

**TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY**

**Representation of the Subaltern in Aahuti's *Dalan***

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### **Abstract**

The issue of representation of the subaltern is one of the vibrant discourses in the academia in general and in the South Asian context in particular. During the colonial period, the subaltern groups of people were oppressed in such a way that these marginalized groups of people are out of the history as voiceless and historyless groups of people. The colonial and nationalist bourgeois historiographies never gave any space to them to speak and exist as an autonomous agent of the history. But with the call of the new times, the voices of the voiceless groups of people have been documented in the literary cultures. The influence of the subaltern studies have been felt in the Nepali literary culture as well including the visual culture, though Nepal was never colonized but it was never been free from the semi-colonial and semi-feudal hegemony. Aahuti's *Dalan* is one of the examples of documenting the history and stories of the historyless and voiceless groups of people of Nepal, the Dalits in particular. This tele-serial is one of the best example of the visual culture that has documented a realistic picture of the long been suppressed groups of people of Nepali historiography.

## Contents

Acknowledgements

Abstract

<b>I. Introduction</b>	<b>1-7</b>
<b>II. Subaltern Concern and Representation</b>	<b>8-36</b>
<b>III. Representation of the Subaltern in Aahuti's <i>Dalan</i></b>	<b>37-63</b>
<b>IV. Conclusion</b>	<b>64-65</b>
<b>Work Cited</b>	<b>66-68</b>

## I. Introduction

The terminology 'subaltern' has been derived from two Latin terms 'sub' and 'alter' which respectively means 'under' and 'other'. The term today refers to those who are deprived of the opportunities and access in each and every aspects of the society.

The subaltern writers intend to identify subalternity as an autonomous domain. They want to write their own historiography that can confirm their representation. The elite historiography is regarded as official history by sidelining the repressed's or peoples history. The elite only valorized their own cultures, codes, religion and castes at the expense of culture, religion, values and castes of the marginalized. In this regard, the issues of the marginalized have always been neglected; they are not incorporated in any crucial activities. Hence the voices of the peoples remain silenced and unheard. Those voices were not included in the mainstream historiography.

Moreover, the word 'subalternity' in Nepali and Indian context is somewhat different and it also denots Dalit as well. Here in Nepal, the word Dalit refers to those people who are inferior in terms of caste and who do not have fully right to do something of their own desire. From ancient period to the present, Dalits remained as a puppet directing by upper-castes people or upper class people. When a baby born in such a family, s/he is totally free to do anything, even in early age s/he never thinks what is wrong or right but as the child grows older the realization of being untouchable hindered inside and his/her life always been deprived from various rights.

On the basis of Hindu philosophy, Sudras are treated as lower caste. The word Dalit itself comes from the Sanskrit root 'dal' which means to shatter, to break into pieces and to step on. The term is a product of 19<sup>th</sup> century Indian reform movement.

According to Y. B Kisan, “the literal meaning of the word Dalit is shattered; overburdened, suppressed, squeezed, stepped upon, kneaded, ground down, shamed by being required to bow to someone else’s feet, or silenced through suppression (06). In the past, the word ‘Dalit’ was used to refer to all of those groups who were oppressed, but in the contemporary Nepali parlance, it is used to refer only to those officially categorized within the untouchable castes.

The term Dalit for the first time was used in India in 1960s in relation with Dr. Ambedkar’s thought and with reference to Symon commission’s report (1927) meaning as the group of further stratified sudras were considered as untouchable (NHRC, 05). The term “Dalit” is a joint designation referring to a number of different caste groups. According to the social scientist, Bidhyanath Koirala, “Dalit refers to a group of people who are religiously, culturally, socially, politically and economically oppressed.”(5) Dalit is not a caste group per se but a politically coined word used to refer to socially backward community in Nepal.

In the modern time if we watch the concept of Dalit, it has changed to some extent but still such issues are prevailing in the context of Nepal in the present time. Still many people are tortured in the name of Dalit. Still such conservative thinking is prevalent in the society. Today by the help of development and education people have changed their concept towards Dalits.

Many thinkers advocated for the voiceless groups of people from the ancient era to the present time. We can see the references of such figures more dominantly from Marx to the postmodern thinkers. In later days, these thinkers are more vocal for the subaltern, even in third world developing countries. In Nepalese context too, we can find such thinkers and energy for advocating for the justice of the subalterns. One



of the Nepali thinker is Aahuti, and his *Dalan* represents the voiceless Nepalese subaltern voices at the core of his discourse or text.

The series *Dalan* depicts the societal dominance faced by the untouchables and lower castes during authoritarian government of yest year Nepal. The film follows three generations of Dalit family through the revolutionary years of 1951 to 1994. *Dalan* is the production of Jagaran media center, written by Aahuti and directed by Nabin Subba.

Aahuti, a well known name in the literary field of Nepal, is the writer of successful novels. He is also active in politics and has deep knowledge and understanding.

Aahuti was born at Naikap Village Development commette (VDC) word no 9, Jholetole in Kathmandu District on 1<sup>st</sup> Chaitra 2023. His real name by birth is Bishwovakta Dulal but later he became famous by the name of Aahuti in the field of literarture, which is his literary nickname.

The childhood of Aahuti was very much miserable because of his father's untimely death caused by tuberculosis, before the arrival of Aahuti in this world. Though deprived from the father's love, he was loved very much by his mother, brothers, and sisters. The extreme poverty in his family lead him to the agonic life from his early childhood. Going to the roads for selling shoes, returning home late night and weaving clothes was his daily routine. He did lots of struggle and left no stone unturned for his survival but his childhood freedom could not survive anymore.

He completed his school level education from his birthplace. Though he was talent and got first position, he was discouraged as being born in lower caste. He wanted to study science but joined civil engineering with the hope of getting job sooner. After finishing his school level study, he was attracted towards politics and

meet different political leaders as well. Later he left his study and enrolled himself in politics.

Aahuti's past was really miserable, full of agony, exploited and downtrodden. Poverty, lack, crisis and sufferings were the part of his life. Though the situation was miserable and unbearable, he did not move back from such plight but he seems moving ahead by challenging such hindrances.

Aahuti's main interest is to uplift the lower class people and society. He is very much revolutionary, dutiful and man of clear vision. He was awarded by "Krisnamami Srijanshil Sahitya Puraskar" for the collection of poems "Tapaswika Geetharu" in 2050. The main sources of his creative works are the then caste-based society, racial discrimination, lack, pain and suffering caused by the extreme poverty and problems which help him to advocate from the side of marginal groups who are lower in caste, exploited and suffered.

He is really a dynamic figure having knowledge in the different genres of literature; such as poem, novel and drama. He has published many literary works and appreciated in this field as a perfect writer. Not only he writes but also he has good skill in directing and acting as well.

Regarding the serial Bishwamani Subedi views that: "In the history of Nepali serial *Dalan* is probably the first Nepali serial which success to go against social discrimination, and saves social awareness about Dalit and also success to collect many views."(6)

*Dalan* as a tele-serial gets popularity not only in Nepal but also in other countries as well. Even in the dense conservative thinking of un-touchable issue prevalent in the Nepal from ancient times, these serial beings a notion of change among the people of Nepal against discrimination. By the help of this tele-serial there

occurs drastic change in treating Dalits or lower caste people. In the history of Nepali Media, *Dalan* is ranked as 1<sup>st</sup> serial which is specially made for minorities and it is believed that *Dalan*, a tele-serial success to bring awareness among the people. The main concept of *Dalan* is to give knowledge about changes of 21<sup>st</sup> century and it emerges as a basic concept of humanist era, where there will be no any hierarchy among the people and discrimination will be vanished where only peace and harmony will ruled.

Viewing on Aahuti's *Dalan* critic as well as Lyricist Sarubhakta says "*Dalan* brings awareness in social change"(5). Bhaktta's remark is exclusively focusing on the societal change that emerges after the movie broadcasted from the television. *Dalan* speaks not only for the right of lower class but also make everyone to think about new values and tries to raise a question about bad aspect of old values. It conveys the idea of newness and speaks that in this era. Indeed it's human right to survive, without any discrimination. *Dalan* presents every struggle of Dalits, their suffering and limited rights, in this era *Dalan* succeed to bring awareness in the societal change.

The senior Maoist leader Dr. Baburam Bhattarai gives his views regarding the serial in this way, "Untouchability is one of the greatest stigma of human society. untouchability ended along with Monarchy in Nepal. Dalits must be given values from every section; such as economical, political and cultural." (My translation, 8)

Here Baburam Bhattarai's views refers that untouchability remains as a stigma in the society. He further added that along with Monarchy, the concept of untouchability ended from Nepali society and Dalits most have given all the opportunity from political, economical as well as cultural sector. They most be treated as other people who are upper caste or of higher class. There should not remain any

discrimination in the name of Dalit because first and foremost Dalits are also human and none can deprive their right of survival freely in the society.

The script-writer Aahuti's view is that "*Dalan* is specially made for to give social justice to people, which goes against traditional values of untouchability."

Aahuti seems more conscious regarding the Dalit issues. In this era of 21<sup>st</sup> century, we heard many castes even about untouchability in Nepal. Traditionally the social norms and values of people were framed as upper and lower class order. There is still hierarchy between people of different class and its impact is still remained in this period too. Against all these norms, a tele-serial *Dalan* immerses in the favor of humanity and also against traditional norms and values. *Dalan* speaks in favor of oppressed group who were tortured by the so called upper class from ancient period. For the sake of lower class people, to give them social justice and provide them rank in the society. The serial arrives as a new concept of change against the notion of untouchability.

Aahuti further mentions that "In *Dalan* there is the presentation of discriminative social values as well as its justification. This is a lively presentation of social life's ups and downs, struggle of Dalits and also solution as a social change.

Aahuti has done one of the great job in presentation of this tele-serial. Den owned in Nepal who represents the every aspects of life of Dalits, their condition, how they are repressed by upper castes people. The main issue he raises here in this tele-serial is to give social justice to the minor people who belong to Dalits community. This movie highlights the miserable condition of subaltern Dalit of the rigid Nepalese socio-cultural background and also explains the way in which Subalternity is enforced through social ridicule. The problem is how the orthodox societal norms restrict and limit the life of the subaltern classes. Here in this research,

my main concern is how *Dalan* represents the voices of the subaltern more autonomously and how it gives the mirror like reflection of social and cultural issues prevailing over the caste based semi-feudal and semi-imperial Nepalese society especially from 1951 to 1996. To prove all this I want to put forward the idea of subaltern theory and by the help of this theoretical tool, I want to prove my hypothesis.

The main concern of this thesis is to highlight the major problems that occur in Dalit's life. Through visual art *Dalan* succeeded to represent the fact about the subaltern groups. The main concern of this thesis is to represent Dalit's miserable life, how they are suppressed by the upper caste people and how the societal norms deprived them from their rights etc. To prove all these, I develop this thesis in four chapters:

The first chapter, introduction has presented the main theme of the tele-serial *Dalan* and also about the Director Aahuti. Here I have put forward the reviews of different viewers what they especially talk about the subaltern groups. Next in the second chapter, I am discussing about the subaltern theory or what the subalternity by presenting references from different critic's book especially in course of presenting their view on subaltern group, their concern regarding the subaltern life, their problem, pain, sufferings, agony etc. In the third chapter, there is the brief synopsis of the tele-serial *Dalan* and also it's scene analysis where we can see that how Dalits life is suppressed by the upper caste people, the hegemony of the so-called power holding group as well as pain and sufferings of the Dalits. It also analyzes *Dalan* and its impact critically. The fourth chapter concludes the whole thesis thereby proving the hypothesis being based on the spirit of the title and statement of problem.



## **II. Subaltern Concern and Representation**

### **A Brief History of Subalternity**

‘Subaltern’ commonly refers to persons who are socially, politically and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure. The term is etymologically derived from the two Latin terms ‘sub’ and ‘alter’ which respectively mean ‘under’ or ‘other’. It refers to those marginalized groups of the society rendered without agency by his or her social status.

The subaltern, a discourse has been used to categorize the colonial subject by the European subordinate identity of the subaltern that has been constructed by the European discourse and internalized by colonial peoples.

Subaltern consciousness emerged in opposition of representation of the marginalized in the nationalist historiography which only valorize the ‘elite leaders’ or upper class people by sidelining the repressed or marginalized. As the nationalist history is regarded as official history which only valorize the elite leaders or upper class people by sidelining the repressed’s history. The way of nationalist historiography failed to include all aspects of the society. It only focused on the elite culture, values, religion, beliefs, norms and casts at the expense of culture, religion, beliefs and caste of the marginalized. Moreover the issues of marginalized have always been neglected, excluded and wipe out from the so-called official history. The voices of the subaltern remained unheard in any crucial national policies and programmes. The voices are denied by the elite history. In this connection, Ranjeet Guha, the leader of subaltern studies project remarks “The history of Indian nationalism is written up as a sort of spiritual biography of the Indian elite.”(28)

The nationalist historiography fails to acknowledge the contribution made by the people to the making and development of nationalism. In this particular respect

the poverty of this historiography is demonstrate beyond doubt by its failure to understand and assess the mass articulation of this nationalism. The tendency of judging everything in a partial way is highly criticized by the subaltern writers. They realized that the nationalist historiography only celebrated the elite culture whereas the subaltern paid little attention. For them the history of such domination should be questioned. They focused more on the dominated groups or the marginalized people. The aim of the subaltern studies project was to revise such one-sided and blinkered historiography and recuperate the voices of the subaltern in history. As the history of subaltern is broken into pieces with the practice of domination and discrimination by the power holding groups of the society, there is no history of subaltern at all. In this regard the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci states, “the history of the subaltern is necessarily fragmented and episodic...” (357-358).

Though the term subaltern officially gets institutionalized in 1982, it has a long past and we can trace the origin of the term back to the medieval age. At that time, the term was applied to vassals and peasants. By 1700, it denoted lower ranks in military suggesting peasant origins. By 1800, the historians and writers began to write novels and histories about military campaigns in India and America from the subaltern perspective and G.R Gleig (1796-1888), who wrote biographies of Robert Clive, Warren Hastings and Thomas Munro mastered this genre. The Great War provoked popular accounts of subaltern life; it was first used in a non-military sense by Marxist writer Antonio Gramsci. He used the term as a synonym for the proletariat, who were being victimized by the hegemony of the ruling classes. subaltern classes may include workers, peasants or any other marginalized groups of the society denied access to the hegemonic power. Gramsci for being a Marxist writer was very much concerned with the proletarians whose voice remained unheard in the



history. He shows his keen interest to the subaltern classes and started to write about them. Gramsci however got into attention only after his death when Raymond Williams promoted his works to the English reading world in 1977. His theories had a tremendous impact on the thinking of the members of subaltern studies project.

In the 1970s the term began to use as a reference to colonized people in south Asian subcontinent. It provided a new perspective on the history of a colonized place from the perspective of colonized rather than from the perspective of the hegemonic power. Marxist historians had already begun to view colonial history from the perspective of the proletariat but this was unsatisfying as it was still a Eurocentric way of viewing the globe. "Subaltern studies" began in the early 1980s as an intervention in South Asian historiography. While it began as a model for the subcontinent, it quickly developed into a vigorous post colonial critique.

Ranjeet Guha adopted and extended the concept of the subaltern from Antonio Gramsci in discussing the historiography of colonial India in 1982. With the wake of Guha the concept of subaltern received an inspiring impetus in the arena of writing historiography and literature of the marginalized people. The group of Indian historian led by Guha began this project due to the dissatisfaction with the way of nationalist historiography and its one-sided judgment in writing history. Having highlighted the problem of historiography in India that the history writing of Indian nationalism has long being controlled by the dominant groups, the subaltern studies writer tried their best to establish 'subalternity' as an autonomous body with their own voice. The group was emerged as an "assortment of marginalized academics, free from any fidelity to any school or party. Regarding the subaltern studies project Guha remarks:

An alternative discourse based on the rejection of the spurious and unhistorical monism characteristics of its view of Indian nationalism

and on the recognition of the co-existence and the interaction of the elite and subaltern domains of politics.” (On Some Aspects 6)

From 1982 onwards, the concept or the scope of subalternity has widened in such a way that it becomes a transdisciplinary approach that began to include all of those groups who are deprived of basic rights because of their class, caste, age, gender or in any other way. Subaltern became a regularly used term in history, literature, sociology, anthropology and human geography. With the development of this new context subaltern studies became an original site for a new kind of history from below, a peoples history free of national constraints, a post nationalist re-imagining of the society on the underside, at the margins outside nationalism. It rejected official nationalism and developed transitionally as did its leadership and its critical appreciation. It is first international collaboration to make a sustained impact on south Asian studies and its ideas are intricately tangled in recent world trends. In 1982, Ranjeet Guha's ascertain that the Indian nation had failed “to come into its own” evoked failed revolution but by 1990, it had new connotations. The fragmentation of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the Balkans was widely said to the failure of Marxism, communism and socialism. Nehru's regime was said to have failed the Indian nation. The failure of the mode state pervaded academic writing. New approaches to nationality came forwarded.

Subaltern groups are creating social movements which contest and dissemble western claims to power. These groups use local knowledge and struggle to create new spaces of opposition and alternative futures. Subaltern project is moving ahead by assimilating ideas from diverse disciplines. Now, it has becoming the remarkable way of writing historiography of the marginalized people. It brought about a paradigmatic shift in the existing way of perceiving life and subalterns is taken as

agents of social and political change. Like other poststructuralist and postcolonial theories, it is very crucial to those intellectuals who oppose the totalitarian concepts and meta-narratives like modernity, enlightenment as such. Subaltern studies becoming a counter hegemonic practices and struggle against neoliberal globalization, particularly the struggle against social exclusion. Victoria Lawsan in the essay “Making Development Geography” announces that:

While the subaltern by definition is groups who have had their voices silenced, they can speak through their actions as a way to protest against mainstream development and create their own visions for social movements which contest and disassemble western claims to power. These groups use local knowledge and struggle to create new spaces of opposition and alternative futures. (258)

Reading subaltern studies began in India whereas writing about subaltern studies began in book reviews. At first each volume in the series is revived separately at collection of essays, but by 1986, an accumulation of writing inside and outside the project had established a distinctive school of research whose adherents came to be called “subalternists” or simply “subalterns”. Their seminal essays appeared in paperback in 1988, when *Selected Subaltern Studies* was published by Oxford University Press in New York and Oxford, edited by Ranjeet Guha and Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak, with a foreword by Edward Said. By 1990, Burton Stein could site the growing interest in subaltern studies as one sign that the 1980s were “a decade of historical efflorescence” in South Asian studies. In the 1990s subaltern studies became a hot topic in academic circles on several continents; a weapon, magnet, target, lightning rod, gold mine and fortress for scholars ranging across discipline

from history to political science, anthropology, literary criticism human geography and cultural studies.

### **Subalternity**

The term 'subaltern' literally meaning of "inferior rank" in the OED, has been used by the subaltern studies writer to designate the people who are not the "elite"-the dominant groups. The term was derived from the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) in his celebrated collection *Selection from the Personal Notebooks* .when he discussed the rural peasants in southern Italy, Gramsci categorized them into the non hegemonic classes. Having emphasized the formation of the subaltern groups, their relation to the dominant groups and their autonomy in political sphere, Gramsci listed six necessary points to study about the subaltern. Moreover, he thinks that history of subaltern classes was as complex as the history of the dominant classes. They have less access to social and cultural institutions even when they raise their voices against the elite groups. For Gramsci the only way to get rid of subordination is the permanent victory which, however, can only be achieved after revolution. Gramsci thinks that in course of bringing revolution and to recuperate the subaltern's cultural and political movement into hegemony the role of the intellectual must be essential. As the subaltern people do not have the means as well as strategy to get access to hegemony, they need the especial kind of support to show them the path ahead. Only then the subaltern classes can be turned into revolutionary character and can be strive to achieve independence.

In its literal sense Subaltern mentality refers to the attitude and feeling of thinking somebody else a submissive, dependent, uneducated, and inferior other etc who is always subjected to be subjugated. In fact, this type of mentality exists not only in the Europeans and the elites but also in the subaltern themselves. The rulers

always have the mentality to rule over and have the opinion that only they deserve knowledge and power concerning whatever they doing. They even don't move back to show the lack of knowledge in the subaltern and always think themselves superiors in every domains. So they always desire to rule over the subaltern. On the contrary the subaltern group think themselves submissive and inferior in terms of politics, economics, culture, administration and so on. In this regard Gautam Bhadra states over the subaltern mentality in this way: "it is well known that defiance is not the only characteristic of the behavior of the subaltern classes. Submissiveness to authority in the context is as frequent as defiance in another. It is two elements that together constitute the subaltern mentality" (54). Bhadra's remarks exclusively focusing that the subaltern mentality not only refers to that the mentality of the submissiveness. The poor and the oppressed have time and again made voluntary sacrifices in favor of the rich and the dominant. They compelled to be subjected in varying degrees in every sphere of the society.

In the hierarchical community there is domination under the dominated themselves. This is a never ending process which is marked by struggle and resistance which ultimately creates the tension. In this hierarchical community, the dominant himself or herself will be dominated by another dominant. There can be find the trace of domination within the repressed community itself. In this remarks Bhadra exemplifies in the poem 'Kantanama' that in hierarchical community, "one's superiors also had their superiors, and one could always appeal to or in the name of the higher authority" (88). That's why it can be argued that subaltern mentality is the mentality of hierarchy which exists not only between the two levels-the elite and the subaltern, but also within the level itself. Thus, it is a never ending phenomenon.

Ranjeet Guha includes rural gentry, impoverished landlords, rich peasants and upper middle peasants into the category of subaltern classes. He however, admits that they “could under certain circumstances act for the elite...” (8). He declares that SS will study “the history, politics, economics and sociology of subalternity...in short the culture informing that condition” (vii). Subaltern studies commitment to history and culture is rather conspicuous. The elite historiography is generally regarded as “official history” by sidelining the people’s history. SS has committed itself “to rectify the elitist bias characteristics of much research and academic work in this particular area” (vii). He pointed out the ambiguities between the elite classes and the subalterns. How the subalterns were defined depended on the regional, social and economic conditions. In this connection Guha contrasts “politics of the people” with elite politics and privileges the former over the later. He views that the politics of the people “was an autonomous domain for it neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter” (4). It, despite of colonialism, was proceeding on by adjusting itself to the prevailing condition in different form and content. In this regard, it is as old as colonialism supposed to be. The development of nationalist consciousness in accordance with elitist historiography was an achievement either of colonialist administration, policy and culture or of elite Indian personalities or idea. For Guha, such historiography fails to “acknowledge or interpret the contribution made by people on their own, i.e., independently of the elite” (3). It of course, ignores the people’s politics. In fact, it is to say that the subaltern politics is different from the elite politics. But in terms of contribution the subaltern people have equal contribution as of the elite. Here we can realize the politics of domination over the subalterns by the so called power holding class or elite.

The elite groups use their power through their agencies or they mobilize their politics through the different institutions where as the subaltern classes suffers for having no agency as such and becomes marginalized in courses of mobilizing their politics. They lack of agencies or institution to mobilize their politics. The politics of political mobilization shows the prejudice of bourgeois nationalist as having link with British colonialism. The bourgeoisie nationalist do not see and appreciate the contribution made by the subaltern rather move by adopting the legacies of colonialism. The practice of domination and exploitation started by colonialism and continued by the bourgeoisie nationalist. The elite historiography does not even move back to claims that “Indian nationalism was primarily an idealist venture in which the indigenous elite led the people from subjugation to freedom” (2). It illustrate how the elite historiography ignores the roles of the subaltern classes played independent of elite command or head quarter during the anti-imperialist movements. Likewise the national narrative fails to speak on behalf of the peoples as the postcolonial nationalist project imposes an indigenous form of elitism. Naturally the rational philosophy of Enlightenment is its impetus. In a way this kind of project is undertaken with the western bias. Consequently, the “subaltern issues and themes” as Pratha Chatterjee is quoted by R. Radhakrisnan in his book *Diasporic Medirarions*, “do not figure out in nationalist equation...”(147). Radhakrisnan, referring to Chatterjee, argues that the nationalism is problematic as “it sustains and continues the baleful legacies of Eurocentrism and Orientalism” (194).

Postcolonial theory tries to understand the power and continued dominance of western ways of knowing. Jonne Sharp, following the ideas of Spivak, argues that other forms of knowing are marginalized by western thinkers reforming them as myth of folklore. In order to be heard, the subaltern must adopt western thought, reasoning,

and language. Because of this, Sharp and Spivak argues that “the subaltern can never express their own reasoning, forms of knowledge or logic; they must instead form of their knowledge to western ways of knowledge” (6).

Similarly, bell hooks and Spivak question the academic engagement with the “other”. To truly engage with the subaltern, they argue that “an academic need to decanter themselves as the expert. Traditionally the academic wants to know about the Subaltern’s experience but not their explanations of those experiences. Hooks argues that in western knowledge a true explanation can only come from the expertise of the academic. The subordinated subject gives up their knowledge for the use of the western academic. Hooks describes the relationship between the academic and the subaltern subject. He states that:

No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back in to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still colonizer, the speaking subject and you are now at the center of my talk. (7)

His remarks clearly focus on the representation of the subaltern as a subordinated subject through the voice of dominant. This shows the lack of agencies in the life which the subaltern people live.

Edward Said’s work on *Orientalism* is related to the idea of the subaltern in that it explains the way in which *Orientalism* produced the foundation and the justification for the domination of the “other” through colonialism. European, Said argues, created an imagined geography of the Orient before European exploration



through predefined images of savage and monstrous places that lay outside of the known world. During initial exploration of the Orient these mythologies were reinforced as travelers brought back reports of monsters and strange lands. The idea of difference and strangeness of the Orient continued to be perpetuated through media and discourse creating an “us” and “them” binary through which Europeans defined them by the differences of the orient. This laid the foundation for colonialism by presenting the Orient as backward and irrational and therefore in need of help to become modern in the European sense. He opines that “The discourse of *Orientalism* is Eurocentric and does not seek to include the voices of the Orientals themselves.” (8-9)

In the same way Stuart Hall argues for the power of discourse to create and reinforce western dominance. The discourses on how Europe described differences between itself and others used European cultural categories, languages and ideas to represent the other. He views that “the knowledge produced by a discourse gets put into practice and then becomes reality. By producing a discourse of difference Europe was able to maintain its dominance over the “other” thereby creating a subaltern by excluding the “other” from the production of the discourse”. (10)

Spivak, in her seminal essay “*Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography*”, gives a deconstructive reading to the activities of Subaltern Studies Group up to their third volume. She tries to assess their work in her writing. Like many other critics, Spivak too, finds problem with their partitioned views of consciousness. While assessing their work, she comes to realize that it somehow resembles deconstruction, which puts the binary oppositions like elite/subaltern under erasure. Their project, in her view, is a rather positivist one as it aspires to investigate,

discover and establish a subaltern or peasant consciousness. It somehow assumes that this empirical project will lead to a firm ground or truth that can be disclosed.

The subaltern historiography approach spearheaded by Guha, challenges and rewrites imperialist and nationalist constructions of the colonial periods in Indian history. In addition, 'subaltern studies' have become the subject of Global concern. Dipesh Chakrabarty, one of the members of 'subaltern studies project' says, "It has gone beyond India or South Asia as an area of academic specialization" (9). The reason behind its global presence is that, "subaltern studies has participated in contemporary critiques of history and nationalism, and of *Orientalism* and eurocentrism in course of construction of social science knowledge" (9).

In the similar fashion, subaltern analysis, as Gyan Prakash remarks, "has become a recognizable mode of critical scholarship in history, literature and anthropology" (1476). John Beasley Murray and Alberto Moreiras in their essay "Subalternity and Affect" add that, "subalternity is a situation of relative inferiority within social order, structured according to the principle of hegemony, which defines and calibrates that relation of inferiority" (1). From this remark too we can realize that subaltern studies deals with inferiority and domination structure of the very global society. It raises the voice of marginalized of their own.

Gyatri Chakravorty Spivak, one of the postcolonial theorists emerged with a fully feminist agenda in this concern. She argues that, as far as the women of the colonized space are concerned, they are doubly subalternized. Spivak's mention is that, on the one hand, the women like their male counterparts, are suppressed as colonized subject and on the other hand, they are also suppressed by their own male counterparts. They are marginalized in double sense at the level of hierarchy between male and female within their groups. She analyzes the problems of the category of

subaltern by examining the position of gendered subject. In other words, colonialism appears to be more hazardous to females than to the males of the colonized space. In her opinion, the identity of women is erased in the very process of rewriting the subaltern subjectivity. As she argues that:

It is, rather, both as object of colonialist historiography and as the subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keep the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and can not speak, subaltern as female is even deeply in shadow. (82-83)

Spivak raised the issue of female identity within the patriarchal society. The practice of domination is pervasive everywhere in different form. Women are the victim of male domination within the subaltern groups. In her scholarly commentary “A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: Mahasweta Devi’s ‘Standayini,’ Spivak argues how women are denied their subjectivity, their voice. Whether the woman is looked “from above” as merely a sexual object or “from below” as a goddess, she is reduced into the object of the male’s desire. The hegemonic males refused to perceive women that they desire the later to be. The male wants to see the women as a sacrificial being so that he could fulfill his various desires from her. However she is perceived, she reduced down to an object of the male’s desire. The gaze from below is only the male’s strategy to dissimulate the oppression he inflicts on his female counterparts through his gaze from above. In this connection, Spivak remarks “through a programmed confounding of the two kinds of gaze, the goddess can be used to dissimulate women’s opinion” (129). So, by representing women as goddess, the patriarchal society has tried to hide the injustice and oppression it has inflicted upon women. Spivak further says, "As long as there is this hegemonic cultural self-

representation of India as a goddess-mother (dissimulating the possibility that this mother is a slave), she will collapse under the burden of the immense expectations that such a self-representation permits" (96).

Spivak's concern is that, voices of women are always suffocated under the great expectation created by that self-representation. She posits women in the role of the subaltern putting the male constructed voice of women within the patriarchal society. In her vibrant essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak clearly asserts that subaltern can not speak themselves through their own voice.

Spivak, like many other critiques, finds problem with the compartmentalized views of SSG regarding the "consciousness" while accessing their work, she comes to realize that it somehow resemble deconstruction, which puts the binary opposition like elite/subaltern under erasures. This project, in her views, is a rather positivist one as it aspires to investigate, discover and establish a subaltern or peasants consciousness. It somehow assumes that this empirical project will lead to a firm ground or truth that can be disclosed. It conspicuously reflects European Enlightenment project because the latter, too, aspires to recover consciousness. For consciousness is consider to be the very ground that makes the disclosure of truth of firm ground possible. In a way, the collective's approach seems to be plagued with as much idealism as the Enlightenment project is. Spivak, however, thinks that "consciousness, here, is not consciousness-in-general, but a historicized political species, subaltern consciousness" (338). She, therefore, regards their effort to recover peasant consciousness as a strategic use of positivist essentialism is a scrupulously visible political interest. However, this consciousness must be used in narrow sense, as self consciousness, if they really want it to be a fruitful strategy. She, again, reinforces their strategic use of "peasants consciousness" by saying that the collective

should be “concerned not with consciousness-in-general but in this crucial narrow sense” (342).

They strive to establish the subaltern people as the subject of insurgency. That’s why they propose to focus on subaltern consciousness as their central theme. Otherwise, the subaltern people’s experience of insurgency would be turned into a history of events without a subject. Spivak finally suggests SSG to follow “reading against grain” approach because it “would get the group of the dangerous hook of claiming to establish the truth knowledge of the subaltern and his consciousness” (356).

Subaltern consciousness has been always a critical point of subalternity. Jim Masselos, as quoted by Ludden, criticized such kind of essentialist notion about peasant consciousness. He calls “subaltern...a creation, a reification of historians” (23). Likewise he thinks that it is merely a “stereotype of resistant subaltern people” (22). In other words, any theory, which endeavors to establish the autonomy of the subaltern classes, would erase them from the history. Nevertheless the peasants or subaltern groups tend to resist the elite domination. It emerges as an invariant feature about subaltern groups. Obviously, it somehow makes the discussion on the subaltern mentality fruitful. Even when they took part in the anti-imperialist movements like Non-cooperation, disobedience and Quit India under the elite leadership of the political parties, they resisted the bourgeois nationalist as well as indigenous elite leaders by disobeying their orders. They would take orders from them. However, they would take part in the movements in their own traditional ways. They would derive the terms from the idioms of their everyday life so that they could make these struggles as their own. This tendency, too, depicts their assertion of freedom and self-identity. Meanwhile, we should not forget that “defiance” as Gautam Vadra says, “Is

not the only characteristics behavior of the subaltern classes” (63) but also “submissive to authority” is equally important feature of their behaviours. In short, “defiance” and “submissiveness” constitute the subaltern mentality. It is crystal clear that subaltern consciousness is rife with this serious conflict. Like their history, their consciousness, too tends to be fragmented as well as complex one. After all, they are subject to the elite hegemony.

### **Issue of Subaltern (Mis) Representation**

In its general sense the term ‘representation’ refers to an act of presenting or showing somebody or something in a particular way. However, in its broadest sense, it refers to the verbal formation which is created by the persons who hold the power which they circulate in the different strata of the society. In this regards, new historicists assume that these cultural and ideological representation mainly serve to reproduce, conform and propagate the power-structure of domination and subordination in a particular society. The person who is in power defines thing, object or any issue in a particular way to produce the truth about that thing. The truth produced as such is circulated in different forms to the people and the one who knows that truth is said to have possessed the power, so s/he attempts to represent others. The very truth can never become the objective truth because that is created or constructed by the person who uses the power and creates truth on his own favor. The truth produced in such a way is not the reality rather it is subjective truth or construction of the power holding groups who rule over the society. The representation in such circumstances turns out to be misrepresentation. In this regard, the essayist Louis Montrose states. “Representation bears traces of the professor’s values, beliefs and experiences- his or her socially constructed subjectivity-and also that it actively-if not always consciously and rarely consistently-instantiates those values, beliefs and

experiences” (396). So it can be said that representation is nothing but attributing some dispositions which cater the powerful to impose power on his own way. Thus it can not be claim that the act of representation is presenting the reality as it is, but at the same time it can also leaves the trace of misrepresentation as well.

If we talk about the representation of the subaltern, it is explicit that they cannot speak themselves because of their inaccessibility to the national policies and programs. Subaltern groups are subaltern not only because of the exploited position that they occupy as the bearers of political and economic exploitation but also because they lack the language or the discourse to make themselves heard. In this connection Spivak regards that the subaltern groups can not represent themselves and they can not speak within the web of historical and linguistic context within which they find themselves. The subalterns have no language of their own and they also have to suffer from the problem of having no agency of their own.

Spivak, in her influential essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” clearly asserts that subaltern can not speak. The subaltern, a member of the non-ruling class, has to be represented. If knowledge is power, knowledge is privilege, and then subaltern subjects are denied to have access to it. In real sense they do not have the privileged position from where they can express themselves. Moreover, they have to be represented by the elite intellectual. Spivak represents the voice of difference among the major postcolonial theorists. In this concern, she further remarks that:

The small peasants proprietors cannot be represent themselves; they must be represented. Their representative most appear simultaneously as their master, as an authority over them, as unrestricted governmental power that protects them the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above. (71)

The Voices of the subaltern, in such a way get filtered through an intellectual viewpoint and this blurred viewpoint is not the “true” voice of the oppressed groups. Regarding the true subaltern voice, Spivak says that “for the “true” subaltern group, whose identity is its difference; there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself...” (80). She further mentions “how can we touch the consciousness of the people, even as we investigate their politics? With what voice-consciousness can the subaltern speak?” (80). From this remarks we can argued that, the actual subaltern subjects are relegated to the position of subjects rather than participants in a two way dialogue. Spivak provokes academicians to understand how their positions of intellectual and economic privilege limit their integrity while representing the subaltern.

Postcolonial theory tries to understand the power and continued dominance of Western ways of knowing. Joanne Sharp, following Spivak, argues that:

The other forms of knowing are marginalized by Western thinkers reforming them as myth or folklore. In order to be heard the subaltern must adopt Western thought, reasoning and language. Because of this, Sharp and Spivak argue that the subaltern can never express their own reasoning, forms of knowledge or logic; they must instead form their knowledge to Western ways of knowing. (6)

In the Similar fashion, Michel Foucault defines representation in relation to power. For him representation is a matter of power. The people who are in power hold authority enough to manipulate representation the way they like. The powerful people or institution turns their representation into a truth by suppressing the representation of their rivals.



Edward Said's work *Orientalism* is related to the idea of the subaltern in that it explains the way in which *Orientalism* produced the foundation and the justification for the domination of the "other" through colonialism. Europeans, Said argues, created an imagined geography of the Orient before European exploration through predefined images of savage and monstrous places that lay outside of the known world. During initial exploration of the Orient these mythologies were reinforced as travelers brought back reports of monsters and strange lands. The idea of difference and strangeness of the Orient continued to be perpetuated through media and discourse creating an "us" and "them" binary through which Europeans defined themselves by defining the differences of the Orient. This laid the foundation for colonialism by presenting the Orient as backward and irrational and therefore in need of help to become modern in the European sense. The discourse of *Orientalism* is Eurocentric and does not seek to include the voices of the Orientals themselves.

Said's concern is directed towards how the powerful colonizers have misrepresented the colonized people of the third world. It is only because of the power and authority that they could prove their misrepresentation of the third world people into so called truths. Said further argues that:

Can one divide human reality as indeed human reality seems to be genuinely divided into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races and survive the consequences humanely? By surviving the consequences humanely, I mean to ask whether there is any way of avoiding the hostility expressed by the division, say, of men into "Us" (Westerners) and they (Orientalists). (Said-45)

## **Subalternity and Literature**

Subaltern Studies in its initial phase emerged as an instrument to re-write the history or with the agenda regarding the historical aspect. Its main focus while it appeared was to recuperate the voices of the marginalized groups in Indian or South Asian history. Subaltern Studies groups wanted to subvert the one-sided perspective of nationalist historiography. Their attempt was to make an empirical study of the culture of those people who have no access to the hegemonic power. In this regard, Veena Das in her article "Subaltern Perspective" writes "the first emancipatory act that the Subaltern project performs in our understanding of tribes, castes or other such groups is to restore to them their historical being" (314). Subaltern Studies group, thus, aims to revive the history of subaltern people from their own perspective.

In such context, the SSG up to their first three volumes, only focus on history, society, politics and revolution. Their attempt was to establish the peasants as an autonomous domain, in this connection they also talked about peasant or subaltern consciousness. A new trend began to develop in this subject from the fourth volume of Subaltern Studies project. With the awakening of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, it however entered a new realm: literature. Her contribution provides a new path in the course of development of SS as a theory of change in the changed political academic scenario. In her seminal essay "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography" (Subaltern Studies IV, 1986), Spivak gave a linguistic as well as cultural mode to subaltern studies. She further states:

The possibility of action lies in the dynamics of the disruption of this object, the breaking and relinking of the chain. This line of argument does not set consciousness against the social but sees it as if self-constituted as and on a semiotic chain. (332)

Her remarks clarify that subaltern studies in its later phase, broke the existing concept and restructured itself as an interdisciplinary discourse by relinking different disciplines in a chain.

Spivak explores the language and textuality of the discursive power. Her subject of concern was representation to politics. In a way her essay is not particularly focused on literature, it is supposed to have given the literary twist to SS as it somehow manages to initiate linguistic and cultural modes in this subject the way literature does.

Of course, did not render SS with the literary mode for nothing, she had another great motive behind it. In fact, she wanted to present women as a subaltern group. She found SS as a rather appealing platform. She exploited literature in order to render SS with another mode: feminism. In course of giving a definite shape to her agenda, she contributed in a more vibrant way. In her deconstructive reading of Mahasweta Devi's "Standadayini" (SSV), Spivak simultaneously reinforces literary as well as feminist modes of Subaltern Studies project. The noticeable fact is that whatever discussion she makes on various Subaltern classes, she directs it to the women issues, she claims that the women is doubly Subalternized in the colonial patriarchal spaces. Literature becomes a point of departure for feminist agenda at the hands of Spivak. She exploits literature for realizing her purpose.

In her vibrant essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak clearly asserts that the subaltern can not represent themselves. They have no adequate means and strategies to do so. Their voices are not heard by rest. The subaltern subjects are denied to have any access to hegemonic power.

Similarly, Edward Said regarded Subaltern Studies as a piece of postcolonial histories. He recommended that SS should also include writers and poets who belong

to the postcolonial period. Said's contribution added more support in course of the intensification of subaltern studies project including literary concern. It reinforced the literary mode of SS. Spivak's idea also prove that SS not only confined itself as a postcolonial writing but also established itself as cultural studies as well. Later on the writers like Susie Tharu, Amitav Ghosh and other emerged writers also contributed their writings in the subaltern concern. Now the inclusion of literary writings has been like a regular phenomenon in SS. Moreover, both Postcolonial literature and subaltern studies have number of similarities because both of them focused on representing the suppressed or marginalized groups. So the purpose of these two domains is sounds quite similar.

In short, postcolonial writings mainly speak on behalf of the third world people whatever the position they belonged to. In the same manner, the SS deals with the issues like subaltern consciousness and effects of colonization on subaltern people. The postcolonial literature tries to demonstrate various aspects of the indigenous culture disrupted by colonialism and its aftermath. How the life of people became so complicated because of the impact of colonialism is the subject of concern of this domain. SS, as a postcolonial critique, aspires to inquire elite historiographies including colonial historiography. The SS tries to establish 'subalternity' as an autonomous body with their own voice. There can realize a strong connection between these two subjects. Both of these derive the heavy ideas from post structuralism.

### **Subaltern Representation in Visual Culture**

Film is becoming the medium of choice of emancipating the age-old prejudicial system of many communities throughout the world. Visual art is becoming one of the demands of the new time and the subject of concern of the great mass as

well. The role of the movie is really important in social transformation of the state. It is a medium to understand cultures, history and society.

Representation involves not only how identities are created or represented but also how they are constructed in the process of reception by the people whose identities are also differentially marked in relation to such demographic factors. In this remarks Manuel Alvarado, Robin Gutch and Jane Woolen states:

Many groups in society experience representations that are not accurate. This is problematic because in addition to perpetuating stereotypes, misrepresentation can erode the self image of people from these groups. Audiences need to think critically about the ways in which certain members of society are represented, misrepresented or absent in the media they consume (153).

These critics are presenting their critical attitude towards the possibility of misrepresentation. They are doubtful in the true representation of social reality through the media.

Cinematography is one of the best ways to disclose the socio-political reality. In this regards there are chain of movies made on the behalf of subaltern people which demonstrates the subaltern people's life long struggle to live, their desire for deliverance and failure to move out of the condition which victimized them repeatedly. These types of movies play an important role to raises social awareness to the society. Especially in South-Asian society where the practice of domination and discrimination towards the subaltern is not totally effaced though the society is moving towards the change, the visual culture definitely supports in the process of revolution to change the society. But because of the rigid structure of censorship that

controls the process of representation of the real issue of the subaltern and the subaltern consciousness can not get articulated autonomously.

In Nepalese context too, though the films and television are the perfect means of expressing people's freedom and advocating their rights, it seems that Nepali media has always lagged behind. In this regard Dr. Yagya Prasad Adhikari states "our society has still not accept film culture which is taken as a light entertaining matter but not as the knowledge gaining material"(7). Though the mainstream filmmakers have initiated issues on the Dalit community through their films, they failed to make any profound awareness regarding the constant prejudiced lifestyle. But the serial *Dalan* proves itself an exception which tried to move away from the traditional way of film making, it has been appreciated and welcomed by all for its success in raising the issues regarding the Dalit community. Adhikari further remarks states that "Film watching culture is yet to be developed in colleges and universities in Nepal. Films are a good way to understand cultures, current affairs, history and other important issues like human rights which definitely add positive impact and to initiate a well informed community."(7)

This thesis paper tries to depict the representation of the subaltern voices in the movie *Dalan* written by Aahuti. It is written in the Nepalese language. It captures the real socio-political scenario of eastern Nepalese society especially from 1951 to 1996. The theme of *Dalan* is really heart-boggling, it remarks on the historical dimension of the subaltern people which really inspire any researcher to go further into this research.

### **Dalit as Subaltern**

The term Dalit for the first time was used in India in the 1960s which refers to the group of further stratified Sudras who were considering as 'Untouchable'. The

term is a joint designation referring to a number of different caste groups which are categorized as inferior or low caste.

The word Dalit comes from the Sanskrit root 'dal' which respectively means to shatter, to break into pieces and to step on. It is basically the construction of Hindu philosophy itself. According to Hindu religion every creature in this world is creation of God Brahma which categorizes the people into four different levels as Brahmins, Kshetrias, Vaishyas and Sudras. This categorization assumes that the Brahmins are created by the mouth of Lord Brahma to symbolize teacher groups, Kshetrias are the production of the arms of him who symbolize the warriors, Vaishyas are created from the lap of Brahma to symbolize a mother like feeding her baby and Sudras from the feet of Brahma to symbolize a weight bearer. As the NNDSWO report states "the source for proof for this setup is the "Bhaagabat Geeta", one of the holy books of Hindu religion" (01).

In this concern Hira Viahwakarma remarks:

The society was based on feudal system. During that time, the king, belonged to Kshetrias, used to rule the country with using their strength. Kshetries were perfect to rule over the country with their might and main. The priest on the hand belongs to the Brahmins category, propounded by the Vedas, and handled the occupation of teachers and farmers. Likewise Vaishyas were given the response of handling the economy of country and Sudras had to serve all of these classes of people through menial works. The religion itself, therefore, treated Sudras as inferior human beings. (19)

Vishwakarma further writes "this system was more formalized and ritualized by some famous Hindu sages like *Bhirgu* who propounded some rules and regulations

and formed “*Manushmriti*” which provided the guidance to the king and further enhanced the caser system” (20). The status of Sudra approximately was that of slaves and they received nothing but only hatred from the rest. They were in such a position that their was no agency of their own and the voices were always remain unheard in the society. In fact, they were legally prohibited to resist or speak against those norms which were made in course of suppressed them under the shadow of the so-called high caste people. They were ostracized from social engagement, forbidden to enter any religious places and prohibited from any contact with the high caste groups.

On the basis of “*Manushmriti*”, casteism was made further strong and social moves of discriminatory nature were enacted. The concept of casteism receives a chance to establish itself with the emergence of such practice. As Nepal is regarded as Hindu country, it can’t be untouched by the practice of casteism. In this connection the remarks of Vishwakarma is that “Casteism in Nepal started during Malla period as Malla king of kathmandu, Jayasthiti Malla formalized it under the law in the 14<sup>th</sup> century on the basis of occupations” (21).

The practice of untouchability emerged and is still strongly pervade in most of the rural parts of the country. As NNDSWO reports “untouchables had to perform the menial jobs and enslaved to work in the fields of the landlords, which strengthened the feudalistic structure of rural country and encouraged the landlords with the opportunities of exploiting the labours” (01). Lower castes or untouchable were not allowed to acquire property, construct comfortable houses and even they were prohibited to touch any persons belongs to the higher castes. They were treated as non-human in this sense.

As Hinduism was a prominent religion in Nepal the rule of nation was thus, guided as an accordant of this religion. The society was based on caste system under



the feudalistic political system. Moreover, it was guided by the strict rules and regulations propounded by religion itself. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Junga Bahadur Rana, founder of autocratic Rana rule, brought Muluki Ain (National Code) in effect in 1853; and caste system got legal provision. The same code formalized Shudras into two categories: one who could be enslaved or killed and the other who could not be enslaved or killed. Hira Vishwakarma states that all “these untouchables were referred as Dalits.” In course of time the Aryans began to practice caste discrimination and to proclaim that the system was made by God himself and it is inevitable to all to accept the rules proclaimed by the God. National Dalit Commission’s (NDC) proposed Bill, 2003 states “Dalit community refers to caste community, who have been left far behind social, economic, educational, political and religious spheres and deprived from human dignity and social justice due to caste based discrimination.” (239)

In the similar fashion K. B. Bhattachan writes:

“As the codes was first ever law applicable all over the country, the untouchability practice was universalized and Hinduized indigenous nationalities were forced to practice untouchability in every-day-life, otherwise they were punished accordingly.”(72)

Dalits were socially, culturally and educationally discriminated, oppressed and exploited. Discrimination and Untouchability deeply rooted in society. The position and identity of Dalit’s was not in existence in society. Society further suppressed Dalits on the support of State, Hindu philosophy and National Code. As a social construct, Dalits have low economic status. Due to their literary rate, sack of political consciousness an overall cultural practice, they have been termed as inferior being. In fact the situation itself becomes influential in creating their identity as untouchable. In a way incidents are goes on happen against the Dalits on the basis of untouchability so

the mentality of Dalits has not changed because they are victimized time and again by the authorized persons but such authority is always at work because of the lack of any institution to punish the dominators.

In a way Dalits are neglected in any crucial national programme and denied access to be part of any programme because of their uneducatedness and lack of knowledge. They are categorized as uneducated and people having inferior rank at every level. Such construction is plasticized in course of inferiorized the community. The Dalit community can not represent state's reformation truly. Voice can find expression by mastering the rudimentary codes of those socially sanctioned speech conventions. In this concern, Dr. Sanjeev Upreti argues that:

The problem however is that the Dalits or the subaltern groups as argued by Gyatri Spivak can not represent themselves. Dalit can not speak within the web of historical and linguistic context in which they find themselves... Dalits are Dalit not only because of the exploited position that they occupy as the bearers of political and economic exploitation but also because they lack language or the discourse to make themselves heard. It should be tried to continue to represent them with the purpose of generating public discourse. So that it might lead to practical measures and programmes that will help liberate Dalit  
(168-169)

Upreti is seems more conscious regarding agency or institution or discourse which the Dalit community does not deserve. Because of this situation, they can not represent themselves. In fact, they are still leaving under the suppression of the social rules, norms and values.

Nepalese Dalits are naturally a part of subaltern studies because of the socio-economic, political status and representation of the state. Even after the centuries long suppression and half century long revolution against state and caste system the mentality of society has not been changed towards Dalits. The Dalits of rural and remote area are still far away from light of education and social awareness. They are still victim of the practice of domination and discrimination.

### **Subalternity in Nepalese Context**

In Nepalese context, indigenous people, Dalit and Madhesis are categorized as subalterns. The Nepalese society is moving towards the change, the country faced the political revolution, socio-cultural changes and even the constitution and laws are conforming certain rights on behalf of the minorities but the problems of those groups are not addressed on physical level. It means the voice of the suppressed is still remained unheard in Nepalese context.

In terms of domination and discrimination, Krishna B. Bhattachan has categories the subalterns/minorities into the following six categories in Nepalese context, “indigenous people or minorities, linguistic group, religion group, Dalit and regional group and gender” (Bhattachan 34-38).

In the Nepalese context too subalterns groups are really disadvantaged and backwards because of the rigid socio-political and cultural discrimination towards them by others. Such discrimination exists when rights and opportunities open to one-set of people are denied to other groups. The existence of a type of traumatic experience inside them makes them to feel as ‘a people apart’ from the majority. They tend to see themselves as inferior because of the age old constructed rules of the society which is imposed upon them. Subalterns are usually to some degree isolated from the larger community in the physical and mental level as well.

### III. Representation of the Subaltern in Aahuti's *Dalan*

“*Dalan* means oppressed, a word made up of three alphabets, speak a long existed discrimination and the impact of such discrimination is really expensive not only to the society but also to the whole human civilization itself which we can see and feel around our own society. The so-called power holding people of our society, instead of paying attention towards the marginalized, give favor to themselves, which is effectively satirized by the movie *Dalan*. In this regard, critic Pradip Sapkota remarks that “The movie *Dalan* raised the curtains from the faces of the so-called power holders of Nepal and it also somehow built confidence in people who are called minorities.”(9)

*Dalan* depicts the societal dominance faced by the untouchables and lower castes during authoritarian/totalitarian government of yesteryear Nepal. The film follows three generations of Dalit family through the revolutionary years of 1951 to 1994. *Dalan* is the production of Jagaran Media Center, written by Aahuti and directed by Nabin Subba.

Aahuti, a well-known name in the literary field of Nepal, is the writer of successful novels like *New Home* and *Skhalan*(Fall). He has also written popular poems like “Gahun Goro African” and “Maila Dai Maile Ghans Khan Sakina”. He is also active in politics and has depth knowledge and understanding of the Dalit Movement of Nepal and the World Communist Movement. The debutante script writer for tele-serials, Aahuti has been writing script for motion picture. Nabin Subba, a well known name in the field of movie has directed Aahuti's *Dalan*. For a very long time, he has been actively involved in the development of Nepalese motion pictures. He states that the movie is produced only after the meticulous research on linguistic and historical culture of the contemporary period.

Mr. Subba has been a pioneer in the quest to create an identity and style of Nepali films at a National and International level through "Khangri" and "Tarewa". Further he succeeded at national level by producing and directing "Numafung". He has a deep understanding of World Film Movement and Indigenous Movement in Nepal. He has also been actively involved in International Indigenous Film Festival in Nepal for the development of Nepali films from the last two years. He has been honored as a jury in lots of renowned International film festivals and is an instructor of Nepali film making. He is also active in many of organizations related to Nepalese films. This tele-serial is his most important television project where he has tried to present a distinct identity and styles for the audience.

This tele-serial is produced with the financial assistance of the European Union (EU), Human Rights and the Good Governance Unit of the Embassy of Denmark in Nepal, and the German Development Service (DED). But the expressed views and conclusions of this serial have nothing to do with consensus and disagreement of all of these organizations.

This serial exclusively focusses on the dehumanizing impact emerged out of the practice of discrimination and how the voices of the Dalit were remain unheard even after the socio-political change after democracy. The society was moving in the same way as it was before because of the lack of consciousness. The serial tries to raise voice against such discrimination and also depict the social reality of the contemporary society. In this regard, Santosh Baraily states that “*Dalan* has managed to display Nepali society through Dalit eyes. It shows the political, social and cultural changes that took place from 1951 to 1995”. (11)

For the first time, a Nepali script seemed void of glitches and unprolific superficial contents. The transition and correlation between the character and their

tales have been harmoniously entwined. The writer has gone beyond than just providing the script and has created a salient soul for the immaculate series. As Madhukar Narshingh Rana remarks “*Dalan* is not only a series depicting a tale of the Dalits’ trouble, survival in the racist society, it is simply a heartrending tale of love and humanistic attributes coming together against hate and intolerance (11).

The film starts from the Rana regime, follows through the movements of rhetorical democracy, procreates the problems of panchayat and depicts the existing prejudicial impasse of the capitalist and modernist society as well.

The two central characters of the serial are Harihar (played by Bhusan Sharma) and Tulki (played by Babita Sharma). At times, when coming in contact with the untouchable was worse than touching a pig for the higher castes. Harihar, who belongs to a Brahmin family committed the deadliest of all sins, falling in love with Tulki (Dalit women). For this deadly sin committed by them in the eye of the society, they disowned by the whole village and even by their parents, both of them are forced to leave the village and prohibited to return to the village forever. The torture and agonies given to them by the rigid society is really pathetic and full of emotions. Rana further remarks that:

The balance between the prejudicial and human attributes are maintained, and overwhelming demonizing and pigeonholing of any sorts of any caste, creed or has not been incorporated in the movie. Aahuti, who wrote the scripts, seems to have meticulously done prior research on linguistics and historical culture while producing this story.

(11)

It is the story of domination and discrimination in the hierarchical society. The society does not allow tasting any fruit of liberation and how it seized the right to live

in freedom and dignity for the marginalized that are always moves around the same periphery because of not having power or consciousness to move out of the condition. There can not be found the solid identity of such groups. The power holder always imposed orthodox norms and values over the suppressed in course of further suppressing the voices of them. The oppressors always opine that they know everything concerning any subjects and made the suppressed to understand that it is reality. Suppressed always feels inferior and thinks that it is inevitable to accept such norms and codes.

*Dalan* tries its best to collect the voices of those marginalized groups of the caste based Nepalese society which treated Dalits as non-human beings. It depicts the heart-warming tale of the Dalits' turbulent survival in racist society. In a way it really succeeds in discovering the stereotype, caste, culture and religion based orthodox society. The characters are struggling to move away from such domination but the situation does not let them run away. It seems as a part of slavery system in which slaves always have to remain at the same position in course of living. The voices of marginalized are always neglected by the dominators.

There are people in the row ahead, down is me in the shadow, same is the birth and same is the death, why a different way of living? Man is made smaller than man, what a hideous tradition. This suppression, this suppression, this suppression... (My Translation)

This is the title song of *Dalan* written by Shrawan Mukarung and sang by Pratima Sunam and Narendra Pyasi is really heart-touching. This speaks the agony of the suppressed in a very sympathetic way. How the orthodox social norms restricts and limits the life of the subaltern classes is a subject of concern. Hence, this is a mind-boggling look at the everyday life of contemporary subaltern people of

Nepalese society. In this connection, Bishal Gautam remarks, “After viewing the discrimination and tyranny as depicted in the serial, we can claim that the Nepalese society is still engulfed by the cave of sluggishness, the contemporary social life has been picked like a real one in the serial.” (My Translation, 7)

The theme is very heart-rending which remarks on the historical dimension that really inspires any researcher to go further into this research. While going through the serial, we really doubt whether we are watching the serial or we are in front of such orthodox society.

A term that stings, a life of hurt and seclusion and oppression beyond our imagination, *Dalan* is a story of the Dalit community in Nepal. Unlike other soap operas, it is based on what the native citizens had to go through the centuries, the shame they had to face and their fight for liberation. In this connection, Deepak Sapkota, one of the critic states that “*Dalan* is moving around the subaltern people’s life long struggle, their desire for deliverance and failure to move out of the condition which victimized them repeatedly.”(My translation, 6). The story carries a realistic picture of Nepalese society through the medium of visual arts. The rigid socio-cultural structure pervasive in the Nepalese society is clearly addressed by the movie.

The story represents the voices of the subalterns in more autonomous way and it really succeeded to reflect the social and cultural issues prevailing over the caste based semi-feudal Nepalese society especially from 1951 to 1996. How the poor people of the Dalit community, victimized by the so called power holding classes of the society is vividly depicted in this movie. The film highlighted the subaltern Dalit of the orthodox Nepalese socio-cultural background and also examines the way in which subalternity is enforced through social ridicule. The realizing factor is that the norms, rules and regulations are for only the suppressed not for the power holder



which is very much paradoxical. Sapkota further mentions that, “*Dalan* broadcasted at time when Nepal is going through socio-political transformation after a decade long insurgency, which led to the peoples movement and paved way for every citizen to stand up for their rights.”(6)

Based on the lives and tradition of the so-called untouchable communities in Nepal, *Dalan* discloses facts on how the unjust land policies have suppressed them for years. These laws were constructed beyond their knowledge of understanding so they were always discriminated and forced to live a life an indignity and humiliation. The script of the story revolves around the social and political history of the country from 1951 to 1995, their accent, lifestyle, dress codes ethics have been taken into account through immense research and analysis of historical data.

*Dalan* is a presentation of Nepalese social history from Dalit’s perspective which covers the lives of the Dalit community from western Nepal to the capital. It develops on the social environment of various castes and tries to unveil the psychological framework formed by the state. Though films are taken as a medium of free expression, Nepalese films seems to have failed to step out of their shells and poverty the sentiments, culture and traditions of indigenous groups, Dalit women and the marginalization society. In this matter *Dalan* has proved itself an exception because there is no space from which we can claim that it failed in representing the life and community of the contemporary society of socio-cultural discrimination.

The development of Nepalese film stored around 1950 AD but very few of them have been made on such issues; even today such are rarely made. The ‘short films’ and ‘documentaries’ made on Dalits were always felt as insufficient to raise awareness about the injustice they have had to face. Praising the serial critic Baliraj Khumbu remarks, “*Dalan* really challenges the traditional way of film-making as

followed by the bourgeoisie serial, it rather addressing the issues which definitely add more awareness in course of transforming the society. (My translation, 41)

“One language, one dream, one religion and one caste” slogan put forth by the state and late king Mahindra was failure because it only protected his rights, culture and traditions. The rights of the marginalized groups were shadowed and they further faced tyranny from the so-called high caste society.

Historical account proves that he used to bring Indian artists to play in the cinemas just to save the “khas culture” and preserve his ‘own culture policy’.

As documentaries and short films are hardly viewed in rural communities of the nation were such informative right based films are utmost importance to disseminate voice of equal rights. *Dalan* which is aired nationally and internationally from Nepal television is able to reach the masses and spread the message of equal rights every week. Critic Bikas Basnet comments that, “*Dalan* is one of the successful movie which filled the gaps left by the short films and documentaries and has been more successful at fighting against discrimination, raising awareness by trying to change the psychological mind-set of society.”(50)

### **Brief Synopsis of *Dalan***

As we step in to the main story of this tele- serial, we find that a Brahmin by birth Harihar falls in love with a girl ‘Tulki’ who belongs to the Dalit family. She falls pregnant as their love flourishes. News of her pregnancy spreads like a rapid fire in the society. However, the society is more rigid and based on orthodox laws which restricts to such affair held between a Brahmin boy and Dalit girl. To save the image of the society Harihar is forced to move towards Banaras and Tulki is compelled to marry with a 60 years old man against her will.

The distance between two love birds doesn't affect their feelings for each other and Harihar soon returns to Tulki because of his devotion to her. He feels restless while he is leaving for Banaras out of the compulsion of the society. He returns to Tulki from the way by canceling to go Banaras. Tulki is about to attempt suicide because of the condition she faced. The states she is in and the things she has to bear in his absence makes Harihar feel guilty about what he had done to her and he decides to marry her. However, this decision costs the couple their right to live in the village. Harihar's decision to take responsibility of Tulki is not taken positively and a village-meeting (Gamasta) is held, which decides to banish the couple by transforming Harihar into a lower caste-a Damai. At the meeting, the village seniors (Jimwal and Taalukdaar) shave off half of his hair and forced to leave the village with a pig on his shoulder.

The condition they faced makes them very pathetic character. The setting itself is very realistic which speaks in itself. The rituals, norms, values and behaviors of peoples are presenting the mirror like reflection of the contemporary society. The rule based society imposed orthodox laws over Harihar and Tulki. The punishment given to them in the name of breaking the socio-cultural boundaries is seems very cruel and heart-touching in itself. Everyone can realize the pathetic condition of the couple while the society punished them publicly in the Scene 11 of the 1<sup>st</sup> episode. The society ridicules them and laughs at them for their deeds. Though in real sense what they have done was not a crime but the orthodox society has taken it as a great crime and they compelled to cross the Bheri River forever. After the society chased them away, they move here and there in course of searching a new place where they can settle themselves. But the poor couple only suffers from troubles because of their poverty and caste which they belongs.

To survive and make a living, they reach western Baglung-Parvat, where their child is born. A new character is then introduced-Dambare Damai who gives them a space to live in when he finds out that they belong to the same caste. The couple is forced to borrow money for their child's naming ceremony and Dambare helps them get a loan from the village head (Jimwaal). This act turns them into bonded labour and they are compelled to live a life of hardship to clear their debt. As life moves on, they build a small hut and Harihar turns into Haliya, a ploughman. He works at the house of Jimwaal though he does not have practice in such works. They have to face various types of troubles and agonies in course of living their life. We can realize the lack of agency everywhere in the life of subaltern Dalits, whereas the dominant always use their power in course of maintaining their superiority. It seems really unfaithful while the members from the so-called upper class imposed their constructed rules over the innocent people. The rules are constructed in such a way that the Subalterns are made habituated to accept themselves inferior and it is inevitable to accept such rules. Their voices are lost in the vast mist of cast discrimination and poverty.

Harihar, a Brahmin by birth compelled to give up his caste and becomes a Damai. He faced extreme torture and agonies while living under the slavery of Bistas in the rigid society. He is the victim of socio-economic condition where he is living. He becomes unable to provide happiness to Tulki and his son because of the lack and poverty which is the never ending part of their life. The struggle started since he left his house, continues till the end of his life. The scene is very heart-rending when Harihar dies while working in field. He becomes suddenly unconscious and fainted over the field by vomiting blood because of his sickness. His son Juthe seems lamenting over the agony of losing his father Harihar forever.

Juthe struggles after the death of his father. He is still a child when his father dies. He faces various agonies since the beginning of his childhood days and struggles for survival. When he becomes adult, he marries Kali and becomes a father of four- a son and three daughters. One of his daughters passes away, another is sold to a brothel in Mumbai, India and his third daughter is raped by the son of Pradhanpancha and became pregnant who is later forced to marry a 60 year old man. The story of Juthe is also moves in a very pathetic way. He works hard in Bista's house but not paid as much as he had to be paid, he always suffers from a type of agony because he becomes unable to fulfill the demands of his family. The food material he collect as a ploughman in Bista's houses hardly covers for one month. The domination towards him and his family from the Bistas is seems very cruel. They work very hard to solve hand to mouth problem. His lifetime struggle against the poverty makes him very pathetic character. However their hardship doesn't end here and he falls off a cliff while carrying goods for school construction and dies in the accident. His wife Kali and son Mane are then left to bare the economical burdens.

Jute's life ends in a very pathetic way. He never get chance to feel the rest and happiness in his life. As the Subaltern people are born in debt, live in debt and even die by taking the burden of debt in their head. The remarks can be applied in the life of Juthe.

Though Kali seems a strong woman, the circumstances she faced is seems very challenging which reduce her brevity at the level of null. There is only looming frustration at every time in her life, because of which she also does not lag behind to drink alcohol in course of her attempt to move out from such agony. But, in fact, she struggles against the cruel circumstances in a very strong way. The situation around makes her really a tragic wife and mother as well. The trouble is a part of her life one

after another. Moreover, she is a victim of the slavery which leads her to the extreme agony. She struggles with poverty in course of living as very strong women. She works hard and manages food and cloths for children. Her lifetime struggle against such poverty created by the dominated proves her representative women of subaltern Dalit who is doubly marginalized under the hegemony of the ruling class.

After Kali dies, her son Mane finds his uncle Ramji Nepali, who takes Mane's responsibility. Mane comes to Kathmandu for higher studies after completing his SLC, where he later changes his name to Manav from Mane.

Manav reaches the Alps of success and rents a room by keeping his caste a secret and falls in love with a non Dalit girl, but the lie doesn't pay off and his girlfriend breaks-up with him because he had lied to her about his identity. This makes him realize what he had done wrong and in the end, he openly calls himself a Dalit. His stay in the city also changes his psychology and he realizes his right as a citizen, because all this happens at a time when the nation was going through political changes. Feeling guilty for lying about his origin and caste, he returns to the village shouldering responsibility of saving his identity and his communal dignity.

### **Scene analysis**

In the second scene of the first episode, the character, Jagman and Ram Prasad try to take Harihar away from Tulki and also from the society. According to Ram Prasad "Harihar has committed great mistake by marrying Tulki, a Dalit girl". (1) Their thinking somewhat reveals that Harihar has thrown his own cast and also the reputation of a Brahmin family. So they try to take Harihar along with them away from Tulki. They really want to take Harihar to Banaras because the rumour of the Brahmin and Dalit marriage spreads everywhere in the society and it is quite difficult for Brahmins to walk proudly because of Harihar's deed. But the consequence of this

scene turns opposite. Ram Prasad fails to take Harihar to Banaras because Harihar steps backward towards his society and also towards his pregnant wife Tulki. Ram Prasad tries to outcast them from the society but Harihar does not move his feet back.

Viewing on this issue raised by the serial, Kesab Thokar remarks that, “A Brahmin young man, Harihar is seems revolting against the than prevailing practice of untouchability and trying to concretize his love against such discrimination of society which is somehow refers to the realistic past of Nepal and Nepalese people.” (My Translation, 5). Here we can see many people as victims of untouchability. Those people who involve themselves in intercaste marriage are always oppressed by upper caste and as a whole from the society. As we see in the scene Ram Prasad makes compulsion for Harihar to leave Tulki as well as the society. Ram Prasad says, “He has done great sin” (1). This dialogue really represents that even in this age of 21 century, the issue of untouchability remains as a cruse in human society. Human used to live a conservative life in the past and its influence still hovered as a type of hangover over the society in the present. Another critic Madhukar Narsingh Rana, viewing on *Dalan* says that, “It is not only a series depicting a tale of the Dalits turbulent survival in a racist society, it simply is a heart-rending tale of love and humanistic attributes coming together against hate and intolerance.” (11)

As Gyatri Spivak mention that “subaltern people are suffering from the problem of having no agency in their life” (26), which can be applied in the heart-touching scene of *Dalan*, where the characters like Harihar and Tulki are tortured by the villagers. There is no one to prevent them by the torture which is given them in front of society. The marriage of Harihar and Tulki brings very negative impact on villagers. Villagers are in aggressive mode and declared the punishment for both Harihar and Tulki. The upper class people of village such as landlord, Khilbahadur,

Harkaman, Talukdar and other villagers are also presented in this scene. Harkaman ordered Kutwal to shave the hair of Harihar from four sides of the head. They also strip him. Then next order against Harihar and Tulki is released by the upper caste people. The character Hariram says that “After shaving Harihar’s hair, both husband and wife will be expelled from the village. They will never get right to turn backward to village or come across the Bheri River”(9-10). He further says, “The act which Harihar does is great sin in the eyes of the villagers so he must carry a pig on his shoulders and leave the village along with Tulki forever.”(9-10)

As we see the present scene, we find that the elite group or upper caste people always exercise their power through their agencies or they mobilize their politics through the different institutions where as the Subalterns or Dalits suffer for having no agency and becomes marginalized in course of mobilizing their politics. This really represents the pathetic condition of voiceless people who seems suffering from a type of severe agony. Harihar and Tulki both have no support, nobody help them. Whole villagers go against their affair and as Dalit, they are suppressed by the upper class. This scene really shows the miserable condition of Dalits and their sufferings. The punishment, which both Harihar and Tulki bear somewhat raises a question about humanity. It really raises voiceless voice of Dalits for their existential right. Being human, one must have right to survive in the open air. Dalits are also human, they also have right to survive freely same as upper class people.

The feelings of upper class people towards Dalits is shown really prejudicial and full of biases here. It reveals the idea of haltered feelings of upper-class people. How Dalts are behaved in the society, how they are taken in the society, all this can easily be noticed here in the 2<sup>nd</sup> episode of the serial. After departure from village Harihar and Tulki reach in a house of Brahmin. They are too much tired of whole day



walking. Both of them request Brahmin woman to let them stay outside her house for one night lodging but the Brahmin woman refuses to give them one night lodge outside her house. Instead she speaks harsh words for them. She says, “How dare you to say for one night stay in my house”? There is no any place for Dalits in my house so get away right now from my house” (3). We can realize that, Dalits are treated inhumanly by the so-called upper class people.

The scene shows how Dalit life suffers by the oppressors. One of the critic, Purna Singh Baraily remarks that “Still the so-called upper class people in course of practicing their hegemony, always created a boundary between the humans. (7) Harihar and Tulki get realize that their fate is stamped to bear many problems. They plea in front of Brahmin woman for one night hold but in return they get only humiliation. In fact it’s not their fault but it’s a fault of societal norms and values which was prevalent from the ancient time. People’s vision towards Dalit is very negative not from present but from past time. If Harihar and Tulki would belong to upper class then it is sure that the Brahmin woman would heartily welcome them but knowing the fact that Harihar and Tulki as Dalit, Brahmin woman spilt her anger towards them and desire to see them no more in her house.

Tele-serial also reveal some ideas that how *Dalits* are treated by the upper class people. The manner of talking itself shows the hegemony of feudal class. One of the most fabulous dialogues which I want to quote here is that “do not ever try to mess with us otherwise we will make question marks in your existence, you came in this world to serve us and to respect us.” This dialogue is taken from the movie *Zameen*, spoken by a landlord to one of the labour belongs to Subaltern group. Here in this scene of tele-serial *Dalan*, we find the same manner of upper class people while treating with lower class people. The landlord Sherbahadur is riding horse and

Harke, a Dalit is seems carrying a luggage. Both happened to meet each other.

Sherbahadur asked him very arrogantly that “Hey, you are son of katwal, aren’t you?”

(4) Dalit Harke bows his head and replies “yes, my lord”(4). Sherbahadur’s behave clarify here that he is boastful about his blood belongs to upper caste. The act of Harke and his manner of talking, every time emphasizing on the word “my lord” clarifies that really the condition of Dalits is Valueless, miserable and their lives remain as a machine, which is regulated by feudal class people. From ancient period, the societal values remain in favor of upper class people and the fate of Dalits always remains under the hand of upper class people. The societal values marked Dalit’s fate and also deprived their right. This scene which we have seen here can easily be noticed in real life too. In this regard, critic Pabitra Sunar remarks that, “In Nepal, still the issue of untouchability, conservative thinking, and upper and lower caste concepts is prevalent. Dalits are still deprived from various rights. Their rights are limited in many sectors such as religious, political, economical etc.” (My translation, Gha)

The issue of upper or lower caste or the issue of untouchability brings vast distance in human life and people are treated not from his or her behavior but from his or her caste or rank. In the 9<sup>th</sup> scene of 2<sup>nd</sup> episode of the serial we can see the very pathetic condition of Dalits. Here in this scene Tulki is suffering from pain because of her pregnancy period. After walking for a long time along with Harihar, she feels difficult to walk anymore because of severe pain. She sits there holding her belly and crying in a pain. After hearing her cry, people come to see her. Females arrive there and hover her and try to help Tulki in her pain. Finally, Tulki gives birth to a male child. Everyone become happy to see cute child and keep themselves in serving the child and mother. Here the female character Juna, who belongs to the rich upper caste, asks her nanny to bring some oil and clothes. After sometimes Juna asks about their

caste, innocent Tulki replies that they belong to *Dalit*, and their caste is “Damai”.

When Juna knows that she serves Damai, a Dalit, her attitude gets totally changed towards Tulki and spells abusing words for Tulki and Harihar. She curses herself saying that, “oh God what a great sin I have done. I serve a Damini in her Pregnancy. I must baptize myself. Oh God...oh God...”(12).

In this scene, we realize that the value of human is noticed through his or her caste. In the painful condition of Tulki everyone helps her but after knowing Tulki as Damai, people changed their attitude towards her. The question of humanism has no any place in upper caste people’s mind. In the name of upper caste or upper level people, they have forgotten humanity. Their act shows that Dalits are not human and they have no value in the society of upper class people. Even today, this practice is prevalent in the Nepalese context. In this connection, Purna Singh Baraily remarks that “Even nowadays too, most of people from upper caste believe that, to help Dalits means committing a great sin.”(5)

The scene here in second episode represents the untouchability concept. It shows the conservative thinking which is prevalent from ancient time in Nepalese society to the present era. The natural process of menstruation or pregnancy is still observed through conservative rules and values. The Hindu mythology itself is the main cause of the untouchability issue. Still in Nepal, in the period of menstruation, it is her compulsion to remain untouchable for seven days and if the female begot a child it is strictly prohibited her to remain as usual for 22 days, which are the traditional norms and values of Hindu society. As we know that these are the natural processes of body but rule and regulation restrict female to do anything who go through this situation. But why such injustice only in the part of women? They must baptize them first after then they can do anything of their choice.

Here in this scene, Tulki engages herself in serving buffalo and Harihar in his daily work. When Harihar brings wood, his eyes turn toward the son of Juna, who is laughing and playing. He is unable to control his fatherly emotions and reach near the child and hold him in his arms. By seeing this act of Harihar, Juna abuses Harihar saying that, “why you touch my child, who gave you right to hold my baby before six months? Have you forgotten your cast? It’s a great sin” (21). Hearing Juna’s abuses, even Tulki asks her husband why he goes there to hold the child.

So if we closely inspect the Juna’s words then we can realize that the people still leave in a conservative world which is regulated by traditional norms and values. The rules of six months restriction keeping distance from child is really a ridiculous values of the tradition which never brings awareness in people’s mind. These norms and values push people only backward not forward in course of development. In this connection critic Prativa Bishwokarma states that “Nepalese society is still moving around the rigid cultural values.”(3)

As the subaltern people born in debt, live in debt and die by carrying the burden of debt in their head. This can really be applied in the serial. Here people from subaltern groups are becoming the victim of never ending burden of debt. Here in the 20<sup>th</sup> scene of 3<sup>rd</sup> episode we can see the presence of the character Raney while Harihar and Tulki are busy in their daily work. After preparation of night meal, Harihar tries to wake up his son Juthe for Supper. Beside Juthe there is a broken slate of school children. Harihar picks up that slate and asks his son Juthe, “So do you want to learn ka kaa ki kii...? Juthe nodded his head in yes. Here in this scene, Harihar is feeling weak and seems coughing all the time. At the same time, Raney appears with a small clothing bag in his hand and enter inside. When Harihar asks him why he came late night, Raney expresses his sufferings. He is totally fed up in serving the landlord.

From his words it becomes clear that he really feels difficult even to breath by working under landlord. He reveals truth in front of Harihar that “now I want to break free from tyrannical rule of landlord. I am not able to pay my debt entire my life. The loan which my ancestors took from landlord, I can’t pay them back till my death. So I am escaping far away from here to Muglan” (20). The problem here in this scene which Raney shows is the bitter reality of the society. By hearing this dialogue which Raney speaks against the hegemony of landlords proves that the tele-serial Dalan really raises the voices of the voiceless people. In Nepal, still there are lots of Dalits like Raney, who engage themselves in serve of landlord for the sake of ancestor’s loan. The value of life, personal freedom, happiness cannot be expected by those people like Raney. I think Raney dare to do this because of frustration. He gets realization that the job in which he was engaged is really a never ending project which he never accomplishes in his entire life. So he wants to escape from landlord’s life for the freedom, for his desire and happiness.

The concept of power makes man so miser and such power make him sinful and corrupt too. In the 4<sup>th</sup> episode, Homebahadur awakes Juthey by kicking him at night time. But Juthey refuses to go with Homebahadur saying that “My lord, I am severely suffering from fever and not able to work.”(15). But Homebahadur ignore Juthey’s words and kicks him saying that “You fool do not ever try to deceive me, lets move to work” (15). Poor Juthey finally goes with him that night. In this scene, we can easily realize the cruel acts of landlord. Though Juthey unable to work, because of his weak physical condition but for Homebahadur his pain does not matter. For him if Dalits suffering from pain means they are pretending. The landlords do not ever try to allow excuses for Dalits like Juthey. I am sure that if Dalits are in final state of death, the landlords surely expects some work from them. They do not have any mercy and

compassion for Dalits. God created this world, people but people go just against God's expectation. The hierarchy, rank and caste play very vital role between human feelings. Power really categorises human and their feelings. For God everything which he creates is equal but people and their power concepts bring upheaval in human life. The pain of Juthey is not noticed but the work from Juthey is noticed all the time by Homebahadur. Juthey's father Harihar also has the same compulsion. All time work makes him weak and finally he dies because of T.B. if we see here Juthey's life, we can easily say that his life too moves in a same direction such as his father's life because it is a fate of Dalits

The scene of Nanda Prasad home, where Kaali and Maili are working in the field. After sometime Kaali and Maili finishes their field task and returns to Nanda Prasad home. In house Mayawati, wife of Nanda Prasad asks Kaali and Maili about their field task. Kaali and Maili steps ahead towards their hut, Mayawati stop them and again assign them same task. At the same time Nanda Prasad arrives there with his two children who are carrying books. Both Kaali and Maili greet Nanda Prasad saying that "Jaadou Baajee". Nanda Prasad asks both Maili and Kaali about their children. He says that every caste people such as Brahmin, Chettri, Dalit use to send their children to school. Why don't you send your children to school? Both female reply that "We exactly do not know! Our main task is to serve our landlords. If children go to school what will they gain and who will do the work for survival?"(29). Here in this scene we realize the fact that still in present time Dalit's life depends on serving or working for upper class people. They still remains in the same suffer which they were in the past. If they work they will alive, if not then surely they go through the disaster of death. So here we learn that in Dalit's fate work is stamped. So instead of sending their children to school, a type of misconception remains in their mind

such as nothing will be gained through education. Only work is primary thing through which our life or existence is possible.

There is compulsion for Dalits to work for landlords at any cost. It shows how Dalits are suppressed under the hegemony of landlords. Landlord needs work at any cost and they never allow any extension for Dalits whether they are suffering from any pain or agony. Here in scene twenty one of 3rd episode, we see that Harihar is suffering from his physical weakness and coughing all the time. His wife died some days before due to some problem during pregnancy period. According to Hindu mythology “people must regulate 13 days mourning in the name of death person.” But here in this scene we see the compulsion of Harihar to work before 13 days in the field for landlord. His physical condition is so weak as well as he is in mourning period but his landlord wants him to do work in the field. Here, we see the conversation of two characters Dhammare and Harihar. So surprised Dhammare asked Harihar that why he join the work before 13 days? Harihar replies here that “Nobody cares us if we leave our task. If we stop working then landlord will not afford grain and there will be question mark in our survival, if we want to live, work is necessary whether we are in critical condition or in any pain. So work is the primary thing for us to survive here” (21). Everytime there is the sense of insecurity in Dalits life. There is existential crisis.

Harihar’s voice here seems really agonistic one. His voice is representing the voices of so many powerless subaltern people who suppressed under the hegemony of so-called power holder of the society. So here in this scene we can realize the compulsion of Dalits who work under landlords. It’s a universal fact that if Dalits do not work then there occur problem to survive for them. Harihar says the fact that “if we don’t work no one cares” (21). Being Dalit he knows that nobody can help him

because he realizes it from his past struggle where he was expelled by Brahmin woman from her house where he asked for the night lodge. So he knows that it is necessary for every Dalits to work for the survival and there are no excuses for them which they can expect from the landlords. The subaltern people knows only one thing that is they have to work and serve the landlords at any cost which we can find here too.

The exploitation of Dalits from the landlords is vividly represented here. The 7<sup>th</sup> scene of 6<sup>th</sup> episode reflects the real nature of landlords. Here if we observe the nature of landlords we find that the character Sher Bahudur who belongs to the upper class is somewhat flexible whereas if we talk about his son Home Bahadur's nature we can find him very cruel as well as tyrannical character. Sher Bahadur somewhat gives extension to Dalits but Home Bahadur is anger in his nature and nobody can expect extension from him. Here in this scene we see that Juthey, son of Harihar suffering from pain of feet. He is serious by his pains and unable to work. In this critical situation Home Bahadur scolds him and also compelles him to do work in his farm. Juthey plea for extention but Home Bahadur denies and spells harsh words for him. Home Bahadur says that "you son of bitch, why don't you join work in the field? Do not try to pretend in front of me otherwise I will fire you from this task."(10). But Juthey still bows his head and plea once again in front of Home Bahadur. But Home Bahadur goes on scolding him again and again.

After watching this scene, we realize that how much torture is given by the so-called upper class to Dalits. In this age of 21<sup>st</sup> century, still the condition of Dalits remains same as before. They are still living under the threat of landlords. In this regard, Amrit Shakya an emerging critic says that, "For us the world changes and headed towards progress as well as the development but for the subaltern people



nothing has changes and they never expect anything from this changing world” (11). Really Dalits are still treated as inhuman and taken as barbaric people who are victims of time. Moreover, Dalits do not have control over their own life rather they are regulated by the landlords as a puppet. Dalits are moving ahead by the landlord’s remote control.

The miserable condition of subaltern people because of the landlord’s cruelty is shown clearly in 2<sup>nd</sup> scene of 9<sup>th</sup> episode, which reveals tyranny of landlords over the innocent people. In this serial the miserable condition of Dalits is shown in a very clear way. In the name of landlords, people become so brutal and did crime for their selfishness. In *Dalan* we can see the torture and rape of female too. *Dalan* is not only about male sufferings but also about Dalit females who are the victim of landlords. In this serial we can see the female character like Maya as well as Rambha who are victims of landlord’s tyranny. In this scene we can see that the female character Rambha is lying unconscious on the bank of the Kali River. Critic Prabin Kumar says “The rich and upper level people here doesn’t have any mercy towards the Dalit and they are playing with the prestige of Dalit girl in course of fulfilling their erotic desire taking a Dalit girl as commodity”(7). Actually Rambha was raped by the three people who belong to upper class. They are really wild in nature. They try to rape Rambha, she cries and plea in front of them but being upper class people and having no fear of anything, they committed this sin. Finally they cruelly push Rambha from hill. Later Dhammare, Juthe, and Mane find her in unconscious condition and take her to home.

Here, the identity of female who belong to the subaltern group is erased in a very cruel way. If we talk about female rights, those people should get punishment for the sin committed by them but the scene which is presented here is about the rigid society of rural area, where there is hegemony of landlords only. There is no one to

hear the voices of the subaltern group. We can argue here that subaltern as female is more dominated and oppressed in a double sense. Regarding this issue Gyatri Spivak mentions in her seminal essay that “Subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow, she is marginalized in double sense in the patriarchal society” (83). Spivak’s concern is that the female voices are more oppressed in comparison to male and they can not speak themselves through their own voice. They become compelled to hide the reality in front of society for their survival. Dalits who work under them never try to go against them. If Dalits dare to do so then it is sure that they will lose this way of survival. If Dalits try to revolt against landlords, they themselves go under humiliation and their voices are further oppressed. If we see the condition of Rambha in the following scene, we find that she is wandering here and there as an abnormal person. There is no one to realize her agony. Here I want to raise a question that; who will think about her life there after? Can Dalits suffer in such a way in his/her entire life? Can they speak against the power holders of the society? In fact, there is always remains a problem of having no space from which the subaltern reveal against the discrimination, practice by the elite people.

After taking Rambha’s unconscious body to home, people like Dhammare, Juthe and others seem to be planning to go to the landlord Home Bahadur in hope of providing justice to Rambha. But their expectation turns opposite. When they put forward the issue of justice especially for the victim girl Rambha, the landlord disappoints them saying that it is not good for our village to call police instead we must take care of Rambha’s health. But Dhammare wants to go against the three people who had raped his daughter. He seems in very aggressive mode but the landlord consoles him saying that “don’t try to broaden this issue otherwise you will bear whole humiliation among villagers. So instead of doing that now you must keep

three hundred rupees for your daughter's treatment and do not ever try to disclose the fact that your daughter was raped.”(8)

Here if we closely inspect the scene, we find that the value of Dalit is nothing in the society. In every landlord's and Dalit's story, we find that there is huge hierarchy between them. If the same case would happen to Home Bahadur's daughter or wife, it is damn sure that he will call the police and do his best for the shake of justice. Probably he would not go to leave the criminals because of his rank or reputation. But here in the case of Dalit girl Ramba, only three hundred rupees is given by Home Bahadur to hide the whole issue. Here her life value is measured with three hundred rupees. What a shameful situation the subaltern people have to face here! One of the critic Aavas Karmacharya says that “The so-called power holders make the rules and laws suitable only for them; as a result, the marginalized people do not get the sense of human rights and they have to burn in the flame of injustice”(7).

In scene 11 of 9<sup>th</sup> episode we can see how the so-called intellectual and wise teacher behaves towards the subaltern students in course of maintaining their hegemony in the society. We can realize how the children of Dalits are mistreated even by the school teacher. The place which is the center of gaining knowledge even there seems the hierarchy between Dalit children and children of higher class people. If we talk about the teacher, they are also regulated by traditional norms and values. Even they themselves create hierarchy among the children who don't have better knowledge about the caste. In school we see that the children of Dalits are kept outside the classroom whereas the children of upper class people have facility to study inside the class.

Here in this scene, the teacher's dialogue clearly shows their neglecting attitude towards the Dalit children. Here the teacher says especially focusing towards

Dalit children that, if they will not fill up the form fee, they will not allow to be participated in the examination. Most of the Dalit children's life is ruined because of economic crisis. It is quite difficult for them to pay school fee in time and they are not capable to do their further study. In present context too, many Dalit children passes time wandering here and there. Because of economic crisis, we can find that lots of Dalit children engaging themselves in childlabour nowadays too. Ashok Darnal states that, "Childrens from Dalit community are still becoming the victim of societal dominance."(11)

The practice of untouchability is not only limited in the village area but it is still practiced in well-developed modern cities as well. As a result the subaltern people compelled to engage even in illegal activities for their survival. In fact, the society itself seems responsible for making them criminal and doing crime. In scene 21 of 19<sup>th</sup> episode of *Dalan* we can see the Manav's miserable life all time suppressed by the upper class people. Even if we talk about his life in village, we can find that he is totally depressed by the landlords and finally being frustration, he reached in a city area of Kathmandu in course of survival. But having poor fate, Manav again experience the torture of being Dalit in valley life too. He struggle lot in Kathmandu valley, he wandered for the job but failed and finally he engaged himself in illegal activities because of compulsion. Various situations occur in his life where he lies about his caste. Even if we talk about the house where lived as a tenant, there also he lied about his caste that he belongs to upper class but his fate does not favor him and his lie disclosed in front of everyone. Finally he expelled from that house too. This scene really shows the struggle of Dalti their pain and agony. Being Dalit is a kind of sin for Manav here. He goes here and there for survival but nobody help him. His struggle for existence depicts the bitter reality of Dalit's life. We expect lot when we

step in valley life seeing Manav's condition, the issue of untouchability all these prove that not only prevail in rural areas but also in the urban place Dalits are humiliating all the time. We can learn various things from this tele-serial *Dalan* that everyone must be conscious about humanity. There must not be discrimination between human in the name of upper class and lower class in terms of caste base. The critic Ashok Pyasi Rai remarks that "the situation of Dalit is really miserable. They are outcaste even from the town. Unwillingly, they are compelled to do illegal activities for surviving in the hierarchical society."(10)

Subaltern women seem more marginalized within the group itself. The scene 16<sup>th</sup> of episode 20 reveals the domination of Dalit women Dhanlaxmi and her sufferings. Saroj a principle of school had married her ten years before. But now having extra-marital affair, he deceives his wife and son. By knowing the fact Dhanlaxmi abuses her husband and their controversy turn into fight. Saroj, a principal represents the intellectual circle, is not able to transcend himself from the conservative thinking and treats his wife in a cruel way. His behavior proves that the upper class people take the Dalit women as a commodity; they use, enjoy, and ultimately throw away. The poor Dalit woman Dhanlaxmi is expressing her agony and says "Saroj did not care us and he never tries to come home since two months, I and my son are alone there."(16)

If we see here, we can realize the nature of upper class of people such as selfishness, cruelty and so on. Saroj had married a Dalit girl before ten years but now there occurs a question mark in the existence of that Dalit girl because Saroj here scolds her publicly and beat her as well. The condition of Dhanlaxmi seems very pathetic and full of agony. It is not only the story of Dhanlaxmi but also of many Nepali Dalit women. Most of Dalit female are still oppressed by the oppressor's

hegemony. They are totally deprived from their right and all these issues made them to move on to the final disaster of death.

The movie *Dalan* has really been succeeded in depicting the bitter reality regarding the subaltern groups of the contemporary Nepalese society. Anyone with the slightest interest in human rights will find this movie very heart-wrenching. It is a well attempt to unveil the societal reality which exclusively focusing on the dehumanizing impact emerged out of practice of discrimination. How the orthodox societal norms and values imposed to the subaltern people and how power is mobilized by the so called upper level people in course of dominating the subaltern is the main concern here. The movie is really heart-warming, which is advocating for the right of subaltern Dalit and raising awareness for their upliftment as well. This movie *Dalan* has collected much appreciation from national and international level for its impact which it left after the broadcast from the television. In representing the subaltern voices, the movie does not left any weaknesses in the way. While going through, we can realize that subaltern voices are getting an absolute way to comes out through the movie *Dalan*.

#### IV. Conclusion

The movie *Dalan* is successfully fulfilled the aim of focusing on the Dalits' deprivation for decades and also enabling them to speak for their rights just like the other citizens. This dissertation has analyzed the Nepalese socio-political and also cultural situation through the movie *Dalan* that captures the history between 1951 to 1996. The main concern here is how the movie successfully represents the traditional concept of society and how the so-called upper class people of the society dominant over the Dalits and the community have been always discriminated, exploited, oppressed and subordinated in each and every spheres of life. They are exploited socially, economically, religiously, culturally and even politically. The orthodox laws and cultural dominance is the main cause of subordination which imposed the constructed rigid norms over the Dalit community in course of further suppressed the voices of them. Such discrimination is prevailed over the Nepalese society is exploited by the movie, which is further elaborated by this dissertation.

Subaltern theory advocates for the marginalized groups of the society. It speaks on behalf of those people who are suppressed by the hegemonic power structure of the society. 'Subaltern' commonly refers to those persons who are socially, culturally, politically and geographically deprived. Subaltern people are always rendered without agency by his or her social status.

The history of Nepalese Dalit is really a fragmented history and the practice is still prevailing in the society even after the various socio-political changes. The study has taken the caste system and emergence of untouchability, caste-based discrimination in the rigid Nepalese societies. The voices of Dalits are suppressed under the vast mist of slavery and they are ignored people in every field of the society. Power holders of the society created discourse about Dalits that they are like

disable, weak and unable people and the suffering in course of living is inevitable for them. The voices are silenced through the practice of discrimination.

This tele-serial really depicts the life of subaltern groups, especially the Dalits of Nepalese society. The movie goes against the trend which was prevalent from ancient time to the present, the movie develops the awareness in people that Dalits are also human, they also have right to live freely. Beside all that this serial has made every audience to think twice about the traditional norms and values whether they are good or bad. In this modern life of science and technology, the people of Nepal still live in such conservative thinking and they still live the ancient way of life. Everyone must not be deprived from any way. S/he must have right to survive freely. Nobody should become the victim of such type of discrimination and this is the plea of *Dalan* for all the people of Nepal, who lived here from decade and called themselves so-called human.



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