project of enabling subaltern agency. In the novel *Junkiriko Sangeet*, Khagendra Sangraula has also adopted the essential dalit identity for the untouchable castes of Parbat district- Kami, Damai, Sarki and so on. Their ethnic identity is necessary to enable their voice in the society marred by caste hierarchy.

Dipesh Chakrabarty underscores the need to write the history of the subaltern groups but he carefully avoids essentialism in the name of recovering the subaltern voices in such histories. In his essay "Radical Histories and Question of Enlightenment Rationalism: Some Recent Critiques of 'Subaltern Studies'", he asserts:

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

Thus, the form of subaltern historiography is open-ended and is not codified as in the dominant modes of historiography. The history from below or the subaltern historiography is necessary but if one devises particular language or vocabulary to write them in the name of creating the subaltern language, it becomes essentialist. Even in the subaltern history, the language of elites, states and even the imperial language and

vocabulary of the Western rationality may come overlapping to each other. Thus, subaltern historian should be non-committal to any particular position or jargons.

In this regard David Richards in his essay “Farming Identity” writes about the agenda of subaltern studies and argues that it is:

concerned with the rewriting of the history . . . not as the traditional narrative of elites engaged in a heroic struggle with . . . but as small-scale local insurrections (often failing) enacted by groups and individuals—workers, peasants, women—ignored or ‘written out’ of the historical grand narrative. (23)

It is clear from his assertion that the term subaltern stands for all the groups and intellectuals who are ignored by the traditional, elitist, colonial historiography including workers, peasants, women etc. To recover their history and to articulate their new collective political and cultural agency with the resistance to the discourses of elitist nationalism, Subaltern Studies Collective or Group (SSG) was found in India by South Asian intellectuals and academics. Partha Chatterjee, the prominent member of Subaltern Studies Group (SSG) further defines the project that “the task now is to fill up . . . emptiness, that is, the representation of subaltern consciousness in elitist historiography. It must be given its own specific content with its own history of development” (62). Thus, the central question of subaltern historiography is to represent the subaltern consciousness with the articulation of the new forms of political and cultural agency of subaltern groups.

While reading the literary texts for the recovery of the subaltern voice the representation of characters and the writer’s position and agency to speak about the

subaltern characters, the characters' growth to awareness of their subordination and subalternity, their agency to their life and the conscious of resistance to come out of the subalternity are very important. Margery Sabin in her essay "In Search of Subaltern Consciousness", with the emphasis on analysis of the writer's position, writes, "In searching for subaltern consciousness through writing, projection of writer's own social position and values are always discernible"(178). For Sabin the writers may knowingly involve to repress or to articulate the subaltern voices.

With the consideration of the anti-essentialist, anti-establishment nature of Subaltern Studies, it has been used in this research to examine variety of texts randomly drawn from the representative writers from Europe, Asia and Africa set in different socio-political settings. Though subaltern inquiry has been made in those texts, the major goal of the research is to justify Subaltern Studies as a wide methodological approach that can be used to examine the muted voices in both global and local texts. In the concluding section of the research, the subaltern consciousness examined texts are underscored.

This research will be remarkable repertoire for the future researchers as it explores the subaltern silence in particular historical circumstances. It also helps to understand the marginalization of the minorities due to the power exercised by the dominant elites with the construction of the elitist discourses. Those discourses silence the minority discourses and voices.

The basic objective of the study is to underscore the fact how the elitist, racist discourses are responsible for the subaltern silence. With the examination of the subaltern outcastes like Damais, Kaamis, Sarkis and others, the muted history of the minority lower working-class outcastes will be unearthed in the course of this research.

Though this research uses the concepts of the some of the noted subaltern historians, it does not offer comprehensive and overall analysis of the Subaltern Studies and its debates. The research will be purely textual and thus, field study about the issues of subalternity will not be included. The subaltern and Third world theorists will be drawn into the debate while examining the novel. The subaltern historians and theorists like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Ranjit Guha, Gyan Prakash, Dipesh Chakrabarty and other will be brought into conversation to examine the subaltern silence and muted histories of minority blacks. The valuable guidelines of the lecturers, library consultation, and internet research will help further to shape this research to its complete form.

The present research work has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter fundamentally deals with introductory outline of the present study. It introduces critical review and the characters in relation to their subjection to the upper-caste domination and the maintenance of silence in the subaltern voice. Thus it presents the bird's eye view of the entire research. The second chapter aims at providing the theoretical methodological reading of the text briefly with both the textual and theoretical evidences. It attempts to examine the subalternity of dalit people and their journey to consciousness of the represented events and the circumstances of the characters. On the basis of the various theories of subalterns and subalternity including Gramsci, Guha, Spivak and so on, the characters and their circumstances and journey to consciousness are examined. This chapter further sorts out some extracts from the text to prove the hypothesis of the research. This part serves as the core of the present research. The third chapter concludes the ideas put forward in the earlier chapter, focusing on the outcome of the entire research. The various logical conclusions have been summarized as the

proof that the novel is written so as to enable the voice and agency of the subaltern dalits of remote district of Nepal.

II. Representation of Subaltern Voices in Sangraula's *Junkiriko Sangeet*

This research is an examination of Khagendra Sangraula's novel *Junkiriko Sangeet* as a representation of the miserable condition of subaltern, dalit people in class and caste-dominated Nepali society and their journey towards the consciousness. The novel is a heartrending portrayal of class and caste-based oppression of the social outcastes and untouchables of the Parbat district. As we examine the social, political or economic, cultural circumstances of the remote village of Parbat district, we see the undemocratic, suffocating atmosphere of the Nepali society in which the poor Damais, Kamis and Sarkis are hegemonized by the caste-system, rigorously maintained by elite Hindu brahmins. Dalits, the socio-politically oppressed Damais, have been presented with their poverty and lack of voice in the setting of a village, Simring Gaun, just two kilometers away from the district headquarter Kushma through Panchayati totalitarian rule to the democracy and People's War initiated by the Maoists.

In the novel, the Sangraula narrates the social discrimination, untouchability, and lack of awareness in the Damais of the village as the factors behind their voicelessness and the condition of the subaltern. The villagers are ignorant and dependent to the elite Hindu brahmins called Bistas and due to their poverty and dependence they are hegemonized, exploited and even dehumanized. They have no agency at all. It is clearly seen that the social outcastes are referred as 'gu ka lind', the portion of human shit or excretion by Brahmins. The women are blamed as witches and the dalits are segregated in the society. They are unable to use the tap without the permission of the women of the upper-caste. Jiri Damini, wife of Sante Damai bears the tag of witch and lives helpless life with her little son Aite after her husband dies eating the 'sino' i. e. the rotten carcass

of buried buffalo belonging to Gopinath, the ex-Pradhanpancha of the village. When Kapil and Sheshkanta, employers of an NGO, start to make the villagers aware, the oppressed villagers gradually see their hellish oppressed existence and start to protest the untouchability and other forms of the social injustice.

The untouchability has its foundation in the many of the Hindu scriptures. So, the elites who consider themselves as the staunch followers of dogmatic Hinduism observe the caste hierarchy in South Asian societies. In Sangraula's novel, Gopinath and the Brahmin elites of the society perpetuate the untouchability and the caste hierarchy as they think themselves to be true Hindus. But even in the scriptures which represent the untouchable subalterns, the subalterns are portrayed as the voiceless ones. In his essay "Ekalavya and 'Mahābhārata' 1.121-28", Simon Brodbeck presents Ekalavya as the muted subaltern whose voice is muted due to elitist Hindu ruling class's appropriation of power with the demand of his thumb that helped him to become unrivaled archer of the world. His racial position is very low in the society as he is regarded as "Nisada", the untouchable. Brodbeck writes:

His story has been particularly celebrated by dalits, members of communities formerly known (to others) as "untouchable," by whom he is revered as a martyred forefather. The ethnic discrimination that led to his downfall is something these communities have felt and continue to feel, and his dignity in the face of it makes him a suitable role model. Key here is his nisada identity. "Nisada" in the Mahabharata is a subtle concept (or construct), expounded gradually through an array of different characters and stories. (2-3)

The dalits are thus regarded as the offspring of the martyred character Ekalavya whose skill of archery had been martyred as the elite Hindu Guru Dronacharya had wanted his thumb as the sacrifice for the Guru. The untouchables thus, has been subaltern sacrificing their skills, art, riches, castes for the Hindu elites and are ruled by them, economically poor and in the lower order of the caste hierarchy in the society.

The ignorant dalit Damais of Simring village are crushed under the grinding poverty. The upper-class elite Brahmins maintain the perfect domination upon them. The Damais are unable to buy the fresh meat and the upper-caste Hindu elites have maintained the custom to get advantage of this situation by giving the rotten flesh of their dead cattle to the dalits as an exchange for their labor. They are thus dehumanized creatures like jackals or vultures to clear the rotten wastes of the elite class and paying the debt of the waste annually with grains or labor to them. The novel opens with the tragedy of eating the rotten flesh of buried buffalo belonging to Gopilal, so-called religious Hindu Brahmin and the Mukhiya of the village. Sante damai and five other people of the village are dead of the diarrhea and vomiting eating the rotten flesh of buffalo. Sante damai leaves Jiri Damini, his wife and his young son Aite behind leaving the family in abject poverty and struggle to live. The elder son has gone to India to earn money but he is out of touch for long time. After the death of Sante Damai, Jiri's only hope and support is Aite, a child studying in third grade.

“Aite,” Jiri spoke looking straight to the eyes of her son Aite with her tearful eyes. “Your brother has gone to alien land and it is uncertain when he returns. You are the bread and butter earner and all in all of this house now. You must leave school now. My body is weak, I cannot labor

anymore. You are lone person to carry our loads and the spade. You are sole person to run the family now.”

“No, I want to go to school, mother.”

“There is no penny or a grain at home now. How do you go to school without eating and clothing?” (My Translation 15-16)

As we see the novel, we see that class and the caste are the major factors that make the Damais of Simring village the subalterns. *Subaltern* is an adjective meaning “of lower rank”; it is still used in the British military to describe the ranks below captain. In recent political and cultural theory, especially that associated with the Subaltern Studies Group and with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *subaltern* is used as a catchall designation for members of subordinated populations—the colonized, women, blacks, the working class—although it is most often used to describe those oppressed by British colonialism and by the political and economic upheavals of the Postcolonial period. According to Ranajit Guha:

The word ‘subaltern’...stands for the meaning as given in the Concise Oxford Dictionary, that is, ‘of inferior rank’. It will be used... as a name for the general attitude of subordination in South Asian Society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way. (vii)

As we look at the quotes and assess them, it becomes clear that the Damai people of Simring village are the subalterns because they are regarded socio-culturally inferior due to the class and caste. The advantage of the term, subaltern, is that it does not privilege any one category over the others; that is, it involves no commitment to the precedence of

oppressions like economic oppression over racial oppression. At the same time, it does imply insurgency; the subaltern is a participant in a movement to overthrow the cultural and political forces that ensure his or her subordinate status. As narrated:

Aite was studying in third grade. He was sharp in study. His father used to boast of him before his relatives; “The Brahmin masters are biased against us because of our lower-caste. If it was not the case, our Aite would turn first in every grade.” When he was happy, he used to see and listen to the writing and reading of his son and speak in the voice full of optimism and enthusiasm; “Labor, my boy. You should be a teacher after good study. Untouchability is too much for our caste. If there are some educated men in our caste, we can talk strongly before *Mukhiya*. Labor, my boy.” (16)

The encouraging words of Sante Damai to his son show the hope to overthrow the cultural forces and come out of the subordinate status. Though there is the sense of subalternity and being segregated and ostracized in the society, the dalits are not united. The lack of unity and class consciousness is profound in the Damai people of Simring village as they are not the ruler of their destiny. They are out of the state mechanism and there is no question of their being state. Until they become united and become the state, they cannot come out of their subalternity as Gramsci says, “The subaltern classes, by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a "State": their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society, and thereby with the history of States and groups of States” (946). The history of subaltern is lost as Gramsci points out as their history is intertwined with the history of civil society therefore the history of the ruling class elites.

With the aim of retrieving the lost histories of subalterns, a group of historians led by Ranajit Guha found the group named Subaltern Studies Group in India. *Subaltern Studies* is the name of a circle of intellectuals and the journal they publish. The term is also used more generally and can also refer to the academic study of the lives and writings of subalterns. Deeply influenced by Marxist, semiotic, feminist, and deconstructionist ideas, the *Subaltern Studies* group aims, according to Gayatri Spivak, at politicization for the colonized. In many ways, this group works for change by striving to seize control of and alter the overriding narratives that determine the subjectivity, identity, and speech of the subaltern. Although deeply political, the members of the *Subaltern Studies* group view political change as happening through alterations in consciousness and culture, changes led by an enlightened, disinterested intellectual class. This view reflects the influence of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, who used the term *subaltern* to refer to Italy's rural peasant classes. The work of the *Subaltern Studies* group has been instrumental in pushing issues of Postcolonialism to the fore of critical and theoretical endeavors in the West.

In the novel *Junkiriko Sangeet*, Khagendra Sangraula has also attempted to retrieve the history of the subaltern dalit people. Their subalternity is the outcome of the tug of war between the power centers. On the one hand the acolytes of Hindu caste system are intently working to strengthen their domain of Brahmin-ruled empire, on the other hand the political change and consciousness is eroding the nation and the Western colonial values are further weakening the values of the dalit people in the name of being civilized and developed. It is very insightful to consider the observation of Gyan Prakash from his essay, "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism" to begin the examination of

subaltern voice in the time of neo-colonial open market and its erosion of the local, subaltern cultures. He observes:

Subalternity . . . emerges in the paradoxes of the functioning of power, in the functioning of the dominant discourse as it represents and domesticates . . . agency as a spontaneous and "pre-political" response to colonial violence. No longer does it appear outside the elite discourse as a separate domain, embodied in a figure endowed with a will that the dominant suppress and overpower but do not constitute. Instead, it refers to that impossible thought, figure, or action without which the dominant discourse cannot exist (1483)

Pre-political response is the subaltern response to the colonial violence. In the novel, the dalit people start to see the evils and colonial motives to destroy their culture in the name of modern technology and progress but they are unaware of its imbedded politics. In the above observation one can see the emergence of subalternity in the paradoxes of functioning of power. Dalit communities are in the state of subalternity, subjected to the marginalization due to neo-imperialism of the marketing of western, colonial values as they are confiscating their cultural values and making them poorer, marginalized and more subalternized. According to Lois Tyson:

Cultural imperialism, a direct result of economic domination, consists of the "takeover" of one culture by another: the food, clothing, customs, recreation, and values of the economically dominant culture increasingly replace those of the economically vulnerable culture until the latter appears to be a kind of imitation of the former. (425)

Though the subaltern people of Simring cannot decipher the power politics of cultural colonialism embedded with the imperial notion of development, modernization and the politics of globalization, their experiences about the development that is exported from the world outside them are very similar and strongly antagonistic to it. As Jamuni relates:

‘I’m thirty now, sir. I carried loads since I was ten. The jungle was free at that time . . . No restriction, no threats. We used to sell firewood, earn some pennies, buy some necessary goods and return home . . . Later, in the name of saving and develop forests, they opened the office of Ranger. The people called foresters started to guard every outlets carrying sticks on their hands. Then, our life ruined, sir . . . The people who claim to develop forest confiscated/robbed the 'dhindo' (porridge) of our children. Is it the development to save the forest killing the people! People-killer development!’ (265-66)

Not only the untouchable Damai caste but also the other working classes like Kami, the ironsmiths, and Sarki, the cobblers, share similar fate due to the neo-colonial expansion of Eurocentric development that has nothing to do to get the subaltern out of the subalternity but further drown them in the abyss of subalternity. Sukaram Kami relates the fate met by the small iron workshops due to industrialization, modernity and the global market:

‘This killer development has also ruined the job of our Kami caste too. The necessary goods for farming, the sharp weapons to cut the things and various tools used to be produced in our own workshops. This Yamaraj development killed our workshops completely. . . In foreign country,

single machine produces large heap of instruments on single day. But the speed of production in our workshop is like the speed of earth-worm in our workshops from the age of our forefathers. We have same style, and there is no upgrade and innovation in our skill and production techniques. Those python-like foreign machines have swallowed our finch-like workshops as if a big fish swallows a small one.' (266-67)

Mangale highlights how the flood of shallow new values are swarming and displacing the old values rapidly due to modernization that came along with the very process of neo-colonial, imperial notion of development. He laments the loss of the traditional tailoring of the clothes and the pipes the Damai caste had privilege to play during the marriage ceremonies for ages. He tells his heartrending tale of cultural loss:

I used to sew clothes in past, sir. The (development) modern fashion trod my job . . . Even our own Simringe children started to refuse my tailoring. Some want the clothes bulged somewhere, some want troughed somewhere, some tightened, some widened . . . Where should I go to learn the skill to fulfill whatever they want? Then, sir, I had an old sewing machine. I threw it to the nettle bush out of frustration . . . (270)

The European styles in the clothing has attracted the younger generation that leads them to reject the traditional, subaltern fashion. The Eurocentric notion of a modern man has been brought to the Third World by globalization, development and modernity. Yu Keping's observation about Valentine's Day is very effective to see how the Eurocentric cultural practices are becoming very popular among the minorities of the Third World. Keping points out; "Chinese people, for the most part, do not even know what

Valentine's Day is, yet it has now become a key market hotspot in this marginal underdeveloped area. This only hints at how Western marketing, and in particular the American economy, have influenced this poor minority region" (135). Thus, it becomes clear that the West is turning the world as the market to export its cultural products as well and establishing its hegemonic relation to the Third World in the deterioration of heterogeneous subaltern cultures.

This point is further clarified as Mangale continues his experience relating how the Hindi songs robbed the younger generation of the taste of the cultural folk songs and music and thus, confiscated their cultural ground. It gave them the sense of being a modern man. He proceeds further:

I used to play pipe (Sahanai) in marriage ceremonies. When I go there now, the children of Brahmin Bista (upper caste, class) demand difficult things. I am supposed to play rotten tunes like *Cholike Bhitari Kya hai, Naitoke Andar Kya hai* (Hindi song meaning 'What is behind the blouse? What is inside /under the navel?'). Our own boys started to reject this job because of the fear that they would easily be recognized and dominated as Damai, the lower caste, thus, they started to turn Brahmins.' (270)

As Dipesh Chakrabarty observes; "Western powers in their imperial mode saw modernity as coeval with the idea of progress" (xix), the notion of progress constructed and distributed by them to the Third World is rejection of their cultural values and the adoption of the Western values and modernize. This modernization and the deterioration of the local cultural values have come along with the global neo-colonial concept of development or progress that the kind donor among the Western imperial powers want

for the Third World to maintain hegemonic order and appropriate their presence. Under the veil of development and globalization, they are constructing a kind of homogeneity among the cultures or what Mike Featherstone terms as 'secular ecumene' 'with its dream of a global culture and, in the post-war era, the equally potent ideal of "development"' (4) so that they can sell their waste products manipulating the taste of the large scale population of different cultural backgrounds around the world. Mirsepassi observes the interests of the West veiled under the modernization of the Third World as; 'The project of modernization becomes one of "development," or "catching up" with, and homogenizing into, the economically, politically and culturally modern West' (6). The guardian role of the West and inferior, insignificant condition of the Third World is visible in these closely connected ideas of globalization, modernization and development. Featherstone sees both the Western 'dream of global culture' and the 'ideal of "development"' responsible to 'set off a whole series of global cultural struggles' (4). So, it is pretty normal to see why the poor people of remote village Simring show the pre-political response to the neo-colonial imperialism.

The neo-colonial imperial power is thus, escalating the open market in the name of globalization and the subaltern cultures are further dented to the state of subalternity. The NGO named AaKhuAaU (Aafno Khuttama Aafai Ubhiun i.e. Let's Stand on Our Own Feet) is working in the village named Simring, in Parbat district to raise awareness in the people about their superstitious values, marginalized social status of untouchable, the oppression of the upper class of the higher caste Bista (Brahmin bourgeoisie). This NGO is able to create a unity among the untouchable dalit lower class people running adult learning classes in which they are able to voice their experiences about the

problems they face. They reflect upon the various factors time and again in allocated turn and discuss the problems they are facing. They reflect upon the retardation and aggravation of the already subalternized cultural practices by neo-colonial imperialism and the failure of development to address their misery. Mangale, a Damai of Simring starts blaming the development such as the construction of the road when the discussion on development begins. "‘The development of recent time ruined us, sir,’ Mangale prompted as soon as the subject of development was forwarded for discussion; ‘This development turned to be number one enemy of our life’" (263). This charge to the development strongly goes against the romanticized cosmopolitan view of the NGO worker Ananta, who is conducting the discussion class. Ananta gives rather romanticized luxuriant view of development. He has the notion of development from the perspective of metropolitan, the global, neo-imperial perspective of development. He can't understand why the local experiences of the poor people of the remote village differ. He starts to contradict the local experience as shared by Mangale and others with his own version of experience:

Numerous vehicles run on the black-topped road. On the plane, wide and glistening road, we can travel luxuriously sitting or sleeping on beautiful, flexible Dunlop of folding-seats, listening melodious songs and watching films. We can travel whenever we like – daytime or night. There would be neither cramping, tired legs nor sore back after the journey, nor the stream of sweats and whistling of tiredness. On the same black road, the strong and big Yamaraj-like trucks run. We need not labor carrying heavy- loads as they help us carry all the loads alone. Then . . . (264)

This notion of development applies only to the affluent upper-class people who are able to afford the luxurious travel or pay for the transportation costs of their things but the poor lower-class untouchables are degraded further as they are unable to do so. The development of the black-topped road has become the hurdle to their life because it is out of their grasp. As soon as Ananta mentions about the Yamaraj-like heavy and powerful trucks, Mangale catches his tongue. “‘The same Yamaraj ruined our life, sir,’ Mangale grabbed the root of problem speaking past Ananta's voice; ‘The same Yamaraj named truck . . .’” (264). As his position surprises the NGO activists and the participants are puzzled, he is requested to share his experience about development. Then, he starts to narrate his experience:

We are poor people, sir. We have no sufficient land for cultivation. We lack skills to do some skilled jobs; we have no fund for investment. The only job we can do to earn our living is to carry the loads. Before this developed road entered the village, there were two porters among us – One was quadruped mule and the other were us, biped human beings. Mule used to carry half of the loads and we used to carry the other half. The load was shared mutually and we used to share bread and butter mutually. The things were going right then. (265)

The time before the advent of the Western notion of development was harmonious, Eden-like stage in the respect that people were able to get work that suits them and thus, able to earn the bread and butter to sustain their lives. But the development has brought the fall for those people and made their living very hard. So-called neo-colonial development and progress has deteriorated the subaltern histories. So, Guha’s call to retrieve the history of

minority culture becomes very remarkable here as the dalits are subalternized by two distinct factors- the brahminic Hindu class structure that has robbed dalits of their agency of the social beings and the neo-colonial extension of open market and western concept of development that has destroyed their cultures in the novel.

Subalternity has the different forms in various parts of the world. Highlighting the differences among the subaltenities Stephen Morton in his essay “Marginality: Subalternity, Aboriginality and Race” writes:

The specific form of social marginalization perpetuated by the caste system in South Asia is clearly very different from the race and class hierarchies that are specific to Southern African societies. For whereas the social exclusion of the dalits is bound up with the policing of caste identity in South Asian society, the social oppression of the Masarwa (an indigenous group in Botswana) is linked to the history of European colonization and the appropriation of indigenous lands in Southern Africa. (167)

Caste system is the major factor in the novel to keep the untouchable dalits subaltern in the Nepali society. It differs in its form from other subaltern conditions around the world. Caste system is perpetuated in the name of religion and it perpetuates the subalternity as on the basis of caste hierarchy the upper-caste people appropriate the dominance upon the marginalized, lower caste people. When Jiri and other Damai people refuse to work for the Mukhiya Gopilal thinks:

How does the *Sanatan* (Everlasting, perpetual) religion remain preserved when a wife stops obeying her husband, slave stops obeying his master

and the lower caste stops obeying the higher caste? How does this world-system function? . . . This is the ruin brought by democracy. This mad multi-party democracy has made all these larva of the shit mad. (30)

In the name of preserving the religion, the elite, so-called Hindu intellectual Gopilal wants to maintain the hegemonic order and ensure that the subaltern could never come out of their subalternity in the name of religion. For him, the subaltern, lower-caste people should always remain subaltern and obey the higher class and higher caste people. Their class and caste consciousness is thus, robbed by multiple dominant, elitist discourses. It is because the western discourses which talk about resistance and blurring the boundary between the center and margin are also operated by the dominant colonial power centers and thus, like religion, they also rob the consciousness of the people making them unable to speak.

In her influential essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak asserts that the success of the imperial "project to constitute the colonial subject as Other" was dependent on effecting "the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subject-ivity" (280-81), for, "in the constitution of that Other of Europe, great care was taken to obliterate the textual ingredients with which such an object could cathect, could occupy (invest?) its itinerary" (280). For Spivak, the native who is the subject of imperial and colonial historiography is Europe's "self-consolidating Other" standing in for the "real" native, subaltern, the trace of whose presence (presence itself being perhaps only a trace, neither "pure" nor "real," as Spivak is quick to highlight the Subaltern Studies Group's attempts to deconstruct the "metaphysics of consciousness" by assigning it a

negative rather than a positive value), in the process of textualization, has been displaced, has been silenced, entirely.

How the western, neocolonial discourses have silenced the subaltern people of the Third World can be clearly seen with Sangraula's criticism of Western, imperial notion of development. The imperial power spend the money for the construction of roads and other infrastructures but it becomes boon for the ruling class as it is not people friendly development. The subaltern classes of the society are silenced as there is the development they cry for, the utopian notion of development promoted by the Western, imperial discourses but it fails to help them. Their mind is manipulated and appropriated by the discourses of the ruling class. But only after they become class conscious, they become aware that the Western discourse of development has fooled them. This condition perpetuates their subalternity and maintains the status quo. The story-teller of the NGO listens to the plights of the subaltern people that have been brought to them by the so-called development and responds in very insightful manner:

This development has turned its face to the foreigners. See carefully, all seem to face the opposite direction. Dalit has turned his/her face to small Mukhiya (petty bourgeois), small Mukhiya has turned his face towards big Mukhiya (bourgeois) who, in turn, has turned his face towards the big political party. The political party has turned its face towards smugglers who, in turn, have turned their faces towards foreign countries. Nobody has turned their faces towards themselves. In reality, this is the development brought by the profit-oriented foreigners and foreign facing

Nepalis together. The development brought by such agents is bound to ruin us. (271)

The imperial discourse of development is responsible to appropriate the mind of the subaltern people and justify their power stronghold in the Third World. The subalternity is further aggravated and subaltern cultures are destroyed by the presence of the imperial power centers in the Third World which are backed by the elite nationalists, bourgeois rulers. They are connected together to work upon the perpetuation of subalternity and maintaining the silence. Subalterns suffer the social, political, economic subordination on the one hand and suffer the voicelessness due to the epistemic violence of collective networks of Western, colonial discourses designed to destroy their knowledge.

Subaltern Studies travels from Fascist Italy, from Gramsci, to postcolonial India, or the Subaltern Studies Group, the question of colonialism is brought to the foreground. Subalternity is the result of political, economic, and social subordination but also the consequence of epistemic violence that undermined and sought to destroy indigenous knowledges. As Gayatri Spivak's defines the epistemic violence in the Western discourses; "The clearest available example of such epistemic violence is the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other. This project is also the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subjectivity" (280-81). In rewriting the essay "Can Subaltern Speak?" for her book *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* Spivak softens the negative answer she gave to the question concerning the speech of the subaltern: "I was so unnerved by this failure of communication that, in the first version of this text, I wrote, in the accents of passionate lament: the subaltern cannot speak! It was an inadvisable remark" (308). Spivak sees the

epistemic violence and corporate network of domination of the western discourses working not for the voice of other or marginalized subalterns but systematically robbing their voice. So, her project is to redeem the voice of subalterns on moral and political grounds. Criticizing the Western theories that rob the marginalized people of their knowledge and political consciousness, she politicizes the problem of subaltern groups. For the politicization of subaltern silence, Spivak takes the essentialist position retaining the essentialized and fixed racial, gender, or cultural identities of subaltern and challenges the neo-colonial essentialist position, thereby using the weapon of essentialism to resist the Western, hegemonic essentialism strategically.

Spivak has the belief that essentialism is not good in long run but it is necessary as one cannot help not being an essentialist to counter the politics of essentialism using the same rule of old essentialism. She observes this strategy as:

Since one cannot not be an essentialist, why not look at the ways in which one is essentialist, carve out a representative essentialist position, and then do politics according to the old rules whilst remembering the dangers in this? That's the thing that deconstruction gives us; an awareness that what we are obliged to do, and must do scrupulously, in the long run is not OK.

(45)

Spivak knows the dangers of the strategic use of essentialist position but it is handy to resist the Western essentialist position. Sangraula is also aware that it is not always good to criticize the Western model of development as we cannot avoid it, but he counters the essentialism embedded in the very notion of development that hegemonizes and dents the subaltern cultures and establishes itself as an essential, inevitable for the Third World like

Nepal. Thus, to enable the subaltern voice, Sangraula is also taking the strategic essentialist position criticizing the Western models of development, education, the modes of entertainment and the neocolonial concept of open market.

The unsuitability of the Western, Eurocentric models of education and entertainment have destroyed the subaltern dalits in the Nepali society that has been highlighted as Sukaram Kami says in the novel:

Cinema is . . . artificial attraction to ruin us. . . Our dalit people spend hard-earned money on it. It ruins our money and character as well. . . Nowadays, the cheating centers, named English Boarding, have reached very near to our village. The disease that if you send your children to these schools they become like the European white men, is making us sick.

(271)

In this quote, a dalit, Sukaram Kami observes the consequences of the Western discourses of entertainment and education. Those western discourses extend the cultural empire of the Europe thus; function as the tools for neo-colonial empire-building destroying the Third World, minority cultures. For entertainment and education, the Western model of cinema and boarding schools are referred as solution for the Third World but they only proliferate consumer culture. They never strengthen the subaltern people and never give them the voices rather destroy their identity and voice. This condition leads not to the solution but aggravate the silence of the subalterns. So, for Spivak, the subaltern people should be given the political consciousness for their voice. It is also ethical to give them the consciousness as there is the possibility of their agency. According to David Richards:

The question of the subaltern is, ultimately for Spivak, an ethical and political question. It is clear from her scrutiny of the subaltern debate that, although real, the kinds of ‘problems’ she has elaborated are without solution in terms of the current postcolonial debate, where ideas formed (in Western academe) outside the site of conflict (in Eastern social orders) come trailing self-defeating paradoxes and insurmountable essentialisms. But ‘silence’ on the matter of economic, class, and gender inequalities, which are just as real and even more pressing, is not an option either. (25)

Postcolonial debates talk about the colonized, marginalized and subalternized people and their problems without solution. The debates come from outside the very regions where the problems emerge. The debate on the problems of the Third World comes from Western academia and thus, it brings various essentialist arguments giving advantage not to the areas full of problems rather giving advantage to the colonial, neo-colonial power centers.

In this line of thought, Spivak sees subalternity and silence of the Third World in the Western theories which take the side of the marginalized other but in reality, they come with the Western episteme that give voice not to the subaltern rather they give advantage to the colonizers themselves. The education that is modeled as per the Hindu elites has segregated the dalit children even from the study in the novel as we see with the details of Aite’s classroom experiences:

The fortunate viewers have sat on the bench moving their slipper-shod legs. Unfortunate viewed has stood alone on the floor without slippers in

his feet. The viewers are enjoying the sight. The pathetic viewed is trembling as if he is inside the den of the tigers.

‘Sit down,’ the teacher commanded swinging his cane. Aite hurriedly sat on the dust keeping the book given by headmaster on the floor. . . . The teacher hurled the cane to hit him with the fear of losing his caste if he beats him holding the cane on his hand. (232)

The bitter example of segregation based on caste hierarchy is highlighted in the narration. Aite, the boy of lower caste Damai has become ostracized from his fellows, the higher caste Brahmin boys and his suffering is the entertaining sights for them.

The elites of the society have thus, abused the spirit of education and there is no agency for the subaltern people in the society. Aite has no identification in the class he studies and the teachers also take the condition of his anonymity for granted. He is the subaltern in the need of enabling his agency. As Richards further argues:

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

Richards clarifies Spivak’s proposition to essentialize the subaltern identity as a strategy to counter the Western essentialist position that they are superior and more civilized than the Third World thereby subalternizing the Third World. The subalterns have their own

national, ethnic, cultural identity should be essentialized so as to counter the essentialism of the western episteme; only then there will be the possibility of the subaltern identity. This essentialism is strategic ones as it is adopted to counter the neo-colonial, Western hegemonic essentialism. The novel also advocates the need of creating the essential unity among the subalterns for their agency as Sita Upadhyaya, the NGO activist says, “If the unfortunate ones around the nation unite with similar ones and raise their fists, the firefly will change into a lamp, lamp into lantern, lantern into sun and the sun will destroy the filth of life” (382). This unity to enable the subaltern agency has been proposed by various subaltern historians and critics as Jose Rabasa in the essay “The Comparative Frame in Subaltern Studies” underscores the need to go carefully ahead of Gramsci’s idea of subaltern as:

Under Gramsci’s formulation subalterns may know spontaneously the causes of their oppression and the need to organise politically (i.e., subalternity contains the rudimentary elements of conscious leadership, of discipline), but only modern theory will give them a full understanding and guarantee that their force is not misdirected by reactionary groups. (370-71)

The unity or the organization of the subalterns either politically or with the understanding their common subalternity is necessary to enable subaltern voice and agency. But for such unity there should be better theoretical understanding of the modern theories so that they would not be misled and used for the advantage by reactionary groups. At the final part of the novel, the possibility of subaltern agency has been shown by the writer as the subaltern dalits of Simring village show the solidarity to fight against the oppression and

demonstrate in the village amid the fear that they might be charged by the security forces as Maoist rebels. The dalits organize a conference; they carry their domestic weapons in case the higher caste might attack them. As narrated:

From the hut made for meeting purpose, the dalits united under the flag of Dalit Chautari started the demonstration. The slow- moving, serious demonstration had only the dream to live and be treated like human being, in the meantime, the battalion of security forces is moving uphill to raid their voice for love and justice in the name of Maoist rebels. . . . The sky of Simring became reverberated with the song of love and justice. (451)

Thus, Khagendra Sangraula has given the emphasis for unity among the dalits so as to enable their voice and agency in the novel. The unity of the subaltern is very important for their consciousness as they understand cause of their oppression and organize to counter them. This unity is neither violent like Maoists nor indifferent like the State but it is to enable the subalterns to raise their voice against the social oppressions and caste and class hegemony perpetuated by the so-called superior, Hindu elites. Thus, Sangraula has generated the possibility for the subalterns to come out of their silence and subalternity.

Raising the questions about the subaltern silences and bitter oppressions and segregation among the dalits of Parbat district, Sangraula has encompassed the events from dehumanized condition of dalit outcastes to the awareness and unity to fight against the oppressions and untouchability. While doing this, Sangraula has strategically essentialized the dalit identity and has shown the possibility of the articulate subaltern voice with their criticism of the Western, neo-colonial models of market, development and education and unity.

III. Strategic Essentialism and Retrieval of Subaltern Agency in *Junkiriko Sangeet*

With the study of the novel from the perspective of Subaltern study, we reach to the conclusion that Sangraula has successfully used strategic essentialism focusing upon the essential dalit identity to counter the elitist, Brahminic oppression based on the class and caste hegemony on the one hand and the erosion of the dalit cultures by the neo-colonial open market and Western hegemonic notion of development on the other. Sangraula narrates the social discrimination, untouchability, and lack of awareness in the Damais, the subalterns due to the socio-economic factors like class and caste both, and are compelled to be exploited by the Brahmin elites. They are ignorant and dependent to the elite Hindu brahmins (Bistas) who exploit them and dehumanize them letting their used up things to consume. The social outcastes are referred by the Hindu elites as 'gu ka lind', a portion of human shit. The women are blamed as witches and the dalits are segregated in the society. The water they touch is seen as impure, so they are segregated from the public tap. The novel opens with the heartrending tale of the untimely death of five of the dalits eating the rotten flesh of the dead buffalo i. e. 'sino' sold by the head Brahmin Mukhiya Gopilal in the exchange of labor of the dalit people. Sante damai unfortunately dies and Jiri Damini and her little son Aite become helpless. Jiri lives a miserable life and is even charged as a witch. Kapil and Sheshkanta, NGO workers from Kathmandu, enter into the horrible scene of the village trying to make the villagers aware, start to protest the untouchability and various injustices educating the subalterns. This new circumstance opens the door for new consciousness in the subalterns in the society and thus, leaves them in the brink of enabling their agency and retrieves their voice.

In the initiative from Kapil and Sheshkanta, The NGO named AaKhuAaU (Aafno Khuttama Aafai Ubhiun i.e. Let's Stand on Our Own Feet) starts working in Simring Gaun, in Parbat district to raise awareness in the people about their superstitious values, marginalized social status of untouchable, the segregation and oppression of the upper class of the higher caste Brahmin elites. Finally, this NGO is able to create a unity among the untouchable dalit lower class people running adult learning classes in which they are able to voice their experiences about the development, the condition of their culture, and deterioration of their minority culture due to the erosion of so-called global, neo-colonial concept of open market. Without any political consciousness, the dalits start questioning the Western discourses of entertainment and education. Those western discourses extend the cultural empire of the Europe thus; function as the tools for neo-colonial empire-building destroying the Third World, minority cultures. To counter the essentialism and inevitability of the Western discourses, and the essentialism of higher caste dominance, Sangraula has emphasized on the need of assuming absolute identity for dalit people, i. e. he uses essentialism strategically and finally, this strategic essentialism helps to forge unity among the dalits so as to enable their voice and agency in the novel. The unity of the subaltern is very important for their consciousness as they understand cause of their oppression and organize to counter them.

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