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Representation of Voiceless in Ruskin Bond's *A Long Walk for Bina*

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Letter of Recommendation

Miss Pabitra Adhikari has completed her thesis entitled “Representation of Voiceless in Ruskin Bond’s *A Long Walk for Bina*” under my supervision. She carried out her research from December 2015 to April 2016. I hereby recommend her thesis to be submitted for viva voice.

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This thesis titled “Representation of Voiceless in Ruskin Bond’s *A Long Walk for Bina*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Pabitra Adhikari has been approved by the undersigned of the research committee.

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Abstract

This paper deals with the representation of gendered subaltern in Ruskin Bond's *A Long Walk for Bina*. Specially, it investigates the suppression and victimization of women in the Indian society. The story shows the subordinate position of females in Koli and Nauti villages from Chamoli district of Uttarakhand of India. Using the notion of gender subaltern forwarded by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Ranajit Guha, this paper argues that though the characters of the novel suffer from social, cultural, educational and economical marginalization, they remain silent unable to raise their voice against the suppression in the patriarchal Indian society. In this sense, the novel has become an effective agency of representing the repressed voice of the subaltern women. As a result, this paper will be a milestone to illustrate the repressed voice of the women in the societies, and further more it will encourage all people who are interested to help in such problems and make the concern authorities aware about the situation.

Representation of Voiceless in Ruskin Bond's *A Long Walk for Bina*

Ruskin Bond's renowned work *A Long Walk for Bina*, excavates many of the Indian concerns like religious, communal, patriarchal, classism, culture, myth and domestic violence. But this paper primarily focuses on the regional patriarchal culture of Koli and Nauti villages from Chamoli district of Uttarakhand of India. The social norms and values privilege men whereas ignore women. Bina, the central female character of the story, had been ignored. The story is related to the females' suffering and their position in the society. They suffer from social, cultural, educational and economic marginalization. In this sense, the story focuses on the subordinate position of Bina. On the one hand, Bina's subalternity is due to social norms such as “women are good for nothing”(22) , a girl child must be silent and always help her mother in kitchen which privilege men's position in the society. Here, her brother is privileged in terms of patriarchal power. On the other hand, Bina as well as her family suffers from poverty. Here, Bina is comparatively living a life in lack of affluence. Ruskin Bond, in his novel tries to show that whatever leads to power, prestige and wealth is widely held as ‘big’ while the rest is relegated to the position of ‘small things’ and these ‘small things’ are the subaltern in the text.

This paper deals with objectification of the female body as exposed in Ruskin Bond's *A Long Walk for Bina*. After the identification of the mechanisms that coerce women to conform to the stereotypical image of an ideal and docile object to entice the males found in the text, the research basically hovers around the concern of gender subaltern. Overestimation, underestimation and the gaze of the female body in the novel uncovers the issue of gender subaltern. When Bina shifts to a school in Nauti, which is a long way from Koli, her village, she must daily cross the mountain, the river and walk through the jungle to get there. She is accompanied by Prakash, a boisterous twelve years old and Sonu, her excitable younger brother.

She is obliged to follow the decisions made by her family. It is her family which decides, -that Sonu must be accompanied on her way to Bina's new school in Nauti. Bina is taken as a care-needed being. She is totally under the grip of her family. She wasn't asked if she is able to go her new school in Nauti by herself, but she was accompanied by her younger brother Sonu to protect her on her way to school. In case, if Bina was only child of her parents she couldn't have got male's company and her study would be stoooped within the primary school. So the feminine existence is always silenced in terms of the opportunities and rights. Even she is not free to choose her friends among her classmate. In this response, she is powerless in patriarchal society. Where, males are privileged. Her counterparts- Sonu and prakash have freedom to make their decision themselves. On the other hand, they too have patriarchal power. Together, they have many adventures, from helping old Mr. Mani save his potatoes from porcupines to visiting the town of Tehri. Bina was always undermined despite her capacity and quality. The female protagonist in the novel represents the feminine gender whose identity has been manipulated by the masculine society. The female gender has been made subaltern due to the relative domination which proves the notion of gender subaltern. They are never viewed from the positive consciousness. Men are responsible for female's effacement; men are agency to suppress women in the patriarchal Indian society.

A Long Walk for Bina tells the story of a marginalized girl with the stereotypes of patriarchy. Tania Ramola, new teacher of Bina in her new school in Nauti is misbehaved by her colleague Mr Mani. Mr. Mani always undermines other female colleague in the school which opens the door of how the century long domination upon the female members in terms of gender has been still in practice. Similarly, Binita is women remained silent after her abduction and rape because she was afraid of being called as fallen and impure women.

While exploring females' position in the text, the researcher uses the concept of Gender Subaltern. Subaltern refers to those groups in the society, who are ignored by the colonialist as well as bourgeoisie nationalist historiographers, who are isolated from the power center, and subject to the hegemony of ruling classes. This research explores Bina's position from gender subaltern perspective. This perspective was introduced in academic field by Subaltern Studies Group in India. In the course of introducing volume *Subaltern Studies* Ranajit Guha defines: "we are indeed opposed to much of the prevailing academic practice in historiography...for its failure to acknowledge the subaltern as the maker of his own destiny. This critique lies at the very heart of our project" (4). Ranajit Guha in his volumes of *Subaltern Studies* raises the issues that, the study of Indian history had been strangled by elitism. What the elite thought is subaltern people cannot appear without the elite. This is the elite group who creates the truth and discourse to suppress the so-called inferior. In the novel *A Long Walk for Bina*, Mr. Mani was amazed when he checked the answer-sheet of Bina. He found the girl very intelligent than his favorite student Prakash, a son from an elite family. He was guided by the social norm that "women are good for nothing" (22). So he rechecked her paper and he made her fail in mathematics. Guha suggested, is how far various subaltern groups, whether women, peasants, outcastes, the working class, tribals, the downtrodden or other marginalized people who had been relegated to the periphery of Indian society, had been able to make history and constitute their politics as an "autonomous realm". As readers were to surmise, subaltern history promised more than "history from below". Guha sought to establish how insurgency might be read from the gaps, fissures, interstices, and rhetorical strategies that marked dominant discourse. Bina is dominated because she was a girl child from a poor family. The text gives narrow social and economic space to Bina. But her counterparts- Prakash and Sonu occupy a larger social and economic space.

Another leading scholar of subaltern studies is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. She argues in her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, the subaltern people cannot speak themselves. They cannot represent themselves. Instead, they have to be represented by others. Though the characters of the novel suffer from social, cultural, educational and economical marginalization they remained silent as they could not raise their voice against their suppression in the patriarchal society. Gender Subaltern especially raises the issue of those female who are ignored, forgotten, backward in position whose voices remain silent, ignored and remained passive, who are docile in front of male and who are in suffocation. It strengthens the voices of such marginalized female. The problem with representation, however, is that the subaltern's voice gets overshadowed by the very chance of investigator's. They can represent the subaltern voice through an elitist perspective and subaltern people's reality cannot be represented. Ruskin Bond's novel *A Long Walk for Bina* also deals with the same issues that Bina had been presented as a care-needed being. She wasn't asked if she is able to go her new school in Nauti by herself, but she was accompanied by her younger brother Sonu to protect her on her way to school. It is the society of Koli village which thought a ten years old boy, Sonu could protect his twelve years old sister. In case, if Bina was only child of her parents she couldn't have got male's company and her study would be stooped within the primary school. So this shows the feminine existence is always silenced in terms of the opportunities and rights. Here, Bina suffers from social marginalization. She is an inferior human being before male privileged patriarchal norms and values, where females are under the control of male-centered cultural domain.

Subaltern is a term used to describe the marginalized or exploited groups in the society. Subaltern people are erased in the society because they cannot revolt and uplift their status. If they try to protest against ruling class, they would be victimized in the hands of ruling class.

They are the subject to the ruling class. They are deprived from human rights. Their voices are under shadow. Subaltern are the people who are neglected as well as they are called inferior in rank. The purpose of the research is to probe into the elements of how the female is always silenced in terms of opportunities and rights. The novel has become itself one of the effective agencies to represent the depressed voice of the subaltern women. The dream of equality always remains as the soap bubbles as regards in the treatment towards the female in general. The feminine self has been thwarted with the absolute power that the males' practice, to find which the objective of the research is. This thesis brings the problems and subaltern issues to the front and informs these problems and issues to the public. As a result, this research will remain as a milestone to illustrate the depressed voice of the women in many societies, and further more it will encourage all the people who are interested to help in such problems and make the concerned authorities aware about the situation.

Ranajit Guha in his volumes of *Subaltern Studies* mentions that Subaltern refers to those groups in the society, who are ignored by the colonialist as well as bourgeoisie nationalist historiographers, who are isolated from the power center, and subject to the hegemony of ruling classes. It specially deals with the subalternity of women, known as gender subaltern. Gender subaltern also raises those female voices that are unheard, ignored and remained passive. It especially focuses on the female's position and tries to centralize those marginal female voices. In case of literature, it never discriminates in terms of gender, class, religion and power. Rather it focuses on the minor issues of society. In the novel *A Long Walk for Bina* too Bond selects such an innocent like character, Bina, as the central character, though there are rich and powerful characters like Prakash, Sonu, Mr. Mani, Tania Ramola and others. In Bond's novel, *A Long walk*

for Bina, Bina's social, economic, cultural and educational marginalization as an inferior girl matches the above mentioned theoretical modality of subaltern studies.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concepts are the most important and insightful. In her essay "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography" (1986), Spivak points out the absence of discussion on women in the Subaltern Studies project. Ruskin Bond's *A Long Walk for Bina*, presents Bina as an inferior individual in her society. She is absent while her family decides to shift Bina in new school to Nauti. Bina, in her early age, shifts to a school in Nauti, which is long way from her village Koli. She is accompanied by her younger brother Sonu just to provide her security on her way to the school in Nauti. It is the society of Koli, thinks Sonu at the age of ten could secure her sister Bina, age of twelve from the dangerous events that his sister have to suffer in her way to school in Nauti:

Bina had been going to school in her own village of Koli, on the other side of the mountain. But it had been a Primary School, finishing at Class Five. Now, in order to study in the Sixth, she would have to walk several miles every day to Nauti, where there was a High School going up to the Eighth. It had been decided that Sonu would also shift to the new school, to give Bina company. (5-6)

Bina is obliged to follow all the decisions made by her family. She got too much trouble while walking with Sonu on her way to school because of his tiredness. Bina was late in the first day in her new school in Nauti but she was quite and said nothing to her mother as she knows her study would be stooped within the primary school. Even she is not free to choose her friends among her classmate. In this response, she is powerless in patriarchal society. Where, males are

privileged. Her counterparts- Sonu and Prakash have freedom to make their decision themselves. On the other hand, they too have patriarchal power of the society.

Spivak argues in the essay that subaltern people cannot speak themselves. They cannot represent themselves. Instead, they have to be represented by others. The problem with representation, however, is that the subaltern's voice gets overshadowed by the very chance of investigator's. Many writers with the help of myth have attempted to depict women as subaltern and they generalize that they cannot speak, because of such reasons writers can speak on its own. In the novel, Bina is taken as a care-needed being. She is totally under the grip of her family. She wasn't asked if she is able to go her new school in Nauti by herself, but she was accompanied by her younger brother Sonu to protect her on her way to school. In case, if Bina was only child of her parents she couldn't have got male's company and her study would be stooped within the primary school. So the feminine existence is always silenced in terms of the opportunities and rights. Here, Bina suffers from social marginalization. She is an inferior human being before male privileged patriarchal norms and values, where females are under the control of male-centered cultural domain.

Subaltern people are always looked from the view of negative consciousness. They are never viewed from positive consciousness. They are not generalized as a group in the society. What the elite thought is subaltern people cannot appear without the elite. When elite tries to expose the subaltern people, they are exposed only for the purpose of discussing negative things. This is the elite group who creates the truth and discourse to suppress the so-called inferior. Mr. Mani works as a teacher to earn his income for the survival of his family. He further gives extra tuition classes for the sons from elite's family. There are many difficulties for him to sustain his social prestige. He was guided by the traditional thought that "women are good for nothing" (22)

Mr. Mani was amazed when he checked the answer-sheet of Bina. He found the girl very intelligent than his favorite student Prakash, a son from an elite family. According to Spivak, it is the elite group who creates the discourse to suppress the inferior groups:

there is always a counter pointing suggestion in the work if the group that subaltern consciousness is subject to the cathexis of the elite that it is never fully recoverable, that it is always askew from its received signifiers, indeed that it is effaced even as it is disclosed, that it is irreducibly discursive. (339).

Spivak, expresses similar view regarding female's silence in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" She discusses about the history writing process of colonialist where women are neglected. She writes:

Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced. The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of sexual division of the labor, for both of which there is "evidences". It is rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and can not speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow. (274)

Here, her assertion is about the ideological construction of gender. This construction always privileges males and keep them dominant she says that history neglects the subaltern. In this contest, female are doubly effaced. On the one hand history ignores them and on the other hand, subaltern male too ignores them. For her, when subaltern has no history and they cannot speak, subaltern women are more deeply discarded. They cannot raise their voice as their tongues are

cut. The matter is same in the case of Bina. She cannot speak for her honor whereas her brother can. She is inferior to her brother Sonu and her classmate Prakash. Consequently, she can't speak. When she speaks hardly, nobody hears her voice and gives proper space to it. The voice is neglected, discarded and unheard as she is poor, powerless and out of power center. She needs her brother Sonu at first as her agency for her protection on her way to school and Prakash to express her thought about the blast of the mountain. Prakash is the agency for Bina to express her thought about the natural disaster that they might have to face. "Bina ! I'll talk to my chachu about it" said Prakash. "he works in head office of this construction company."(183). When the villagers faced landslide then Mr. Mani said it was Prakash who thought about the natural disaster. Here, Bina suffers from social marginalization. She is an inferior human being before male privileged patriarchal norms and values. Firstly, she is marginalized in her family. She is taken as a care-needed being. Secondly, she raises the voice against the blast of the mountain in the Tehri town, but she was unheard. At the end of the story, landslide caused death of many people then Mr. Mani says Prakash had a long vision in his early age to think about the natural disaster. In the novel Bina's voice is overshadowed by Prakash and Mr. Mani.

According to Edward Said, history should be written from the subordinate's perspective because they are always neglected in the mainstream history. Between the two existing social classes - super-ordinate and subordinate, the former is always privileged whereas the latter one is discarded. So, the discarded one should be given special attention for their uplift and empowerment for social justice and egalitarian society. Ranajit Guha defines Subalternity as:

Subaltern Studies was a part of an attempt to align historical reasoning with larger movements for democracy in India. It looked for an anti-elitist approach to history writing, and in this it has much in common with the "history from below"

approach pioneered in English historiography by Christopher Hill, E.P. Thompson, E.J. Hobsbawm and others. (4)

Here, Guha views Subaltern Studies as a part of an effort that separates historical reasoning from the Indian movements against British Raj for independence. And relates it with the process of writing history where elitist approach is challenged. Thus, he focuses on the minority perspective for writing history. He also adds that “subaltern are the maker of his own destiny” (4).

Spivak furthermore expresses the same view on the context of third world female. They are entangled between culture and development, tradition and modernization. The imprisonment causes them to remain as displaced figure. Bina is also displaced and tortured girl. On the one hand she is failed by her teacher and on the other she is beaten severely by her own younger brother. Bina remains powerless and passive. She can do nothing according her will. Even, she moves back and forth according to her family decision. Here too, her identity is effaced. Because of her failure result, her whole family feels humiliated. Spivak writes:

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject constitution and object formation, the figure of women disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling that is the displaced figuration of the third world of women cut between tradition and modernization, culture and development. These considerations would raise every detail of judgments that seem valid for a history of sexuality in the west: Such would be the property of repression, that which distinguishes it from the prohibitions maintained by simple penal law: repression functions well as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, affirmation of non-

existence and consequently states that of all this there is nothing to say, to see, to know. (304)

Their situated-ness between patriarchy and imperialism revises the patriarchal judgment which is valid for the western history of sexuality. Women's position lets the male to suppress women though the suppression is different. In this contest male are privileged and women are subaltern. Female do not have anything to say, to see and to know as the males' privileged position casts them an injection to silence, and affirmation of non-existence.

Bina does not have social and cultural power to challenge Mr. Mani; she cannot go for revenge with Sonu, her brother. Here, too, she remains silent and miserable. If she tries to revolt against the elite groups, it is considered against the rules. It is against social norms and she might be alienated from the society. For this reason, the subaltern people can never uplift their status. This is due to ruling class or elite people. These norms or values are the supportive subject to dominate women. Though she lives with her family, she is seen as a victim living in a jail. She lacks decision making power. Bina is a poverty- stricken girl from a poor family. Her family has low income. The family income hardly supports their family expenditure. Her economic condition is bad: "Bina was the youngest daughter of a family of scant resources" (3). "Her house is modest one, not so good: her family lived in a modest house with brick walls and a palm roof, topped by two attics where swallows got in to breed in February" (4). She goes on living a life of marginal people. On the one hand, Bina's subalternity is due to social norms which privilege men's position in the society. Here, her brother is privileged in terms of power. On the other hand, Bina as well as her family suffers from poverty. Here, Bina is comparatively living a life in lack of affluence. Ruskin Bond, in his novel tries to show that whatever leads to power, prestige and wealth is widely held as 'big' while the rest is relegated to the position of 'small

things' and these 'small things' are the subaltern in the text. The 'small things' need not refer to inanimate objects only. There is no lack of selfish, cruel people in our society who treat the poor and the powerless no better than 'small things'. They reduce beings or persons to object which can be broken, crushed, thrown away or destroyed at the sweet will of the powerful. Their faith may even their life, is immaterial (unimportant) to those who wield (exercise) power. They are unable to raise their voice against the injustice done to them. As they are voiceless, as they cannot resist, they are but 'small things'. 'small things' are the victims of state, society and sheer will of the unthinking powerful. Though, the term 'small things' implies a lot and defies as exhaustive enumeration and elaboration. Women who are placed in a subordinate position by society and left defenseless by the state have no place to complain. The workers and the downtrodden exploited and abused traditionally. They are the voiceless. They are the subaltern groups and they are deprived of their rights. Children who are unable to defend themselves have to suffer a lot to survive. The "subaltern" is a broad category that attempts to characterize individuals where voices and actions have been silenced drastically reinterpreted lost or consciously swept away. Implicit in the term are related questions of power, agency and representation.

Bond is concerned with the subaltern female, Bina and her subordinate social and economic position in comparisons to the other males. Her brother is socially superior to her. And her counterpart Prakash is socially as well as economically superior to her. Male are privileged one way or other but she is marginalized. So, Bond's writing deals with subaltern issues related to a female. Obviously, his works is grounded with the female position in the Indian society. He shows the pathetic and sorrowful condition of subaltern girl, Bina. She does not have well respected position in her society. Male's social and economic power pushes her to the margin.

Another Scholar, Kamala Visweswaran argues about the discourse that does not admit women as proper subjects. They are handicapped without agency. So, they need agency for their action. She writes:

We must then ask why the bourgeoisie subject resorts to the subterfuge of attempting to contain agency through the projection of stereotypes: on the one hand, shouting women, and on women who make seditious speeches; and on the other, silent illiterate women who ‘came to see’, were pressured into Civil Disobedience activity; or bold and bad women who make small speeches. Women are not admitted as proper subjects by the discourse, but it does register and seek to contain their agency. (124)

She claims that bourgeois discourse based on their stereotype do not treat women as capable or full-fledged subject. On the contrary the discourse points the female need of agency for their social rebellion. They are taken as powerless and meek beings. The novel, *A Long Walk for Bina* does not expose Bina as proper subject. Rather it treats her as handicapped subject who needs agency for her action. In this respect, Bina is a gender subaltern, who has no voice.

Consequently, she can't speak. When she speaks hardly, nobody hears her voice and gives proper space to it. The voice is neglected, discarded and unheard as she is poor, powerless and out of power center. She needs her brother at first as her agency for her protection on her way to school and prakash to express her thought about the blast of the mountain:

‘They’re blasting the mountain,’ said Prakash.

‘End of a mountain,’ said Miss Ramola mournfully.

Mr. Mani maintained that it would bring electric power and water for irrigation to large areas of the country, including surrounding area. Miss Ramola declared that it was a menace, as it was situated in an earthquake zone. Bina found it all very confusing. And what about the animal in the area, she wondered, what would happen to them? There would be a terrible disaster if the dam burst!

‘Will the whole town be swallowed up by the waters of dam?’ asked Bina

‘Yes, all of it,’ said Miss Ramola . ‘The clock tower and the old palace. The long bazaar, and the temples, the schools, and the jail, and hundreds of houses, for many miles up the valley. All those people will have to go – thousands of them! Of course they’ll be resettled elsewhere.’

‘But the town’s been here for hunderes of years,’ said Bina. ‘They were quite happy without the dam, weren’t they?’

‘Yes, but there’s no one to listen you, Bina ! so it’s better keep quite’ said Miss Ramola

‘Bina ! I’ll talk to my chachu about it’ said Prakash. ‘he works in head office of this construction company.’(182-3)

The Subaltern Studies scholars claim that subaltern people can never have freedom of right, expression and others. They are always guided by the ruling class. They need agency to perform any sort of action. Here Prakash is the agency for Bina to express her thought about the natural disaster that they might have to face. According to David Ludden, “Acts of resistance link up

with interact which intersected with what is happening around them” (23). In his view, any theory of subaltern autonomy would tend to erase real subaltern from their surroundings.

Spivak detects the limitation and problems of representing women in the two narratives. Women are represented rather than representing themselves; they do not have their own voice and agency. Here Prakash is the agency for Bina’s voice. Spivak concludes: "There is no space from which the sexed subaltern subject can speak" (103). Even in the Subaltern Studies project, a project whose concern is particularly the marginalized and exploited people, the male subaltern is privileged. By investigating the opening the discussion of the gendered subaltern, Spivak expands and complicates the established concepts of the subaltern" (Morton 59). Here Sonu is privileged. Bina suffers a lot on her way to school in Nauti because of her small brother. Sonu gets tired very fast and when Bina says “it’s too late *vai!* Come fast we must be in time.” (188) He gets angry with her and beats her severally.

The story while creating demarcation of superiority and inferiority between male and female explores the other factors of that society, culture and religion. *A Long Walk for Bina* tells the story of a marginalized woman with the stereotypes of patriarchy. Tania Ramola, new teacher of Bina in her new school in Nauti is misbehaved by her colleague Mr Mani. “He had been a bit upset because a new teacher, a slip of girl, had been given charge of sixth, while he was still with the fifth.”(55) Mr. Mani feels discomfort in his job because of his thought that Miss Ramola, a young girl of twenty-five had given upper classes in her early age. He underestimates her as she is female. As he is male member of the society with his long experience in teaching, he was looking for the sixth class. Mr. Mani never thought she had passed masters level from Delhi and he was there with bachelor. He thought whatever is happening that is due to Miss Ramola

though Mr. Mani was explained by the headmaster clearly that Mr. Mani is going to be retired soon, so he wasn't given burden with senior classes:

The headmaster had explained that as Mr. Mani was due to retire at the end of the year, the school did not wish to burden him with a senior class. But Mr. Mani looked upon the whole thing as a plot to get rid of him. He glowered to Miss Ramola whenever, he passed her. (75-6)

Tania Ramola is moral, strong and determined; she walks her own way and life. But the patriarchal society mocks at her. The males dominate her and the male members of the family have economic interest from her. Women are treated as playmate for pleasure and entertainment of male. Male rarely treat them as human beings. Mr. Mani always gazes on Ramola's body as sexual object. He glowered to Miss Ramola whenever, he passed her.

From Spivak's perspectives, Tania Ramola in *A Long Walk for Bina* is trapped within a similarly complex discursive framework of representation. Being represented as a sexual object by her admirers, Tania has become the victim of multiple oppressions. As Spivak would say, her meaning is emptied to signify the domination of patriarchy and class, her body serves as the site where these discursive powers conceded. However the representation of her suffering from this oppression of patriarchy and class turns out to be a silence after she suffers sexual harassment from her colleague Mr. Mani.

As described in the novel, Tania is a twenty-five -year-old Hindu girl, who is charming and has a lot of admirers. She is portrayed as attractive and often receives "gazes" from men. For instance, in the beginning scenario of the novel Bond describes how Tania draws the "Covetous glances":

Up and down they look at her. Stub handed twisted beggars and dusty old beggars on crutches drop their poses and stare at her with hard, alert eyes. Hawkers, cart-drivers, cooks, coolies and cyclists turn their heads as she passes, pushing may pram with the unicorn of the Hindu goddess she worships. Tania tolerates them. (42)

The aforesaid description clarifies the gaze from males of male centered society. Those "covetous glances" radiating from variety of men-beggars, holymen, and so on—form a masculine domination upon Tania. They make Tania the object of the male gaze. Under the gaze, she is eroticized and objectified. In addition to the male gaze, Tania receives physical molestation from the male characters—frequent sexual harassment from Mr. Mani. Every men whether they are young or old have been attracted by her beauty. Being a girl she is treated as an object and her beauty has become the desire for a large circle of men of many races and creeds, their furtive attempts to touch her with their hands, and even their arms. Tania Ramola has faced the multiple oppression of patriarchy.

Overestimation, underestimation and the gaze of the female body in the text uncovers the issues of gender subaltern. Gyatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay "A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: Mahaswetadevi's 'Stanadayini'" views that subjectivity and voices of women are ignored. She is reduced to the object of the male's desire. "Whether women are looked "from above" merely as a sexual object or "from below" as a goddess" (106). Moreover, she has pointed the parallelism between Joshoda (the central female character of "Stanadayini") and the subaltern divine. At one aspect, she has been turned into an object of the male's desire. On the other, she has been worshiped as she feeds the children with her breasts. Similar is the case in *A Long Walk for Bina*, At one aspect, Miss Tania Ramola has been turned into an object of the

male's desire. On the other, she has been presented as a goddess of education. By presenting as goddess, the patriarchal society has tried to hide the injustice and oppression upon female. It is just a patriarchal politics to use women for their benefit. Thus Spivak entered a new domain of feminism in *Subaltern Studies IV* and gave gender subaltern a separate position in subaltern studies as Subaltern Studies hadn't taken the woman issues distinctly. Till then Subaltern Studies had undertaken empirical study on various aspects of subaltern people irrespective of caste, gender, class, color, space, economy. Bond further narrates the physical description of Binita from the perspective of Mr. Mani:

Things loved to crawl beneath Binita's sari, Ladybirds, glow-worms. She dusts them off with impartial non-chalance. I keep an eye on her breasts. Sometimes in the course of an engrossing story, they travel so cautiously that both Binita and I are taken unawares. He is also an absorbing gossip. When the story is extra good, and the tentative toes polite, my hands were playing with two soft balls with the rhythm of her fast heart beat. The fresh young firm whose full breasts with their dark beads of nipples stood out. (248-9)

This narration implies Mr. Mani's great sexual attraction towards feminine body. The aforesaid description clarifies the physical structure and appearance of Binita. Being a girl from subaltern class is treated as an object and her beauty has become the desire for Mr. Mani. Her attractive physical structure was the reason behind her rape. Male takes women body as an object, which is used for experiment. They never pay any serious attention towards female's problem. Due to social norms too, women are in suffocation and inferior in-front of men. They are passive and backward in the society. Ranajit Guha in his essay "Chandra's Death" deals with such issues. According to Guha: "I administered the medicine in the belief that it would terminate her

pregnancy and did not realize that it would kill her”(136). After Chandra’s death her mother remains silent because she is weak in terms of wealth, power and gender. In *A Long Walk for Bina*, Binita, after abduction and suffering from rape, she is silent that she cannot express what exactly happened after her abduction. She has a kind of shame and fear of being fallen woman. Many women after abduction and subsequent rapes made them victims; get reduces to the status of fallen women. They felt themselves ashamed of meeting their relatives. The women felt that they were soiled through forced sexual union with other men. They internalized that they had diluted the purity of the family and the community as well. Binita too feels such and does not want to express her reality after abduction. Bond narrates the events “She has nothing to be ashamed of; I know Binita is deeply irrevocably ashamed, he had shamed her” (266). This narration makes us clear that Binita is virtually dead and become fallen and impure woman. Although she was abducted and raped by Mr. Mani she refuses to stay with him. She is seeking freedom from the Mr. Mani. During her rape she request with Mr. Mani, Bond describes “Binita grasps Mr. Mani's Legs. "Please—I fall at your feet, *Babujiee*- please get me away".” (275) it makes us clear that Binita was suffering very much during abduction. Binita's suffering represents the suffering of gendered subaltern. As a gendered subaltern Binita has faced many difficulties and domination from patriarchy and her lower class, she has to face suppression of patriarchy violence because of being a gendered subaltern. As Spivak says subaltern do not have their own voice and cannot speak, Binita is silent and lost her own identity.

Similarly, Bina’s mother is silent after she was attacked from backward by the priest in the temple, as she is weak in terms of wealth, power and gender. “And then when she was bending down to worship; he came behind her and held her by her breasts.”(125) Bina remains quite while her mother was scolding her for her failure result, because she doesn’t have power to

prove her paper was rechecked and forcefully she was made fail. Due to class hierarchy, women are suppressed, their voices are ignored, their pains and sufferings are unheard.

In the novel Mr. Mani as an agency destroys Bina in her educational field, Miss Tania Ramola is victimized by sexual harassment and Binita is women remained silent after her abduction and rape because she was afraid of being called as fallen and impure women if her secrecy would be released in the society. Similarly, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak claims that male subordinates female. Males are agency to suppress females. Men are responsible for female's effacement. Their presence as agency destroys the female's position. She writes: "The agency was always male; the woman was always the victim. The dubious place of the free will of the constituted sexed subject as female was successfully effaced" (298). She charges male for female's social marginalization. According to her, male are agency to suppress women. They always remain victim for male. Their gender subjectivity as female is destroyed by male. The prey upon female and wounds them. Presence of male member in the Indian patriarchal society always dominates the female members. The silence of Binita signifies the silence of the gendered subaltern. Binita cannot express the oppression and domination of her after the abduction. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, for example, has underlined this problems in the introduction to *selected Subaltern Studies* "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography", where she observed that the member of the Subaltern Studies project overlook the importance of women as subject in their exploration of the subaltern in history.

In this essay, "The Mentality of Subalternity: Kantanama or Rajdharmā" Bhadra says; "It is well known that defiance is not the 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."(63) By nature, there are two types of

mentality of subaltern people. On the one hand they try to be free from domination and exploitation. They want to rebel to secure the position in the society. But another characteristic of the behavior of subaltern class is their subversiveness. They consider that it is due to their faith they are victimized, and this faith destined to be suppressed by elite. Due to this the dominant elite continue to dominate and rule, because of the poor mentality of subaltern people. As a result, the elite group always gets chance to make progress. In the novel, *A Long Walk for Bina*, Binita keeps silence by thinking that it is due to her faith that she was raped. Tania gets angry with Mr. Mani but she does not seem to be strange to these male gazes and acts of sexual harassment, she only tolerates them. Her passive reaction suggests her dilemma under the patriarchal oppression. Under this oppression her body becomes the object where the patriarchal power is imposed. She didn't complain anywhere against Mr. Mani because of her thought that male members of the society are meant to mock females and females are here to tolerate their activities.

Above all, Bond has weaved the story of his novel, *A Long walk for Bina* through the subaltern characters with their pain, sufferings, feelings and attitudes. He has given marvelous place to their discarded, neglected and ignored voices. It is written from the perspective of subaltern people as the narrator questions the official history through his investigation.

Here, Ruskin Bond shows the picture of Indian culture of Koli and Nauti villages from Chamoli district of Uttarakhand of India. In the novel, he presents how subaltern people are suppressed. How do the lower class people have to suppress their voice? The lower class people don't enjoy the rights but the higher class people can do anything and that is considered as their right in the society. They can fulfill their wishes by any means, whereas the subaltern people can make no choices in life. Women are silenced in different fields by the domination of male. They

are not given equal rights. They cannot make any decision at home as well as in the society. It is all due to patriarchal system. The main character of the novel, Bina, is exploited in different fields. The practices or norms created by male have to be followed by women without any resistance. These norms or values are the supportive subject to dominate women. Though she lives with her family, she is seen as a victim living in a jail. She lacks decision making power.

Females are suppressed and alienated in the society. Even they are even effaced. The elites think that the females are not human beings and they don't have any role to uplift the social status. They are considered as down trodden and inferior in rank. So, their history too is fragmented and episodic. If they try to revolt against the elite groups, it is considered against the rules. So, their voices are always silenced. They are the subject to the ruling class. The subaltern people cannot break the boundary. And if they try to break, it is against social norms and they are alienated from the society. For this reason, the females can never uplift their status. This is due to ruling class or elite people. They never give the way or chance to females. This is the elite group who creates the truth and discourse to suppress the so-called inferior. Spivak says that the subalterns cannot revolt; they are speechless and have no space in the society. Not only the lower class people are subalternized but also the female are doubly subalternized in the patriarchal society. On the one hand, she is subalternized at home and, on the other hand, in the society. Bond shows the picture of Indian society where women are considered in the lower rank. Therefore, the author in one way or the other depicts the resistance of the subaltern characters like Bina, Binita and Miss Tania Ramola.

Bond is concerned with the subaltern female, Bina and her subordinate social and economic position in comparisons to the other males. Her brother is socially superior to her. And her counterpart Prakash is socially as well as economically superior to her. Male are privileged

one way or other but she is marginalized. So, Bond's writing deals with subaltern issues related to a female. Obviously, his works is grounded with the female position in the Indian society. He shows the pathetic and sorrowful condition of subaltern woman, Bina. She does not have well respected position in her society. Male's social and economic power pushes her to the margin. Similarly Bina's mother, Miss Tania Ramola and Binita are also presented as an inferior being in the patriarchal Indian culture.

In this way the novel, by providing some examples, clearly shows the situation faced by the subaltern women. Their voices are never raised because they are often represented by elite people who never expose the reality faced by the women. As a result such problems and bitter reality of the subaltern women are always locked inside which, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak says, requires effective agencies to raise them as great issues to be solved. Regarding this, the novel has become itself one of the effective agencies to represent the repressed voice of the subaltern women. In this sense, the present dissertation, by raising the small issue mentioned in the novel, has tried to explore the deep rooted silence of gendered subaltern faced in many societies.

To sum up, Bina is socially and economically subordinate being in the society. She gets the secondary position whereas her male counterparts – Sonu and Prakash live a privileged life. She is poverty- stricken as well as fragile before male but Sonu and Prakash are rich and have strong position in the society. In this respect, Bina is a gender subaltern, who has no voice. Consequently, she can't speak. When she speaks hardly, nobody hears her voice and gives proper space to it. The voice is neglected, discarded and unheard as she is poor, powerless and out of power center. Therefore, Bond in his novel, *A Long Walk for Bina*, successfully presents the

subalternity through sexuality. Through sexuality, Bond tries to show the resistance to the discrimination and prejudices against subaltern group.

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