

Tribhuvan University

Representation of the Subaltern in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*

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Abstract

This thesis entitled “Representation of the Subaltern in Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies*” focuses on under-privileged, oppressed and exploited subaltern people of 19th century. All the characters have lost their identity and being helpless due to Hindu socio-cultural norms and values. The lives of the marginalized subjects in this novel are conditioned and dictated by movements of people, commerce and empire. These characters like Deeti, Hukumsingh, Kabutri are privileged, oppressed and exploited by the so called higher caste and patriarchal society. The representation of the practice of sati, the immolation of widows on their husbands’ funeral pyre, has garnered interest for long from postcolonial and feminist discourses among others. Likewise, the Hindu caste system make the characters traumatized and loss their identity in the modern world.

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I. Dalit Subaltern in Ghosh's Writings

The Sea of Poppies by Amitav Ghosh presents a picture of 19th century Indian society with its beliefs, customs and social problems like poverty and the marginalization of a particular sect of people in the name of caste. The novel brings to light the caste discrimination and male domination in a patriarchal society and the consequent relegation of women to a secondary position. Similarly he depicts the real experience and struggle of subaltern.

The present study focuses on the issue of subaltern and their cultural practices. This study is based on caste discrimination and gender discrimination. The main character Deeti is double marginalized because she is female and dalit. The caste system of India has divided the society into two poles. According to the census 2011, there are 201 millions dalits in India, who have been compelled to lag at the bottom of the social structure and excluded from national development.

The novel *The Sea of Poppies* raises the voice of subaltern, in the making of Kalua as a heroic protector of the dalit Deeti, “. . . resisting oppression . . . and in the building of a subaltern solidarity within the fragile community on board the author reaffirms dalit agency and writes the oppressed back to the center” (49).

This paper presents the cultural practices of Indian society and tries to argue about the characters who are marginalized and suppressed by the male and higher caste. Here, the study centralized with the pathetic condition of these people and depicts their struggle to survive in the caste based Indian society.

The author focuses on almost every character belonging to different levels of society. The different incidents which take place in the life of characters are interconnected. The novel is a commentary on socio-cultural evolution of Indian subaltern society, a story of struggle by the marginalized group of Imperial India.

Indian people are forcefully employed into Opium cultivation by British rulers.

Amitav Ghosh within the text *Sea of Poppies* have been successful in exposing the crude reality of caste binaries existing within the social structure.

Sea of Poppies presents the story of colonized India on the eve of the British attack on the Chinese ports which was known as the war for Opium. Here, Amitav Ghosh describes a picture of different kinds of subaltern characters drawn from different corners of the planet- sailors, passengers, marines, a slaves, coolies, girmitis; indentured labourers to a state or space where just and normal 'laws . . . have . . . no hold' and 'submission and obedience' (404). On their course towards the plantation business in Mauritius, these characters are compelled to experience sati, ship board mutiny, a court case, jails, kidnapping, rapping, beatings, floggings, wretched life as of a dog.

The *Sea of Poppies* portrays the Hindu caste system and traditional patriarchal society. Dalits are undermined and ignored by the upper class society and female two are exploited in the every step of their life. So Ghosh reveal the facts like this:

In the end, it was the old woman herself who provided Deeti with the impetus to act upon her suspicions. One day while massaging Deeti's belly, she said, and after we have delivered this one, we must make sure there are more many many more. It was this throwaway remark that revealed to Deeti that her mother in law had every intention of ensuring that whatever had happened in her wedding night would be repeated, that she would be drugged and held down to be raped agin by the unknown accomplice. (37)

This paper presents the psychological trauma of the subaltern and their bitter experiences in the society. While dealing with subalternity, my attempt would be to

underline subalternity as something not biologically inherent, but a characteristic maintained to sustained power relation and dominance. This paper would argue that subalternity does not define the being of a subject, instead a 'subjected state of a being which has been tried to be fixed into limited position, where from their speaking for them become an affair of improbability, unlike the organized. As Spivak says, "to that extend is the name of the place which is so displaced from what made me and the organized resister, that to have it speak is like Godot arriving on bus" (Spivak 91).

The issue of dalit subalternity woven into the *Sea of Poppies* has been noted by Shanker A. Dutt in his essay, "*Dalit Writings: From Empathy to Agency.*" The authenticity of non-dalit empathetic sensibility has been questioned and the experiential discrimination emphasized. They are of the view that "Dalit literature is a socio-political document of dalit movement . . . [their] struggle through pen and pain against inhumanity" (ctd. in Kothari 62). There is another point of view countering this ad hominem approach wherein the class, caste and location of writers are confronted rather than ideological allegiance or position they maintain. Dutt argues that, like Tagore's treatment of untouchability in his dance drama, *Chandalika*, Ghosh's perspective on the hegemonic structures of oppression is revolutionary. He declares:

The *Sea of Poppies* also records the heinous system of caste discrimination practiced in Indian society. Nicholas Dirks in his introduction to *Colonialism and culture* remarks, . . . Culture in India seems to have been principally defined by caste. Caste has always been seen as central in Indian history and as one of the major reasons why India has no history, no sense of history. Caste defines the core of

Indian tradition, and caste is today- as it was throughout the colonial era – the major threat to Indian modernity. (8)

This novel moves around the numerous intricate stories of poverty- stricken people. If any unacceptable behavior is shown by Hindu, he is degraded to the position of an out caste. When Neel's forgery case is on trial, he asks the authority to lose his caste instead of another penalty. As the Raja of Rashkali Neel enjoys the privileges of upper caste but once he is convicted, he loses caste and is made to clean the cell that he shared with Ah Fatt. "When he had to take hold of the jharu, he could not prevail upon his hand to make contact: the risk involved seemed unimaginably great for he knew that he would cease to be the man he had been a short while before" (323). Crossing the sea also meant losing one's caste. Seeing the grimy as marching towards the river, Deeti reflects on the implications of losing one's caste. "She tried to imagine what it would be like to be in their place, to know that you were forever an outcaste" (72).

Inter caste marriages and inter-religious marriages were considered as social taboos. Jodu a Muslim is beaten to the point of death when he is found with a Hindu girl. An outcaste marrying a woman of high caste was considered to be a serious crime than murder. Captain Chillingworth informs Zachary that Kalua has to be flogged the next day for murdering the silahdar and later the case would be heard by a judge in Port Louis. Zachary wonders why he has to be punished twice for the same offence. The captain replies that in the eyes of the subedar, murder was the least of his crimes and for the heinous crime he had committed he would be cut and fed to the dogs at home – "he is a pariah who has run off with a woman of high caste" (481).

This novel is set in India in 1838, on the eve of the Anglo -Chinese Opium Wars 1838 -43 and 1846 -60. The novel *The Sea of Poppies* elucidates two enormous

economic episodes of 19th Century; the cultivation of opium as a cash crop in Bengal and Bihar for Chinese market and the transport of Indian indentured workers to cut sugar canes for the British on such islands as Mauritius, Fiji and Trinidad.

Imperialism has traditionally, culturally and linguistically blended Indian ethos with the European.

Subaltern Identity in the Modern World

Subaltern identity is related with the people and their condition of subordination which is brought or created by the particular society or other forms of economic, social, racial, linguistic, and cultural dominance. Subaltern studies refers study of power where the powerful rules to the powerless people. There is always be conflict with who has it and who does not. Who is gaining it and who is losing it. Power is intimately related to questions of identity and existence to which representations have cognitive authority and can secure hegemony and which do not and cannot.

Subaltern Studies began in the modern world with the work of Ranajit Guha and the South Asian Subaltern Studies in the 1980s. Subaltern Identity is conceptually derived from the cultural-hegemony work of the Italian Marxist intellectual Antonio Gramsci. In postcolonial theory, the term subaltern describes the lower classes and the social groups who are at the margins of a society, a subaltern is a person rendered without agency due to his or her social status. Nonetheless, the literary critic Gayatri Spivak advised against a too-broad application of the term in 1992.

From the above statement, subaltern refers to the oppressed, or the people lacking the opportunities and facilities from the state or society. In post colonialism, subaltern is the social group who are socially, politically, and geographically outside

of the hegemonic power structure of the colony and of the colonial homeland. In describing "history told from below", the term subaltern derived from Antonio Gramsci's work on cultural hegemony, which identifies the social groups who are excluded from a society's established structures for political representation.

The term subaltern employed by Spivak is to highlight the predicament of those who are allotted 'sub' or 'secondary' space in the human society. Subaltern is used as an umbrella term for all those who are marginalized and deprived of the voice to speak. Spivak makes it clear that subaltern can't speak, even though the subaltern attempts. Because the opposite one, the centre, against whom often the subaltern speaks, ensures the subaltern should go unheard, whatever way possible. The subaltern speaks, though speech ultimately, reaches to the people to appeal stupendously. That is it is often the destruction or sacrifice, which draws the attention of the people to the subaltern. Amitav Ghosh has picturized in the works under study this very process and journey of the subaltern characters, who are suppressed and denied speech.

In the 1970s, subaltern began to denote the colonized people of the Indian subcontinent, and described a new perspective of the history of an imperial colony, told from the point of view of the colonized man and woman, rather than from that of the colonizers. Marxist historians already had been investigating colonial history told from the perspective of the proletariat, using the concept of social classes based in economic relations. In the 1980s, the scope of enquiry of Subaltern Studies was applied as an "Intervention in South Asian Historiography".

The subaltern has been understood as synonymous with women, children, colonial subjects, the poor, the illiterate, the proletariat, dalits or the religious or ethnic minority. Antonio Gramsci, a Marxist thinker or philosopher who first time

used this term to refer the groups who are marginalized from the mainstream society and the groups who are outside the established structure of political and social representation. Prakash in his writing said “Gramsci emphasized that the term 'subaltern' literally, refers to any person or group of inferior rank and station, whether because of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion” (Prakash, 234).

In the novel, the *Sea of Poppies* Ghosh assembles the sailors, passengers and marines from different corners of world for the ship Ibis, a slaving schooner now converted to the transport of coolies and opium to China. In bringing his troupe of characters to Calcutta into the open water, Ghosh provides the reader with all manner of stories, and equips himself with the personnel to man and navigate an old-fashioned literary three-decker.

The word subaltern in late medieval English, referred to vassals and peasants. It was Gramsci who introduced the term in social theory, using it to denote the people in the margin as opposed to those in the centre. Subaltern Studies group aims to provide a systematic discussion of oppressed groups of society through a new historiography that rewrites history from the below. They describe their project as an attempt to study the general attribute of subordination in South Asian Society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in other way Subaltern Studies group sketched out in wide ranging concern both with “visible ‘history, politics, economics, and sociology of subalternity’ and with the occluded attitude, ideologies and belief system-in short, the culture informing that condition (Guha vii).

Gramsci was interested in the historiography of the subaltern classes. In ‘Notes on Italian History’ (1934-35) he outlined a six point plan for studying the

history of the subaltern identity classes which included their objective formation their active or passive affiliation to the dominant political formations the birth of new parties and dominant groups the formations that “the subaltern groups produce to press their claims new formation within the old framework that assert the autonomy of the subaltern classes: and points referring to trade unions and political parties” (Gramsci 197).

Gramsci claims that the “history of the subaltern classes was just as complex as the history of the dominant classes” (52), although the history of the latter is usually that which is accepted as official history. For him, the history of subaltern “social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic” (54), since they are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel. Clearly they have less access to the means by which they may control their own representation, and less access to cultural and social institutions. Only permanent victory can break that pattern of subordination, and even that does not occur immediately.

A history that recounts only the story of the Indian bourgeoisie, however, cannot ultimately explain nationalism in India, Guha asserts in his article entitled “On Some Aspects of Historiography of Colonial India”, “because it excludes what he calls “the politics of people, “and by people he means the subaltern groups”. Therefore, the subaltern group of historians offers alternative histories of nationalism in India, histories which reveal the workings of subaltern resistance as well as the efforts on part of the nationalists leaders and writers to suppress its emancipator potential.

The terms subaltern entered the global world of post-colonial studies through the works of the Subaltern Studies Group, a collection of global historians who explored the political-actor role of the men and women who are the mass population

rather than the political roles of the social and economic elites in the history of global world. “Subaltern Studies” started at the end of 1970s but it formally appeared in 1982 under the banner “Subaltern Studies: Writing South Asian History and Society” until the Six volumes, it was edited by Ranajit Guha. “Now it not only boasts of eleven volumes but it has also undergone several transformations” (147).

In the global context, scholars, however, do not intend for the term to be reduced to any single oppressed group or minority; Bhubaneswari herself was “a woman of the middle class, with access to the bourgeois movement for Independence” (206). Though the study of subalternity has been central for generations of Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial scholars, they may not have used that terminology, it should not be assumed that Subaltern Studies is necessarily a secret argument with any of these intellectual schools.

This line of thought can also be found in the works of Gayatri Spivak, who criticizes how western feminists have attempted to apply their theories to a Third World context on behalf of their oppressed sisters who cannot speak for themselves ‘French Feminism in an International Frame’ in (184-211). In women sharing similar biological features does not necessarily mean that they also share the same culture, values, beliefs and experiences—and therefore the “First World feminist must learn to stop feeling privileged as a woman” (187).

Instead, she should ask herself what she can “learn from them” and “speak to them” instead of always trying to speak for them (186). However, Spivak is not ethnocentric in the sense that she would believe that “only Indian women can speak for other Indian women” (McLeod 186). Quite the contrary, McLeod establishes that “Spivak has consistently advocated that critics must always look to the specifics of their own positions and recognize the political, cultural and institutional contexts in

which they work” (186).

Considering this, it becomes of course very difficult to speak for anyone else with different experiences from yours. In her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Spivak addresses these issues in depth and scrutinizes the Subaltern Studies Group’s attempts to revise the history writing of colonial India by revisiting historical colonial archives, where reports of subaltern insurgency has been filed, in an attempt to retrieve subaltern perspectives.

Subaltern cannot therefore, by definition, move upwards in the social hierarchy or make his or her voice heard. To speak, in Spivak’s sense, is when there has been a “transaction between the speaker and the listener” and to her there is “something of a not-speakingness in the very notion of subalternity” (289). However, Spivak adds, this does not mean that she has some kind of dubious interest in preserving subalternity. “There is for us no feeling of romantic attachment to pure subalternity as such” (289).

Amitav Ghosh is trying to portrait the subalternity in his novel *Sea of Poppies* by presenting the subaltern characters. It is the interest as an intellectual humanist endows him with the ability to deal with the subaltern, in world where “wazirs and sultans, the chroniclers and the priests. . . had the power to inscribe themselves physically upon time” (17). Almost all of his works are replete with the experiences of the subaltern characters. The mosaic of the characters in his works is characterised by the subalternity almost Deeti is a young woman, married to a drug addict, retired sepoy, working at the British opium factory in Bihar, living with her husband and a daughter of seven years age. She is herself a quite young but only being married, to a retired sepoy, at an early age of her life, subjects herself to be addressed as a women. As Ghosh says, "after seven years of marriage, Deeti was not

much more than a child herself. . . ." (4).

Being a category in Indian social setting where modern girl Deeti does not have the freedom to decide when, why, whom, they would marry, and what, how, when, they should have children. Same is chosen for Deeti as well, she is informed about her marriage with a retired sepoy with a minor disability as he was a drug addict and physically handicapped- a limp. She was not required to spend time to give consent for marriage. She is married to the drug addict Hukum Singh, who is senior to her Deeti, who when estimates her position being married to an affeem-khoor, drug addict, hints towards the fact that she cannot escape the clutches of the patriarchal society where it is her fate to be subordinated, "Her prospects had always been bad evilled by her stars, her fate being ruled by Saturn- Shani- a planet that exercised great power on those born under its influence, often brings discord, unhappiness and disharmony" (30). Deeti sounds to be more vulnerable than other characters.

One important project of this latest wave of Subaltern Studies, beginning with Spivak and continuing on through Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee and others are reviving the stories of voiceless people. Another project worth noting has been to track resistance, even to the smallest degree, in attempt to represent the subaltern as an active agent in her/his own history.

In India where caste based discrimination, religious antagonism, class consciousness and economic disparity prevail; subaltern state of being can be discerned at different levels of existence. Added to all these, there is a strong gender based discrimination in India over the ages. In the words of Spivak, the women constitute what she calls the 'gendered subaltern'.

In 1995 Gopal Guru, Professor of Political Science at Pune University, wrote a piece in the Economic and Political weekly "Dalit Women Talk Differently" (13)

drawing attention to the formation of a pan-Indian group known as the National Federation of Dalit Women (NFDW). The NFDW was explicitly framed around what Guru described as a "politics of difference" was essential for understanding the specificity of dalit women's subjugation, characterized by their experience of two distinct patriarchal structures: a brahminical form of patriarchy that deeply stigmatized dalit women because of their caste status and the more intimate forms of control by dalit men over the sexual and economic labour of their wives.

In that same year, an edited anthology *Dalit Women Issues and Perspectives* was published as the proceedings of a two-day seminar held in 1993 at Pune University. One of the contributors to that volume, Vidyut Bhagawat, noted that "by using the term "women we are creating an imagined category. This imaging is necessary because "we hope that dalit women in the near future will give new critical dimensions to Indian feminist movement as well as to dalit movement" (3). Bhagawat's receptivity to a specifically dalit feminist position signaled an awareness among feminists of emerging critiques by dalit and lower- caste women, who had begun to take Indian feminists to task for the seeming invisibility of caste to mainstream Indian feminism. They argued that this had led to an exclusive and partial construction of Indian feminist politics.

The political empowerment of dalit and other lower-caste women has posed a strong challenge to Indian feminism .In his essay, Guru advocates the feminism of the NFDW as an implicit critique of brahminical feminism, a questioning of Indian feminism's hegemonic impulse to speak for, or in the name of Indian women. Guru argues also that dalit women's autonomous organizations challenge, at the same time, the reproduction of patriarchal norms within dalit communities (Guru 4-5). In brief, dalit bahujan feminists critique both anti-caste and feminist movements for their

particular forms of exclusion.

Struggles for equality, rights, and recognition by anti-caste activities have complemented similar struggles by feminists. From the categorization of struggles against caste hegemony as separate from the project of social reform during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's to the persistence of a political sociological analysis of caste relations as unchanging traditional practices, scholars and activities have tended to examine struggles against caste inequality and the critique of gender relations in isolation from each other. The new political agenda being articulated by dalit bahujan feminists demands the exploration of their shared and entangled histories.

Subaltern in *The Sea of Poppies*

In *The Sea of Poppies* Ghosh focuses the characters belonging to lower and marginalized levels of society. The different incidents that take place in the character lives are interconnected. This is the most striking features of Amitav Ghosh. Patriarchal is set up of Indian Society in the pre-colonial period is beautifully portrayed in the novel.

Mostly Ghosh presents the female characters as a double marginalized, being female and dalit. They are sensitive enough towards their situation they are located in. But they are unable to control the "factors of oppression". They know they are looked after for some capitalist end, they are nothing but child bearing machines, as de Beauvoir says, while describing women in such a particular society: "Woman. Simple. She is a womb, an ovary" (Tilwani 30). These machines, ironical enough to say, that the child from her womb is expected to be a male only. Why because he can be an heir, who can look after, inherit and maintain the sustenance of heritage and legacy etc.

Ghosh is preoccupied with the question why the Indians became indentures in the first place. He delineates the socio-economic conditions of the British Raj in which the farmers of the Gangetic plains had been forced to cultivate opium leading to the rapid destruction of the agrarian economy thereby depriving the farmers of their sustenance as Ghosh records:

The town was thronged with hundreds of other impoverished transients, many of whom were willing to sweat themselves half to death for a few handful of rice. Many of these people had been driven from their villages by the flood of flowers that had washed over the countryside: lands that had once provided sustenance were now swamped by the rising tide of poppies; food was so hard to come by that people were glad to lick the leaves in which offerings were made at temples. . . . (202)

In *The Sea of Poppies* he has tried to show how women can be empowered so that they may become independent in the future. The story presents the vivid picture of plight of women during colonial rule. The suffering of a woman in zamindar family and an agriculturist is nonetheless similar. His novel is based on historical background of colonialism, of cultivation of opium in India to fulfill demand of opium in China and migration of indentured labours to Mauritius for working in plantations. It will be dealing with women characters in the novel. Deeti, one of the leading female characters in the novel and it is around her that novel revolves. Ghosh has represented women from every section of Indian society. The position of upper class women is not very different than woman of lower class. Women in the novel suffer from gender discrimination, class and caste structure. The writer says in this way Ghosh has dealt with spiritual love between god and a devotee. Through the

character of Paulette he tries to show development of a child irrespective of discrimination results in respect for all culture whether it is European or Indian.

The present study focuses the people from lower rank and excluded from the mainstream of society. In the novel there are a number of characters, who groan under the British rule but Kalua is doubly marginalized. He was an untouchable and chamar by caste and that is why he had to bear the burden of being lowest in the caste hierarchy and simultaneously became the victim of British colonial rule.

During late 18th Century, Afganistan had been the chief producer and supplier of opium to Europe but in early 19th Century, the time period which has been depicted in the novel British fortune seekers in India converted the fertile banks of Ganges where the crops of pulses and wheat were raised once, into a *Sea of Poppies*. In spite of the orders of china to ban the opium trade, the forced refined opium to be shipped out to canton. Finally they persuaded London to wage the opium war, just denouncing the Chinese restrictions of free trade. It affected the life of native Indian adversely and brought them to serve poverty, starvation etc. (Telwani 117)

The marginalized section of the society suffered the most owing to the attitude of British rulers. The novel begins in this period of crises and shows eastern region of Bihar. It introduces Deeti, a simple pious lady, caring mother and an efficient house wife, married to Hukum Singh, a crippled worker in the Ghazipur opium Factory, the unfortunate Deeti figures out that on her wedding night, She was drugged with opium by her mother-in-law, so that her brother-in-law could rape her and consummate the marriage in place of her infertile husband. When her husband dies, Deeti sends her daughter Kabutri to stay with relatives. (Telwani 119)

Deeti is an ordinary village woman. She is one of the prominent characters in the novel. She suffers from gender bias since her childhood in the novel. In the first

chapter of the novel it is told that due to colour of her eyes, she is called as “chudaliya, dainiya as if she were a witch: but Deeti had only to turn her eyes on them to make them scatter and run off” (5). She is married to Hukum Singh who served in the same battalion as her brother Kesri Singh of British army.

A description of the conditions prevalent in the Ghazipur Opium factory reveals the inhuman working conditions of its employees, as witnessed by Deeti, who is summoned to take her sick husband home from work:

Her eyes were met by a startling sight – a host of dark, legless torsos was circling around and around, like some enslaved tribe of demons... they were bare-bodied men, sunk waistdeep in tanks of opium, tramping round and round to soften the sludge. Their eyes were vacant, glazed, and yet somehow they managed to keep moving, as slow as ants in honey, tramping, treading ... these seated men had more the look of ghouls than any living thing she had ever seen: their eyes lowed in the dark, and they appeared completely naked. (95)

Deeti being female of the Indian society get tortured from her own husband and couldn't get any help from the other people too. As Deeti looks almost certain to meet her doom when she is forced to consider Sati ritual as the only option in the face of threats of more rapes by her brother-in-law, but Kalua, the untouchable Caste ox man from the neighboring village, comes to her rescue. The couple flee and unite. This is not acceptable to high caste villagers. In order to escape Deeti's in-laws, she and Kalua become indentured. Kalua, in a way, becomes the representative of subaltern consciousness. Being related to the subaltern studies project.

Deeti the modern girl feels lot of bitter experience which she never imagined in her life. She tries to control herself, though she suffers too much but she does not leave

reign in the hands of her brother-in-law and mother-in-law to subject in her to their evil designs. Till the death of her husband, Hukum Singh, she continues to be adamant in her resolution. But her husband's death leaves her outcaste and destitute. Since cornered by her brother-in-law with the demands for sex, she decides to undergo sati to defend herself and offend her brother-in-law.

In this present study the Indian society with subalternity is exposing the reality of caste binaries existing within the social structure. However, the vision lies in investigating the full humanity of the dehumanized subalterns. Finally the author takes the ground to construct their identity that can enable them to make spaces in the main stream of caste based oppressive mechanism of social order. On technical ground but he outshone him in his courage of taking poor man's side even for his rich master's killing. Here he became an aggressive revolutionary subalternist, who permitted even violent means to ensure their rights

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II. Voice of Voiceless in Amitav Ghosh *Sea of Poppies*

The Sea of Poppies is a novel related with the downtrodden people. The present study focuses the subaltern. This works can be studied in two manners: first the concept of subaltern as an pretentious exercise, kind of parallel exercise that existed during colonial period but never taken note of, as meant by Subaltern Study Group. Ghosh in his works talks about the alternative histories and practices of people. Secondly subaltern as an approach that represent marginalized as they have the inability to speak and empowers them to represent the marginalized people and their issues. Telwani also mentioned that, “Almost all of his works replete with the experiences of the subaltern characters. The mosaic of the characters in his works is characterized by the subalternity almost in his all works” (137).

Sea of Poppies has taken the theme from the Indian history, real events of life. This research work is about the story of the common man, who have been the sufferers to the maximum of these historical upheavals or political crisis have been taken as a subject of the fiction. These characters from the marginalized sphere are in the main lead of this stories. By providing the centrality to the marginal characters, Ghosh also answers the dilemma of the postcolonial intelligentsia regarding the ability of the subaltern to speak. He assumes the role of narrator of a narrative for himself who doesn't become the representative; but allows the representations of the subaltern group by the same group by providing them stage.

He tried to provide the space for the voiceless or those who are overlooked by history. In the interview with Hawley, Ghosh consents “I have been deeply influenced by the ideas of the subaltern studies group. I think, I share some of the concerns of the Subaltern Studies group because I am from the same milieu as many of the group members” (156).

Sea of Poppies is imbued with dozen of major characters, including the son of

an American slave , the orphaned daughter of a French botanist and an Anglophile raja. But a majority on board are Indian peasants from the opium-producing countryside, forced by famine or scandal to seek a new life elsewhere. Devoted to reinvention, Ghosh's plot focuses on one of these villagers, Deeti, a widow who assumes another name and the lower caste of a new love as they escape together on the ibis. Figures like Deeti, merely hinted at in the official record, have long preoccupied Ghosh.

Ghosh shows interest in marginalized and silenced people. Ghosh negotiates the challenge of recovering and representing the story of subalterns in an integrated manner. With his skill, he tried to amalgamate this subject and raised the issues related to them. He employs two methods to incorporate the discourse of subaltern writings. Firstly in his writings, both fiction and nonfiction the character of this marginalized group has occupied the central stage. Secondly, the stories and issues are construed as a representation of the issues of subaltern class. John Hawley rightly comments: "Ghosh's roots are in journalism and academic writing-investigation and analysis, a revelation of subalternean connections and patterns" (278).

In the postcolonial view, concept of subalternity has incepted from the concept of self and other. Self-constructed these binaries and hierarchies to mute the other. These are the constructions of the self to establish and preserve its hegemony over the other as well as to silent the other. The concept of other is a considerable and universal matter in which self-claims to be main and supreme and all the rest come under the concept of other. The term other is highly complex and relative that changes its significance in accordance with the context. The self tries to dominate the other and tries to sideline the other from the mainstream of life and they are treated as marginalized. Their contribution is nil in respect to the growth of society.

Said a prominent scholar of post colonialism, identifies a European cultural tradition of Orientalism. Said in his book *Orientalism* mentioned the theory of identifying the East as Other and inferior to the West. Said emphasizes construction of binary division between the Orient and the Occident. He mentioned that West as self is considered to be the supreme the main source of knowledge and learning, while Said said “East as Other is represented as a place of ignorance, superstition and illiteracy” (167). The Orient exists as static, ignorant and cut off from the progress of Western history. They do not have even the capability to represent themselves and hence west as being superior take the responsibility of presenting orients, Other in the form of literary text. These Others are basically the marginalized group who are considered being the suppressed and muting for years. The term, subalternity, highlight the quandary of those who are allotted ‘sub’ or ‘secondary’ space in the human society.

Subaltern is the term that refers to the inferior rank or person from the below strata of society. Antonio Gramsci first used the word subaltern in the essay ‘On the Margins of History’ that can be associated with the people of those group in the society who are the subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes. Subaltern classes may include the people who have denied access to hegemonic power come under this category like farmers, workers or woman. Gramsci claims that the history of the subaltern classes is as complex as the history of the dominant classes, although the history of the latter is usually accepted as official history. The history of subaltern group is generally fragmented and episodic, since they are always subject to the activities of the ruling class, even when they rebel. “They have less access to the authorities of social, cultural, and political institutions as they have no power to represent” (Gramsci 148).

Telwani mentioned 'In *The Hungry Tide*, Amitav Ghosh sketches the out-caste dalit refugees from Bangladesh in Sunderban forests . . . *The Hungry Tide* registers a response to the social and political concern of the marginal sections of the society.' The novel unfolds the events at Morichjhapi in 1979 and the subaltern consciousness which demarcates the post partition movement of persons from East Bengal to West Bengal. Sushil Sarkar mentioned that the refugees who belong to the subaltern classes were forced to seek out a dwelling elsewhere. Morichjhapi incident took place when these refugees were fighting for the survival (39).

In the *Sea of Poppies*, Ghosh presents the character from lower class. One of the character Zachery is presented as a representative of subaltern class. This lines of book shows their dress and profession in this way:

Zachery was dressed in his workday clothes, canvas trousers and the usual sailor's banyan-a loose fitting tunic made, in this stance, of course and faded osanaburg cloth. After weeks at sea his face was unshaven and his curly hair was grimy with grease, tar and salt. (18)

Homi K Bhabhas emphasizes the importance of relation of social power while defining subaltern groups. According to his notion about subalternity the presence of these oppressed minority groups was vital to the self-definition of the majority group. Subaltern social group were also in a position to subvert the authority of those who had hegemonic power. This can be well exemplified by Kusum in *The Hungry Tide*. Kusum gives vision to Nirmal to see the entire movement of Morichjhapi to feel the agony, pain or sufferings caused to these refugees. This upheaval is from below or the subalterns which is being evinced by voiceless nobodies who want to be heard. For Nirmal, the cry of the refugees becomes a representative of all such subaltern communities without home. It becomes a cry for 'not just themselves, but on behalf of

bewildered humankind. Who, indeed, are we? Where do we belong?' (254)

In *Sea of Poppies* there are several characters whose positions in the society keep shifted. King Neel and his family can be mentioned here as once the center of power and society turns as a marginalized on the ship. Deeti can also be quoted here as once wife of high caste man is subaltern in the form of woman or became victim by marrying Kalua. Ghosh purposefully brings subaltern characters into stories and focuses on personal histories of these individuals:

Kaula lived in the Chamar-basti, a cluster of huts inhabited only by people of his caste. To enter the hamlet would have been difficult for Deeti and Kabutari, but fortunately for them, Kalua's dwelling lay in the periphery, not far from the main road to Gazipur. Deeti had passed that way many times before he had often seen Kaula lumbering about.

(53)

The marginalized characters like Deeti, Kaula and Kabutri feel lot of challenges and difficulties due to lower caste and class which help us perceive life, events and issues from their point of view. The themes evoked in his works are in tune with the concerns of subaltern theory. B.K.Sharma delineated this in his book, 'influenced by his association with the Subaltern Studies, Ghosh with his rigorous mode of empirical research recovered the characters of the masters, possessing hegemonic power and of their slaves, sighing and crying under the burden of oppression, be it for their caste hierarchy or for the British power or for their gender status.' (87)

The novel also shows the dark web of the empire's history as a mixed caste of characters for whom the ibis is a projection of the uncertainties of their lives and routine of home. Cut off from their roots, in transit and looking ahead to a fresh start, the migrants are prone to invent new names and histories. Deeti feels very

embarrassed by getting inferior identity as:

. . . it was on her lips to identify herself as Kabutari- ki- ma, the name by which she had been known ever since her daughter's birth her proper given name was the first to come to mind, and since it had never been used by anyone it was as good as any. Aditi, she said softly, i am Aditi.
(233)

A controlling theme running through the many strands of plot is the question of existence of subalterns belonging to two or more geographical areas to conflicting feelings of unbelonging or alienation. Foucault stated that history ceases to be the forte of those who exercise power. So history will be the tool in the hands of elite and they projected their own perception while writing history. History written till now is one-sided, partial and biased. This kind of history is not able to show the true picture of the member of lower strata of society. The ruling class is having the control on these institutions and they constructed the Other according to their own perception. West, powerful or the elite group cannot create history as they perceive the incidents or the events. History should be unbiased and impartial. True history is not restricted to superior group but it is also related to common people. The victory in any war cannot be assigned only to the king or the leader but it is also the effort of the soldiers who fought in the battlefield or the persons associated to them the contribution of these marginalized group can never be ignored.

Studying history of these marginalized groups comes under the term subaltern studies. Subaltern studies is considered as history from below. The formation of subaltern studies group is not a sudden or an abrupt phenomenon. Ranajit Guha initiated this group in 1982 when a collective of South Asian scholars in Britain especially Partha Chatterjee and Dipesh Chakraborty, initiated publication of a book titled Subaltern

Studies. The most prominent writers of the subaltern scholars are Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak, Gyan Pandey, Edward Said, Gautam Bhadra, David Hadriman, Shahid Amin, Sudipta Kabiraj etc.

Subaltern studies group focused on the concept of subaltern and the various aspects of subordination as a subject to study. But throughout succeeding volumes and studies the concept of subalternity underwent various shifts. There was the gradual change in the concept, divergence in interest and theories well reflected in the essays of the subsequent volumes. The new contributors ended up giving new form and substance to subalternity. Subaltern studies group sketched out the complex ramification arising from the composition of subordination and its wide ranging concern both with the visible history, politics, economics and sociology of subalternity and with the obstructed attitudes, ideologies and belief systems- in short, the culture informing that condition. In other words, subaltern studies defined itself as an attempt to allow people finally to speak within the envious pages of elitist historiography and in so doing, to speak for, or to sound the muted voices of, the truly oppressed.

Under the term subaltern's studies has new trend of writing the events have been initiated. The subalterns have been given preference to make them audible to the world. Their sufferings, pains and muteness have been presented through the history. Various writers have tried to depict their condition and their miseries with the help of their work. The concerning scholars of Subaltern Studies Group tried to fill the gaps of history, which is written by elites or the west, by distinguishing, recuperating, streamlining and identifying the stories of non-elite, subjugated and marginalized people. The perception of other has been assimilated to understand them. This approach of assimilating the perception is required as till the time history has been

representing the views of self which is based on their own understanding of the other.

Thus, the term subaltern can be used as an umbrella term for all those who are marginalized and underprivileged and deprived of the voice to speak. The term subaltern refers to the suppressed group that belongs to the lower strata of life, or the woman, who have been intimidated for many years. Subaltern can be meant as overlooked, neglected, disregarded, and treated with unconcern and indifference.

In Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of poppies* almost all the characters feel the sense of place in fact long for the locality where they come from and where they miss it. The ibis, the ship becomes an alternate place for people to form their new identities and new communities as well. The colonial sense of place gives an impression in the present to alter the notion of place and history of place at present. Ghosh has given a lot of emphasis on the nature of human existence, which draws our attention to the local rather than global. *Sea of Poppies* concentrate on characters like Kalua, Deeti, Hukumsingh slaves and coolies who appear and disappear without touching the edges of official history. Most of the characters in the select novels seem more "to underscore the fragility of our brief time on earth" (Hawley 134).

In *Sea of Poppies*, Ghosh has argued the effect of the imperialism and the tricks of the East India Company. Edward Said says, "To think about distant places, to colonize them, to populate or depopulate them: all of this occurs on about, or because of land" (93). *Sea of Poppies* is a novel about appropriation of history. It narrates the society, territories, lands, geographical domains, "the actual geographical underpinnings of the imperial, and also the cultural context" (Said 93). Ghosh historicizes the past in the novel. These elements push the novel into the spacio-temporal sphere of the society of 1830s–40s. Ghosh tries to assert that the blurring of

identities in all aspects become certain. He problematizes the notion of rigid boundary, single culture, nation, religion. In the novel Ghosh presents the difficulties and challenges by the subaltern people in this way:

The disturbance had caught Bhyro Singh's attention and he began to advance upon Kalua, lathi in hand. Deeti lay where she was and pulled her sari tight over her face but what was the points of hiding when Kalua was standing right above her in full view and sure to be recognized. She shut her eyes and began to mutter prayers: Hey Ram hey Ram . . . (367)

The distinguished critic of subaltern is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak whose pivotal line is fully pertinent "Can the subaltern Speak?" suggests that silence is the critical characteristic of subaltern identity. Amitav Ghosh works strongly confirm to the notion that the subaltern can speak in contrast to Spivak's concept of 'subaltern cannot speak' if given a proper chance and with an appropriate employment of the discourse. Ghosh purposefully brings subaltern characters into stories and focuses on personal histories of these individuals. The marginalized characters help us perceive life, events and issues from their point of view.

In *The Calcutta Chromosome*, Ghosh has provided agency to the subaltern and tried to extend the reach of Subaltern Studies Group. Mangala and Lakhan though belonging to subalterns helped Ronald Ross in discovery. Their practices seems quite contrary to the scientific research for Malaria but they provide direction to the research by providing useful but scattered information leading towards the final discovery. Thus, it establishes that the power established its discourse on the agency provided by the subaltern. Subalterns have their own mechanism that saves them from being eradicated. Here, Laakhan and Mangala achieved the positions of power as

manipulators of knowledge.

Ghosh managed to evade from the Western and Eastern gap, by formulating a plot in which subaltern helped in directing and producing the final results of scientific research. Tabish Khair has also highlighted the issue of subaltern agency in *The Calcutta Chromosome* as one of its essential constituents:

Such an intricate plot insists on not only the comprehensibility and agency of the subaltern, it also dismisses arbitrary and essentialist dichotomies between the West and India. For Khair, agency allows the subaltern to regain his silenced role in the narrative of history, “for history can be seen as the plotting of human experience and agency”.
(309)

Amitav Ghosh ponders on the force and nature of power of British Empire that was changing fates of thousands across the subcontinent.

What vast, what incompressible power, to move people in such numbers from one place to another—emperors, kings, farmers, dockworkers, soldiers, coolies, policemen. Why? Why this furious movement—people taken from one place to another, to pull rickshaws, to sit blind in exile?’ (43-44)

B. K. Sharma stated, ‘Ghosh’s major concern in this novel is to universalize subaltern history. These subaltern figures therefore are made the real heroes by their sheer power of resistance to unbearable odds and adversities rise to the status of real makers of history.’(234)

Telwani stated, another novel by Amitav Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* unfolds in the north of the colonized India in 1838, on the eve of the British attack on the Chinese ports known as the opium war. Here Amitav Ghosh delineates a mosaic of different

kinds of subaltern characters drawn from different corners of the planet- sailors, passengers, and marines for the *ibis*, a slaving schooner, convicts, criminals, coolies, girmitis; indentured labour..... these characters are exposed to experience sati, ship board mutiny jails, kidnapping, wretched life as of a dog, criminal justice etc.(67)

Sea of Poppies is also successful in capturing the several incidents that not only delineates the strength of British power and its diffusion into various classes in Indian society but the position of doubly subaltern also. Deeti, the lead character in it represents the subjugated woman in Indian society during 19th century. It is her character that undergo several upheavals and demands the questions on sati system, widow remarriage and safety of a woman within a family.

These are the issues of Indian females in that scenario who are already known as doubly marginalized class. People like Hawaldarin *Sea of Poppies* on the ship were given utmost liberty to harass and torture their own people in the name of tradition. The story of Kalua is also remarkable in this continuation. Kalua was beaten dreadfully on the ship by the Indians for getting married and spoiling a high caste woman. This incident can easily be quoted against imperialism that subverts the British proclaim of social reformation in India. This also speaks for the unwritten stories of doubly subaltern people, people who were lower in rank within a colonized society.

Amitav Ghosh makes the relative recovery of the subaltern consciousness through the character of Kalua. Ghosh's vision reflect Spivak's thesis of subalternism. "The historian must persist in his effort in this awareness, that the subaltern is necessarily the absolute limit of the place where history is narrativized into logic" (qtd . in Sharma 99).

Subaltern refers to the people and those groups of society who are subjected to

the hegemony of the ruling classes. Subaltern classes may include peasants, workers and other groups denied access to 'hegemonic power'. These types of subaltern people are always silent and ignored in the society. They have been marginalized and underestimated in all aspects. They have the significant role in the society, if they are given the good knowledge, skills, and other opportunities, they are able to change the traditional society and make tremendous changes in other aspects too.

The other female characters on the deck, whether it is Heeru, Munia, Champa, Ratna or Dookhanee have common past of Patriarchal Society and they abandon restrictions of complex society and go ahead identify themselves as indentures on a strange land. They desire to leave their complicated past experience and seek betterment in future. They build up an egalitarian community which is classless and casteless.

Their vision of a community stands for equality is an enthralling imagination. In this respect Ghosh paints the ship *Ibis* in a womanish image when Deeti thinks that "at the start, that they were all kins now; that their rebirth in the ship's womb had made them into a single family" (Ghosh 432).

Through the character of Heeru, Ghosh has tried to depict plight of women left by their husband due to some disease or inability to give male heir to the family. She is left by her husband in a fair due to her disease of forgetfulness. She agrees to marry on the ship with one of the indentured labour who is much older than her portrayal "She had shed the body of the old Deeti, with the burden of its karma; she had paid the price her stars had demanded of her, and was free now to create a new destiny as she willed" (166). These incidents not only depict the callous exploitation of women but also the muteness of women in the society. Gayatri Spivak pointedly observes:

Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual

difference is doubly effaced. ...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 cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow. (32)

The *Sea of Poppies* presents a poignant picture of Deeti in a resplendent white sari being carried to her husband's pyre to be burnt alive with him. She was slumped over, barely upright: she would not have been able to stand on her own feet, much less walk ... “Half dragged and half carried, she was brought to the pyre and made to sit cross-legged on it, beside her husband's corpse” (177).

Deeti's childhood home overlooked a confluence of two rivers, Ganga and Karamnasa meaning destroyer of karma. It was believed by the village folk that the waters of Ganges was auspicious while the touch of the water of the karma-negating tributary would erase a lifetime of merit and so women from the household preferred to go to the auspicious river to bathe or fetch water. Looking at the parched land around Deeti felt that, Karamnasa's influence has spilled over its banks, spreading its blight far beyond the land that drew upon its waters. (192)

Historians often claim that the rhetoric of Hindu nationalism after 1857 not only made gender discrimination on the basis of education and property rights but also connected the ideology of national purity with the body of the Hindu woman, which was “moulded from infancy by a shastric regimen of non-consensual, indissoluble, infant marriage, and by iron laws of chastity, austere widowhood and supposedly proven capacity for self-immolation” (Rorty 143).

The novel also presents the discrimination towards the dalit people like Kalua. He was an untouchable and called him as chamar by caste, as he had to bear lots of burden and tensions of being the lowest caste of Hindu society. When Deeti is forced to consider sati ritual as the only option in the face of threats of more rapes by her brother-in-law, during that time Kalua, the untouchable Caste ox man from the neighboring village, comes to her rescue. The couple flee and unite. This is not acceptable to high caste villagers. In order to escape Deeti's in-laws, she and Kalua become indentured.

Zachary Reid, An American Sailor born to a slave mother and a white father receives a lot of attention, knows that he will be bound to a brutal history and the stigma of colour. For him, the mask of ship's second mate is a means of moving into water where no colour lines exist. In *Sea of Poppies* all the poor including Kalua, Deeti, Azad, Munia, even other minor characters never thought of breaking their rooster coop. Kalua bore no grudge for three thakurs, not even for a second a thought of revenge occurred in his mind; Deeti preferred to be sati than to raise her voice against anyone; Azad also swallowed his part of insult and left it without fighting back; Munia like other poor on the ship lacks this spirit of breaking that rooster coop. What they want is just to run away from their present. This revolutionary quality of breaking free is only displayed by Balram. That made him special character in twenty-first century novel.

Ghosh's perspective on the hegemonic structures of oppression is revolutionary with visceral impact. Deeti and Kalua are presented as victims of the prevalent social practices and beliefs. There was a belief that the stars under which they were born had a great influence on one's life. Deeti's fate was ruled by her star, Saturn or Shani which was believed to bring discord, unhappiness and disharmony. With this shadow

darkening her future Deeti did not have high expectations about her married life and the prospect of marrying a disabled man did not bother her. But as feared her marriage brought only unhappiness as husband was not only invalid but also impotent. He showed no interest in her but was always in a , “state of torpid, opium induced somnolence” (36).

Deeti is shocked to find that to preserve the family’s honour she has been impregnated by her brother in law in an opium induced state and this manual act was done with the help of her mother-in-law. Family honour was considered more important than the honour due to a woman. In a state of trance, “she even refers to Deeti as Draupadi, wife to five brothers and tells that it’s a fortunate woman, who bears the children of brothers for each other” (39).

In *Sea of Poppies*, there are several characters whose positions in the society keep shifted. King Neel and his family can be mentioned here as once the center of power and society turns as a marginalized on the ship. Deeti can also be quoted here as once wife of high caste man is subaltern in the form of woman or became victim by marrying Kalua.

Ghosh purposefully brings subaltern characters into stories and focuses on personal histories of these individuals. The marginalized characters help us perceive life, events and issues from their point of view. The themes evoked in his works are in tune with the concerns of subaltern theory. B. K. Sharma delineated this in his book, ‘influenced by his association with the Subaltern Studies, Ghosh with his rigorous mode of empirical research recovered the characters of the masters, possessing hegemonic power and of their slaves, sighing and crying under the burden of oppression, be it for their caste hierarchy or for the British power or for their gender status.’

To sum up, his depiction of the term subaltern generates following points: the investigation of and notion of origin, to trace their customs and identities to their native location, an absorbing play of center and margins, enmeshing of cultural identities, complexity of the very play and shifts of nucleus, a demonstration of the fact that the subaltern can speak for themselves can be spoken about either through making them speak their stories or by creating stories on and around them in his writings. Thus, his writings are a demonstration of connotations and manifestations of the term subaltern in contemporary writings.

In *Sea of Poppies*, Amitav Ghosh has exposed numerous issues concerning the Indian women, for instance, double colonization and analyzes different relationships between male members of a patriarchal society and its female members besides their relationships with power. This novel stands for one of Ghosh's writings in which the footprints of the colonial power and its effects on different parts of the life of the colonized people, for example, politic, economy, and culture are quite observable.

This present study focuses the various effects of this subject on different groups of the Indian society, particularly Indian women. Double colonization refers to a situation in which the women are colonized twice. In the first place they are colonized by the patriarchal ideologies predominated within their own motherland and in the second place by the imperial colonizers mostly came from Europe to control their country and manage it based on their own rules. In such a condition the women experience various oppressions imposed on them by different forms of power.

Deeti resisted the offer till she thought of Kabutri after all the girl had just a few years left home why make her live through them in hunger? She gave in and agreed to place the impression of her thumb on the seth's account book in exchange for six months' worth of

wheat,oil...(156)

Women are usually represented as the colonized objects rather than subjects in patriarchal societies. In this way, they are treated as subordinate in comparison with men and are noticeably marginalized from most of the significant social activities. The absence of the women in the activities of society is quite tangible which can be the representation of their trivial importance in society. If there is another and greater power besides patriarchal force, the situation of women is more deteriorated.

Being considered as a post-colonial novel, *Sea of Poppies* has played an important role in revealing the new aspects of the west and the issues related to this concept. The Indian women and their various problems in Indian society have a major place in this novel. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is a postcolonial critic whose ideas can be applied in this novel and her works have a particular effect on the concept of feminism. She attempts to reveal the phenomenon of double colonization and the inferior situation of women in comparison with the other groups in society.

In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak argues "my reading are, rather, an interested and inexpert examination, by a postcolonial woman, of the fabrication of repression, a constructed counter narrative (sic) of woman's consciousness, thus woman's being" (95). She considers woman in a quite equality with the other groups of society and notices her as an important part of it. In relation to the importance of woman, there exists the word 'subaltern' which Spivak uses it more than common terms such as 'woman' or 'colonized'. Subaltern refers to any group of people who are lower than the others from different points of view which Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean define it as "the kinds of groups that are claimed to be subaltern are simply groups that feel subordinated in any way" (290).

The women, therefore, are considered as inferior ones in various ways such as

cultural, social, political, and economic as the most important ones among the others. Subaltern exposes the prejudice in a society controlled by an imperial power and governed by its rules and its laws. In the condition that this power penetrates and controls the society in the form of colonialism, Landry and Maclean indicate that "the oppression of women," in that society will be increased and they will be more impressed (124). Under such a situation, the women have to tolerate the oppression from two various forces who treat women in, approximately, the same way. Here the imbalance position of the women and men is argued which exposes the different rights for them. The major result of these differences is double colonization. It refers to an act which has an essential relationship with the ideas of feminism and post-colonialism.

The present study focuses on subaltern in *Sea of Poppies*. The novel tries to depict the language of the subalternity too. Words from the Indian languages from the vernaculars, creole and pidgin and slangs that have again arisen in India since 18th century. The text evidences of a big amount of conversation between Serang Ali and Zachary Raid in pidgin tongue when at one point Serang Ali says in disagreement as “if no catchi dokto, he makee die. Go topside to muchee quick”.(23). The dialogues between Deeti and kalua in Bhojpuri as “kai sochawa, chal, jaldi- jaldi khana kaa lai” (203) etc. Similarly, folk songs in Bhojpuri dialect are competent enough to give a savour of then recent Indian locale. To quote:“sakhiya- ho saiya more pise masala Sakhiya- hi bara mithe lage masala” (32). A suitable translation is attached with the song scraps everytime to circulate the motif of the song.

Ghosh describes the marriage ceremony of subaltern people of India like Deeti and Hukum Singh as if a crime is happening. He focuses on those women who advise Deeti for her first night of marriage to show this issue as a natural one which is quite

common among the Indian women so that they have accepted it:

The songs had grown increasingly suggestive while she sat waiting for her husband, and her neck and shoulders had tightened in anticipation of the grip that would push her prone on the bed. Her sisters had said: Make it hard for him the first time or he'll give you no peace later; fight and scratch and don't let him touch your breasts. (22)

This above lines shows that how the subaltern Indian is suffered from their own husband. Since the time of their marriage their all taste and choice have been controlled by the patriarchal norms and values.

Woman and her position in the society, according to Spivak, "is maneuvered between indigenous patriarchy and colonial government" (234). In both points of view women are marginalized from the important social activities and are considered as productions and desirous objects possessed by men who dominate them. Women's freedom and "Women's desire," as Spivak considers, are always restricted by the traditional patriarchal principles and the power of the rulers (302). She declares "the subaltern cannot speak" and clarifies the state of the women especially in India and illuminates "the subaltern has not the right to talk" (104).

The present study is not deal with poverty alone, it also take up other issues like East-West differences. West's superiority-complex, it means the west generalize the east as a group of subalterns like gender, subjugation of women, dalit's helplessness, sati, multiculturalism, and hegemony. In *Sea of Poppies* the cause of subaltern has been taken up genuinely and seriously. Where as it is a novel, which compel readers to bite their nails and hold their breath on several occasions; such as: Deeti's sati ceremony, her elopement with Kalua, Kalua's humiliation by three thakurs, Deeti's arrest in Dubusa, Kalua's beating by Bharoy Singh, Bharoy Singh's

unexpected murder by Kalua, Azad's merciless beating by Subedars, first Mate's murder by Ah Fatt, Fo'cle deck scene. These are few scenes, which are so unpredictable that readers never able to figure out what is going to happen next.

In *Sea of Poppies* the subalterns like all the poor including Kalua, Deeti, Azad, Munia, even other minor characters never thought of breaking their rooster coop. Kalua bore no grudge for three thakurs, not even for a second a thought of revenge occurred in his mind; Deeti preferred to be sati than to raise her voice against anyone; Azad also swallowed his part of insult and left Ibis without fighting back; Munia like other poor on Ibis lacks this spirit of breaking that rooster coop. What they want is just to run away from their present. This revolutionary quality of breaking free is only displayed by Balram. That made him special character in twenty first century fiction. Amitav Ghosh on technical ground but he outshone him in his courage of taking poor man's side even for his rich master's killing. Here he became an aggressive revolutionary subalternist, who permitted even violent means to ensure their rights.

Deeti being a subaltern is tortured by her own family members. when Deeti knelt to feed Hukum Singh, he would lean so close as to brush her breasts with his knees and elbows. His advances became so aggressive that Deeti took to hiding a small knife in the folds of her sari, fearing that he might attack her, right on her husband's bed.

Another character Chandan Singh, in a very rough condition of his brother's life, aims to seduce Deeti to rape her instead of helping her. He creates such an evil circumstance for Deeti so that she has to carry a knife in order to support herself if it is necessary as if she is always ready for a fight.

Chandan Singh tries to use the patriarchal rules in order to satisfy Deeti to make love with him. He frightens her from a rule which does not allow daughters to

be their father's heir. On the other hand he, like the other men in male-dominated society, sees Deeti as an object which can be used based on his tendencies. Woman is considered as a land that is fertile and can give the desired products of patriarchal society. Ghosh again focuses on the unpleasant condition of the Indian women in male-dominated society that causes them to tolerate more oppression by men.

Chandan Singh wants to abuse her and permits himself to do such a shameful work because, as Spivak states "the woman giving pleasure, without the usual affective charge, as use-value, in need" in the patriarchal society (182). The norms in the patriarchal society do not allow Deeti to have her husband's properties and Chandan wants to use such a condition against her. Concerning this issue Said argues "the oriental woman is no more than a machine" or an object (187). He aims to say that a woman is a programmable machine with some particular tasks utilized in any path based on the standards of the patriarchal system.

Responding her brother-in-law's proposal and answering his threat concerning that she will be burnt with her husband in his funeral pyre, Deeti imagines "better by far to die a celebrated death than to be dependent on Chandan Singh, or even to return to her own village, to live out her days as a shameful burden on her brother and her kin" (108). Obviously Ghosh attempts to portray the position of the Indian women in such a rigid society in which there is no equality between its different groups.

Deeti has to choose to be burnt on fire quite against her will. It is completely clear that this choice is imposed on her by those who are in dominant group. In such a situation the women do not have the right of making decision for themselves because their voice can be heard by nobody. Said considers such a woman as an "Oriental woman" and argues "she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history" (6). The colonial voice dominated by the male society is the

superior and this emperor voice is easily heard, however, the double colonized or subaltern voice of the women is not heard because they are inferior group controlled by the others. This kind of control and superiority torture them so that they consider themselves as weak individuals.

He moves out from the local communities and families into a greater one with the same strategy but more power, i.e. the society. He describes sati in the novel from the viewpoint of Kalua which is called as "widow sacrifice" by Spivak (1999: 235).

Ghosh writes:

Kalua saw that it was headed by Deeti, in a resplendent white sari – except that she was slumped over, barely upright: she would not have been able to stand on her own feet, much less walk, had she not been supported by her brother-in-law, Chandan Singh, and several others.

(120)

Ghosh here shows a patriarchal-rule performed in a patriarchal society by some of the men as its male authorities. He illustrates the condition of Deeti who is very anxious concerning her destination and makes it clear that this event happens quite against her real desire. Spivak explains the origin and the history of sati in this way: "the Hindu widow ascends the pyre of the dead husband and immolates herself upon it.

This is widow sacrifice. The conventional transcription of the Sanskrit word for the widow would be sati. "The early colonial British transcribed it suttee" (93). She clarifies that this ceremony is accepted even by the British colonizer identified as suttee. Concerning the reasons forming Sati, she declares "as long as the woman (as wife) does not burn herself in fire on the death of her husband, she is never released from her female body" (97). She describes a wrong consideration regarding sati which creates an unpleasant imagination in the mind of the Indian women that makes it easy

for them to accept such a ceremony more simply.

The present study focuses women as a subaltern being, it was a patriarchal society in which women did not have an identity of their own. They were identified either with their father, husband or children. Deeti was recognized only as Kabutri-ki-ma. Exploitation of women was multifaceted. They were subjected to physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Not only is Deeti raped on her wedding night by her brother-in-law, but with her husband in his death bed, she is also subjected to sexual harassment by him. His advances were so aggressive that she feared, he might attack her, right on her husband's bed. Malati, the wife of Neel is a passive sufferer who performs her duties as a wife and mother without any expectations. Her suffering is mental but as a typical Indian wife, she never complains or questions her husband's relationship with his mistress Elokeshi. Neel's mother was also neglected by her husband and she lived a secluded in a gloomy wing of the palace while he enjoyed with his mistresses, giving in to their demands which resulted in the mounting up of his debts.

The present study explores the issue of subaltern pathetic condition to portray a fire of traditional ideas flamed by the patriarchal society in which all the desires and expectations of the women are burnt. It is a fire that does not allow the Indian women to live, to breathe, and to speak; however, it is itself a voice for them trying to call out. Spivak explains "sati as an oppressive term and an instrument for both the colonizer and the colonized communities utilized by patriarchal system in order to limit the freedom of J Nov" (153).

This study portrays the ceremony of sati in the novel, in which Deeti is to be burned, in order to make different aspects of such a ceremony more clear. This unjust ceremony shows that the widowed women do not have the right of living after the death of their husbands. All their desires and wishes are ended with this fire. Sati

therefore can be considered as the climax of the oppressions which the male-dominated society imposes on the colonized women. On the other hand Sati can be regarded as the final words of the Indian women. Its flames are represented as the voices which are called out by those women.

However, Deeti, though religious, does not appear as a woman repentant for her escape. She does not seem to be burdened with a sense of guilt over her escape from the fire. Instead of being remorseful of not being able to die and be a sati, as should be the case for a religious sati, she feels a joy within and starts a new life with the love of the ox-man, her savior:

Even then she did not feel herself to be living in the same sense as before: a curious feeling, of joy mixed with resignation, crept into her heart, for it was as if she really had died and been delivered betimes in rebirth, to her next life: she had shed the body of the old Deeti, with the burden of its karma ... she could hear the whispering of the earth and the river, and they were saying to her that she was alive, alive and suddenly it was as if her body was awake to the world as it had never been before, flowing like the river's waves, and as open and fecund as the reed-covered bank. (178–79)

Therefore, here the practice of sati appears as a process, through which a woman's vision of her life changes. The same Deeti who would always cover her face to avoid Kalua's gaze and maintain distance to avoid his touch as a low caste man now comes to realize the insignificance of such caste divisions in society only after visualizing her own plight at the hands of her relatives and being saved from the fire.

When Deeti realizes that she has been saved, she immediately brushes off her old past ties with the social and cultural norms, decides to get married to Kalua even

without awaiting his consent and sets out to make arrangements for a secret wedding. Her intention of refuting the constrictive religious and social mores through her marriage and decision to lead a conjugal life is a symbolic reversal of traditional Hindu religious rules. Narasimhan informs that most of the Hindu religious texts including *Srutis* and *Smritis* are silent on the customs of sati to be followed by a widow, though they have specific injunctions inscribed for a widow to follow after her husband's death.

Comparing the position of the women in the patriarchal society with the situation of the others, it reveals that they are restricted to be active in the social activities and the only thing they are allowed to do is to be silent. The male-dominated society does not care about the women and treat them as the inferior and weak group so that they can be viewed as the working forces and do not have the ability to do anything else. Ghosh explains this idea in various parts of *Sea of Poppies*.

The awful situation of Deeti together with the other Indian women and sati in addition to this fact that her girl, Kabutri, cannot be her father's heir all are small parts of this issue. In the first place it is patriarchal system and male-dominated society which creates a severe condition for the women but their situation is quite worse when a greater power as an imperial authority dominates over such a patriarchal system. The presence of such a power and its penetration into the deepest layers of the life and career of the colonized makes the condition of the women more complicated.

III. Concerns for the Marginalized

Ghosh opens *Sea of Poppies* with a rural woman named Deeti with her Daughter Kabutri who live in a very bad condition. Deeti, like the other women in that society, is a woman with a poor family who has to work on the poppy farm to help her husband who works for a British factory. She is married with an opium addicted man, Hukum Singh, who is her brother's friend. In her wedding night, her husband makes her unconscious with opium and she is therefore raped by her brother-in-law, Chandan Singh, instead of her husband because of his infertility. This event happens while some of her husband's relatives participate in this terrific ceremony.

When she discovers anything about that night told by her brother-in-law and while her husband is near to death she is confronted with the shameful request of her brother-in-law on having sexual relationship with her in order to have his support, a request for which she chooses to die with her husband's funeral pyre necessarily. Being saved from sati, a ceremony which refers to an action in India in which a widow, when loses her husband, is inevitable to be burnt in the funeral pyre of her husband, by Kalua, Deeti runs away from his homeland to an unknown destination while she surrenders his only daughter to her aunt.

This present study focuses the subaltern people in which some landlords request for more women as laborers in order to work in agricultural fields. These laborers are transported on the Ibis in which Deeti has the same destination with the other women gone to Maurities. Indian women experience the same situation on the Ibis just like when on the land. They have hard responsibilities on it such as cleaning, cooking, serving food, and washing the clothes. At the end of the novel Kalua, Deeti's current husband, with some other men escapes from the Ibis and leaves Deeti alone and unsupported.

In *Sea of Poppies* the author present the plight of subaltern people like Hindu

woman who undertakes the ritual of sati cannot simply be reduced to an object of sympathy, and also, at the same time, she should not be viewed as the stalwart follower or epitome of the Hindu religious, cultural and social values who should be worshipped as a deity by the East. Rather, Ghosh points out the ways the victims of marginalization in society exert their self-will over their own lives under the guise of religion and cultural legacy. Instead of merely castigating the act of sati as a criminal Hindu ritual, *Sea of Poppies* delves deeply into the entrenched social and cultural discriminatory attitudes towards women in India and shows the ways constrictive rituals of religion, the very basis of the practice of sati as well as of Indian society and culture, serve as a ploy, which, instead of perpetrating violence, confers a subjective entity on the sati that can even subvert the constrictive norms of a colonized society.

The present study focuses the experience of subaltern people and their struggle to survive in the 19th century Indian society. The distinction of Ghosh's vision lies in investigating the full humanity of the dehumanized subalterns and he finally takes the ground to construct their identity that can enable them to make spaces in the main stream of caste based oppressive mechanism of social order.

Amitav Ghosh not only focuses on a group of individuals in this novel but a group that is challenging all established concepts that rule the general idea of the Indian past -including that of colonialism and nationalism. Moreover, Ghosh does not directly allow any connection to a larger history, or looking back in any anger or any reaction of such nature. Ghosh takes care to avoid familiar figures from history and looks at marginal society that can give him a better point of fictionalizing and to his own end. In this novel, we look at a period of time in which Ghosh takes care to avoid familiar figures from history and looks at marginal society that can give him a better point of fictionalizing and to his own end. In this novel, we look at a period of time in

which the notion of nation itself is somewhat absent. The area that Amitav Ghosh concentrates on is beyond even the generalized subaltern that Ranajit Guha speaks of in his subaltern studies.

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