

Ambivalence of Subaltern Consciousness in Somaly Mam's *The Road of Lost Innocence*

Key Words: Subaltern, Subaltern consciousness, Activism, Domination, Representative, Patriarchy, Ambivalence, Solidarity.

The present research paper attempts to explore the ambivalence of subaltern consciousness in Somaly Mam's *The Road of Lost Innocence*. It deals with Mam's way of getting consciousness and her activist and reformist acts which are ambivalent. Mam focuses on the NGO activism instead of political and national activism which is imperial notion of liberation. Mam's autobiography on the one hand goes against domination, subordination, violence and patriarchal society but on the other hand Mam accepts the hegemony of NGO. Subaltern historians believe that subaltern character turns to be a very radical autonomous revolutionary being after getting subaltern consciousness but Mam is not actually liberated autonomous rebellious individual rather an agent of an NGO. Mam is a sexual slave girl who turns to be an activist in the field of sexual slavery. She contributes from minimum level to collective conscience for broader solidarity of gender subaltern and somehow empowers sexed women position in society but this is not an appeal for radical transformation of gender subaltern. For radical transformation, political and national activism is necessary which is not mentioned by Mam. Therefore, this research paper projects the ambivalence of subaltern consciousness in Mam's *The Road of Lost Innocence*.

The autobiography, *The Road of Lost Innocence* published in 2005 is a story of a sexual slave girl Somaly Mam. It depicts the experience of sexual and domestic slavery of Mam, her struggle to create space in the society and concerning moreover with the issue of sexual slavery in Cambodia. Mam engages her reader to think

seriously about the pathetic condition of sexual slavery which is horrible in these days by traffickers. Mam reflects brutalities of sexual slave girls caused by their own parents and relatives for the greed of money. The author is conscious about the position, space, status and identity of women in society. It is necessary to involve in the mission of anti-trafficking to stop slavery and girls trafficking by all people in the world. The author, therefore, appeals people to hear the voice of sexual slave girls and protect them from hellish life of brothels and traffickers.

This dissertation deals with the consciousness of subaltern character Somaly Mam in the text *The Road of Lost Innocence* which is in-between consciousness. Mam is an orphan girl from countryside of Cambodia. She was sold in the brothel by her so called grandfather when she was sixteen years old. She suffered unspeakable acts of brutality and witnessed horrors which in the brothel. When she watched viciously murder of her friends then she decided to escape from brothels. There are many mode of getting consciousness. In some cases consciousness comes from revolutionary ideas, political consciousness and co-incidentally after too much domination and suppression. Mam gets consciousness after too much domination and violence. Subaltern character becomes rebellious and autonomous after having consciousness. But in the text, Mam tries to escape from brothel with the help of her customer and is able to escape. She does not go against brothel owners after getting consciousness but flew to France. She has no capacity to revolt at first that's why she escapes but after one year, she raises voice against the dominant force.

Subaltern consciousness is a revolutionary consciousness, radical transformative consciousness, political consciousness, and power hegemony consciousness which search the radical transformative way to be out. It is a real reformative consciousness. In the text, Mam is a gender subaltern protagonist but she

is not liberated autonomous subaltern character. She accepts the hegemony of NGO after being free from brothel and brothel owners. She escapes from brothel with the help of a foreigner later she marries him and flew to France. She does not come out from brothel by revolutionary spirit. But one year later she returns to Cambodia and raises voice against brothel owners with the help of NGO which rescues many sexual slave girls. It is not a feature of subaltern character consciousness because subaltern character becomes more autonomous revolutionary being after getting subaltern consciousness. Mam is not an autonomous individual subaltern character but her contribution and activism in the field of sexual slavery cannot be ignored. So her acts look contributory but paradoxical.

Somaly Mam was born in 1970/71 in Cambodia. She studied her school level at a local school. When she was sold in a brothel she was only sixteen years old. She suffered from brutal torture and violence in the brothel that's why she escapes from brothel with the help of a costumer. She flew to France and one year after returns to Cambodia and dedicated her life in saving girls from traffickers and brothel owners. She recues many girls, provides them shelters and skill to re-establish new life as normal women. Her Anti trafficking mission gains internal support. NGO and INGO from different western countries help Mam providing fund to her NGO. She wins Glamour Magazine Women of the Year, Prince of Asturias award, Daily Beast Women in the World for her brave act and mission of anti-trafficking. Many people are interested in her span of life that's why she published Autobiography *The Road of Lost Innocence* (2005) in which she appeals to the people in the world to involve in the mission to stop girls slavery and trafficking.

The Road of Lost Innocence tells the story of Mam's brutal experiences and story of her awakening as an activist and her harrowing and fights against corrupt

forces that steal the lives of many innocent girls. It raises issues of sexual slavery and girls trafficking in Cambodia. Mam demonstrates that domestic and sexual slavery is taken to be normal in Cambodia which is a curse for innocent girls. It shows the degradation of human civilization. Mam raises voice to empower sexed women position in the society. She goes against brothel owners to save girls from hellish life. She appeals for collective activism to eradicate girls trafficking and the exploitation of women from the world because domination upon women is pervasive throughout the world. Her calls for collective solidarity of women look good and contributory but her means of activism is NGO activism which is not able to eradicate sexual slavery without political and national activism.

The autobiography tries to give justice to women in society who are always ignored in patriarchal society. The male dominated society pushes the existence of female in critical condition. Male regard themselves superior to female. Eventually, they misuse and dominate female to fulfill their desire. The patriarchal societies establish rules and regulation without proper attention and thinking about female and female rights. Mam brings the story of other sexual slave girls who are sold by their own parents for money. Male invest money in girls to fulfill their sexual desire and they have no sympathy towards women. Mam is not being valorized from the mass national oppressed subaltern group of people. She gets award from international elite circle. She is objectified by Glamour Newspaper. So, patriarchal society's rules and regulations turn to be destructive for female.

Mam is a highly submissive gender subaltern character which is not possible to all the subaltern women in general. She becomes a role model of gender subaltern not all subaltern women can achieve the same status and position like Mam. Her struggles and practice of empowering sexual slave girls' position somehow help to

empower position of subaltern women in her society. Mam tries to give lesson to sexed women to raise voice for their rights and identity in the society. To establish existence in society, it becomes to a duty to be conscious and care about the position and right. Mam gives hope to those sexual slave girls who are in hopeless situation. So, Mam's narrative inspires many sexual slave girls to go against dominant social power structure for their rights and identity.

Few critics and writers have observed the text from different perspectives. I have studied Suzette R Grillot, Heidi Hoefinger, Nicholas Kristof, Abigali Pesta and Karen Thornber's observation of the text. Grillot claims autobiography as source of inspiration to those sexed women what he tittles, "Human Trafficking Board of Regent of the University Oklahama". In the journal, he asserts:

This is first-hand account of exploitation survival and courage offers an incredible inside view of the sex trade. As if escaping the life of forced prostitution is not difficult enough, Mam shows us how triumph over tragedy leads to a determination to help others do the same. Unable to leave behind those who like her, were imprisoned in the brutal world of sex work. Mam gives hope that bravery can defeat brothels. (6)

Grillot links the issue with the sex trade. He has mainly focused on the sexual slave tragic life and Mam's strategies to imprisoned girls from brothels. He argues that Mam's determination is a main reason behind triumph over brothel owners. Her strong determination to supports other is a risky task. The bravery and courage to face any problems lead towards triumph. That's why Grillot focuses on Mam's bravery which is the main cause of demolishing brothels and brothel owner's supremacy and domination.

In similar manner, Nicholas Kristof in article, "Fighting Back: One Brothel

Raid at a Time”, asserts Mam as an anti-trafficking activist from slave girl. He argues, “Somaly dedicates her life to battling forced prostitution, for her herself was sold as a child to a Cambodian brothel. After enduring torture and rapes, Somaly escaped and reinvented herself as an Anti-trafficking activist. She convinced Cambodia’s Anti-trafficking police to mount raid” (3). Kristof demonstrates Mam as an anti- trafficking activist first time who keeps capacity to resister case against the owners of brothels. She is a fearless woman who does not stop mission to raid brothels also after brothels owners have fight back ferociously against her. Kristof praises Mam for her dedication towards sexual slave girls. Mam dedicates her life to stop forced prostitution.

Abigali Pesta criticizes those people who are against autobiography *The Road of Lost Innocence* because Mam shares personal experience about sexual slavery in front of the world. In article, “SomalyMam’s story: I Did not Lie”, pesta mentions Mam’s view when people of Cambodia and other countries also criticize her for unfolding personal experience. Mam gives reply to those people as, “If girls want to talk about their story, they can. I do not tell anyone they have to do it. I have told my own story. Mine is enough. Why do we need to be silent in the brothel? Why be silent now? Enough” (3). It shows that male are not happy with Mam’s story because she unfolds her brutal experience of the brothels and sexual issue openly which is not accepted by male supremacy. That’s why she claims that it is enough now, we should not remain silent but raise voice against domination and subordination. She questioned why we should be silent forever. Mam shares her story to show reality of sexual slave girls in Cambodia in front of the world. Mam shows her anger towards those people who want sexed women need to be silent.

Karan Thornber praises Mam for her effort to combat with girl traffickers. He

states, “The Cambodian human right advocates Somaly Mam’s French language memoir on her experience with and struggle against sex slavery, almost all of the women who seek help from AFESIP, the NGO Mam founded to combat human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Southwest Asia” (235). AFESIP’s efforts in ending sex slavery including monitoring and preventing trafficking of girls from Cambodia and Thailand to others countries. In similar way, Rocap asserts that, “Miraculously, Mam survived the atrocities that she was subjected to and is now an activist. She founded and runs a non-governmental organization which translates from as acting for women in distressing situation” (72). AFESIP was founded in 1996 in Cambodia and spread to Thailand and Laos which have similar sex slave industries like Cambodia. It provides shelters, take care, providing health treatment and occupational skills to those rescued girls. Its aim is not only to rescue them but also reintegrate them in their society.

Heidi Hoefinger takes *The Road of Lost Innocence* as source of inspiration for sexual slave girls which provides hope and strength to go against dominant force. He analyses Mam story as, “Mam’s story is one that has both inspired and shaken the global anti- trafficking movement . . . Autobiography virtually projected Mam into the world as the beautifully damaged, global anti- trafficking poster child” (2). He praises Mam for her courageous combat against brothel owners and traffickers by transforming herself activist from slave child. Mam learns to resist from extreme mental and physical torture. She gives hope to subaltern women how to come up from hopeless situation. She supports Anti- trafficking movements. Mam turns to be somebody from nobody instead of being an orphan and slave.

Simon marks in article, “Sex slave story reveled to be Frabricated” asserts that, “ Mam was not orphaned and sold in to the sex trade as child, but instead lived

with biological parents through high school before sitting the teachers exam” (10).

Marks raises question on the authenticity of Mam’s story. She claims that Mam admitted falsehood and imaginative story in her autobiography. She takes interviews with Mam’s husband and other relatives of Mam and finds out that some events are imaginary and untrue. Marks suspects on Mam’s story and raises question about her imaginary events.

The Road of Lost Innocence raises issue of sexual slavery and girls trafficking. Almost all critics focus on the issue of girl trafficking and Mam’s tragic life where as it raised many issues too. Somaly Mam is an example of gender subaltern women who became an activist from a sex slave girl. Mam’s story does not only raise the issue of girl trafficking, but it reveals the reality of sexual slave girls and tries to empower sexed women position in society. It requests all people in the world to take the issue of slavery seriously. Therefore, this dissertation analyses *The Road of Lost Innocence* from the perspective of gender subaltern. In this regard, this paper explores Mam’s ambivalent subaltern consciousness.

The term subaltern refers to those groups of people who are at the margin in society and have no political agency. Subaltern is a term coined by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci in his notable work *Prision Notebooks* (1973). Gramsci used the word subaltern to refer to those groups of people who are, “Subject to the hegemony of ruling class” (14). It means subaltern people are suppressed by elite hegemonic power structure. Gramsci defines term subaltern as, “The groups that are excluded from a society’s established structures for political representation and therefore denied the means by which people have a voice in their own society” (43). He is interested in the historiography of the subaltern classes. He claims that history of subaltern people is a complex as the history of ruling class because subaltern history is fragmented,

episodic and subjective. Gramsci's main aim of term subaltern is to liberalize the suppressed voices by challenging authoritative voices. Ranjit Guha uses the term subaltern to refer to the peoples who are "socially, politically and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure of the colony and of the colonial homeland" (87). Subaltern studies is written in the colonial Indian context but it is applied throughout the world because hegemony is everywhere in the world.

The term subaltern entered in the postcolonial studies through the notable work of subaltern studies group led by Ranjit Guha who explores the role of non-elite actors in South Asian history. The subaltern studies group is a group of south Asian scholars interested in the postcolonial and post-imperial societies with a particular focus on those of south Asia while also covering the developing world in general sense. In 1980s the scope of enquiry of subaltern studies was applied as an "invention in south Asian historiography" (Spivak 21). Subaltern studied focuses on the perspective of the colonized and challenging the colonizers perspective upon the south Asian history. Guha explains subaltern studies groups aim as, "The aim of subaltern studies is to promote a systematic and informed discussion of subaltern themes in the field of South Asian studies" (48) and defines term subaltern as "a name for the general attribute of subordinate, whether this is expressed interms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any way" (27). The subaltern is a term to use for the dominated groups of people. It means subaltern studies searches the voice of marginalized people and tries to centralize them. It focuses on the history from below and goes against elite domination. So, a subaltern study is an influential academic movement whose goal is to re-focus history on people in bringing about large scale transformation in society.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak joined subaltern groups as an extravagant

subalternist who criticized subaltern studies as itself an elite based school of thought due to its ignorance of the issue of women. She pointed to male bias in subaltern studies where the leading members of a collective were all men who often ignore life experience of gender subaltern while celebrating the macho exploits of male provincial. Venna Das in her essay, "Subaltern as perspective" asserts that "The question of gender subaltern construction of the subaltern has been largely absent from the purview of the studies mentioned here an exception is Guha's paper on Chandra's death" (32). Spivak revolutionized the existing course of subaltern in her philosophical essays entitled, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography". In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" she focuses on themes including re-presentation, insurgency, and passiveness of gender subaltern and critique of attempt to speak for the most marginalized. She defines subaltern as, "The oppressed subjects or more generally those of inferior rank" (283) and subaltern position as, "The subaltern is not privileged and does not speak vocabulary that will get a hearing in institutional location of power" (12). She advocates for gender issue in subaltern studies. She claims that, "The subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (287). It shows that female is in double suppression and domination. Kamala Visweswaran also criticizes male subaltern theorist to put gender subaltern under topics of caste and class. She asserts, "Either gender is subsumed under the categories of caste and class or gender as seen to make a social group apart from the other subaltern" (88). She focuses that gender subaltern should be considered separate issue in subaltern studies not in relation to caste and class.

Subaltern consciousness had always been a critical feature of subalternity. Ajit k Chaudhary reiterated that, "The focus of subaltern studies is on the consciousness of subaltern classes, especially peasants" (108). Different subaltern theorists define

subaltern consciousness differently. Spivak defines, "Subaltern consciousness is subject to the elite that are neverfully recoverable that is always from its recovered signifies indeed that is effaced even as it disclosed that it is irreducibly discursive. . . ." (339). Spivak's more focuses on the gender subaltern consciousness. The gender subaltern is more dominated and suppressed than other subaltern groups of people. Spivak focuses on, ". . . consciousness here is not consciousness in general but a historicized political species subaltern consciousness" (338). Guha believed that the politics of the subaltern constituted an autonomous domain for it neither originated from elite politics nor did it existence defend on the latter. He claims that, "It neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the later" (11) Parth asserts, ". . . subaltern consciousness in the specific cultural context of India cannot be but contain caste as a central element in its constitution" (169). He focuses on the caste consciousness and complex kinds of consciousness and practice. So, subaltern consciousness is about the consciousness subaltern people acknowledged that they are dominated and suppressed. After getting consciousness, subaltern peoples are conscious about space and position in their society and ready to resist dominations and subordinations.

The subaltern study is based on Indian colonial context but it is applied throughout the world where hegemony is pervasive. It focuses on the minor and marginal people's issues to centralize them. Hegemony is everywhere in society even in the heaven where king Indra oppressed Apsara. So, subaltern theory is applicable in every hegemonic society. Therefore, it is used in the case of Somaly Mam because she is a most suppressed and repressed character. In, *The Road of Lost Innocence*, there is a local, national and international hegemony. She is a victim of local peoples and governmental officers. NGO is one of the hegemonic forces in the text. So,

gender subaltern perspective is applicable in the autobiography *The Road of Lost Innocence*.

The Road of Lost Innocence is about the issue of sex slavery and domination and subordination of women in society. Various writers have been writing many texts regarding the issue of female domination. Mam is one of them who tries to raise women issue in front of people in the world. Mam in text reveals crucial reality of sexual slave girls and her efforts to save girls from brothel owners and traffickers. She appeals for collective activism to stop girls trafficking. She advocates on behalf of sexual slave girls who are under the suppression of brothel owners. In *The Road of Lost Innocence* Mam presents the brutality of patriarchal society where women have no value and identity. The female are objectified to fulfill sexual desire of males. So, the writer challenges dominant social norms and values regarding women.

Mam focuses on the gender subaltern. She tries to give justice to those women who are dominated and suppressed by patriarchal rules and regulations. Mam is a gender subaltern protagonist. She is a subaltern character in terms of gender, race, color, education, ethnicity, geography, occupation and class. Gramsci defines subaltern characters as, “subordination in terms of class, caste, gender, race, language and culture and was used to signify the centrality of the dominant/ dominated relationships in history” (5). Mam is a sexual slave girl, widow, domestic slave and comes from country side of Cambodia. She is sold in brothel by her so called grandfather after the death of her first husband. She suffers from unspeakable acts of domination and subordination during the period of sexual and domestic slavery. She is insulted due to her profession and color of skin. The people insult her like a nonhuman being by calling her, “A dirty dark-skinned girl with no more brains than a lump of wood. They push me, yelled at me, insulted me” (11). It shows that Mam is

compared with wood because wood is a passive thing which does not have a life and brain. For males Mam has no existence in the world unless object. Mam is a victim of male gaze and patriarchy. Males compel her to be a sexual worker by sold in the brothel but they themselves call her whore. A customer who has a sexual relation with Mam calls her, "He called me a whore- don't try to give me any lesson, whore" (96). He does not feel guilty by calling her whore but he considered himself as pure and considered Mam as filthy. Mam lives in traumatic situation due to selfish nature of male dominated society.

Mam is a victim of patriarchal society. She is a victim of male dominated society which compels her to be a domestic and sexual slave where she suffers from mental and physical violence. Grandfather keeps her at his home for his service. Mam mentions, "I would become his indentured servant, domestic servant and unpaid servant" (13). Her grandfather and first husband sexually abuse her when she was at thirteen years old. In patriarchal society, males can do whatever they want to do with female without her permission and it should not be considered a crime. Ranjit Guha argues, "Dande is depicted as male there could be nothing wrong about exploiting women by forced either for labour or for men's sexual gratification" (239). It shows that female is nothing than sexual puppet for male which provides pleasure but does not have any value in their life. Mam endures physical torture when she refuses to have a sex with grandfather, "He would make me kneel and beat with a long hard bamboo that cut into my flesh and made me bleed with every below" (13). Mam suffers from mental and physical violence. The domestic violence is still privileged in the society but nobody could raise voice against that crucial system of torturing. So, Mam is a victim of domestic violence and suppression.

The female voices as well as their deeds are always ignored in society. Mam

does not speak against grandfather and her husband who make her life hellish due to the social rules and regulations which are male dominated. The society teaches girls to remain silent and calm follow the rules made by patriarchal society. It does not allow women to go against them even their dignity is spoiled. Mam tells, "There is a one law for women. Silence before rape and silence after rape" (202). It shows that female are not allowed to speak even their life is spoiled by male. The patriarchal society challenges women to keep silence otherwise they are discarded from the society. So, Mam remains silent when grandfather and shopkeeper rape her forcefully. The female are subjected to oppression of patriarchy. There is a law in the society, "to survive, you must be silent" (29).

Mam gets consciousness after too much psychological and physical domination and suppression. She is voiceless at first but later she gets the voice. There are different ways of getting subaltern consciousness. One of them is too much oppression and suppression. Mam is suffered from unspeakable acts of brutality and witnessed of her friends in the brothel force her to escape from brothel to survive. She is acknowledging that she is dominated and subordinated by customers and brothel owners. After that she tries to escape from brothel and able to escape with a foreigner costumer instead of revolting against dominant force. Subaltern character becomes revolutionary and autonomous after getting consciousness but Mam escapes from brothel after getting consciousness. Subaltern character becomes more autonomous individual, "It is also a retrieval of subaltern consciousness" (Spivak 12). She elaborates that this subaltern consciousness presupposes that a subaltern is an autonomous subject with an inherent essence. Mam is not an autonomous subaltern character because she chooses the hegemony of NGO after free from brothel. After one year of escaping from brothel, she returns to Cambodia from France and starts

mission of saving sexed women from brothels. She chooses NGO as a means of activism. So, she has no political and radical transformative consciousness.

Through self-representation, she tries to give space to subaltern women. She is conscious about her space, position and identity in her society. Subaltern consciousness means subaltern people know or conscious about their space, right and position in society and go against elite people for the sake of their own welfare and existence. This dissertation mainly focuses on gender subaltern consciousness not consciousness in general. Spivak claims, "Consciousness here is not consciousness in general but a historicized political species, subaltern consciousness" (338). She focuses on the gender subaltern consciousness because gender subaltern is more deeply in shadow of dominant force. Gender subaltern consciousness is about awareness and consciousness of women about their own position, identity and space in society. When they feel that they are dominated then go against dominant power. Mam creates own space in her society through her personal struggle. Mam tries to become somebody from nobody and able to establish her position in society from where she is discarded and neglected. She involves in the mission to save girls from traffickers which makes her international figure from sexed girl. Her mission helps women voiced their voice. That's why subaltern consciousness is necessary to break silence of subaltern groups of people.

After subaltern consciousness, subaltern character turns to be an independent autonomous individual. Gautam Bhabra in his essay, "The Mentality of Subalternity" depicts subaltern groups of people's mentality of resistance as:

It is well known that defiance is not only characteristic of the subaltern classes. Submissiveness to authority in one context is as fragment as defiance in the other. It is two elements that together constitute the subaltern mentality.

It is an account of this combination that the poor had the oppressed have time and again in different histories voluntary sacrifices in favor of the rich and dominant at last as often they have rebelled against the latter”. (54)

From this quotation, it is clear that subaltern people rebelled against domination and subordination when they are oppressed again and again. Subaltern people are not only resist silently but they are violent, “when they rebel, they are in a state of anxious defence” (Gramsci 10). When dominant forces give too much pain and torture, dominated subaltern groups of people start resist violently. Similarly in the text, Mam resists the customer’s misbehavior. She is ready to kill a crucial customer when he misbehaves with her brutally. She mentions, “I fired the gun. I was just so angry. The bullet hit his leg” (45). So, the environment and situation what is happening around subaltern people is intersected with act of resistance.

The intellectual plays important role in arising subaltern consciousness. Intellectuals provide a non-coercive support of the power and the potency of the dominant groups. According to Gramsci it is the responsibility of intellectuals, “to search out signs of subaltern initiative and incipient class identity that could be nurture and educated in to true class consciousness and effective political action” (28). He says that integral function that intellectuals perform in political leadership. They provide a non- coercive element of consent in political domination that the state cannot fulfill on its own. He focuses on the intellectuals role’s in formulating subaltern people space and arising subaltern consciousness. But in the text, there is a no role of intellectual like Gramscian point of view. Mam is a sexual slave girl. She is escaped with a foreigner from brothel and later she marries him. Pierre (her husband) is also an NGO worker who used to coming brothel to have a sex with Mam but later he helps Mam to escape and flew to France. So, in the text, role of intellectual is

ambivalent. Intellectuals' role is necessary for subaltern consciousness. Somaly Mam is not a great intellectual but she plays role from minimum level to give justice to sexed women. Her role's somehow help to empower women position in society. Though great intellectuals also cannot able to do work what Mam does for sexed women. That's why it is also ambivalent. She is escaping from brothel not turn to be a rebellious character when she gets consciousness. She has no consciousness to do such a great work in the field of girl trafficking and sexual slavery. She only wants to save her life but later she plays important role to prevent sexual slavery and girl trafficking in Cambodia and its neighbor countries. Though she is not an intellectual, her contribution in saving sexual slave girls and her anti- trafficking mission is most respectful and honorable act.

Mam speaks for own identity, space and position in her society particularly and for all sexed women in generally. It is believed that subaltern women cannot speak but in the text, Mam can speak for betterment of women and to empower women position in her society. She goes against brothel owners and traffickers to save a life of innocence girl from spoiling. Spivak claims that, "There is no space from which is sexed subaltern can speak" (103). It shows that mostly subaltern women cannot speak. But Mam shows the point of departure from Spivak's view about sexed women. She creates own space in her society from where she can speak on behalf of sexed women. She gains a name and fame in her society from where one day she is ignored and discarded.

Mam's perspectives towards Cambodian government are totally negative. She shows Cambodian government and its officers are totally corrupt and immoral. She generalizes all officers in the misdeed of some officers. Mam puts request to governmental institution to rescue girls from traffickers and brothel owners but

Cambodian government does not give proper attention towards her request. The government officers take bribe from the dominant force and ignored marginal people's issue. Mam argues, "With money. you can buy a judge, policeman- whatever you want corruption is like a gangrene at the heart of the Cambodian people and legal system" (89). According to her, money is everything for responsible officers of government. The police officers are running after money instead of helping exploited people. It is not good to generalize all officers in order to the misdeeds of some particular officers. Mam cannot able to do anything if police of Cambodia do not give support and help her in raid on brothels. She highlights her deeds and back grounding police contribution in raid on the brothels and rescue girls from traffickers. She claims, "We made so much fuss about it that the police agreed to raid the brothel. I think they do not want to lose face . . . too many of them were involved in the sex trade themselves. They worked as guards or went to the brothels as clients. Many of them were even investors" (136). She shows that government is almost corrupt and involve in immoral activities. She does not give any value to those innocent police officers who help in her mission. The police officers help Mam in her every step. She mentions, "That first raid was a farce. There were half a dozen policemen with me" (136). It shows that there is an involvement and contribution of police in saving sexed women from brothels. She mentions their involvement in her mission but back grounding their good deeds and highlights bad deeds, "It is worse outside. At least here, we were protected from the police" (58). She keeps her view totally negative due to some of the police offices. She only highlights corrupted things of police and ignored good things of police. That's why it is itself contradictory.

The role player is an exploiter or a savior of Mam. The role player is a customer of Mam. Pierre a customer of Mam later he helps her to escape from brothel

and support her in every step of her acts. He is a foreigner comes from France to Cambodia as an NGO worker. He used to visit brothel to have a sex with Mam. He is interested in Mam and has a Feeling of love towards Mam. Mam Says, “But one time a man seemed to be interested in me. He came several times. We almost became friends. He told me that he love me and wanted to marry me. This was after six months we moved to Aunt Peuve’s . . . there was a way out” (55). Pierre is a medium of Mam to escape from brothel. He helps Mam to escape and marries her. He supports every step of her life and problem. He helps her to run NGO and Supports her act the anti- trafficking mission. So, it is paradoxical that Pierre is an exploiter or a savior of Mam. There is a double role of same customers. Same customer becomes a savoir and an exploiter in the case of Mam. Pierre is also suffered by Mam. When she gains name and fame she gives divorce to Pierre. Other customers also help Mam. Dietrich is a customer of Mam who cares her and provides money for her because he does not want to see Mam in brothel again. He wants to take Mam Switzerland but Mam refuse. So, it is difficult to separate customers as exploiters or saviors of Mam.

Mam speaks against dominant social power structures which are made by male to dominate women. She challenges male orientated rules which are responsible to make women passive, dependent and helpless. She appeals for collective activism to dismantle defiled force’s supremacy. Her collectivism is an NGO activism that’s why she is not able to eradicate women’s domination and subordination. It is only acknowledge women that they are suppressed and repressed. The national and political activism is necessary to justify women equality and identity in society. But she accepts NGO activism which is questionable. NGO is itself an imperialist mission of liberation where we found hidden imperial faces. She chooses hegemony of the NGO after free from brothel. She frees from one hegemonic power structure and

enters another hegemonic force. She has a lot of contribution in the field of sexual slavery. She runs NGO to eradicating girls trafficking. "We had decided to call it something mild- we know we had to avoid attracting too much attention to the girls who would be living there. We settled on AFESIP- 'Acting For Women in Distressing Situation'" (155). She opens an NGO and appeals to NGO and INGO from western countries for funds instead to take a help from government of Cambodia. Mam mentions, "We took our project to the European Union Office . . . UN agency promised us funds and funds from UNICEF" (156). It shows that she follows path of imperial mission of elite people. From this it is clear that she is not an autonomous subaltern character instead of an agent of NGO. She goes against patriarchal rules and regulations but at the same time she accepts NGO's domination in her life. So, it is questionable itself because she is not free from domination only dominant agency is different.

Mam appeals for collective solidarity to empower women position but means is Imperial notion of liberation. Mam never criticizes NGO/ INGO and foreign peoples. She praises them for their support and help in funds of AFESIP. She is under the hegemony of NGO which is not accepted by rebellious autonomous subaltern character. She supports the foreigners and criticizes the local peoples. Subaltern theorists believe that subaltern consciousness makes subaltern character more independent autonomous rebellious being. The autonomous rebellious being does not support NGO but she/ he criticizes NGO for its hidden imperial faces. But Mam chooses NGO as a means of liberation. So, she is not actually liberated autonomous revolutionary being rather an agent of NGO. Where according to her government is too corrupt then she has no other option. So, what she is doing is looks good because it helps innocent slave girls to free from their master and to re-establish life like

normal people. She does not able to bring radical transformation without help of political agency. That's why her activism looks contributory but paradoxical.

Mam is a highly subversive gender subaltern protagonist. She has been transformed slave to an activist. It is not possible to all subaltern people in general to achieve success like Mam. She is a role model of gender subaltern. She speaks against dominant social force to create her space in society. Her struggle and fight against brothel owners shows that subaltern women also raise voice against suppression but their voices are ignored in patriarchal society. Mcheod writes about the Spivak as:

It is not speak but rather that others did not know how to listen how to enter in to a transaction between speaker and listener. The subaltern cannot speak because their words cannot properly interpret. Hence, the silence of the female as result of failure of interpretation and not a failure of articulation. (195)

It shows that subaltern women can speak but their voices do not given proper meaning, interpretation and value by dominant people. That's why it is not a failure of articulation but it is a failure of interpretation. Elite peoples do not heard marginal peoples voices at first and if they heard, they misinterpret, misjudge marginal people's voices and do not care about dominated people's feelings and emotions which are connected with voices. In the text, Mam is always speaking on behalf of sexual slave girls but nobody gives proper attention towards Mam's appeal. Peoples do not want to hear Mam's voice. That's why she runs NGO and helps sexual slave girls. She gets help from INGO from different western countries. It helps somehow improve position of women in society. She gets a position through her NGO but it is not possible to all women to achieve the success in NGO like Mam. Her transformation is an activist from a slave girl is not easy to all slave women. She is a representative of gender subaltern character who gains such a position and space instead of being a slave girl.

So, Mam is a highly Subversive gender subaltern Character.

The ideological construction of gender is one cause of women's downfall. Patriarchal society constructs role of gender in society. Gender is not an inborn trait of human being rather it is constructed by the society. Mam tries to establish women position in her society by going beyond ideological concept of gender. She deconstructs stereotypical images of women as passive, emotional, dependent, savage and so on. She challenges rules made by male to suppressed women in their every step of life. Spivak herself recognize that the ideological Concept of female is fraught with epistemic violence by claiming that, "The ideological construction of gender keeps male dominant" (18). Male shows themselves superior over female. The patriarchal society looks female from the perspective of sexuality. Females are victims of male gaze by, "This however, is an explicit masculinist gesture: turning women into rivals by making them objects of gaze" (Spivak 134). The male looks female only from the perspective of sexual gaze no more than that. Males have strong desire to have a sex with female but do not have any kind of sympathy and emotion towards female. The ideological construction of gender makes female weak and passive.

Similarly in the text, Males mostly use females for only fulfill their sexual desire. Mam Mentions that, "They pay to rape women, teenagers and little girls. They use violence-they hit, slap, bite in Thai porn videos that are sell as everywhere" (112). Women are only sexual puppet for men. They invest money for their sensual pleasure. Female have only exchange value for male agency. They pay and rape them. So, in the patriarchal society, women are objectified and exchange with money like an object. Mam and other innocent girls are victims of male gaze. They suffer from psychological and physical violence when males enjoy with their body. Every girl

remains silent due to the fear of males but Mam keeps capacity to revolt against objectification of female. She talks about the space of female in society. She mainly focuses on the issue of sexual women not all women in general. So, she is not able to empower position of all women in society.

Mam is not being valorized from the whole mass national oppressed subaltern groups of people rather she is valorized from international elite circle. Mam is getting award from glamour newspaper. She wins a Glamour Magazine woman of the year award in 2006. This award is given to her for contribution in girl trafficking. She says, "It was a wonderful night, full of emotion, support and hope. I had not realized that our cause would touch so many people" (120). She feels grateful for those people who support her. Her work is awarded by elite magazine but not awarded by mass groups of people. She wins other awards from foreign countries and INGO for her work but she is not awarded by local people. It is ambiguous that she is rewarded by elite not by those people for whom she works and speaks.

Mam gives voice to herself through literary representation. She published autobiography *The Road of Lost Innocence* to give voiced herself. She demonstrates all her personal experiences in the text. Mam shares her experience about sexual and domestic slavery in front of people which help to hear her voice. It is one way of voiced voiceless people. Female subaltern voice is disappear because, "Gender subaltern disappear because we never hear her speak about herself" (Gandi 29). It means female cannot speak for herself that's why she is always dominated and ignored by the society. But Mam chooses the way literary representation to give voice to gender subaltern. She depicts all brutal things happened with her during the period of domestic and sexual slavery in front of people of the world. It requests people in the world to hear her voice. She has a direct experience of all these things that's why

people believe on her tragic story. Julie Stephen argues, “A distinguishing features of contemporary feminist discourse is that purports to speak about real women. It claims to record direct experience of women . . .” (92). It shows that the authenticity of real experiences which have more possibility of accept truthfulness of the story by readers.

Mam speaks about real experience of sexed women. She herself is a sexual slave girl that’s why her experiences are authenticated. Spivak distinguished the real subaltern experience as, “Those who read or write literature can claim as little of subaltern status as these who read and write history the different is that the subaltern as object is supposed to be imagined in one case and real in another” (102). It shows that real subaltern experience is different from the imagined experience of subalternity. Imagined experience never depicts the real plight of subaltern people. Imagined subaltern experience never touch the emotion and thought of real subaltern people. So, Mam has a real experience of sexual slavery that’s why she depicts the real plight of sexed women.

Subaltern theories main aim is to, “reify and celebrate the writing of history from a non-elitist worldly lens; history from the margins” (Gramsci 84). Gramsci claims that subaltern theories celebrate marginalized and ignored issues which are not addressed by mainstream writers. It is a history from the below not from the above. Subaltern theories main aim is to bring marginalized voices in the mainstream. It tries to centralize marginal people’s voices. *The Road of Lost Innocence* is written from the perspective of a sexual slave girl. It is a story of a slave girl who is forgotten and discarded from her society. Sexuality is a marginal issue and it is valorized by Mam. Mam says, “When I was sold to a brothel as a prostitute, I was about sixteen years old. There are virgins for sale in every large town: to be sure of their virginity, the girls are something as young as five or six” (2). It raises the issue of girl’s trafficking

and sexual slavery which is ignored by elite people. Elite people do not talk about the issue of sexuality. It is a marginal issue. So, Mam highlights non-elitist people's issue to centralize.

Mam's *The Road of Lost Innocence* is one of the representative stories of gender subaltern. It represents voices of all sexed women. Mam becomes the voice of all sexual slave women. She argues why she writes this book as, "I am writing about it to make visible the lives of so many thousands of other women. They have no choice; so, let this one life stand for their story" (207). She represents all girls who live hellish life in brothels and who cannot speak due to fear of their master. Mam's personal story makes visible the lives of many thousands of sexual slave girls. Mam's story is an only representative story of all sexual slave women. Mam believes that one day people in the world could hear the voice of sexed women. So, it is necessary to continue writing about personal experience which challenges male's representation of women in their writing. The confessional writing is a weapon of women to destroy male point of view about female. Ranjit Guha argues that, "re-writing will inevitably destroyed the images of women as passive beneficiaries of struggle for equal rights waged by other on their behalf . . . I felt that women's voice once it is heard, will activated and make audible the other small voices as well" (11-12). It focuses on the importance of writing to make voice audible. It inspires women to write for their equality and identity which challenges male point of view about women in writing. That's why the day will come when women's voice could be heard and be interpreted throughout the world.

Mam's narrative inspires subaltern women to fight back against domination and subordination. It inspires many sex slave girls to come up with various form of internal and external domination and subordination. It is essential to create one's own

history and space in the society one self. Mam is a brave and courageous woman who endures all difficulties easily in her life. She does not care about what others think about her but she has a strong desire to do something for sexed women. She mentions:

I thought I would show those villages that even if you have been a prostitute, even if your skin is dark, you can still be a good person. You can be clever and you can succeed. After the way they had treated me, I had made a good life for myself. I was helping others and they could do that too. (162)

It inspires sexed women to live life like a normal human being. Mam's story motivates women to do something better in life in front of those people who ignored them. Mam is neglected, ignored and isolated from the society but her strong determination creates her space in society which makes her an activist. She helps sexual slave girls to re-establish new life. She provides hope to those female who are in the hopeless situation. She is self-made person.

Mam focuses on NGO activism throughout the text but at last she appeals to all governments of the world to get involved in anti-trafficking mission. She only criticizes government of Cambodia and praises foreigner agency for their support and help. But at last she writes that *The Road of Lost Innocence* is a call for collective mission to stop sexual exploitation of women. She says that, "I would like this book to serve as a call to the governments of the world to get involved in the battle against the sexual exploitation of women and children. Victims are victims in every country" (207). She appeals to governments throughout the world to help in the battle against sexual exploitation of women. The exploitation and domination of women is pervasive everywhere in the world. So, universal or collective mission is necessary to make society free from sexual exploitation of women. It shows that at last she knows that national and political activism is necessary to address the issue.

The Road of Lost Innocence depicts the suppression, repression, violence, domination and subordination of gender subaltern character Somaly Mam. Mam is a minor modality of gender subaltern who is transformed from a slave to an activist through personal struggle. She goes against dominant power structure to give justice to herself and those sexual slave girls who are the victims of patriarchy. She tries to empower women position in society and bring issue of sexuality in the mainstream. Mam personal story inspires many other slave girls to raise voice against the corrupted social power. Mam's transformation from a slave to an activist through her brave act provides hope to other sexed women. It is a transformation of subaltern woman despite of being an orphan, domestic and sexual slave girl. She raids on the brothels with the help of anti- trafficking police of Cambodia. She does not only rescue girl from brothels but also provides shelters and skills to restart new life like as usual. She runs NGO which helps sexed women and raise voice against girls trafficking.

Mam has brutal experience of sexual slavery in brothel which forces her to escape and raise voice against the brothel owner. Mam somehow achieves success in rescuing girls from brothels but not all sexual slave girls are free from sexual exploitation. So, she appeals for activism but her activism is itself problematic. She chooses NGO activism to give justice to sexed women which is imperialist notion of liberation. Without national and political activism it is not possible to give justice to sexual slave girls. It is necessary to address women issues from political dimension only after equality between men and women is possible. She has given focus on NGO activism instead of political and national activism. She praises INGO's from western countries and foreigner people and never criticizes them. She does not praise local people in Cambodia who give help in her mission.

Mam is not an independent autonomous subaltern character. She accepts NGO hegemony after being free from hegemony of brothel owner. After getting subaltern consciousness, subaltern character becomes more autonomous and never accepts any kind of domination. But Mam accepts NGO hegemony. Mam Claims that those governmental officers are too corrupted than she has no other option instead of running an NGO. She plays role from minimum level and gets success in her mission. She does not focus on political, social and national activism rather she focuses on NGO activism which is not ultimate way of liberation. Her activism somehow helps to empower women and acknowledged women about their oppression. But it is not an ultimate way to empower women position in society. Without political activism it is impossible to provide equality to women.

To, conclude, Mam plays important role in anti-trafficking mission. She brings brutal reality of sexual slave girls in front of people of the world and raises voice against dominant social power structure. Her mission recues many slave girls from hellish life of brothels and somehow stops girls trafficking. She requests people in the world to hear the voice of sexual slave girls. She appeals all people in the world to involve in the mission to eradicate women exploitation from the world because it is pervasive throughout the world. She did what is supposed to be done by intellectuals. She plays important role from minimum level to give justice to sexual slave girls. She is able to somehow empower status of sexual slave girls in her society. But it is not an appeal for radical transformation. So, Mam is not great instead of her great work and she is not popular instead of her popularity.

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