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Presenting the Voice of Subaltern in Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea*

Presenting the Voice of Subaltern in Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea*

**A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Partial
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Letter of Recommendation

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Approval Letter

This thesis entitled “Presenting the Voice of Subaltern in Anita Desai’s *The Village by the Sea*”, submitted to the Central Department of English Tribhuvan University, by Mrs. Shovha Adhikari, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

The Village by the Sea, by Anita Desai, has been analyzed from the subaltern perspective that powerfully subverts not only the elitist ideology but also corrects the Subaltern Studies' perspective of the subaltern as being unable to speak and represent themselves. The novel presents the subaltern characters with resistance and self representation, changing their fate and raising their voice against the marginalization. They do have the sense of identity which they want to preserve and live with dignity. For this, Hari, the central character of the novel, tries his best to protest the capitalistic mode of society and makes his identity sure. His endless efforts ultimately offer him his success of fulfilling his dreams of life.

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I. Anita Desai and Subaltern Perspectives in *The Village by the Sea*

The research work has analyzed *The Village by the Sea* by Anita Desai from the perspective of Subaltern Studies to show how Desai has depicted the subaltern's resistance and voice. The novel presents such subaltern issues through the relentless struggles of Hari for his dream to have a happy and prosperous family.

Being a member of class subaltern, Hari and his family members are let to suffer every kind of economic hinderances and the marginalization as well. Even to survive, it becomes tough to his family. Because of the shortage of money, his family members are compelled to eat dry chapattis with salt and chili without any choice that even caused illness of and finally death. Moreover illness becomes a great problem to them, because it needs money to be cured, which is out of their reach. Hari's mother can be taken as an example, "She has been ill for so long-she has grown very thin and weak" (155). Not only this, they are bound to sell their cattle and boat to pay their debts which has negative impact to their economic status. They have to repair their house but it has been stopped due to the lack of fund. The education of Hari and his sisters becomes incomplete because of the scarcity of money. Though the so-called elite class talks about the right of the children to education, they (Hari and his sisters) are victimized from this point too, "We don't go to school anymore" (15). Hari is misbehaved by the police in the city which is an example of the elitist authority. These people only know how to take advantage from the lower class people, in spite of helping them in their needs. This also shows the selfish nature of the upper class people including government.

But Hari is a man of strong determination, with courage and hard labour. Even though his education is stopped, he has developed a sense of identity. He wants to

make his own fate by his own labour and efforts. He wants to live on his own. For this, he strives and struggles without saying day and night. To achieve his motto 'to have a happy and prosperous family', he gives continuity to his efforts. To make his future bright, he makes himself engaged in a restaurant and also learns to repair the watch while he was in Bombay, which could be a great achievement. These lines really represent his hard work and determination: "His shirt was soaked again and he spent the rest of the day with the wet cloth clinging to his body" (185). Finally, he is successful to fulfill his dream of life. Desai has given a happy ending to this novel. At the end of the novel, Hari becomes a successful man with money as well as blooming happiness. Now, he is no more a person who is suffering in the hell of economic crisis. He has money, happiness, courage, hope which is supposed to be only with the elite class, "Hari brought out presents for them" (225). Hence, Hari is successful to cross the boundary of elite/ subaltern, which is merely a construction of the traditional society that has become less effective in such a time of modernization (globalization). In fact, "He felt like a new person like someone who had emerged from a tightly shut box and now saw the light and felt the breeze for the first time" (230). In this way, Hari is able to raise the voice against any kind of suppression, discrimination, exploitation and marginalization. So, he no longer has to depend upon others to be represented.

In order to analyze this text, I have applied Subaltern Studies as a tool. Hari, the main character of the text, is from subaltern group and becomes successful to fulfill his dream of having a happy and prosperous family life by his own endless efforts, being independent of the elite class. He is able to change his fate and achieve material success which is supposed to belong to the elite class only. The achievement, which Hari grabs, is a strong proof that subalterns can do everything for their welfare

and they no more need to be done by others. They are capable of raising the voice against every kind of suppression discrimination and marginalization.

Different critics have seen this novel via different perspectives and find various themes. Indian critic R.K. Dhawan says, “Desai also shows very clearly how the cruse of poverty and superstitions could be transformed with the help of the forces of science and process of industrialization” (19). In fact, Hari is from the village ‘Thul’, which totally depends on the fishing and agriculture, but, in the wake of industrialization. Similarly, another critic Samatha Kenedy comments, “It is story of a poor Indian family where the children work and fight to keep their family together” (14). Kenedy has shown that the parents lack the ability of fulfilling their duties and responsibilities, so that the children are compelled to solve the problems related to survival. Hence, the novel in S.P.Swain words, “is based on substantial, natural, realistic and solid human action centering on the existential strife of Hari and Lila in the face of a grave identity crisis” (114). Hari, because of his full energy and labour, becomes successful to create his own identity in the society. As a result, Hari’s sense of alienation vanishes as soon as he reaches to his destination. Hari grabs the golden opportunity struggling against experience and fighting for survival against a natural backdrop.

Desai reveals with great courage, not only how humanity suffers and inflicts untold damage upon itself, but also how it eventually repairs itself and thus sustains and survives through the darkest times. So, D.K.Pabby says, “Desai arrives at the conclusion that a comprehensive and meaningful understanding of life means the genuine attempts and heroic struggles of the individual to establish human relationships with other individuals and through them with community and humanity” (57).

Although there are many critics who have made comments upon this novel regarding different issues and angles, I have tried to analyze it by applying Subaltern Studies as a tool. Because of the nature of the protagonist's sufferings and hardships and the ultimate success, it becomes the appropriate tool which can provide justice to the marginalized people, making them speak against discrimination and exploitation, in order to establish their existence and identity in the society without hierarchy. Hari, the protagonist of this novel *The Village by the Sea* is a victim of the bourgeoisie society, which is not willing to do anything on behalf of the marginal people so that they can live a life. Hari and his family stand for the subaltern class, who are financially hard pressed and materially alienated. Survival becomes a major problem, which is also emphasized by the voice of bird watcher and the watch mender: "If you want to survive, you will have to change too" (129).

I will develop this thesis project from introduction in the first chapter which will be followed by a discussion of Subaltern Studies as a tool to apply in this novel. Moreover, my attempt will focus and analyze the struggle and the achievement of the subaltern people to live a meaningful life in the society in the third chapter. Similarly, conclusion and works cited will be in the fourth and fifth chapter respectively.

II. Subaltern Studies: A Theoretical Tool

The term 'subaltern' refers to the marginalized or oppressed people, whether in terms of class, caste, age, religion, ethnicity and gender. The most prominent violation perpetrated over the subaltern people, is the effacement of their identity in the official representation. The subalterns are marginalized, thinking that, they cannot speak though they are aware of the suppression or marginalization. They lack the language of their own, which can express their pain and sufferings. Not only the language, but also, the theoretical strategies they lack, thereby, the marginalization becomes an ongoing process.

The very word 'subaltern' was first used to refer Vassals and Peasants in Medieval period. By 1700, it was used to stand for the lower ranks in military suggesting them as peasant origin. By 1800, the writers and the historians started writing novels and histories about military campaign in India and America from the subaltern perspective. Later on, the very term got a rather authentic voice, when Antonio Gramsci adopted the term to refer those groups in any society "who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes" (76). Peasant, workers and also other groups may fall under the term subalterns, who are denied access to hegemonic power. These subaltern classes are forced to stay away from the hegemonic power and suffer the exploitation of the ruling classes.

With the motto to provide the subaltern people their own history and voices, 'Subaltern Studies' has begun since 1970s. It encourages writing the historiography of the people ignored by the colonialist as well as bourgeois nationalists and also works to establish the subaltern as an autonomous body. Subaltern Studies also questions the academic history in South Asian historiography by calling it "elite culture" resulted as "the consequences of British colonialism" (Guha VII). According

to the group, the bourgeois nationalist history is the successors to colonialist history as both of them ignored the activities the subalterns do, being independent of elite group. The role played by these people is not less significant to drive the colonizers away from India, but unfortunately, the colonialist historiography did not record their actions and deeds and wrote only about the actions and thoughts of those bourgeoisies colonialists. It totally ignored the voices and deeds of the indigenous people.

In this sense, Subaltern Studies can be defined as a theory of change, which sustains vigorous political commitment. This study, that's why, is very much influenced by postmodernism and post structuralism. Cultural studies are getting much more attention from all sides. Subaltern Studies recently deals also with the issue of representation, critical theory and cultural studies from subaltern politics. Spivak writes: "The Subaltern Studies [. . .] perceive their task as making a theory of consciousness or culture rather than specifically a theory of change" (330). Spivak here is very much concerned about the problematic dealing of the elite to the subaltern. Her essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) has raised the issues related to the welfare of the subaltern people, though it is hotly debated everywhere and also gets many different ideas. And it is credited to have brought the subalternity in to post colonial domain, where she has presented women, as a subaltern group. The ultimate goal of Subaltern Studies, is to seek to rewrite and redraw the boundaries of history and recover the erased or missed history of marginalized people. So, it focuses on the activities and the muted voice of the marginals. The publication of books on Subaltern Studies itself proves as an important event in the writing of the history of subaltern. The subaltern people have their own identity, history and also their own way to be identified. Despite the domination of the subaltern people by the elite group, they try to protest it. Subaltern Studies group has tried their best to provide a fertile platform

(Postcolonial Studies) to the third world voices, which is supposed to get enough attention. Gautam Bhadra tries to focus on certain features called the 'subaltern mentality' which is "not only 'defiance' but also 'submissiveness' to authority is the characteristic of the behavior of subaltern classes" (54).

In this way, Subaltern Studies has become a global concern. It is no more the phenomena of Indian or South Asian only. "It has gone", as Dipesh Chakravorty says, "Beyond India or South Asia as an area of academic specialization"(9). The way it is marching ahead suggests that, it is a rather creative as well as flexible project. It draws ideas from diverse discipline like history, culture, sociology, anthropology, literature and so on. So, it is interdisciplinary in nature. It is a different way of writing historiography from the perspective of the marginalized mass. While writing, it has reinvented many terms, which are essential for such kind of historiography including subalternity itself. It is participated in contemporary critiques of history and nationalism. It deals with inferiority and dominating structures of every global society. The history of subaltern classes is a very complex issue, no doubt, as the history of dominant class.

There are two types of views related to the question that either the subaltern people can raise their voice by themselves or they need to be represented by others. On the one hand, there are some critics like Spivak who believe that the subaltern subjects have been regulated to the position of subjects rather than participants in a two-way dialogue. They are made only the subjects. So they cannot speak. They have to be represented by the elite intellectuals because only the intellectual elites can present interpretation of the subaltern voice filtered through the intellectual viewpoint. It is all because they "have no history" and "cannot speak" (Spivak 32). The subaltern is the marginalized one, which has no access to hegemonic power. So, they

lack the means as well as strategy of their own. Moreover, they do not have the privileged position, from where they can express themselves. Therefore, the spokes person of subaltern members becomes their life-giver and master:

The small peasant proprietors cannot represent themselves: they must be presented. Their representing must appear simultaneously as their master, as an authority over them, as unrestricted governmental power that protects them from the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above. (Spivak 29-30)

On the other hand, there are so many critics like Dipesh and Arnold who have presented so many examples of protest of the subaltern class people. In the process of making the authority aware about their condition and position, they follow different tracks. Sometimes they use strike as a fruitful means to get the attention of the authority (government). They keep on reminding the authority of the proper use of their power. And when the authority ignores the subaltern people, they constitute a continuing form of protest by acting together in small bonds, against it. Even though, there are two types of distinct views regarding the voice of subaltern, I do believe that, the subalterns are capable of raising their voice against every kind of suppression in this modern age, though they needed to be represented by others in the past. This novel is an example that subalterns can make their identity sure with out depending on others.

According to Gramsci's opinion, the history of the subaltern classes is inevitably fragmented and episodic. They have less access to the means by which they can control their representation. Here, Gramsci "is concerned with the intellectual's role in the subalterns' cultural and political movement into hegemony" (78). As we know, subaltern people do not have the means and strategy to get access to the

hegemonic power; they should be guided by the intellectuals. In such a context, intellectuals must play vital role to show them the right way. They should educate and make aware and mobilize the people. So that the subaltern people can be changed into revolutionary figures, who will strive and struggle to get independence and equal representation.

The history of India recorded only the story of bourgeois and could not explain nationalism in India ultimately. The Subaltern Studies Group tries their best to rewrite the historiography of India. Though they blame Marxism of developing complicity to bourgeois nationalism, they bring some materials from Marxist historiography. Guha, the leading figure of Subaltern Studies Group, insists that it excludes what he calls “the politics of people,” and people here refer to the subaltern group (4). Guha brings about a parallelism between colonialism and bourgeois nationalism in his writings because both give emphasis only to the actions and deeds of the elite group and ignored the efforts of the subaltern groups. Both historiographies use ‘assent’ of people as a cover to hide the cruelties and injustices they inflicted on the people. Guha, in his next essay, “Dominance without Hegemony and Its historiography”, states that colonialism involved dominance without hegemony. In other words, it proceeds on with the help of “coercion” rather than “assent of people” (221-22). The hegemony is either created out of coercion or it is simply imagined by colonialist historiographers while writing British history. But they believe that they have written Indian history. In fact, the South Asian history is just one stage in the colonial career of the colonialist historiography. The similarities are found between colonialism and bourgeois nationalism because even after the independence, the bourgeois nationalism inherited colonial legacy. Their political as well as bureaucratic mechanisms are similar. The parliamentary system, English

education system are some examples of the legacies of colonialism. So, Guha says, “In short, the price of blindness about the structure of the colonial regime as domination without hegemony has been, for us, a total want of insight into the character of the successor regime too as dominance without hegemony” (307). The colonialism was, no doubt, against the will and wish of the people. They resisted it with great courage and hope but the colonial historiography simply observes their resistance and always busy in proving the British rule as based on people’s wish and will. It undermines their political sensibility. There was remarkable participation of the subaltern people in the great anti-imperialist movements like civil disobedience, Non-cooperation and Quit India. But the actions and deeds of these people were simply ignored.

Because of this tendency of writing the historiographies, a new type of history writing is inevitable. For this purpose, Subaltern Studies has emerged as an appropriate tool to balance the gap of injustice created by the colonialist historiography and bourgeois nationalist historiography. Subaltern Studies, which deals with the history, which is ignored or unseen, aspires to “rewrite the nation outside the state- centered national discourse that replicates colonial power/knowledge in a world of globalization”(Guha 20). Subaltern Studies, therefore, has brought a paradigmatic shift in the perspective through revision of elite historiographies. It seeks the dispersed moments and fragments in ethnographic colonialism and constitutes the subversive politics to expose the forms of power and knowledge that oppress subaltern people so as to provide liberating alternatives. It stands against colonial modernity to secure a better future for the subaltern people, learning to hear them, allowing them to speak, taking back to powers that marginalized them and documenting their past. It avoids European theoretical models and recovers subaltern

consciousness as a theoretical tool. It attempts to write the “history from below” (Ludden 12). It raises the voice of subaltern people, which was forgotten long by the colonialist historiography. Now subaltern people are known as the agents of change who possess the great potentiality to counter the elite hegemony. The first emancipatory act that Subaltern Studies performs in our understanding of tribe, caste, class and other such groups, as Veena Das writes “is to restore to them their historical being” (Subaltern as Perspective 314). It tries to take resort to culture as well as literary modes to inquire into history. As a postcolonial cultural critique, Subaltern Studies tries to restore the integrity of indigenous histories that appear naturally in non-linear, oral, symbolic, vernacular and dramatic forms. It moves away from people’s politics to the study of the culture of the subaltern people. Indeed, Subaltern Studies has become, as David Ludden says “an original sight for a new kind of history from below, a people’s history free of national constraints” (12).

Obviously, Subaltern Studies attempts rewriting a new kind of national history, which accumulates dispersed moments and fragments. Spivak argues, “To investigate, discover, and establish a subaltern or peasant consciousness seems at first to be a positivistic project- a project which assumes that, if properly prosecuted, it will lead to firm ground, to some thing that can be disclosed” (338). And Subaltern Studies is a project, which tries its best to discover, investigate and establish subaltern consciousness and ‘subaltern’ means the colonized or oppressed subject whose voice has been silenced. Spivak, however, thinks, “For consciousness here, is not consciousness- in-general, but a historicized political species thereof, subaltern consciousness” (338). So, she regards their effort to recover peasant consciousness as a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest. She

reinforces their strategic use of “peasant consciousness” by saying that they should be “concerned not with consciousness in general but in this crucial narrow sense” (342).

But as Michel Foucault defines representation in relation to power, the powerful people’s authority is enough to manipulate representation as they like and turns representation into a truth by suppressing the representation of their opposites.

The subaltern issue has become a global concern, which is hotly debated. The work of subaltern historians does offer a real alternative to traditional historiography in their attempt to rethink history from the perspective of the subaltern. Here the subalternist intervention of subaltern group of historian turns out to be a metaphoric representation of the subaltern - metaphoric at the level of epistemology that the subaltern can speak as opposed to the ironic representation of the subaltern by the poststructuralist and postcolonial theorist who believes that the subaltern cannot speak. They make subaltern exercising their power. This shows that the subalterns are able to represent themselves and they need not to be represented by others. They are capable of doing the things on their own.

Guha’s suggestion to take ‘peasant consciousness’ as a strategy and Spivak’s ideas about ‘reading against the grain’ are very useful for establishing subaltern people as an autonomous domain having their own history. So, “it would get the group off the dangerous hook of claiming to establish the truth-knowledge of the subaltern and his consciousness”(356). Subaltern Studies Group endeavors to establish the subaltern people as the subject of insurgency. That’s why they propose to focus on subaltern consciousness as their central theme so that subaltern people become conscious of themselves first. As Dipesh writes:

The central aim of the Subaltern Studies is to understand the consciousness that formed and still forms political actions taken by the

subaltern classes on their own, independently of any elite initiatives. It is only by giving this consciousness a central place in historical analysis that we see the subaltern as the maker of the history s/he lives out. (374)

In this way, subaltern consciousness has been always a critical point of subalternity. The peasants or subaltern groups tend to resist the elite domination. It emerges as an invariant feature about subaltern group, which makes the discussion on the subaltern mentality fruitful. The subaltern people resisted the bourgeois nationalists as well as indigenous elite leaders by disobeying their orders. They would take part in the anti-imperialist movements in their own traditionalist way. They would derive the terms from the idioms of their every day life so that they could make these struggles their own. Hence, “defiance” is not the only characteristic behavior of the subaltern classes but also “submissiveness to authority” equally important feature of their behaviors (Bhadra 54).

The subaltern groups tend to protest the elite domination. But sometimes they are misrepresented by the intellectual elites, who leave them on the middle of the path making them unknown where to head. Such type of activity is similar to the death of the subaltern classes’ history. This kind of incident happens because of the arrogance of the elite classes. Whatever the subaltern people think and wherever they go, bourgeois nationalists and colonialist always seem to dominate or marginalize these people despite their great contribution in each and every field. Nevertheless, Subaltern Studies “entered the academic scene by asserting the complete autonomy of the lower class insurgency” (Ludden 10). To establish subaltern historiography as the hegemonic one, Subaltern Studies tries its best to deconstruct colonial historiography. After the emergence of Subaltern Studies, the way of perceiving life and world has

been changed. Our perception has been different. It is the significant change, brought by the Subaltern Studies, which deals with the issue like subaltern consciousness and effects of colonization on subaltern people. Subaltern has to appropriate the language and the theoretical strategies of the ruling class (elite group) to speak on behalf of the subalterns and finally to establish the subaltern as an autonomous domain, free from all kind of suppression, domination and marginalization.

The term 'subaltern' is used to denote the entire people that are subordinate in terms of class, caste, age, gender, and office, or in any other way. The historical processes of colonial India are marked by an admixture of pre-capitalist and capitalist relations. The nature of power, exploitation and popular resistance in such a society is not, therefore, amenable to adequate understanding in term of distinct class categories that can clearly enunciate. For the dominating elites, this lack of clarity is expressed in their inability to unite the people around themselves. For the subaltern, on the other hand, this very lack of clarity makes it important for us to realize the significance of every trace of their independent initiative, even though it remained fragmented in scale and distant from the core of articulate political society. In Guha's view it is not the fault of the elite only but also the weakness of the subaltern because the failure is "caused by the inadequacy of the bourgeoisie as well as the working class to lead it into a decisive victory over colonialism" (7).

The volumes of history writing entitled "Subaltern Studies" are concerned with such questions with seeking a way out of what characterized as 'the elitism of modern Indian historiography'. This historiography is seen to suffer from a narrow and partial view of Indian politics. Here Gramsci, "is concerned with the intellectuals' role in the subalterns' culture and political movements in to hegemony" (78).

Gramsci's reflections on the subaltern classes are indeed appropriate in this regard,

for they are marked by a clear recognition of the incalculable value of such peripheral initiative for 'the integral historian'. The binary elite/subaltern relation must not be seen as a substitute for the more familiar categories of class and class struggle. The elite/subaltern dichotomy has certain specific analytical uses in the study of historical processes in a colonial society.

The phenomenon of collective consciousness is the hallmark of Marx's 'class for itself' as 'the interests it defends become class interests. But the struggle of class against class is a political struggle. The Leninist distinction between 'class – in – itself' and 'class – for – itself' is familiar in contemporary Marxist literature, but its usage is frequently mechanical and insensitive. Hence, E.P. Thompson in his essay *The Making of the English Working Class* asserts:

It is significant that the most authentic history of the English working class emphasizes not the *existence*, but the *happening* of a class as and when 'some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interest as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. (9)

The communal mode of power exists where individual or sectional rights, entitlement and obligations are allocated on the authority of the entire social collectivity, i.e. the community. Here the collective is prior; individual and sectional identities are derived only by virtue of membership of the community. Institutionally, there may consist of an assembly of all members of the community, but this is by no means a necessary institutional form. Communal authority may be exercised through a council of elders of leading families, or even by a chief or patriarch. The point is that authority resides not in the person or even in the office; it resides only in the community as a whole. In

some of the cases, a number of local lineages are combined into a village community to comprise the smallest political segment; a number of villages united in a regional confederacy define the tribe or people. This explanation rests on “the relation of local groups to one another”, which, “are seen as a balance of power, maintained by competition between them” (SSII, Partha 319). We can see some interesting cases are of groups in which there exist official functionaries, such as chiefs or elders or lineage heads or priests for the performances of various administrative and other regulatory acts. There may be petty chieftains who perform routinized, often ritualized, official duties but have no especial privileges. But at other times, parallel to the institution of chief ship, there is an earth cult and there are priests who act as ‘custodians of the earth’: the ritual of the earth cult specifies the respective position of each structural unit with respect to the other and also symbolizes the unity of the whole community. There is a simultaneous institutionalization of the authority as a whole. It has also been pointed out recently that much of the conventional anthropological literature, guided by an almost obsessive concern to unravel the procedural and symbolic intricacies of the balancing mechanism in segmentary political systems, has missed the very real exploitative relations which characterize the social formations of most extant tribal people. Many of their relations are in fact the result of the domination imposed by conquering groups. The classificatory scheme which divides people into different tribes, classes, castes etc. is entirely arbitrary: one can insert other stages in between any two, or lump together two or more stages and call them one. In Partha’s words, “The problem is highlighted in the work of anthropologists who, faced with incontrovertible evidences of the existence of regular processes of class domination in tribal societies, have attempted to incorporate this into their conventional positivist framework” (326).

For colonial India, we can then interchange the subjects of Marx's proposition we have here the experience of a historical process where the dominant classes, foreign and indigenous, have had neither will nor initiative to bring about any coherent social transformation. The inception of capitalism, which came out through the onslaught of imperialism lacked integration with the local economy. Thus, the dominant classes could evolve no organic links with the entire society and therefore create no consciousness that could enlarge their class sphere morally and ideologically on a national scale. For colonial India, we could say that it was the *dominant classes* who had no feeling of community, no national bonds and no political organization adequate for the task of social transformation. Being dominant and commanding wealth and resources, they could operate from the core of society and economy, keeping them in strategic control, but they lacked the organic links with the entire society and therefore created no consciousness. The question of unrealized potential arises out of the distinct articulation characterizing insurgencies at the grass root as Ranjit Guha writes "all mass struggles will tend inevitably to model themselves on the unfinished project of Titu, Kanhu, Birsa, and Magher Singh" (336).

Among the causes responsible for fragmenting subaltern insurgency must be included the failure of elite leadership to identify itself with the mind and energy of grass root revolt. It is in this context that we must understand the meaning of the autonomous domain of subaltern moments and their consciousness. We are, in a situation where elites remain dominant without having the will or the ability to transform society, while the counterthrust from subaltern group is perpetually thwarted or subalted by elite domination. The need for co-existence and peace between people of the two groups is obvious. The occasional convergence of interests between various upper and lower castes and occupational groups cannot be viewed in

isolation. If we talk about Hindu- Muslim relation during 1888-1917 they bound themselves neither to “interfere” in the religious practices of the other community nor to “introduce any change” in the established customs (Pandey 128). Such type of agreement is really necessary to maintain peace and harmony in every society.

The bourgeoisie revolution is said to have been marked by the elimination of feudal relations, in whose place stepped free competition, accompanied by a social and political constitution adapted to it, and by the economic and political sway of the bourgeois class. The difficulties of constructing of typology of bourgeois revolutions remain a major concern of the transition debate. What is note worthy here is that, the bourgeoisie in history always appears in which its active and passive roles are fused. Religion often has an important role in subaltern protests against an order that perpetuates operation and distress. As observed by Sumit Sarkar:

A crucial feature of the concept of break down of authority in its more extreme form is it’s predominantly magico religious character, natural and indeed inevitable in a peasant society which has not undergone the process of ‘disenchantment of the world’ partially brought about in the west in the post-reformation era. (308)

For the peasants, religion is an essential and integral part of their every day lives. It also mediates between themselves and those forces, for good and evil, appears to lie beyond their control. The workers become more conscious regarding their welfare and rights. It is observed that there is an urgent need of working class organization, which would fight for the betterment of the entire workers. The workers become united so that they could give pressure to the authority. The government in Dipesh words has described this labour force in 1933 as “perhaps the largest and the most compact group of workers with identical interest in the world” (116). It was not just the “higher

frequency of strikes however that made the authority takes notice of them; the authorities were also sometimes worried by their longer duration” (118). He provides an answer to the question of why trade unions made little headway despite evidence of the urge for protest among workers.

Marx’s theory is never merely an exercise in political economy; it is also its critique. His pure theory is connected with the economic domain and implies a principle of correspondence between the capital – labour relation and its negation through the dynamics of exploitation and its antithesis. There in lies the clarity of the capital –labour relation and its historical perspective. The economic entangled in pre-capitalist residues and other sub-structures of non-economic phenomena, which have a critical influence on the class struggle. The simple equation of bourgeois initiative with the historical advance of productive forces is an inadequate formula with which to analyze the transition process. This is precisely where the mass initiative and resolute opposition manifest in the insurgencies of subaltern group becomes significant as ‘the politics of the people’. The freedom struggle monitored by elite leadership passes through many different phases.

Gandhi’s understanding of India under British rule followed from his opposition to both capitalist relations and process of production. Gandhism provides for the first time in Indian politics, an ideological basis for including the whole people within the political nation. In order to do this, it quite consciously seeks to bridge even the most sanctified cultural barriers that divide the people. Gandhian intervention in elite-nationalist politics in India in Partha’s thinking is “to establish an authentic national movement” which can build upon the organized support of “the whole of the peasantry” (193).

The emphasis on subaltern autonomy and consciousness demonstrates variable reactions and results as the subjects encounter different historical experiences. For example, the Devi movement of 1922-23 in south Gujarat was distinguished by a tribal solidarity secured substantial gain for the adivasis in their struggle against exploiters. The same movement, however, represented a stage in the growth of a class of richer peasants within the adivasi community. The subaltern classes believe that those who hold power over them, whether money lenders, grain traders, land holders or officials, should not abuse their power but be responsive to subaltern needs. So the protest is accordingly directed not to overturn the super ordinate classes but to reminding them of the proper use of their power. But when the authority ignores the peasant “they constitute a continuing form of protest by poorer peasant acting together in small bonds, against it” (Arnold 90).

The questions about autonomy and spontaneity of subaltern insurgency are connected with such issues of historical transition. Neither autonomy nor spontaneity is absolute. Their relativity is revealed in several essays of Subaltern Studies. Subaltern revolts can be spontaneous within their own conscious domain since their forms, aspirations and views of the world have no common ground with the domain of elite life and politics. Beyond the story of success and failure of the elite, subaltern history may therefore reveal the revolutionary subject with a distinct mind and energy of its own. Thus, autonomy and spontaneity are not immanent in the methodology of the Subaltern Studies, being manifest in the peripheral resistance of subaltern groups in their endeavours against state operation as well as capitalist and pre-capitalist exploitation. These systems of oppression appeared to them not as purely economic phenomena but as a total assault on their life, honour and dignity. As per as elite old

was concerned, it remained bound to the conceptual and intellectual framework of a mix between traditional confusion and imported liberal sanctions.

The revolutionary subject of Subaltern Studies is inseparable from the task of Marxist mediation. Though difficult to avoid, we may leave out questions of current political praxis. But historiography itself is a form of mediation. Guha further says that colonialist historiography amounts to “an act of appropriation” which excludes “the rebel as a conscious subject” of his own history (33). In much the same way, the specificity of rebel consciousness had eluded radical historiography as well. This has been so because; it is impaled on a concept of peasant revolts as a success: on of events ranged along a direct line of descent – as a heritage. In this ahistorical view of the history of insurgency, all movements of consciousness are assimilated to the ultimate and highest movement of the series-indeed to an ideal consciousness. A historiography devoted to its pursuit is ill- equipped to cope with contradictions which are indeed the stuff history is made of. The rich material of myth, rituals, rumors, hopes for Golden Age and fears of an imminent End of the World, all of which speaks of the self alienation of the rebel, is wasted on this abstracts and sterile discourse. Hence, the swift transformation of class struggle into communal strife and vice- versa in our countryside in Guha’s words “evokes from it either some well-contrived apology or a simple gesture of embarrassment, but no real explanation” (39).

However, it is not only the religious element in rebel consciousness, which this historiography fails to comprehend. The specificity of a rural insurrection is expressed in terms of many other contradictions as well. There too are missed out. Blinded by the glare of a perfect and immaculate consciousness the historian sees nothing, for instance, but solidarity in rebel behaviors and fails to notice its other,

namely, betrayal. It has still to go a long way before it can prove that the insurgent can rely on its performance to recover his place in history.

When we talk about the formal aspect of subaltern attitude, in practice subordination-rebellion and all that may lie in between will naturally develop in relation to specific issues, grievances and social relationships. Agrarian conflicts of various types – tenant- zamindar disputes over rent and tenure, bargadar claims to a two – thirds share of the produce – in fact remained a major feature of Bengal life in the mid – 1920s. Giving the notice of revolts Sumit Sarkar writes, “Though most strike took place on specific economic demands, other dimensions were not entirely absent. Racist insults and assaults at Jhajha and Tundla provided the immediate occasions for the two EIR strikes in early 1922” (296). Indeed, the subaltern classes can have their own unity of wars of position and manoeuvre. The languages, semiotics and weapons of both kinds of war should be relevant to what we want to discover in their autonomy and spontaneity. The difficulties are present in the study of resistance as well, particularly with subaltern groups whose lives have already been muted into forms that are less exotic in their existence and communication than those of the peasant masses. It is dubious whether Chakrabarty’s emphasis on the aptitude of ‘science’ and ‘rationality’ in place of moral concern takes a full view of the subjectivity of jute-mill workers.

Hence, the novel *The Village by the Sea* by an Indian-American writer, Anita Desai can be taken as a strong proof that the subaltern is not the subaltern life long. The subaltern people are equally capable of doing everything to make their life as well as economic standard better. In the world of modernization, people either they are the elite or the subaltern do have same kind of wish and will to possess the benefit of advanced science and technology. It is a human nature that demands and

necessities are endless. In the process of completion of demands of life, subaltern no more needs the help of the elite as in the past. Time has passed a lot, changes are uncountable. Subaltern are strong enough to hold their voice against any kind of discrimination, suppression, exploitation and marginalization. They are no more a parasite; they have changed themselves as an active and alert actor of their deeds. Hari, being a main character, which belongs to a poor family, is successful to fulfill his dream of happy and prosperous life by his own efforts and continuous labour. From his character, we can say that subaltern can make or change their fate by themselves. They can bring light or make bright future independent of the elite. In one sentence, they need not to be represented by others anymore.

III. Presenting the Voice of Subaltern

Desai's *The Village by the Sea* presents the voice of subaltern not only as the resistance against the dominant class ideology, but also to subvert such an elitist ideology for their self-representation through Hari and his family members' struggle and success to have a happy and prosperous family life. In the novel, Desai shows the Herculean efforts of the main character, Hari and his family to keep the family ties strong. The characters portrayed as the subaltern characters, have courage, hope, energy and struggle not less than the elites. Hari is a boy of full energy and strong determination, which he proves at the end of the novel. Hari is just twelve and Lila thirteen, and at this tender age, they take upon the burden of running the family as the elders would do; for their father is a drunkard and mother sick due to poverty. The children have become victim because of their class. In most of the poor families, the children are compelled to take the responsibility of running the family on their young shoulders. So, Hari and his sister Lila try their best to pull up their family from the mire of poverty, insecurity and ruin. In spite of their suffering, they maintain their corporation for the family loyalties and social responsibilities. Hari leaves school and is determined to earn money to release his family from economic crises. Similarly, Lila, too, leaves school so that she could take care of her mother and the entire household works. This shows how painful is the victimization, which the children of the marginalized groups are suffering. Economically they are so poor that these lines describe the picture of their home:

The hut should have been re-thatched years ago –the old palm leaves wear dry and tattered and slipping of the beams. The earthen walls were crumbling .The widows gaped, with out any shutters. There was

no smoke to be seen curling up from under a coking pot on a fire, as in the other huts in the surrounding groves of coconut and banana. (5)

These lines really show the sympathetic condition of class subaltern showing how much they have been crushed by elitist ideology in the capitalist society.

The family has no way to be out of the economic problem. Unfortunately, mother is a bed – ridden patient who is in need of money for treatment. Instead of her help, she needs constant care and balanced diet, which is very tough to the subaltern to maintain. Because of all these circumstances “Once they had had a buffalo but she, too, had been sold to pay debts” (6). They had a boat, too, which was a source of livelihood but “he had sold his boat to pay his debts” (3). Now they have a patch of land in the name of their property, where they sometimes grow vegetables. There is no regular source of money to make their survival easy. The children of the subaltern class are compelled to leave the school because they must give priority to feeding and clothing. Education becomes out of reach to them. Hari is every time haunted by the grave poverty which a common feature of the subaltern class. He spends his time thinking of the solution of the very problem. He starts to search the way to get rid of it. He feels guilty for not being able to buy sweets when his sisters Bela and Kamal ask for sweets and say:

‘Hari-bhai, buy us sweets,’ they chanted.

‘Buy us a few sweets.’

‘No sweets,’ he shouted. ‘I have no money.’

‘Oh Hari-bhai, just three-only two-then one, just one,’ they screamed, but Hari shook head and frowned. They saw he was serious and walked on disappointedly. (9)

Despite the problem of survival, Hari is full of hope and courage. It is, in fact hope and courage, that makes him successful to bring about happiness in his family. Hari comes to know that a factory is going to be built in Thul soon as Ramu says, “The Government is going to build great factory here. Many factories, hundreds of them” (11). This message comes to his mind all the time. He starts to think of a job in the factory, which could bring an end to his miserable economic condition. Speaking truly, he does not want to work in the field anymore. Because his effort spent in the field is unable to cover the needs of his family. Therefore, he hopes to find a job in the factory, which will become the ultimate source to fulfill his dreams. He wants to sell his labour to get money, because money plays vital role in a capitalist society. But at the same time, he doubts his efficiency to find a job in the factory because of low education. It means he has no good education and enough knowledge, which is the direct result of his poverty but thinks that he can operate the machines and tools because his hands are strong and sturdy. It is because he used to work in the field. The ambivalent mental position of Hari can be observed in the extract below:

But all the time he thought of the factory and a job. Could he get one, too? Could he work in a factory and earn money? No, he thought, he had not finished school. Although he could read and write and add figures, he had not taken an exam and had no degree, so how could he get a job? But did you really need a degree to work in a factory? Any man could work machines and use tools if his hands were fit to work.

(13)

Hari is from the subaltern group (bottom strata) of the society. He is living a life of scarcity. He does not have confidence because his education has stopped due to lack of money. But the important thing we can see in him is that, he is striving for his

identity, for his own image, and his meaningful existence in the society. The most important formula they accept is “to be hopeful” (17). We can find the philosophy of optimism and positive attitude towards life in the characters:

She felt relieved now to think Hari was growing up and would soon be able to find work and earn money. Of course he was still young, a year younger than her, and she could not expect him to work and earn like a man. Change would not come suddenly or quickly to their home and family, but it would come. She had to believe that it would come. (17)

In the case of Hari, it is obviously hope and passion that energizes him to cope up the miserable situation. Anyone whoever sees his family condition feels sympathy. They are unable to fulfill the basic needs like food, cloth and shelter. Neither the shelter nor the food is good. The food they eat is far worse than the dog of the elites eat, “There was nothing to eat with the *chapattis* but a pinch of salt and a few green chilies” (14). Hari tries his best to change his own condition by challenging the fate. Anyhow he wants to get rid of the problem of food, cloth and shelter. For this, he even thinks to work in Biju’s boat in Thul, though Biju is said to be a smuggler and he may turn Hari too into a smuggler. Hari being a victim of elite class does not think even the consequences after he is caught by the police. He simply thinks that he will get a way of fulfilling the needs of his family:

They would have to marry, one day, and he would have to see to it since his father would not. He would have to find them husbands, and buy them their wedding finery-silk sari and gold jewellery – and arrange their weddings to which the whole village would have to be invited. The bridegrooms might demand a dowry – a bicycle or even a

scooter. Gold buttons, coins and jewellery. A cow or a buffalo. A piece of land. (67)

Though marriage is considered as a holy bondage, which gives hope and happiness, it becomes a burden to the subaltern class, because it needs money (wealth) to buy material things in order to fulfill the demand of dowry. The painful situation, which Hari undergoes, is not different. He does have three sisters to get married but without dowry, it is not possible. Hence, the dowry system, which is constructed by the elite class of the society, needs to be changed, so that marriage becomes accessible to such class without any burden. He becomes happy thinking that he will get a job in Bombay and can earn money for the dowry for his sisters. He wants to change his fate. He wants to break the social boundary (subaltern) by his own labour and effort. He believes in his own constant struggle. For this, he wants the place to work, he wants only the opportunities not any kind of sympathy from any side. Lack of opportunities is the main cause of all his sufferings. So, for him Bombay becomes a solution of his problems and says that “it was a rich city if he could get there; he might be able to make money, bring home riches, pieces of gold and silver with which to dazzle his sisters” (45). For him, hard labour is imperative for subsistence and meaningful survival.

Thul, is a village dependent on agriculture, near Bombay in the wake of the changes that are ushering in through the advent of a large fertilizer complex. Only the beginning of industrialization is seen in the village. There are only a few choices for the villagers (poor) to choose. They do not have more options and opportunities. So that they are forced to do what they find either it would be sufficient to meet their needs or not. In the same way, Hari sees only these possibilities:

Even if all he could do now was to fish and sell coconuts, later on he would be able to choose between a factory job, a job on a big fishing boat like Biju's or a job in Bombay if someone helped him to get there. Although it excited him to think that life held so many possibilities, it also frightened him. The men in Thul had never had to make such choices; they had never had to consider anything beyond fishing and farming along these shores. (48)

The freedom of choice is not found in the case of the subaltern class. It is because they are not the policy makers. They are not guaranteed to make the choice according to their wish and necessity. Knowingly or unknowingly, they are compelled to do with certain things though that is not enough to complete his needs. Despite the fact that there are only a few possibilities, Hari hopes to get choices in the job opportunities in his own village that is in the process of industrialization. And because of industrialization, he can change his situation by exchanging labour for money. Hari's encounter with de Silva's family gives him a little relief, when de Silva says, "Good fellow, you did a good job of the car, if you ever come to Bombay, I'll give you a job as a car cleaner" (57). Hari is basically an introvert. He never talks much and always prefers to think things slowly and carefully before he does. He does not know what to do and where to go. Though he gets some economic support from de Silva's family, he does not limit himself only on it. Because he wants to stand on his own. He wants to be known on his own. He wants to make his own fortune, future and his identity. He thinks, "Perhaps if it really did turn into a factory site one day, he would stay on her, living a new kind of life. Otherwise he and his family would surely and slowly starve, fall ill like his mother and die" (60). To overcome the horrific situation, he makes his destination to Bombay. But he is misbehaved everywhere. He

feels very much alone. Even the police, who are for our help, scold him using insulting words. Really villagers are unknown to the traffic rules since they do not get used to the policies of the city. The bad treatment of policeman with Hari shows that how the innocent and marginalized are dealt with by the authority in a society. Hence, the extract as follows reflects the fact:

‘Where have you come from, fool?’ The policeman roared at Hari.

‘Never seen traffic lights? Don’t you know how to cross a street?’

‘Come straight from the pumpkin fields, have you?’

‘Send him back there-let him grow pumpkins-keep him off the Bombay streets,’ shouted the bus driver fiercely.

The policeman laughed, held up his hand to keep the bus waiting and waved to the marchers to cross the road. (116)

He is a man of self- respect. He feels very much hurt when the Bombay policeman jeers at him and Mahe for stalling the busy traffic on the road. Being a member of the state authority, the police man misuses the power over the marginalized people (like Hari and his friend), in spite of helping them in their need. .

Desai’s sense of satire is scattered in this novel. Here, she intentionally satirizes the government that always exploits the citizens and survives on the sweat and blood of its citizens. In fact, the government should take the responsibility regarding to its citizens. The government should play the role of a guardian, but instead it exploits, suppresses the people (especially the marginalized group). On the one hand, it collects taxes and on the other hand it uses the lands of its citizens forcefully. It can be evidently observed in the following term:

Do you think the government has ears and can hear? Do you think the government has eyes and can see? I tell you, the government has only a

mouth with which it eats-eats our taxes, eats our land, eats the poor.

Take my advice and keep clear of the government. Don't ask it for anything; do depend on it for anything. Be a man, be independent.

(132-33)

The government simply ignores the disagreements, protest, revolt, thinking, feeling, and the sentiment of the subaltern people. It acts according to its wish and will.

Without realizing the fact that the subaltern people are also the citizen of the same state and they have paid the tax to the government and they have completed their duty towards the government. In the same way, the government does have its responsibility towards the citizens, which should be fulfilled without discrimination in the name of class.

In desperation, Hari runs away to Bombay, and Lila is left to cope alone. She fights very hard to sustain the family together. When she finds her mother's health deteriorating, resulted by the poverty, she admits her in Alibagh hospital with the kind help of Mr. de Silvas and paves way for her complete recovery and return home. Her devotion to her mother and her hardships in running the family alone makes her drunken father repent and become responsible. Her devotion is supported by these lines:

It was all very frightening and difficult but she was here, her sisters and her mother were in her care and somehow she would have to manage [. . .]. She would go herself to Alibagh to see a doctor and fetch medicine for her mother. Her mother could not get into a bus and go so she would describe everything to the doctor and ask for help. (129-30)

In the case of Lila, too, the right of a child to read and play is suppressed. She is all the time busy to look after the family. She does have no time to think about herself.

Children rights are totally marginalized here. Moreover, there is no hospital in their village, so they must go to far place (city) to see doctors and fetch medicines. Lila works all the time to run the households properly therefore she could tie the family bond together.

Hari thinks that by going to Bombay, he will make a lot of money, bring riches, peaces of gold and silver to adorn his sisters. But when he reaches to Bombay, he becomes disappointed because he is misbehaved everywhere. He is haunted by the loneliness and identity crisis. He thinks that it is all because of his low class (marginalized position). The elites are highly appreciated and praised everywhere. But the subalterns are usually treated badly. He asks the stall man to guide him the address to the de Silva. The ill-treatment towards the subaltern class people is seen when he reaches to the door and bangs it, the uniformed servant of the de Silva comes and shouts at him like this:

The sahib is not here. He has gone to Thul, where you come from – he left this morning. They have all gone – for their summer vacation.

When they come back the sahib will go abroad. He is a big business man, don't you know? He has big business in England and in America.

He will not come back for another month [. . .] go, go away. (140-141)

The servant of the de Silva is also from the lower class, but he is unable to understand the feelings of another person from the same group. It is because he may be trained in the same manner or he is contaminated by the elitist behaviour and behaves the subalterns as if he is one member of elite class.

We can easily guess the suffering and hard times of Hari, as a member of a marginalized group. He becomes a wanderer, wandering for a job to sustain his life as well as for his bright future. Hari's physical and mental tiredness is boundless "He

had never been so hungry in his life and so tired” (143). As a representative of subaltern class, Hari lacks the economic power. He does not have any job. It becomes very hard to sustain his livelihood. In such a materialist and modern world, no thing can be done without money. Money deserves much more value than the humane sentiments. Hari frankly states that he has no money to pay for his food to Jagu. But he can and willing to do work. It means he wants to exchange his labour with the food. Jagu is also from the same class, so he easily understands Hari’s sentiments. He keeps Hari to work in hotel despite having other boys. Jagu becomes ready to pay when Hari puts his reality in front of him like this:

I have no money to pay for all this food you are giving me. Will you let me to work in your kitchen instead? The man considered for only a moment, frowning as he thought then he said, ‘yes, I can do with another boy in the kitchen. Start by washing these pots. Then you can knead the dough and help roll out the chapattis. If you like, you can stay here and work for your meals and – uh- one rupee a day, like the other boys. (147)

Really, the condition of Hari is very sympathetic. He explores his helplessness without hiding anything before the man. He is badly struck by poverty due to which he is not able to pay for his food. That’s why, even the job Hari gets there is not too much payable, he becomes very happy. He is bound not to bargain since there are a few choices before him. The subaltern are knowingly or unknowingly marginalized everywhere. So they are compelled to derive pleasure and happiness out of just simple survival. They cannot dream beyond the boundary of their survival. To join their hands, to mouth, becomes the main and common problem of these groups.

But Hari believes in his own labour. He does have strong determination that he can change his fortune through his own efforts. He wants to create his identity. For this, he does not lose any trace. He makes constant efforts to improve his family condition. He keeps in his mind that nothing remains constant-everything changes – his condition. He devotes himself in his work keeping in his mind that “everything changes” (210). With great hope and energy, he tries his best to overcome every sort of difficulties like: "The eating house never quite shut and customers had to be served with tea and bread or bread and lentils whenever they demanded it, day or night” (165). These lines suggest his suffering and pain also:

Even when the rain slowed from a downpour to a drizzle and the floods receded, nothing dried out, everything remained damp and muddy, and smelt [. . .] his shirt was soaked again and he spent the rest of the day with the wet cloth clinging to his body. He began to cough so badly that his chest hurt. (185)

Food, cloth and shelter are the basic needs of human beings. These things are the foundation of life, without which we cannot survive. But the shelter of the subaltern people reflected by these lines is damp and muddy. Not only are the homes of these people damp but also their clothes. They should spend the whole day with wet clothes, in the lack of substitution. In such a condition too, he never becomes hopeless and diverted from his determination. Instead, the more he suffers the hardships, the bolder he becomes. He learns to fight his way out for his survival at every turn and becomes a man.

Another tormenting situation of Hari's family can be counted through the illness of his mother, who is suffering from anemia. It is caused due to scarcity of good food. It is a disease mostly found in the families like Hari, because balanced diet

is out of their reach. Ultimately, their health condition becomes as weak as their economic condition. The following lines expose the bitter reality that the subalterns fall sick due to not having enough good food, “She is suffering from anemia. A very bad case of it the doctor says. It is lucky we brought her here in time. They have done many tests - X-rays and blood test and so on-and they found that she has touch of TB too” (162-63).

Desai truly presents the life style of those subaltern groups through the medium of Sri Krishna Eating House of Gowalia Tank, Bombay. Jagu, The owner of it is a representative of the very group, who has got a house in the slum that is to say *Zopadpatti*. Jagu's condition seems to be similar like Hari. A scenario of Jagu's house can be visualized like this:

Jagu was the proprietor of a 'restaurant', the owner of an eating-house on a busy street and had plenty of customers yet his house in a slum one of those colonies of shacks made out of rags and flattened tin- cans that are called *Zopadpattis* in Bombay. There are not enough houses and flats in the city for the millions of people who come to work in it and earn a living in it. (186)

Jagu, the owner of the restaurant, is another member of the subaltern class. His house made up of rags and flattened tin-cans reflect the realities that how much these people are suffering, being the victims of a materialist and selfish society. The eating-house is the meanest and shabbiest restaurant. The usual customers are beggars and coolies but Hari cannot discontinue the work. Because he doesn't have the next, in place of such work .So he continues the work honestly.

He is a developing character that is on the process of becoming. With full energy, he seeks change and promotion. As a member of the poor class, Hari is bound

to work a lot. Hari learns to mend watch in his free time. In this way he keeps himself busy all the time. Another member of the same class, Mr. Panwallah, also keeps on giving Hari courage and moral support: "Once you start mending watches on your own, you can collect the payment, it will be yours [. . .]. Then you can go back and set up as the village watch mender" (205). Hari takes the support from his well-wishers and changes it into courage and determination. He confines himself to the work day and night to meet his dreams. He does not want to miss his motto. So, he promises to Mr. Panwallah and says, "I want to learn more" (210). Learning makes him hopeful towards bright future. If he works, he will earn to make the life easy and happy. All the hardships and experiences make Hari capable of differentiating right and wrong. He becomes bolder and more courageous as the time passes. He remains strong on his decisions. The physical as well as mental development can be seen in Hari. Now onwards, he does not want to live the life of a servant. From the beginning of the novel, he tries to prove himself as an independent person. He wants to stand on his own foot. He looks forward to spending the life with prestige and human dignity as does the elite group. It will be clearer from these lines:

He felt he could not bear the shame and humiliation of finding his way into it and asking for work. He was no longer the frightened, confused boy who crawled into any hole where he could find shelter and protection. He knows he could make choices and decisions now. He did not really wish to live in a rich man's house as a servant. (212)

Here, we can see the change in the thinking of the main character, Hari. At the beginning, he was fragile and weak that he was unable to make a decision. But his struggle for existence has made him bolder than before. He is now mentally grown up and strong enough of making decision and choices on his own. So he feels

independent and starts something on his own. Hari is not willing to stay in the city since he is sure that he will be enslaved in the city because city for him, is a place for the elites only where the subaltern are exploited. He wants to be free from the exploitation, suppression and marginalization of the elite class. And he can search (find) much more possibilities in his village in future. Now he has courage as well as knowledge to do the work. After having both courage and knowledge, it will not be tough to survive. It is also supported by the words of Panwallah:

‘So, you’ve become a real city boy at last, have you?’

You’ve learnt to push and fight your way with the city boys, have you?’

Hari, Hari-I never thought I would see you do such a thing [. . .].

Yes, you can manage now,’ he said, in a pleasant way.

‘You will manage all right-I can see I don’t have to worry about you any more.’ (217-18)

Hence, his effort to release himself from the boundary made by the elites of the society, where money matters, not humanity, displays his courage, psychological development and the symptom of his bright future. Hari buys some presents for his family. It shows that Hari has improved his economic condition. Hari becomes so much happy that he does have some money, which is collected by his own labour. He buys presents to his family, throws the light of success and victory of Hari. These lines are the proof of his success:

Then Hari brought out presents for them-the presents Mr. Panwallah had helped him purchase in Bombay with his watch repair money-bangles for the younger girls, metal ones with a gold and silver wash that made them shine, and a sari for Lila: not one of those thick homespun ones one could buy in the village, but a mill- made one of

filmy silky cloth, striped pink and white like some freshly bloomed morning flower [. . .] so expensive or so fashionable had come into their house before. (225-26)

Hari makes himself engaged, with out saying day or night to cross the boundary made by the society and also to meet the necessities of his life, as a result, not only presents but also some money, he has brought back to his family. In this way, he proves that subaltern can change their condition without depending on the elites.

People who are economically poor cannot get rich over night. But it is not impossible. One should have hope, patience and courage to improve or change his fate and status. There is an unbridgeable gap in the way of living, earning, thinking and so on between the so-called elite and the subaltern. In every sector, the subaltern is knowingly or unknowingly marginalized. They are victimized in every social sector. To get the same thing, the marginalized group has to do more struggles. For example, Hari's earning is not as much as his labour. The fact is expressed in this extract, "rich for a few days" (232). Another important thing of Hari is that, his suffering, experience and his hard labour has made him a man who can tolerate any kind of pain. He is hopeful that his future will be better. He believes in his labour and states:

Then there will be plenty of people with watches around here- and I'll be the only man in Thul who knows how to oil and repair them so that they won't have to go all the way to Bombay to get it done. Things will change here, Lila. We could begin by selling eggs in the village. We can make a living with a poultry farm. By the time the factory comes up and all those workers come to live here, we shall have chicken to sell, too. (227)

Hari is hopeful that he will find jobs in his own village. And his life would be easier in future. Moreover, he has some money to invest in order to make a good earning which helps him to cope up with and struggle for the meaningful existence.

In this novel, Desai has reflected the corrupt nature and the behavior of the politicians clearly that they do support the status quo of the society. They seem to exploit the subaltern groups due to the fact that politicians constitute the policies, which strengthen the position of the elites and endangering the life of the subalterns who indeed want to live on their own. It is evident in the text that the agrarian life of people of Thul exposes the bitter reality. When the politicians tend to make huge amount of money just turning the fertile land of the poor, which is the only source of their livelihood, into industrial area, the villagers try to protest it. The act of the politicians shows the oppression done on the villagers who are unskilled and uneducated and have been living simple life just by fishing and cultivating their land. They do not have seen and expected the world beyond it. They are enjoying, what they are. The villagers are uneducated because of their poverty; as a result they do have no knowledge. So they express their worry about the change going to happen in their village. They do not support the advancement of technology as we see when they oppose the factories that are about to be built on their soil. The following extract can work as evidence:

The politicians won- so they can make plenty of money from the sale of land and licenses in the name of progress. Thul is lost, he sighed, straightening the spectacles on his nose. Every thing is doomed. The fish in the sea will die from the effluents that will be pumped in to the water. The paddy fields will be built over by factories and houses and streets. (254-255)

Innocent and ignorant villagers become unhappy and expose themselves against industrialization. They love their soil, fish and water than the development. Because they know that the development will not be in the favour of the poor villagers. Although they are illiterate, they know the corrupt nature of the politicians who use the villagers as a ladder and reach the apex of success marginalizing the devotion of these people. But in the case of Hari; he has learned and understood that the agrarian life does not sustain him any more. All his efforts and energy spent in it has become water in the sand. He can see no traces of improved condition. So he is convinced to change the agrarian life into the urban one. He makes his mind to change his family's living standard by engaging him in the poultry farm, which could help him to be a successful man. He is successful too in his determination. He is now no more a confused person. He is so confident that he can fight all sorts of hazards, which may come in his path of success. His high enthusiasm and positive thinking energizes him to move ahead in his profession and the entire future plan. The ultimate gain of Hari is highly notable. His constant labor to achieve his goal of life is acceptable and assimilative as it enlightens the life of all family members, which inspires them to do better in future.

Thus, Hari has proved that the subalterns are not the subalterns all the time. They too have the energy and capacity to change their position by their own efforts. They can do each and every thing for themselves. There is no need to be represented by the so-called elites. But it is necessary to bring change in the thinking of the people who are rooted in the traditional thinking and behavior. The subalterns can keep their voice against all sorts of marginalization, which they happen to face. They can have their own authority. Time has changed a lot. There is no need to divide people in the name of class, caste, gender etc. The hierarchy or boundary, which was constructed earlier, has become useless. It works no more in the favour of any one.

IV. Conclusion

Anita Desai in her novel *The Village by the Sea* presents the voice of subaltern by fulfilling the dreams of the main character Hari (and Lila) to have a happy and prosperous family life. For that, the struggle and hard labour of Hari and Lila can be taken as a living proof of the subalterns that they are capable of fulfilling their needs to live with dignity. In this sense, the novel stands against the concept that the subaltern can not speak and they should be represented by others.

The novel focuses on the tormenting and pathetic economic condition of Hari's family and the continuous efforts of Hari and Lila to make the poor condition much better. Hari and Lila stand for those children of the marginalized class, whose education has stopped due to the very lack of money. Though the elite class, including government, makes the slogan 'Education to All', it has not been implemented effectively. Desai unfolds the story of Thul through the story of the poor village boy Hari, aged twelve and his sister Lila, aged thirteen. Hari and Lila put on Herculean efforts to save their family from the brink of ruin as their father is a drunkard and mother is ill. Their father once owned land, boat and animals but they had to be sold to pay off debts. There is unbridgeable gap between the subaltern and the elites. The subalterns are becoming poorer, on the contrary, the elites are becoming richer day by day. His nagging family worries and ever mounting debts have probably made him take to toddy. Hari works in the field, goes to the sea and fishes with his net, and cuts down bunches of coconuts from their grove. Hari's elder sister, Lila is equally hard working like Hari. She does a man's job both literally and metaphorically by attending to her households' chores, looking after her school – going sisters Bela and Kamal, and ministering to her ailing mother besides managing the drunken father. The

children of the subaltern are compelled to work, though they too deserve the 'Child Right'.

The young mind of Hari is every time haunted by the problem of survival and sisters' marriage and dowry. Dowry system has become really a burden to the subaltern classes, whereas, it has become a measuring rod in the elite society, to show the economic strength of a person. Hari wants to get a regular job to solve these problems. And the next important thing is that, the villagers of Thul have no hospitals, no doctors, no medicines and no money to cure the sick. Directly or indirectly, the subalterns are made backward. When we talk about Hari and his family (villagers as a whole), do not have proper food and the ultimate result is –illness. And unfortunately, they do not have money as well as hospital to cure the disease. To get rid of such fundamental needs, Hari leaves to Bombay. In Bombay, he finds people engaged in criminal activities due to extreme poverty that demoralizes them and make them resort to crimes. But the case of Hari is completely different. He tries his best to improve or to change his family's economic condition by involving in the work without saying day and night. Food, clothing and shelter are the unalienable rights of a human being. But the subalterns are not granted. They are eating food, which cannot provide nutrition, the clothes they are wearing cannot protect them from heat in summer and cold in winter and the shelter where they are sheltering cannot save them from the weather and danger. Despite this fact, Hari works in Sri Krishna Eating House and gets a meager salary, which becomes a great support to him to bring his dreams come true.

From the beginning part of the novel, Hari tries to prove himself as an independent person, who wants to live on his own. He wants to stand on his own foot, though the subaltern groups are knowingly or unknowingly marginalized in every

sector of the society. And at the end of the novel, Desai ultimately makes Hari prove that the subaltern is not the subaltern inborn, the very term 'subaltern' is a social construction. It is a traditional concept and becoming useless because, they too, do have the energy and capacity to change their fate, their condition and position by their own efforts. They can raise their voice against all sorts of marginalization. In short, they cannot be ignored any more.

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