

Chapter I

Introduction

Salman Rushdie, Early Days and Growth as a writer

Salman Rushdie, an Indian-British novelist, was born on June 19, 1947 into a middle-class Muslim family, eight weeks earlier than the Independence Day of India, that is, August 15, 1947. Rushdie attended the Cathedral Boys' School in Bombay. His education continued in England at the Rugby School till 1965 A.D. In 1964, his family moved to Karachi of Pakistan from Bombay joining reluctantly the Muslim exodus-- during these years there was a war between India and Pakistan but Rushdie remained in England in order to complete his education. Though he was abroad, his family's preference to Muslim exodus heavily burdened him in choosing the sides and divided loyalties. After the completion of M.A. in history with honors in 1968, he acted at an experimental theatre for about one year. He lived briefly in Pakistan, working for a television service in Karachi. He was associated briefly with acting and moved later to London and worked as a freelance advertising copywriter for Ogilvy and Mather and Charles Barker which supported his early writing career during the 1970s.

Rushdie enjoyed a privileged childhood, living in one of the grand mansions of Warden Road and attending the elite Cathedral and John Cannon School. This life is transmuted into fiction of *Midnight's Children*. He and his school friends went to watch 'Bollywood' movies, read comic books and pulp fiction, and brought records from the 'Rhythm House', Bombay. These activities provided the ground for him to write rock and roll novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Two fictions in particular, Hollywood film *The*

Wizard of Oz and a collection of tales entitled *The Arabian Nights*, had a deep and long lasting impact upon Rushdie's youthful imagination, he confesses himself. The true inspiration for his creative writing debut is that of *The Wizard of Oz*.

The 'Subaltern' Experience

His father decided to send him to the British Public School Rugby recalling his schooling at Cambridge, England. Rushdie accepted it immediately as he was already familiar with the English language and aspects of English culture from his early education and early reading. However, he was shocked to find it that many of the Englishmen considered him to be a 'wog' and as such 'below even working-class English status'. This act had imprinted his mind and was expressed in *Wogs go home*, a room writing, pasted on the wall above his chair. When a candidate in a mock school General Election was speaking in favor of stronger immigration laws, Rushdie asked the candidate whether or not he (as a black man) would be excluded from Britain under this new control. He was disappointed when the candidate replied him that he too would be denied entry to Britain though he was having a peculiar brownish color despite being black on the basis of family root.

These experiences inspired Rushdie to write an autobiographical novel, an immature work, entitled *Terminal Report* about a school boy who is radicalized by his confrontation with prejudice. His first substantial attempt at fiction led him to entertain the possibility of becoming a writer in the days to come. Whilst Rushdie was still at Rugby, his parents finally decided to move to Pakistan from India having spent two years in London to be near to their son. Numbers of reasons were there to force them for

migration. The most prominent among them was the fact of suffering them from anti-Muslim prejudice. The government's seizure of his father's properties is translated into fiction through the freezing of Ahmed Sinai's assets in *Midnight's Children*. The young Rushdie was fiercely furious towards his parents' movement to Pakistan. It was because he had the feeling cut off in England and there was no consolation of returning to Bombay, his actual hometown and birthplace. Despite the ups and downs he had gone through, Rushdie won a scholarship to Cambridge University because of the excellence of his academic achievement at school. So, he was inclined to turn the scholarship down and return to Bombay to write but his father, mortified at the prospect of his son becoming a writer, insisted that he accepted the scholarship.

His works and Interests

The Anglo-Indian novelist Rushdie is not limited just as a novelist but he also has earned fame as a short-story writer, essayist, critic, editor, children's writer, travel writer and playwright. Rushdie is the co-editor of *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing*. Among all the reputations, he is more famous as a novelist. The multi-genius personality Rushdie uses various themes from the tales of different genres-fantasy, mythology, religion, oral tradition and so on in his works. Many autobiographical elements and historical facts are also the inevitable issues in many of his works of arts. It is clear from Rushdie's view that 'works of art cannot be separated from politics, from history because they do not come into being in a social and political vacuum' (Rushdie 92). Rushdie is commented not only because of his issues and the techniques he has raised but also because of his anti-religious themes. To this point, we can say that he is as equally controversial as famous.

As a novelist, Rushdie made his debut with his first novel *Grimus* (1975), a fantastical science fiction. The title '*Grimus*' is extracted from pre-Islamic Persian mythology which stands for 'the immense, all-wise, fabled bird'. This speculative fiction employs the alien qualities of 'new worlds' like elixirs of immortality which are used as a means of investigating and disestablishing settled certainties concerning our own world. The novel's protagonist Flapping Eagle is a migrant who leaves his place of habitation, travels through the world in search of a new homeland or destination but becomes a hybridized entity in this process of investigation.

Grimus was followed by *Midnight's Children* (1981) which is more autobiographical creation of Rushdie himself. It is clear from his conversation with Haffenden when he says, "when I began [*Midnight's Children*] . . . it was more autobiographical, and it only began to work when I started making it fictional. The characters came alive when they stopped being like people in my own family" (qtd. in Teverson 71). It is also accepted as the revisited history of India. This novel received wide critical praise and earned Rushdie the Booker McConnell Prize. Written in an exuberant style, this comic allegory of Indian history revolves around the lives of the narrator Saleem Sinai and the thousand other children born after the Declaration of Independence. All of the children are awarded with some magical property as Saleem has a very large nose with which he could see into the hearts and minds of men.

Similarly, *Shame* was published in the year 1983 which centres on a well-to-do Pakistani family. This novel has something to do with two thinly veiled historical characters namely-- Iskander Harappa and General Raza Hyder. Shortly after his return from South Africa, he was in India to make a documentary entitled 'The Riddle of

Midnight'. This documentary, designed to locate the fortieth anniversary of Indian Independence and his own fortieth Birthday, was regarded as a non-fictional companion piece to *Midnight's Children*. Rushdie has written *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990) especially for the children and *Luca and the Fire of Life* (2010) is the sequel published later.

Rushdie's fourth novel, *The Satanic Verses* won the Whitbread Award in 1988. This novel is predominantly about the experiences of London-living Indian and Afro-Caribbean migrants but it even includes different dream sequences concerning the Prophet Muhammad and religious revelation. The scene related with a group of prostitutes in a brothel impersonating the wives of Prophet Muhammad to titillate customers led to protests by some Muslim readers and the reviewers, especially the devout Muslims. Outraged by a perceived belittling of Islam within the novel, devout Muslims staged public demonstrations and placed bans on this book's importation. Despite being the fantastical novel, it was banned in India (there was political motif behind this) and other nations with significant Muslim populations including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Indonesia and South Africa. Many bookstores and infrastructures were destroyed and few demonstrators were killed during demonstration against the writer, publisher and the book. Eventually, a fatwa or decree (an Iranian form of punishment or a death penalty), was issued by the then Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, calling for Rushdie's execution along with the proclamation of reward. Rushdie published an essay *In Good Faith* to appease his critics and issued an apology with his respect for Islam. However, Iranian clerics did not repudiate their death threat and demonstrations against Rushdie are still ongoing time and again nowadays too.

Despite lingering death-threats, Rushdie continued his writings with the determination to use his work as a platform for the exposure and denouncement of institutional violence and intolerance even though he was under hiding with special security force in Britain.

Since the religious decree Rushdie hiding from assassins, he continued to write and publish books. He wrote a collection of essays *Imaginary Homelands* in 1991 A.D. and *East, West* (1994). Like *Midnight's Children*, *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) was published which also focuses on the contemporary India. It is about the darker, more fractured and more pessimistic vision of Indian contemporary history. This novel is not only the reflective of Rushdie's disrupted life experience but also operates as an assertive and self-empowering answer to prosecution. In 1999, Rushdie made the decision to move to America from England. Rushdie's long journey from Bombay to London to New York is charted as the structure of his own life in his sixth novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. It is a transitional novel revolving in the triangle of cities. Rushdie weaved his favorite themes of exile, rootlessness and metamorphosis in his eighth novel *Fury* (2001) appropriating the-then scenario of America.

Step Across This Line (2003) is a collection of non-fiction from the year 1992 to 2002. Most of them were written after the issue of fatwa, a decree. Rushdie's ninth novel, *Salimar the Clown* (2005), does not talk about the events of '9/11' substantially (*Fury* was published on September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre, America) though it offers a portrait of the evolution of an Islamic terrorist during the 2000s. Similarly, *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008) is a historical romance which captures the mutual suspicion and mistrust between East and West.

Rushdie published many non-fiction books like *The Jaguar Smile* (1987), *Imaginary Homelands* (1991) and *Step Across This Line* (2003) and also plays such as *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990), and *Midnight's Children* to be performed.

Midnight's Children: The Voice of the Ignored

Midnight's Children is written about the Indian history with the apt appropriation of Independence Day of India and other consequences. *Midnight's Children* took its title from Nehru's speech delivered on August 14, 1947, at the stroke of midnight, when India gained its independence from England. This comic allegory of Indian history revolves around the lives of the narrator Saleem Sinai and the 1000 children born at the stroke of midnight or after the Declaration of Independence. Though the narrator traces back the history from 1915 when his grandfather came to Kashmir, India, it is about the narrator's growing up in Bombay between 1947 and 1977. Among 1001 children, two of these babies are born in the same Bombay nursing home on the very moment of midnight: a boy born to the streets and the other to wealth.

On the small advance that Rushdie earned for his first novel *Grimus*, he and his first wife, Clarissa Luard, decided to travel to India and Pakistan. Rushdie in *Imaginary Homelands* notes that the novel *Midnight's Children* was born. He realized how much he wanted to restore the past to himself, not in the faded greys of old family-album snapshots, but in Cinema Scope and glorious Technicolor (9-10). So, it is clear that *Midnight's Children* is the novel that comprises the past and the present series of events along with travelogue. *Midnight's Children* was published by Jonathan Cape in 1981 which was at first moved by Liz Calder instead of printing who believed that a five-

hundred –page epic of twentieth century Indian history book would be sold worst of all in India. But contrary to his expectations, *Midnight's Children* sold forty thousand copies in hardback and received tremendous reviews from the readers, critics and others. For Robert Towers in the New York Review of Books comments that it was 'one of the most important [novels] to come out of English Speaking World in this generation' (qtd. in Teverson 81), and V.S. Pritchett in The New Yorker dubbed Rushdie 'a master of perpetual storytelling' (qtd. in Teverson 81).

Rushdie as a writer of *Midnight's Children* had produced a work that dared to show the everyday lives of 'ordinary' citizens of a country are inextricably bound up with grander national politics.

Saleem Sinai, the major character and narrator, was born in the sharp midnight of Independence of India in 1947. The conceit of the book as title represents Saleem and other children born in that first hour have astonishing magical superheroic powers. The story is bound up with Indian Independence, not just after 1947 but before that time too. The story of how Saleem's parents meet and how Saleem's telepathic powers are at first a blessing and later a curse is portrayed in lucid manner. Together with another boy, Shiva, he is born exactly at midnight, thus winning acclaim from the prime minister and prize from *The Times of India* for being a symbol for the nascent nation. Besides, his birth is celebrated with fireworks and letter sending by Nehru saying that his fate will forever be entwined with that of India. Growing up on a Bombay estate, he bumps his head while hiding and discovers a gift for telepathy. He can enter other lives at will, see through walls, plumb all secrets including the secret of his true parentage. But his telepathic gifts bring death, destruction and very little happiness.

The midnight children, the hope of the nation, await Saleem's call of a 'midnight parliament'. The only obstacle from embracing Saleem's political destiny arises from his fear of the murdering hero Shiva whom he knows to be the equally rightful inheritor of all his privileges. The gifts of the midnight children are never pooled because of Saleem's fear and guilt. When they finally meet, the remaining five hundred and eighty one midnight children are sterilized during the emergency. Ultimately, Saleem travels from his hometown Bombay to the jungles of Bengal as part of a secret army expeditionary force and confronts Shiva.

Other Dominant Issues

Chunks of appreciations and comments led this book to win the Booker prize for in 1981 and have since become one of the mostly read pieces of literary fiction all over the world. This book aroused a great deal of controversy in India because of its unflattering portrait of Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay, who involved in a controversial sterilization campaign. Rushdie's grotesque portrayal of Indira Gandhi as 'The Widow, not for the accusations of malpractice in the election, state-organized violence and mass murder, but for a single sentence in which Sanjay Gandhi ('labia lips' in this book), accuses his mother responsible for his father's death by neglecting him. According to M.L. Ahuja, the novel, *Midnight's Children*, provides a semblance of author's background (89). In October 1981, this novel won the lucrative Booker Prize which was Britain's most prestigious award for fiction. Similarly, *Midnight's Children* was voted as one of the nation's 100 best-loved novels in 2003 by the British people. So, twenty-five years later, this novel became the Booker of Bookers. As argued by M.L. Ahuja, this book's major concern lies in Post-Independence India which is the subject of bulk.

Indians are shown united but only by opposition to the British during the freedom struggle that is found lacking after its completion.

Saleem is the narrator and the major character of series of events in the novel whose recording of the history is that of Rushdie and his family, the days of Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Morarji Desai. This fact is strongly raised by Andrew Teverson in his book entitled *Salman Rushdie*. He remarks, “*Midnight’s Children*, for stance, borrows extensively from Salman’s early life to supply the details of Saleem’s childhood; it also tells the ‘family secret’ that his mother had been married before and offers a fictionalized and comedic version of his father’s addiction to alcohol” (67).

Thus, the details of Saleem’s life resemble Rushdie’s in some superficial respects but there are significant dissimilarities too. Unlike *Salman*, Saleem becomes telepathically receptive to the voices of other children, lurches from dramatic crisis to dramatic crisis and he falls victim to events that Rushdie himself had never experienced in straight forward manner. Likewise, though Salman’s grandfather like Saleem’s came from Kashmir and was a Germany-trained doctor, he never married his wife after having glance through a hole in a sheet, never lost his religion and never became involved in nationalist politics in contrast to Aadam Aziz. Rushdie’s family’s move from India to Pakistan is also the fictionalized form in *Midnight’s Children* though Saleem is not at school in England but with the family in India in the novel. One of the dominant characteristic features of Salman Rushdie’s writing is its self-consciousness, and its willingness to incorporate an analysis of the cultural locations from which it is written.

Rushdie occupies a privileged position as a migrant intellectual, commenting, in a number of his works, upon political situations that are viewed from a geographical distance. His style of foregrounding that fact in which he is writing from this prospective to explore the implications of this location is noteworthy. In this sense, Rushdie does not claim to speak from the prospective of Indians particularly rather from the perspective of the privileged migrant Indian intellectual in a complex but not entirely unworkable position. That is to say, he writes as an ‘outsider’ from several cultures and as ‘insider of none’ and his writing is sprouted out of an experience of disjuncture and discontinuity. For Rushdie, description is itself a political act that redescribing the world is the necessary first step towards changing it (qtd. in Teverson 13-14). This novel becomes political not by engaging directly in political issues but by describing the world in a way that resists the interpretations of it offered by power-led official organs. He believes that we can’t set out to change the world with a book but what we can do is change something small inside the minds of a few people with profound impacts upon us leading to change whatever book we read. This perspective is found in many of his creations. The resistance to perceived or habituated political resignation is apparent in almost all of Rushdie’s writings, from his early bile-spewing satires on South Asian political leaders in *Midnight’s Children* and *Shame* through anger at institutionalized racism in Britain police in *The Satanic Verses* to his interrogations of the global dominating power of US in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, *Fury* and *Salimar the Clown*. Rushdie’s distinct style of biting off big chunks of the world and chewing them over is his true demonstration as a writer.

Clark Blaise, a critic, believes that the literary map of India is about to be redrawn when he read *Midnight’s Children* (qtd. in NY Times). The glory or the success of this

novel is expressed here by borrowing the familiar outline of E.M. Forster which will be always there in India. This is because India will always offer the dualities essential for the Forsterian vision. Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children*, as Indian Critic Aparna Mahanta opines, did well in Britain because it was the latest in a long line of fictions to ponder to western desires to see India as a strange, sensual, tyrannical, fantastical other place (qtd. in Teverson 6). This novel is appropriated as the supplement for the Westerners especially Britain in order to wake of the reigning nostalgia for the Raj. The Saleem Sinais were talked about as the pseudo-sons which are none other than the nostalgia for them. Admixture of the concept of orientalism is the emerging theme in this novel. At the core heart of Rushdie's writing, for Edward Said, is "the conscious effort to enter into the discourse of Europe and the West, to mix with it, transform it, to make it acknowledge marginalized or suppressed or forgotten histories" (qtd. in Ashcroft 97). So, Rushdie has a debut of new narrative style among the European narratives. Anti-colonial political resistance by Said seems to be confirmed by Rushdie's own understanding of his political role. Being a migrant from one culture to another or from the diaspora, makes the people self-conscious about their position that obliges them to establish the ground to stand on. This diasporic notion is recurring in *Midnight's Children*.

Chapter II

Subaltern Studies and Positions of the Oppressed and the Marginalized

The 'Subaltern' Concept

The concept of Subaltern emerges first with preliminary definitions as it was initially used by Italian Marxist political activist, Antonio Gramsci, in his widely known book "*Prison Notebooks*" written between 1929 and 1935. Gramsci called Marxism 'monism', and was obliged to call the proletariat 'subaltern'. In Gramsci's words, the subaltern classes refer fundamentally to any "low rank" person or group of people in a particular society suffering under the hegemonic domination of a ruling elite class that denies them the basic rights of participation in the making of the history and culture as active individuals of the same nation. The only groups Gramsci had in his mind during that time were the peasants and workers who were oppressed and discriminated by National Fascist Party, Benito Musolini and his men.

The word 'subaltern' originated to address the British Military Post which is a commissioned officer below the rank of captain. *A Glossary of Literary Terms* by M.H. Abrams defines 'subaltern' as a British word for someone of inferior rank, and combines the Latin terms for "under" (sub) and "other" (alter). So, subaltern is the one who is under somebody in the lower strata of life in the social or institutional ladder. The term 'subaltern' was coined by Antonio Gramsci and was derived from his euphemism for the proletariat in his famous book *Selections from Prison Notebooks*. The exact meaning of the term in current philosophical and critical usage is disputed. Some critics or

interpreters use it in a general sense to refer to marginalized groups and the lower classes whereas others use it in a more specific sense beyond the meaning for oppressed.

Similarly, one of the writers and renowned literary critics of subaltern studies, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, argues “subaltern is not just a classy word for oppressed, for other, for somebody who’s not getting a piece of the pie The term ‘subaltern’ has lost its power to indicate people from the very bottom layer of society” as quoted by Poudel and Ujjwal Prasai (The Kathmandu Post 10). For her, subaltern is everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism, a space of difference. In her view, just being a discriminated against the minority, subalterns do not need the word ‘subaltern’ but what are the mechanics of discrimination should be thoroughly observed.

A Marxist thinker Gramsci appropriated the term subaltern or subaltern classes in his attempts to talk about the historical formation and its ingredients. Subaltern is used to refer to those groups in society who are subject to hegemony of the ruling classes. It may include peasants, workers and other groups denied access to hegemonic power. In order to uplift the people belonging to the lower strata of the society, Gramsci, as a Marxist thinker, tries to clarify the roles of subaltern or subaltern classes and their relation with the state in his book “*Prison Notebooks*”. For him, history is the indispensable term both for state, ruling class and ruled ones. History is essentially the history of states and of the groups of states. He even writes that ‘the history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic’ (206). Though it is fragmented, it is recorded in the history of state. Subaltern classes are intertwined with the civil society, history of states and groups of states. For him, ‘the subaltern classes . . . are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a state’ (202). It is clear that they are un-unified and lowest entity of the

state. Gramsci wanted to unite them and write the history of the state. Their history is connected with the history of the state and history of groups of states means to say that the history of subaltern is complex.

Subaltern Studies Group and Their Works

Post-colonial theory has lately become one of the mostly attractive disciplines or scopes as a recent field of study that incessantly triggers piles and piles of literature written by critics, social reformists, political economists, literary critics and political scientists. The continuous expansion of post-colonialism in its recent days made its own domains of interest and areas of functionality by overlapping the other fields such as literary theory and criticism, anthropology and cultural studies. One of the latest subordinations of Post-colonial theory, *Subaltern Studies Group* or *Subaltern Studies Collective*, was launched in the 1980s by a group of eminent Indian Scholars especially in the context of South-Asian territory.

Subaltern Studies began its impressive and catchy career in England at the end of the 1970s. By the late 1970s, a rapid decline in state centred historical research had already occurred and social history “from below” was flourishing. E.P. Thompson’s 1963 book, *The Making of English Working Class*, is often cited as an inspiration for the growing number of “bottom up” studies of people whose history had been previously ignored. It emerged when conversations on subaltern themes among a small group of English and Indian historians led to a proposal to begin to print a new journal in India in collaboration with Oxford University Press, New Delhi, which published three successive volumes of essays called *Subaltern Studies: Writing on South Asian History and Society*.

This trend of publishing other volumes continued annually from 1982. All previous volumes of *Subaltern Studies* were edited by Ranajit Guha. For him, the group originally was an assortment of marginalized academics by 1993.

E.P. Thomson argues, “Subaltern Studies began with the rejection of European master-narratives that have only seen derivatives, little challenge or denial. The European supreme self-confidence made it clear in the Hegelian proposition which declared India an intellectually sterile land bereft of any history” (2).

Indian scholars showed their critical minds through the Subaltern Studies which compel West to correct their past mistake. The work of *Subaltern Studies* offers a theory a challenge which tries to reverse the colonial outlook of Indian culture, history, arts and mass media and nexus them with the broad term of nationalism.

The *Subaltern Studies* group provoked a great number of controversial issues in its immense effort to restudy the Indian history and society as a narrative. Among the controversial issues, the most problematic issue is the issue of subaltern subject and its constitution in the Indian historiography. Even though this controversial concept of the subaltern caused a great confusion all over the academia, it has established the subaltern as a critical concept of extreme importance in post-colonial theory. Throughout its history since the beginning of the twentieth century, the concept of the subaltern remains one of the most slippery and most difficult to define. This difficulty arose due to the manipulations of critics and writers whose attempts to animate the selective readings of Gramsci and to make them appear relevant to the present time. This approach became historical which excavated the origins of the concept of subaltern by referring to a

genealogical study of the foundational academic theoretical works dealing with subalternity.

Along with the coinage of the term 'subaltern' first by Italian Political activist Antonio Gramsci, it tends to detach itself from its originality. Gramsci designed six steps plan in order to study the history of the subaltern groups. He was intended to study them: firstly, their objective formation by changes taking place in economic production; secondly, their active or passive affiliation to the dominant political formations and their attempts to influence their programs; thirdly, the birth of the new parties and dominant groups, which are mainly created for the subjugation and maintenance of the subaltern; fourthly, the formations which the subaltern groups themselves made to vindicate limited rights; fifthly, new formations which maintain the subaltern groups' autonomy within the old frameworks; sixthly, those formations which may help to affirm their entire autonomy. (qtd. in Louai 5) Besides, Gramsci even compares the history of subaltern classes with the history of the hegemonic groups or classes. He ironically argued that the subaltern have the same complex history as that of the hegemonic classes. In Gramsci's opinion, the subaltern group's history has no evident unity and seems to be in its very episodic totality because of their submission to the authority of the ruling groups even when they break with the established system. The only possible way for him is to establish the state of freedom through a 'permanent' victory which guarantees a dismantling of the dominant master/slave pattern.

This dismantling means to release the subordinated consciousness of non-elite group from the cultural hegemony exercised by the ruling class. His groundbreaking, newly revealed and deeply formulated ideas about the class of peasants as a cultural,

social and political force aware of its distant consciousness of subalternity made other subsequent twentieth century scholars working on the issues of Indian peasantry historiography resume his effort. Scholars led by Ranajit Guha emerged out as the *Subaltern Studies Group*. With the emergence of the *Subaltern Studies Group* in India in the early 1980s, the subalternity as a concept, it gained a worldwide currency. The elaborative and systematic strategies of reading of the Indian and South Asian histories were further developed by Ranajit Guha through his manifesto in “*Subaltern Studies I*” and his famous critical treatise entitled as ‘*The Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*’. In his later book, Guha tried to show that the Indian Peasants were socially and politically aware of their uprising against colonial administration as a struggle for the social justice if it really happens. He seeks to do justice to those peasants by examining the interplay of domination and subjugation relations in Indian context. In the context of the emergence of new subaltern, the question of subaltern consciousness has once again become important; now displaced to the global political sphere, so that knowledge can be made data and subaltern will for globalization can put together as justification for policy. *Subaltern Studies*’ attempt to rewrite the history with the sustained sign of re-appropriating the capacity to represent themselves (subaltern) has occupied the space in David Hardiman’s text “*Origins and Transformations of the Devi*”. He postulates, “As history, accounts . . . are in no way superior to the writings of the nationalists, for in both cases the adivasis are appropriated to an external cause. Their role in the making of their own history is correspondingly ignored” (qtd. in Guha 105).

The religiosity of the *adivasis* (subaltern) is ignored even though it must have had a profound bearing on their state of consciousness in the socialist histories. In writing the

history of adivasis along with others, so-called subjects, *Subaltern Studies Project* has the vital role so as to understand the consciousness that informed the political actions taken by subaltern classes on their own which were and are independent of elite narratives. David Hardiman's indirect resistance of colonialism and its harsh realities generates the efforts for *Subaltern Studies*. The prison system and its hierarchical practices emerged in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in India are strongly raised by him in his text "*The Colonial Prison*". Arnold draws the concept of Foucault and Ashis Nandy and defines prison as the means of construction and implementation of colonial knowledge which colonizes the minds in addition to bodies and produces cultural and psychological pathologies. Arnold writes that "the prison did not treat all its inmates alike; rather, it distinguished between them on the basis of race, community, and, later, gender" (158). In this sense, the prison occupies its position as an archetypal colonial institution in which separate prison wards were reserved for Europeans who maintained its privileged status even in confinement. The prison exemplified the role of colonial medicine as an agency of disciplinary control. Arnold adds: "There are many histories of the colonial prison yet to be written. Concealed within its wall are many examples of unexplored subalternity, still obscured from us by the sheer density of the colonial record and . . . familiar narratives of prison life" (qtd. in Guha 171). He suspects numerous subaltern cases and hidden colonial prison histories and paves the way for others to reveal it.

The subaltern for Ranajit Guha is that clearly definite entity, which constitutes "the demographic difference" between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the 'elite' (1-8). The group members aimed at studying the subaltern group as an 'objective assessment of the role of the elite' and 'a critique of elitist

interpretations of that role' which was the foundational view of Guha. The writing of Indian national history was controlled by colonial elitism as well as nationalist bourgeois elitism which were the productions of British colonialism. From the above assumption, the concept of *Subaltern Studies Group* was originated. So, there is the distinct difference between the elite and the subaltern which can be clarified by the notion of political mobilization. The central aim or theme of the *Subaltern Studies Project* is to understand the consciousness that informed and still informs political actions taken by the subaltern classes on their own, independently of any elite initiatives.

When Ranajit Guha announced that 'the politics of the people from an autonomous domain', people who agreed with him like Sumit Sarkar joined the project immediately. *Subaltern Studies* joined debates about insurgency and nationality at the breach between popular unrest and state power. Sumit Sarkar's *Modern India* gave workers' and peasants' movements more autonomous political space than any history text had ever done before. Ranajit Guha's *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency* depicted tribal revolts as completely separate from nationalism, inside a subaltern space, below. *Subaltern Studies* began by asserting the complete autonomy of lower class insurgency. Books like A.R. Desai's *Peasant Struggles in India* (1979) and *Agrarian Struggles in India after Independence* (1986) not only promoted the study of agrarian upheavals in the past time, but also opposed the technocratic developmentalism and the status quo politics of cultural traditionalism. *Subaltern Studies* became an original site for a new kind of history from below, people's history free of national constraints, re-imagining of the nation at the margins, outside nationalism. This notion is evident in Saleem's attempt of recording the past, present and the future of India in *Midnight's Children*.

Guha's inauguration of *Subaltern Studies* by declaring a distinct break with most Indian historians of that time, announcing the project's ambition "to rectify the elitist bias" in a field dominated by elitism namely colonialist elitism and bourgeois nationalist elitism was mind blowing and catchy at that time. It is also evident that *Subaltern Studies* had its root in the colonial education system. He suggests the same thing in *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency*. He asserts, "The historiography of peasant insurgency in colonial India is as old as colonialism itself; it then describe the 'discourse on peasant insurgency' as a 'discourse of power' under the Raj" (qtd. in Ludden 10).

Subaltern Studies launched itself with an act of rejection, denying South Asia's previous "history from below". Domination, subordination, hegemony, resistance, revolt and other old concepts have made subaltern which are ignored or denied by all scholars in the past and all the old research became elitist. There were problematic relations with Marxism in the one hand and national history on the other hand.

Dipesh Chakrabarty, a distinguished figure of *Subaltern Studies*, presents that "Indian" history itself is in a position of subalternity: one can only articulate subaltern subject positions in the name of this history (qtd. in Guha, 263-64). For Chakrabarty, subaltern subject positions would be best articulated through the history of subalternity. Another critic Partha Chatterjee highlights the issues of women which are in a far better position to locate with the claims of nationalism. He writes, "that nationalism did in fact provide an answer to the new social and cultural problems concerning the position of women in 'modern' society and that this answer was posited not on an identity but on a difference with the perceived forms of cultural modernity in the West" (qtd. in Guha 242).

Chatterjee demands nationalism to situate the “women’s question” in an “inner” domain of sovereignty far from the arena of political context. The so-called women’s question in the agenda of Indian social reform previously was not apt for the condition of women in the colonial state. He locates the mark of women’s newly acquired freedom in the attainment of his own efforts of a superior national culture. He sees the image of woman as goddess or mother as the means to erase her sexuality in the world outside the home. He further adds:

The reason why the issue of “female emancipation” seems to disappear from the public agenda of nationalist agitation in the late nineteenth century is not because it was overtaken by the more emotive issues concerning political power. Rather, the reason lies in the refusal of nationalism to make the women’s question an issue of political negotiation with the colonial state. (qtd. in Guha 259)

The changes taking place in the colonial period mostly outside the arena of political agitation. The nationalist discourse for Chatterjee is a discourse about women who do not speak there and her desperate want is to reiterate the women’s question in the midst of refusal. She points out that though nationalist discourse is different from that of colonialism, women’s question nonetheless remains trapped within its framework of false essentialisms. Besides, she admits that duality of class and caste which are unavoidable in the mentality of subaltern. Veena Das agreed with this idea and further alludes the case of ‘Chandra’s death’ by Guha. Das argues that ‘the story . . . becomes the medium through which the nature of women’s subordination within the patriarchal structure of family, religions and law’ (323). She extends even further that “it is not the case of the

illegitimate lover alone but the entire structure of patriarchy within which sexual desire is articulated” (323). So, like feminist, she advocates the females who are the victims of domination of patriarchy and sexuality. It is obvious to question as ‘there could be nothing wrong about exploiting women by force either for labour or for men’s sexual gratification’ (Guha 239). Guha too reveals how females were exploited in the cruel hands of males’ sexuality. A woman has no voice because she speaks in the mode of the social mechanism which represses woman. Mody and Mhatre agree to it as she has not have the ability to think or act otherwise being entrapped within the social and cultural mechanism.

Ranjit Guha, the editor of *A Subaltern Studies Reader 1986-1995*, clarifies the need of this project. He opines, “This has indeed been a hallmark of *Subaltern Studies* from the very beginning- this insistence on a solidarity that would not reduce individual voices, styles, and approaches to a flat and undifferentiated uniformity” (ix).

Guha defends against some of the Marxist thinkers and intellectuals of that time who opined that establishment of *Subaltern Studies* do not contribute even to maintain the Marxist notion rather deteriorates. Although, Marxist historians produced impressive and pioneering studies, their claim to represent the history of the masses remained debatable. So, *Subaltern Studies* plunged into this historiographical contest over the representation of the culture and politics. Guha clarifies that it would not concise the individual voices, styles and approaches expand them. He further writes, “It has opened us to attack from those party-liners, one-horse riders, and other monists who had looked for the straight and the steady and the singular in our work only to find us wanting. But

we have taken that risk in order to generate and continually renew a space that is vital to a project like ours” (ix).

Guha seems ready even to take the risks during and after this project and declares that they would not stand straight and steady just on others’ wanting but try to generate and revitalize the space for their project. In Taralal Shrestha’s view, “it is the project of the quest of hope amid the hopeless condition among the subaltern” (5). Shrestha further quotes the view of Paulo Freire from his book *Pedagogy of Hope* that the existence of hope is within hopelessness or despair. In order to correct the vital mistake of the history, there needs to be the development of the concept which should create the hopeful environment among the people with the dream of serious revolution and re-construction (5).

So, Subaltern Studies is the project having the indications to create violent revolution and re-construction in favor of those hopeless people.

Guha traces back the decades of Subaltern Studies and informs us the necessity of *Subaltern Studies Group*. He insists:

“the years between the Naxalbari uprising and the end of the Emergency- has often been described as a period of disillusionment and Subaltern Studies as one of its outcomes Our project may be said to owe its formation to the disillusionment of those times. For even illusion does not work in quite the same way for the young and the old. It comes in two forms- the illusion of hope and the illusion of recollection, according to Kierkegaard. “Youth”, he says, “has the illusion of hope; the adult has the

illusion of recollection The youth has illusions, hopes for something extraordinary from life and from himself; the adult, in recompense, is often found to have illusions about his memories of his of youth”. (xi)

Shrestha’s understanding is matched by the disclosure from Guha that *Subaltern Studies* is the product born out of disillusionment of the 1970s Indian history. The mood characteristic of this disillusionment was one of anxiety suspended between despair and expectation and projected, as such, into the future. The turbulence of the 1970s and its pain culminate through the clash of doubt and self-doubt, interrogation and response between generations. The knowledge and interpretation related to the past which had been granted and authorized politically as well as academically was subjected to doubt with the possibility of losing its certainties along with the establishment of *Subaltern Studies Group*, according to Guha. He opines: ‘what made that possible and indeed necessary was not only its place in the sequence of generations, which led . . . to a continuous dialogue with the proximate age groups, but also its freedom from institutional constraints’ (xiv).

Because of the generational gap and the elitist education, Guha believes, *Subaltern Studies* with its argument to break out that from its very inception was arose. So, the embryo of freedom was possible for them to inaugurate this project with the caption “The historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism- colonialist and bourgeois- nationalist elitism”. *Subaltern Studies*’ attempt to undo that elitism is lucidly expressed in the introduction of *A Subaltern Studies Reader 1986-1995*. The editor writes, “The failure of elite discourse, in both its imperialist and indigenous nationalist varieties, to identify, far less interpret, many of the most

significant aspects of our past follows from a thematization framed rigidly by the presupposition of its monistic view of colonial power relations” (xv).

The central concern of *Subaltern Studies* was to undo the crimping and concealing effects of that failure by means of an alternative mode of thematization. It was to thematize the structural split of politics. This project was to challenge not only national, secular and other categories but also against the privileges of the so-called general over the particular, the larger over the smaller, the mainstream over the marginal. It even raised/raises the question of power and its displacement. This idea occurs dominantly in the preface to *Subaltern Studies I*:

We recognize of course that subordination cannot be understood except as one of the constitutive terms in a binary relationship of which the other is dominance, for “Subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up”. The dominant groups will therefore receive in these volumes the consideration they deserve without, however, being endowed with that spurious primacy assigned to them by the long standing tradition of elitism in South Asian Studies. Indeed, it will be very much a part of objective assessment of the role of the elite and as a critique of elitist interpretations of that role. (i)

Most of the complexities of subaltern derive on the recognition of such entities and forces of civil society are usually left out in the cold by elitist who were privileged by the dominant discourse to deal with the rulers on behalf of all the colonized. So, *Subaltern Studies* blends the issues in favor of the point of view of the state, adopts its

perspective without asking questions and ends up by concentrating selectively on those parts of the colonial experience that are limited to this light. The recognition of that tension is central to *Subaltern Studies*. This survey had set out with an array of questions in order to index the difference between the South Asian and European experiences in the age of colonialism, nationalism and modernism. Gynendra Pandey, one of the members of *Subaltern Studies Group*, locates the problem of elitism upon the subaltern and says that “the mass of ‘the people’ appear to count for very little in our analyses of “riot” situations. It is economic interests, land struggles, the play of market forces, and frequently elite manipulation that make them occur. “‘The people’ find their place, once again, outside history” (18).

Pandey finds problems not only on economic interests of land and property for sectarian conflict but also on the factors leaving the little room for the emotions of the people, for feelings and perceptions. He talks about the harsh conditions that the subaltern had undergone during colonialism. He opines:

In the major attacks, neither old people nor infants, neither women nor children, were spared in the rural areas and city. In his opinion, Muslims were the primary victims of the “riots” backed by the power of colonial government. He raises the issues of raped and abducted women and writes that ‘there is widespread feeling that women were abducted and raped on a large scale, but none of the surviving victims will talk about rape’. (9)

Even though they were severely victimized, they, as subaltern, could not voice their suffering. Besides, patriarchal norms were forcing the females into the

overwhelming dish of subalternity. “The paucity of male offenders in our sample is a telling index of patriarchal concern to exercise greater control over female than male sexuality” (47), Guha discloses with apt reference of Chandra’s death. Both genders were not treated the same in response to the society. Simone de Beauvoir’s concept is noteworthy where pregnancy is above all a drama that is acted out within the woman herself in the domain of female’s body. Subordination seems almost desirable by the glorification of the sources of oppression such as religion, *rajdharm*, punishment, social rituals. Religion becomes the opium of the people and the sign of the oppressed even for Marx.

Gautam Bhadra, a contributor to *Subaltern Studies*, sees the interplay or the fusion of the two opposing ideas of domination and subordination. Bhadra with the reference of King or landlord writes that “in the consciousness of the peasant, the King or the landlord was duty bound to look after him” (88). Everybody in this hierarchical order accepts the chains of duty as moral obligation like the peasant had duties towards the King. Even through the description of heaven and hell, subaltern upholds the hierarchy of authority.

Gramsci became interested in the study of the subaltern classes of consciousness and culture as one possible way to make their voice heard instead of relying on the historical narrative of the state. This notion is inherited by another subaltern critic like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Spivak affirmed that the task of an intellectual is to pave the way for the subaltern group and let them freely speak for themselves. From this idea, it is lucid that she is also for the subalterns who could speak on their own. But she further asserts that the subaltern has no history and cannot speak in the colonial production.

For Spivak, the subaltern has a type of organization and consciousness but has been hegemonized to accept its wretchedness as normal. “The subaltern does have a voice, only it is not loud enough to be heard by the people in power” as quoted by Manish Poudel and Ujjwal Prasai (The Kathmandu Post 10).

So, Spivak believes in training the imagination of the subaltern and gradually transforming their existing consciousness. By doing so, she wanted to make their unheard voice loud enough to be heard or listened. She even stresses the project not of direct financial assistance but to remap their minds.

Subaltern Studies' originality came to be its striving to rewrite the nation outside the state-centred national discourse that replicate colonial power or knowledge in a world of globalization. Writing such a new history constitutes subversive cultural politics as it exposes forms of power or knowledge that oppress subaltern people and also provides liberating alternatives. Because of the influence and effectiveness of the establishment of *Subaltern Studies Group* in South Asia, the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group was founded in 1993 by five academics. The Latin American Subaltern Studies Group affirmed both the historic exclusion of voices from Latin American studies and the responsibility of the academic community to seek these voices out and include them in academic, social and political discourse.

Whether it is the Subaltern Studies Group of South Asia or Latin American Subaltern Studies or from elsewhere, different historians and post-colonial critics stand together against colonial modernity to secure a better future for subaltern people, learning

to hear them, allowing them to speak, talking back to powers that marginalize them, documenting their past. The overall project is to uplift the subalterns.

Subaltern Studies and Cultural Criticism

Culture

Culture in English is derived from the Latin word ‘cultura’ which stands for cultivate the soil in its true sense. Culture is not simple to define since it has many layers of meanings along with the changing time and context. During medieval period, “cultura” as cultivation was often associated with the development of religious faith whereas in Roman literature, it was referred to the cultivation of farming. For renaissance humanists, culture was regarded as mental cultivation. In modern sense, this term, ‘culture’ denotes whole product of an individual, group or society of intelligent beings. It includes technology, art, science, as well as moral systems and characteristic behaviors and habits of human beings. Culture is the way of life for an entire society. As such, it includes codes of manners, dress, language, religion, rituals, and norms of behaviour such as law and morality and systems of belief. Thus, culture belongs to “the realm of broader human consciousness that is both developed and shaped by society, religion, history and geography” (Saraswathi 223). As there are multiple religions, societies, histories and geographies, there are many cultures existing in the world. Consciousness of human beings is affected by the history, society and other factors which has become evident even in *Midnight’s Children*.

Like Saraswathi, Stuart Hall defines that “Culture is the whole body of efforts made by the people in the sphere of thought to describe justify and praise the action

through which a people has created itself and keeps itself in existence” (121). So, culture is the result of people’s efforts to describe, justify their actions created by themselves. But in this process of justification, appraisal and description, different factors may be dominant hence affecting the overall phenomenon of culture and cultural practices. Whether it is the coercive power exercised by the state or the civil society, people are hegemonized and compelled accordingly. The effect of culture or cultural domination is even observed upon subaltern. For Ranajit Guha, the founder of *Subaltern Studies* in India, subalternity refers to the condition of subordination brought by colonization or other forms of economic, social, racial, linguistic and cultural dominance. A subaltern study, therefore, is a study of power and its effects. Socio-economic foundation is the mirror of the cultural practice which itself is the interplay of power directly or indirectly. According to Bhabha, “Postcolonial criticism forces us to engage with culture as an uneven, incomplete production of meaning and value of composed of incommensurable demands and practices, produced in the act social survival. Culture reaches out to create symbolic textuality, to give the alienating everyday an aura of selfhood, a promise of pleasure” (438). For him, Culture is the platform which is capable of providing the aura of selfhood and pleasure. He further opines:

Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational. It is transnational because contemporary Postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement. Culture is translational because such spatial histories of displacement now accompanied by the territorial ambitions of “global” media technologies-make the question of how culture, a rather complex issue. It becomes crucial to distinguish

between the semblance and similitude of the symbols across diverse cultural experiences-literature, art, music, ritual, life, death and the social specificity of each of these productions of meaning as they circulate as signs as signs within specific contextual locations and systems of value. (438)

So, Culture is transnational and translational. The transnational dimension of cultural transformation: migration, diaspora, displacement, and relocation make the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification. The natural unifying discourses of 'nation' or 'peoples' cannot be readily referenced. Postcolonial intellectuals' attempt to elaborate a historical and literary project begins from this hybridity of cultural value. Raymond William, one of the leading cultural critics, regards culture as a general social process, the giving and taking of meanings, or the process of living of people and writes:

Culture in the normative sense, "representation of the organic voice of the people," there emerged a third way using the term, "One that refers neither to people's organic way of life nor to the normative values preached by leading intellectuals but to a battle ground of social conflicts and contradictions". (qtd. in Graff and Robbins 421)

The attempt to draw a single central culture rendering individual experience in coherent and meaningful way in culture itself is dissonant and is almost impossible. While gathering the ideas about the relationship between culture and empire, Edward Said, a notable postmodern cultural critic, posits that 'the scope of Orientalism' matches

with ‘the scope of empire.’ At the same time, he also sees the culture representing as well as functioning as a form of hegemony. He writes:

The history of all culture is the history of cultural borrowings. Cultures are not impermeable; just as western science borrowed from Arabs, they had borrowed from India and Greece. Culture is never just a matter of ownership of borrowing and lending with absolute debtors and creditors, but rather of appropriations, common experiences, and interdependencies of all kinds among different cultures. This is a universal norm. (qtd. in Ashcroft 98)

Culture is both powerful means of differentiation, appropriation and domination. Culture, a double faceted term, has become not only the means of domination as the creation of ‘Orientalism’ but also resistance. Said writes; “Along with armed resistance in places as diverse as nineteenth century Algeria, Ireland and Indonesia, there also went considerable efforts in cultural resistance almost everywhere” (*Culture xii*). In this sense, culture not only serves the purpose of imperialism but also serves the purpose of resistance against empire. Said believes that novel, a kind of cultural form, was immensely important in the formation of imperial attitudes, references and experiences in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Like him, Herodotus, too, believed, ‘that-barring inevitable exceptions-slaves as a class were inferior in their psychology, by their nature’ (Guha 216). So, Guha observes the influence of dominant culture which spoke for the domination based on the exploitation of slaves (subaltern). Because of this too, it is relevant to study cultural aspect while studying subaltern.

Cultural Criticism

Culture is the set of costumes and beliefs, arts, ways of life and social organization of a particular country or a group. It is thought to have emerged around since late 1950s and early 1960s. Culture is a set of practices and beliefs constituted by the language games. It is not a tightly coherent unified movement with a fixed agenda but a loosely connected group of tendencies, issues and questions. It is the cultural criticism that studies culture as an interdependent set of institutional and formal practices and discourse. It emphasizes the issues of identity, dislocation, cultural alienation, cultural clash or collision, diaspora, etc. These issues of culture and cultural practices are bossy terms present in *Midnight's Children*. Cultural criticism highlights the interrelationships and tensions that exist between cultures and their effects upon both the literary works and authentic texts of our lives. Cultural Criticism has always been a multi or post disciplinary field of inquiry which blurs the boundaries between itself and other subjects. For Chris Barker, "What is at stake is Cultural Studies' connections to matters of power and politics" (5). So, it is clear that Cultural Studies has connections to 'power' and 'politics'. The power and politics are pervading every level of social relationship. This notion has got dominant space for E.P. Thompson's text "The Making of the English Working Class" (1964) in which he argues that conceptions of individuality have become fragmented in the post-war and longer restricted themselves to notions of shared cultural interests and value systems.

The central concept of power is regarded as pervading every level of social relationship in Cultural Criticism. "Power is not simply the glue that holds the society together, or coercive force which subordinates one set of people to another though it

certainly is that, but the processes that generate and enable any form of social action, relationship or order” (Barker 10). Such notion of power is similar to Antonio Gramsci’s concept of ‘hegemony’ which implies a situation where a ‘historical block’ of powerful groups exercise social authority and leadership over subordinate groups through the winning of the Foucauldian concept of power.

Influence of Hegemony on the Oppressed and the Marginalized

The Concept of ‘Hegemony’

Like ‘subaltern’, the term ‘hegemony’ was also the coinage of Italian communist Antonio Gramsci, when he was imprisoned by the fascist government, wrote approximately thirty documents related with political, social and cultural aspects in his famous book “*Prison Notebooks*”. By appropriating his concept of hegemony, M.H. Abrams asserts, “hegemony: that a social class achieves a predominant influence and power, not by direct and overt means, but by succeeding in making its ideological view of society so pervasive that the subordinate classes unwittingly accept and participate in their own oppression” (151).

Hegemony is a kind of influence or effects produced by power or power leading agencies, which is not the direct or overt means, with which the subordinate classes accept and participate unwittingly. It is most appropriated especially in the context of colonial period or post-colonial scenario. The consent of the ruled to be ruled is also hegemony. Gramsci mentions the influence of hegemony even in the subaltern and writes, “Among the subaltern groups, one will exercise or tend to exercise a certain hegemony through the mediation of a party: this must be established by studying the

development of all other parties too, in so far as they include elements of the hegemonic group or of the other subaltern group which undergo such hegemony” (203).

Hegemonic effect of the parties or the other subaltern group may affect them as they have the tendency to exercise the same.

The categories of domination and subordination, their influence and practices by subordinated people, submissiveness to and defiance of authority, deconstruction of colonial communalism, etc are more comprehensively explored in an attempt to re-write the history of subaltern through the publication of volumes of *Subaltern Studies*. That is to say, volumes of *Subaltern Studies Writing* raised the questions on the story of the victimization, the strength and the structure of the resistance it meets from its objects and above all the implications of a dominance desperately striving for a hegemony that continues to elude it.

The Oppressed and the Marginalized: Quick Targets of Hegemony

Hegemony is explicit and overt which is based on consent. Hegemony has no unconscious foundation for Gramsci which contrasts with dictatorship as a distinctive form of domination that combines the force and consent without force ever disappearing and in the force itself is the object of consent. So, hegemony is the consent protected by the armor of coercion. Civil society and state exert the power upon the people through the different mediums which contributes in its production. The experience of class is transcendent for Gramsci, so that the war of position which itself is the transformation of civil society, is a struggle for class hegemony. In class hegemony, each class seeks to prevent its interests as the interests of all people. The state orchestrates hegemony

through its connections to civil society. Under advanced capitalism, bourgeois hegemony is especially powerful. Gramsci's account of the rise of the class also serves as a framework for the struggle for socialist hegemony. Gramsci sees the importance of hegemonic ideology as a relatively autonomous system of ideologies that present bourgeoisie's interests as the interests of all. The working class (as subaltern) has an almost impossible task forging its own hegemony, since it does not have the wherewithal to grant economic concession, nor does it have the state to enforce its collective will. After a struggle over the very existence and meaning of the classes, Gramsci sees the possibility of class struggle for hegemony. Classification struggles precede class struggle in his opinion. He foresees the struggle with revolutionary effects in order to bring social transformation due to hegemonic domination and other factors. Civil society and the political society or the state correspond to the function of hegemony which the dominant group exercises throughout the society and direct domination or command through the state and its bodies.

To a certain extent, the subalterns are always epistemologically below the dominant culture. In this regard, they are marginalized from the state mechanism and, hence, oppressed accordingly. Civilization, progress and even self-identity always elude the subaltern, that is to say, marginalized and oppressed are judged as foreign objects knowing little or nothing about the civilization, progress and identity of the self. West is defined by the differentiation between the "present", "past", and "future", also from the sense of other. The oppressed are victimized by the hegemony of that thinking attitude. The effect of hegemony is even dominant in Spivak's reference of Indian *sati* who was having no meaningful place. In the context of Hinduism, her act was presented as

voluntary and as the slaughter of innocent women through the English perspective. Hegemonic effects become clear that 'In case of widow self-immolation, ritual is not being redefined as superstition but as a crime. The gravity of sati was that it was ideologically cathected as "reward", just as the gravity of imperialism was, that is, was ideologically cathected as "social mission"' (97).

She writes that "the production of the postcolonial subject is dependent on the intellectual creation of the "west" as the subject of study, as well as Said's orient" (qtd. in Maggio 425). The ideological impact of hegemony is vividly exposed as the case was justified as crime only despite the superstitious practice. This is because of the intellectual creation of the west colonialism and even in postcolonial context. Colonial oppression has resulted into the division of people into elites and subalterns. Colonial oppression has overriding effects on subalterns or marginalized and oppressed rather than elites. Spivak demands the westerners to judge and study the subaltern not only by Subaltern Studies Group. She notices the influence of hegemony when she notes that 'Deleuze's focus on the "workers' struggle" is characteristic of his Eurocentrism' (qtd. in Maggio 422). Deleuze's Eurocentrism vision (hegemony) loading "workers' struggle" is opposed by Spivak silently.

Gautam Bhadra clearly notices the hegemonic effect to the oppressed and marginalized people or subalterns. She opines:

It is well known that defiance is not only characteristic of the behavior of subaltern classes. Submissiveness to authority in one context is as frequent as defiance in another. It is these two elements that together constitute the

subaltern mentality ...the poor and the oppressed have, time and again . . . made voluntary sacrifices in favor of the rich and the dominant, at least as often as they have rebelled against the latter. (qtd. in Guha 63)

Bhadra does not see problem in oppressed's defiance only but their submissiveness to authority which is hegemony itself. Even though they made voluntary sacrifices in order to please the rich and the dominant leaders, they are left nowhere. So, they are compelled to revolt against them in return. The oppressed accepted / accept their authority and obey them without questioning, hence, became/ become the puppet or hegemonic subjects. Because of subordination or domination, struggle and resistance are born out as the products. Bhadra further adds on how hegemony occupies the place.

While talking about the tension between landlord and peasants, she finds problem of *abwab* (miscellaneous cesses, imposts and charges levied by landlords and public officials in addition to rent and revenue). She posits:

Abwab is considered by historians to have been an illegal cess and an extra burden on the peasants who, because of their helplessness and the superior political power of the landlord, had to pay up and suffer Although the colonial government banned these in the late eighteenth century, the peasants still had to pay these cesses to the zamindars. (qtd. in Guha 75-76)

Despite the fact of being an illegal and extra burden to peasants, *abwab* was collected until the later days from those helpless and oppressed peasants. The colonial hangover was stigmatized until later although colonial government banned these acts.

Hegemony affects both the zamindars (landlords) and helpless peasants at the same time. She proves it through the reports of cases where the peasants themselves took the initiative in paying extra amount to salvage the prestige of zamindars in crisis. By using the threat or force, many landlords did not hesitate to levy the cess at the same time. Subordination seems almost desirable by a glorification of the source of oppression. *Danda*, the punishment, practiced with and from colonizers is regarded as the foundation of everything which sidelines most sinners not to commit crimes for its fear. Different outcomes of the exercise of *danda* such as burning of houses, beating of people, the taking all rents due in a single installment were accepted by those marginalized and oppressed. In order to meet the demand of rent, peasants sell their plows, yoke and other agricultural implements along with their infants. These facts are recorded in the songs of Gopichandra.

The subalterns also regard religion as the means of resistance. But for David Hardiman, religion, a dogmatic belief, is no more than a “hegemonic ideology” imposed on the peasantry by a dominant class so as to divide and rule. Hardiman writes, “Religion is important for peasant consciousness . . . because religion is part of the ideological superstructure” (qtd. in Guha 105). So, religion is seen as a political resource used to manipulate the peasantry by unscrupulous leaders for their own selfish ends. Similarly, Dipesh Chakrabarty’s attitude of ‘discipline’ as the key to the power of the colonial state and its practice even later leaves the imprint of hegemony. The British were powerful because they were disciplined, orderly and punctual in every detail of their lives and this was made possible by women education. This notion is overridden in the mind of oppressed and marginalized which is no other than hegemonic effect. The desire for order

and discipline or rule of law enforced by the state is its influence. Homi K. Bhaba's concept of 'memetic' is also the part of it. 'Indian history remains a mimicry of a certain "modern" subject of "European" history and is bound to represent a sad figure of lack and failure' (qtd. in Guha 284). The desire or the consent of becoming European modern is also because of hegemony. Hegemony is prevailed through the different activities and attempts in the daily life. These afore-mentioned facts are found enough in *Midnight's Children* which are studied and explained in Chapter III next to it.

Chapter III

Subalternity and Quest for Meaningful Existence and Identity

Subalternity in *Midnight's Children*

A subaltern man is the one who is marginalized and oppressed. In another words, she/he is the one whose history is denied or left unheard by the state or the so-called elite intellectuals or rulers. She/he always remains pendulum on margins within the nation despite her/his contribution. Margins have always been ambiguous signs which have served to frame the center in terms of indictment as well as approval beyond the struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed.

The condition of subalternity paves the way from the very beginning chapter of *Midnight's Children* when Saleem Sinai traces back the history of his family and at same time, the history of his twined friend the Independent nation. Saleem is obliged to say that he was born once upon a time and having no further use for him, time is running out.

Subalternity is also the product created out of hegemonic influence and lack of education. Subaltern character 'Tai' is uneducated boatman, who runs his livelihood in Shikara Mountain and lake, compares the arrival of Doctor Aziz with the English sahibs. His desire to ferry them to Shalimar gardens and the King's spring reveals his previous impressions what he did to those so-called civilized people. The western thinking parameters are reflected when Doctor Aziz says to his wife that "Forget about being a good Kashmiri girl. Start thinking about being a modern Indian woman"(39). The Europe-returned man's comment upon his wife and his wife's comment response with 'they will see my deep-deep shame!' shows the hegemonic hangover despite the refusal.

Lifafa Das's act of rattling his drum and calling people to buy different accessories and things of daily use reminds us the initial periods of colonization and its impact on people even later. What Saleem thought about his father as a businessman of India turning white like Europeans is none other than the deeply rooted hegemonic consent. He further emphasizes the importance of white skin with Lila Sabarmati at the cocktail party that "All the best people are white under the skin". All the Europeans remain crystal clear in his attitude. This sort of deeply rooted hegemony has created subalternity even in Saleem. Almost all the people belonging to the lower economic condition become the victims of power. The peasant's terror intensifies its effects when he witnessed the soldier's act. "They have one mighty soldier fellow, he can kill six persons at one time, break necks khrikk-khrikk between his knees, my sirs? . . . I see, my sirs. With these eyes, ho yes! He fights with not guns, not swords. With knees' (518-19). The peasants were so terrified that they no longer need guns, swords and ammunition but just the physical strength is enough.

Subaltern concern evolved from the background of history from below or bottom up approach that starts from 1915. The stories of subordination, domination, victimization of the subalterns are unheard and suppressed. People having low economic background in the ladder of society are ill-treated which gave rise to subalternity. When Saleem along with his (false) mother Amina Sinai came to Rawalpindi, he internalizes the variation. "The General and Emerald travelled in Air-conditioned; they bought the rest of us ordinary first-class tickets" (396). People with low economy are forced to accept whatever the wealthy or rich wish them for. Subaltern consciousness arose because of the hypocrisies and immoralities of the rich as well. Brigadier Dyer's soldiers

killing and wounding one thousand five hundred and sixteen innocent people reveals the misutilization of state power. Similarly, Brigadier Iskander's treatment to the newly recruited soldiers prevails the domination and culture of domination within the state power. Domination or suppression is not only the state but also by the patriarchal norms and values. Coercive force from the state is more responsible than patriarchal. The formal letter informing Ahmed about freezing of all his assets is the domination exerted by the state. Only Ahmed was not the target. Almost all the Muslims were the victims according to Narlikar who says, "freeze a Muslims assets, they say" (185). State's domination is presented in Saleem's disclosure when he thought, "Threatened by policeman, I have remained silent for two decades: but no longer" (343). He was forced to remain silent for two decades. State-domination is there even in the case of commander Sabarmati who was found 'not guilty' by jury but 'guilty' by the Supreme Court of the state. Saleem's recognition and disclosure heightens the domination of the state upon the subaltern. "It is my firm conviction that the hidden purpose of the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965 was nothing more or less than the elimination of my benighted family from the face of the earth" (469). So, state's involvement in the war of 1965 was designed in such a way to eliminate Saleem's family erasing their existence. Even though subalterns sacrificed a lot for the nation, they are rewarded with the death souvenir by motivating them to participate in the war as the rear chance of history. How the subaltern characters are sacrificed is vividly presented from the voice of Pakistan. It reads:

Old men, young boys, irate grandmothers fought the Indian Army; bridge by bridge they battled, with any available weapons! Lame men loaded their pockets with grenades, pulled out the pins, flung themselves beneath

advancing Indians tanks; toothless old ladies disemboweled Indian babus with pitchforks! Down to the last man and child, they died: but they saved the city, holding off the Indians until air support arrived. (472)

The state did not see the children, toothless old people, disable people like lame, etc. in the name of saving the nation and did not care about their untimely demise too. They are sacrificed strategically in the name of awakening and better future.

The students and the lecturers were made the targets in the incident of 1971. “Students and lecturers came running out of hostels; they were greeted by bullets, and Mercurochrome stained the lawns” (497). Even the university turned out to be the battlefield stained with red blood of those innocent subalterns who had killed at midnight. The most tragic event was that of the Indian planes bombing the three places of Karachi from a great height thereby killing the subalterns such as Major Alauddin Latif, seven puffias, Mustasim, Saleem’s parents and many other relatives. State domination knows no barrier when it vitalized its soldiers whose brutality upon the subalterns reads like this: “Soldiers entering women’s hostels without knocking; women, dragged into the street, were also, entered, and again nobody troubled to knock” (497). The guiltless villagers were made sacrificial lamb and villages were being burnt owing to their collective responsibility for harboring Mukti Bahini, one of the revolutionary forces against the state, is noteworthy which reminded the moist insurgency era even for Nepalese people. The harsh brutality that the subalterns had undergone has further marginalized and oppressed them. Because of the brutality and beaten up by the low economy, the subaltern even chose suicide and other forms of destruction. Deprived of income, Saleem’s uncle or Pia’s husband, Uncle Hanif committed suicide. State-indifference

towards marginalized and oppressed has deeply affected the characters to subalternity. Shiva, one of the midnight children, regards history as the continuing struggle of oneself-against-the-crowd in his existence in the earth. Affected by the socio-cultural norms of hierarchy, Saleem also develops the notion of revenge when he was never invited into the Narlikar flat where he was born. It is the culture that shapes the mentality of people living within its domain, hence, paves the way to subalternity.

State's apathy to subalterns reflects when the state forgets or blurs its own invitation to make their sacrifices 'as never before'. There is no doubt that the subalterns as the citizens are ready to contribute for the nation and perform their duty. Saleem writes: "While parliamentarians poured out speeches about 'Chinese aggression' and 'the blood of our martyred jawans', my eyes began to stream with tears" (416). The emotional support becomes clear from his eyes full of tears. His support and sympathy can be observed through his revelation when he says, "I had also been overwhelmed by an agonizing feeling of sympathy for the country which was not only my twin-in-birth but also joined to me (so to speak) at the hip, so that what happened to either of us, happened to us both" (538). He further adds that "when I tumbled out into dust, shadow and amused cheers, I had already decided to save the country" (538). Even though the subalterns like Saleem are not getting the piece of pie as told by Spivak, they are determined to save their country till their existence despite the harsh conditions they would bear or are bearing. Subalternity co-exists with declaration of Saleem that "now my mission of saving-the-country could be seen in a new light; more revolutionary methodologies suggested themselves" (554). The phrase 'more revolutionary

methodologies' provides the clue from Gramsci's notion of the need of permanent revolution to re-structure the roles of subalterns in the state.

Domination or suppression is one of the inevitable parts of subalterns whether they are victimized by the coercive power or socio-political power. Most significantly, the subaltern especially females become the direct target of the patriarchal system of society which is agreed by many feminists and Subaltern Studies critics. Neither Ghani nor Amina Sinai, or Parvati-the witch or cow-dung Padma, almost all the female characters as subalterns have internalized the sufferings produced by socio-cultural practices. The servants talking advantages from a widow landlord Ghani and Padma becoming the total servant of Saleem under the male-dominated scenario are not only the examples of domination. There are many other incidents waiting to be flashed out. Doctor Sahib's desire to change his wife, Naseem, into a modern Indian woman and Ahmed Sinai's acts to desert Amina at his wish are the few examples. Naseem's question "Must your wife not look after you, even?" (40) is none other than the utterance produced amid the circumstances of patriarchy. Amina Sinai's secret visit to Ramram Seth is also its product. Padma raises the question and answers herself as "Why did she fail, somehow or other, to tell her visit? . . . 'But think how angry he'd've got, my God! Even if there hadn't been all that firebug business to worry him! Strange men; a woman on her own; he'd've gone wild! Wild, completely!" (116). Amina despite her want for freedom of activities keeps her visit to Ramram Seth secret in order to avoid the possible problems from her husband who may even raise the question of her chastity. This concept clarifies how the females are subdued and subordinated in the hands of patriarchy. Similarly, Padma recognizes and accuses that Saleem, one of the patriarch for her, had tricked her

all the time. It is true from the evident when Saleem discloses that, “Sitting in my enchanted shadows, I vouchsafe daily glimpses of myself-while she, my squatting glimpser, is captivated, helpless as a mongoose frozen into immobility swaying . . . paralyzed” (165-66). Reverend mother’s domestic rules are somehow supplementary to patriarchy. Patriarchal impacts are prevailed in the act of Padma too. She confesses:

It was my own foolish pride and vanity, Saleem baba, from which cause I did run from you, although the job here is good, and you so much needing a looker-after! But in a short time only was dying to return.

‘So then I thought, how to go back to this man who will not love me and only does some foolish writery? (Forgive, Saleem baba, but I must tell it truly. . .)’. (267)

Here, Padma shows how the subalterns (especially females) surrender themselves even at minor mistakes and let others dominate them or provide room for it with their submission. It is not only the problem of subalterns rather the culture and patriarchy which taught them to behave accordingly.

Oriental thought as argued by Edward Said is also one of the means of domination for the subalterns. The act of othering is helpful to generate the hegemony to those so-called uncivilized people. Saleem conceptualizes the impact of hegemony and asserts, “I permit myself this one generalization: Americans have mastered the universe, but have no domination over their mouths; whereas India is impotent, but her children tend to have excellent teeth” (251). He generalizes the American domination upon Indian and foresees the possibilities in her excellent teethed-children. Evie Burns’ European hangover has

dominant effects upon the subaltern characters. “From now on, there’s a new big chief around here. Okay, Indians? Any arguments?” (253). Just half a year older than Saleem, Evie threatens and wastes no sympathy but further compares the people with killing rats. How the Indians pushed into the ditch of subalternity is presented from Saleem’s thought. When he writes, “In India, we’ve always been vulnerable to Europeans . . . Evie had only been with us a matter of weeks, and already I was being sucked into a grotesque mimicry of European literature” (256). Just as the colonizer, Evie has the same mentality of domination with which she flirted.

Religion as argued by David Hardiman has vital role to create the space for subalternity in this novel too. Religion as a hegemonic ideology is important for peasant consciousness because of the ideological superstructure along with the sense of domination. Mian Abdullah, the Hummingbird and the founder chairman of Free Islam Convocation, collapsed who regards himself as the person not much of Muslim but all for Abdullah who fights his all fights. Reverend mother’s verbal protest leaks the truth about the religion. She says, “He was teaching them to hate, wife. He tells them to hate Hindus, and Buddhists and Jains and Sikhs and who knows what other vegetarians” (50-51). The tendency of one religion to accept even the dogmatic, contradictory ideas and to hate others’ religions is commented here. Religious intolerance in the painting and in behaviors is also getting the place in the novel. “MUSLIMS ARE THE JEWS OF ASIA!” (93) and “Mister Hindu, who defies our daughters? (99) have heightened the religious malpractice in the society. The most tragic event occurring in the curtain of religion is the Mary Periera’s crime which had doomed Shiva, one of the midnight children, to poverty and oppression or margin.

Aziz's inclination to European education and act of sending his children for the same is also the superficial form of domination which was accepted by Reverend mother too. For her, it was father's traditional role to decide. So, she did not object that. 'Because your studies were important, son' (7) not in his own nation but in Germany. The European educator Mr. Emil Zagallo's fury upon the students is also important to include. The hair-tearing figure of Mr. Zagallo represents himself as the factor of subalternity. Children comments, "You see heem, you savages? These man eez civilization! You show heem respect: he's got a sword!" (318). Saleem's victimization also contributed to the concept of European education as the superior one. Saleem's uprooted hairs stuck to Mr. Zagallo's hand shows the extreme brutality of the so-called European intellectuals over the non-western students (subalterns). It conspicuously reflects European enlightenment project which aspires to recover consciousness.

Saleem records the history of India and wants to rewrite its history with the collective force of midnight's conference which was participated by living five hundred and eighty one children later on. He proclaims, "how could I have known that history which has the power of pardoning sinners" (458). He is determined to create history with justice excluding the power of pardoning sinners. In this struggle, he seems ready to bear up different forms of punishments in prison or hardships till the success. The Buddha, talking to himself, supports his notion and attempt to reconstruct the history. He agrees that "It is time to think about saving our skins" (525). His want to save the midnight children is to support voice to subalterns. Saleem informs in the convention about different forms of punishments and motivates them to tackle. "steel rods are painful when applied to the ankles; rifle-butts leave bruises on foreheads. . . . Live electric wires up

your anuses, children; and that's not the only possibility, there is also hanging-by-the feet, and a candle-ah . . . is less, than comfortable when applied, lit, to the skin!", he asserts (609). In order to establish the rule and order, Saleem forecasts state's possible punishments to strike their soul as argued by David Arnold. For there can be no colonialism without coercion, no subjugation of an entire people in its own homeland by foreigners without the explicit use of force and the same is found even during post-colonialism. This novel inhibits somehow some giving rise to subalternity. In this regard, the subalternity helps the subalterns to go against the whole authority that dominates and suppresses them frequently.

Sense of Meaningful Existence with Identity

Human has progressed a lot since the ancient civilization in order to come to this modern period. Each and every activity of human is connected with existence or identity though directly or indirectly. Pursuit of happiness results from the meaningful existence or identity. In the quest of true identity and meaningful existence, man goes ups and downs in his/her life. Different approaches would be entertained to be safe and have a meaning in one's life. The society or the culture and the nation or the politics are the determinants to give rise to peoples' consciousness. For consciousness is considered to be the very ground that makes the disclosure of truth or firm ground possible. The novel "*Midnight's Children*" is an apt example of a novel written on the subaltern people. Almost all of the subaltern characters spend their life in mercy and pain. It is a form of a history written about low class people which explores the pain and torture of the poor and marginalized people.

It is the consciousness that arises initially from the narrator's (Saleem's) style of narrating the past events which began in 1915. The background of history from below or bottom up of his family and other subaltern characters are vividly presented along with very minute details of the events. Implementation of history from low class is reflected in the novel in which we can analyze the overall events of life of subaltern characters. The narrator totally revolves in the account of Saleem and his recording of the history what he and others crossed over and came to present. Being entrapped and a puppet in the hand of religious dogmatism of Mary Pereira, Saleem and Shiva both subaltern characters undergone unexpected destinies when Mary Pereira exchanged the name-tags of them in the Narlikar Nursing home on the stroke of midnight. According to her, she did it all for her Joseph. Its impact came into effect when she reveals her mistake with Saleem and his family. She confesses, "you must not send him, sahib, after eleven years he is your son . . . O, you boy . . . , O Saleem my piece-of-the-moon, you must know that your father was Winkie and your mother is also dead" (389). For about eleven years, Saleem was accepted as a son of Amina Sinai and Ahmed Sinai but actually, he was the true son of Wee Willie Winkie and Vanita who died of haemorrhage during delivery. This disclosure brought the flood in Saleem's life. The indifference of his adopted parents and the disclosure let him to search his self and have proper existence. His revelation also indicates the way for the pursuit of his self-identity. He asserts:

I have begun to crack all over like an old jug-that my poor body, singular, unlovely, buffeted by too much history, subjected to drainage above and drainage below, mutilated by doors, brained by spittoons, has started coming apart at the seams. . . . I shall eventually crumble into

(approximately) six hundred and thirty million particles of anonymous, and necessarily oblivious dust. This is why I have resolved to confide in paper, before I forget. (We are a nation of forgetters.). (43)

Saleem reports of the singular, unloved and poor body buffeted by the history which is subjected to drainage and even compares himself as the unified body of six hundred and thirty millions population of India. It is the consciousness from which the quest of identity begins. It is the same consciousness that arises and forces him to have the meaning of his life. Saleem's recognition reaches its height when he came to know about his reality despite his glorious childhood for eleven years with middle-class family. The consciousness develops when "Thunderbolts, one after the other: Saleem fears for his safety, and simultaneously learns the inescapable truth about his mother's death, and also that his position is weaker than he thought, because in this part of his family the act of acceptance has not been made" (548). The Newspaper celebrated, politicians ratified personality and congratulated baby even by Jawaharlal Nehru born in the happy moment of Indian Independence collects the bitter realities within his family. He becomes the matter of hatred in his relatives such as aunt Sonia, uncle Mustapha and so on. Loss of identity deeps down with the ill-treatment by Mustapha when he Saleem that "you eat my bread and do nothing . . . you are from my dead sister's house" (550) and "You were born from bhangis, you will remain a dirty type all your life" (552). Because of the extremity of accusations, Saleem left his uncle's house, deprived of family ties, returned to poverty. So, socio-cultural practices of hating other's son have pushed him to choose the side of poverty thereby developing the subaltern consciousness. Schaapsteker's advice or instruction "Be wise, child. Imitate the action of the snake. Be secret; strike from the

cover of a bush” (358) inspired Saleem to be the same. Saleem’s search for identity widens with his response “I am the sum total of everything that went before me . . . of everything done-to-me. . . . I am anything that happens after I’ve gone” (535). He defines himself as the one who had and would be there like history which records all the events and the changes. Furthermore, his assurance of the ability to see the things he didn’t actually witness has become vital to develop the self-consciousness and finally, the identity.

Saleem is not the only character having subaltern belongingness. There are many others behind him. The Brass Monkey, Parvati, Mumtaz, Mary Pereira, etc are the characters with the desperate wants of meaningful life. Almost all of them are in favor of glorious self and change their names in order to have the fresh beginning. Mumtaz changes her name into Amina Sinai, Wee Willie Winkie whose real name is never known, Parvati into Laylah, The Brass Monkey into Jamila Singer, Mary Pereira into Mrs. Braganza and her sister Alice into Mrs. Fernandes are the by-products in the quest of self-identity or the meaning.

Similarly, Ahmed Sinai finds problem in the so-called western civilization and comments, “So what? Mr. Methwold is a little eccentric, that’s all-can we not humour him? With our ancient civilization, Can we not be as civilized as he?” (130-31). His resistance of western civilization is the consequence produced from the elitist ideology of domination which paves way for the search of his identity and inspires others in search of their identities too. Shiva devastated by the abject poverty struggles hard to have his meaningful existence. Getting no clues, Shiva becomes war-hero and a notorious seducer in his struggle for life. With acute apathy of society and the elitist-led nation, ‘he suffered

from the curious fault of losing interest in anyone' (571) in search of his identity. He chose it as he was left no options. Being blurred by the elitist-bourgeois and nationalist elitism, he did not recognize his midnight companions and went on killing them.

Subaltern identities were about to diminish with the extremity of state domination when state declares the sterilization of midnight children. But this declaration fires up the role of subalterns in the project of their recognition.

Jamila singer became the public property, 'Pakistan's Angel', 'The Voice of the Nation' like that of Saleem who was also the national property being a twin to Indian Independence. Squeezed in the elitist bourgeois domination and national elitism, they remained nothing in the course of time which automatically gave rise to subaltern consciousness. Nationally praised and celebrated figures are sidelined into margin. Being humiliated among the relatives and discarded from the centre politics, Saleem undertook the project of rearranging the history. Saleem founded the conference of midnight children as the initial and grave project to rewrite the history through. Saleem leads the conference excluding Shiva and addresses them illustrating the aim of conference. He announces, "We must think . . . what we are for" (316). The collective campaign begins with the need of their recognition by the state and the society. He further adds, 'Our country needs gifted people; we must ask government how it wishes to use our skills – science – 'We must allow ourselves to be studied' – and religion – 'Let us declare ourselves to the world, So that all may glory in God' . . . cowardice – 'O heavens, we must stay secret, just think what they will do to us, stone us for witches or what-all' (316). Saleem demands their inclusion in the centre, right to education and religion of their own choice. He sees the possibility of ill-treatment like stone to witches against

their secret but regards it as the cowardice act even if they behave. His support was there when he knew about the script of Uncle Hanif. He opines, “Now he must write about ordinary people and social problems!” (336). His aim of rewriting the history of ordinary people, marginalized or oppressed intensifies when he says, “a chapter ends when one’s parents die, but new kind of chapter also begins” (482). The project seems to move with full vigor and strength after the bombing and killing of his parents. In combined efforts, they want to fix their blurred identities and existence with clear vision. Moreover, subaltern people who moved from Karachi to Agra to Delhi to some part of Bangladesh because of no fixed place for them seem to be addressed this project. Saleem internalizes the problem of untouchability and the status quo which was preserved in India and in his life too. So, with the attempt to alleviate these evils with which he was also victimized, he runs conference as a tool to revolt. The consciousness develops further when he felt “Utterly distracted by the double insanity of the war and . . . private life. I began to think desperate thoughts” (472).

The novel captures the personal history of the narrator which covers the whole life of subaltern characters. Saleem explores himself by memorizing the whole history of his life as well as his family and relatives. The story begins with life experiences since childhood, faces problems like poverty, social insecurity and exploitation of elitists that contribute for the quest of his identity and rest of the others too. As a subaltern whether it is Saleem or Padma or any other becoming recognized or known figure from lowly position as a worker is obviously fragmented and episodic that is what the history of subaltern group claimed by Antonio Gramsci. However, it is undeniable fact. Subaltern identities were about to diminish when the state declares the sterilization of midnight

children. It fires up the role of subalterns in their role of recognition. Finally, the novel ends with the abundance of hope to a son of Saleem, Adam Sinai, who gathers all the possibilities of completing the ongoing project of subaltern.

Chapter IV

Conclusion: Self Consciousness to Overcome Subalternity

Salman Rushdie's novel "*Midnight's Children*" (1981) has been one of the International bestseller books since its publication. Rushdie is regarded as one of the most distinguished novelists. This study analysed the novel from the prospective of subaltern ideology. Subaltern ideology helps to explore the low class peoples' history and the self identities by using memoirs. Saleem is a midnight child who narrates his life experiences with the inclusion of many histories of other children and his family. The story begins from Saleem's birth in the city of Bombay with prophesy of soothsayers, celebration of newspapers and politicians as he was the true twin to his independent nation. With the crime of Mary Pereira, he spent glorious childhood but the days full of struggles count especially when he was eleven years old through Mary's confession of her crime of exchanging the name-tags of Saleem and Shiva. Through the narration, it becomes clear that the life of poor people is not easy whether it is Bombay or Agra or Karachi. The memoir is a documentation of Saleem, his family, relatives and midnight children based on the experiences of subaltern's life. Consciousness is the way out to achieve the sense of identity and existence. The narrator clarifies the subaltern consciousness as self-consciousness of a sort which inhibits the area of independent thought and conjuncture of speculation. Social and religious backgrounds also reflect subaltern identities. Personal history or the history from (below) low class people helps to explore the reality of the nation and search the self. The novel captures the memoirs of workers or peasant consciousness. Consciousness is the ground that makes all disclosures possible. Back and

forth narrative style of the narrator in the novel reminds the subalterns which develops consciousness in them.

Socio-economic and religious foundation and its hierarchical structure are the vital factors which have grave effects upon subalterns. The narrator experiences the life of being subaltern while he was just eleven. He artistically presents the issues of subaltern (all midnight children) by memorizing the history even of the common people. The author has successfully raised the subaltern voice of an archetype mother (female) as well as an archetype son when he deals with how a woman is persistently oppressed in a society. Subaltern characters become the subject matter of discard and humiliation in the same society. It is also because of culture which affects through power and politics.

The question of identity and subalterns' inclusion in the main stream politics has been distorted by the colonialist elitist and bourgeois nationalist elitism. Subalterns are exposed just as the means of state machinery for war but are deprived from the basic rights to education, security, housing and so on. Saleem has started school at sixteen which means to say that subalterns are provided less chance for their intellectual development. In the one hand, they were excluded from education and main stream politics, and were subjected to sterilization with the intension of eliminating their generations on the other hand.

Subalterns become conscious when they reach the extremity of domination and suppression from oppressors and they begin to struggle to improve their condition with the same consciousness. In the organic composition of the domination, there lies persuasion and coercion as purposed by Ranajit Guha with which hegemony occupies the

space in subalterns. But the consciousness awakens them and resistance shifts the hegemony. The rhetoric and the claims of equality of citizen's rights, of self-determination through a sovereign nation-state have empowered marginal social groups in their struggles.

The socio-cultural affairs, hegemonic effects and elitist domination make subaltern characters conscious about their position which contributes to their meaningful recognition and identity with abundance of hope. Subaltern consciousness is not merely the structure characterized solely by negativity but it is also history shaped and developed through a changing process of interaction between the dominant and the subordinate. Only the dominant culture has a life in history and subaltern consciousness eternally frozen in its structure of negation. Despite the colonialist elitism and bourgeois nationalist elitism, the author has created enough space for subalterns for their conscious development. Because of the long domination and victimization of colonialist elitism and bourgeois nationalist elitism, they develop the consciousness against that. They (subalterns) search for their equal rights and representation in the main stream politics through consciousness. There is no option left for them. So, they revolt against the state domination and its indifference towards them. However, the revolt does not conclude till the end of the novel only through the attempts of Saleem and other subalterns but optimism remains alive even with Adam Sinai for the completion of this project. So, the struggle for self identity and recognition seems to be elongated till its achievement.

The author brought up in the middle class family struggles for his identity even from diaspora which is supportive for subaltern consciousness. Ousted from the centre politics to the margin in the status of extreme indifference, the author feels himself as a

subaltern and the imprinted mentality bursts out as the voice towards subaltern. The novel explores the self by writing personal history on the periphery of socio-economic status of the society and also of nation. Subaltern people, though not given their fundamental human rights to education, expression and free exercise of will power, can assert their existence through the consciousness generated by the socio-political and elitist ideology. In short, the novel represents the subalterns for their expression and different forms of acts.

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