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Subaltern Literature

The seed of Subaltern has grown and bloom to the present level

Abstract

The paper focuses on the origin and development of subaltern theory. The word subaltern was unknown to the writers of history or application in the field of literature. The word "subaltern" is drawn or originated from Latin means below all others Sub means 'below', Altern means all others. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary denotes that the word Subaltern means lower in rank or inferior in rank. The term Subaltern was used by a Italian Marxist political leader Antino Gramsci in his famous book "Prison Note" has used the term Subaltern meaning inferior rank. Usually the term was used in the military purposes only but for the first time he used it other than military purposes. He defined the term as somebody who does not have political power and therefore no voice. The study of Subaltern Literature was the same as the study of Subaltern Studies. The application of subalternity was a new and novel in the field of literature. Already the concept of Subalternity was applied by the feminist writers and writing about women and dalits. Therefore Subaltern Literature was one of Sub Division of Subaltern Studies. The application of Subalternity is nothing but application of formula in Mathematics. The Subaltern Literature is more powerful tool to reach the vast majority of the people cutting across the boundaries of nation than the Subaltern Studies. For the scholars, the profound and deep bottomless thematic subject's objects are available in the field of subaltern studies such as linguistic subaltern, western, eastern globe troops.

Key words: subaltern, history, thematic endless, subordination, mathematical tool

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denotes that the word Subaltern means lower in rank or inferior in rank. The term Subaltern was used by an Italian Marxist political leader Antino Gramsci in his famous book "Prison Note" has used the term Subaltern meaning inferior rank (1). Usually the term was used in the military purposes only but for the first time he used it other than military purposes. He defined the term as somebody who does not have political power and therefore no voice. It also comprised of marginalised or oppressed people in the hegemony of the ruling elite class. As per definition of Julian Wolfery the term subaltern "the group that are marginalised, oppressed and exploited on social, political and religion grounds" (2). The term subaltern was used in synonyms with common, people, lowerclass, unprivileged, exploited minors, weak, poor, farmers, workers. Gayathri S.Pivak attributed the term subaltern to South Asian Society's colonised people. EP Thomson wrote an article in the Times of magazine. He used the term subaltern means from "Down below".

History was recorded for the struggle of the people seeking to realize the freedom from suppression. The common man had the capacity to make history. Generally the history of the state was written by the dominant group or ruling 'power'. Gramsci was interested in subaltern class G.N Dey "History is made from villages and taluk blocks and district divisions of small communities, by people whose names are never recorded in history. History is continuously brone by such people that basic and central tent of subaltern studies may find exercise in all the volumes" (3). The subaltern people were known for their innocence simplicity and sincerity. However they were isolated from civilisation, urbanization and industrialization in the evolution of development of the nation.

The aim of the study is to focus and analyse the study from the Inception to the Contemporary. The purpose of subaltern studies is to consider the chief concern of the people's consciousness and their actions. The proper analysis of the people consciousness and due recognition by the historians would rightly project the "subaltern" were a maker of the history. The principle aim was to rectify elitist bias found in the academic works of the history. The subordination was in various forms and type. The object of Subaltern studies was to focus towards this subordination. The process towards was to rethink history from the prospective view of subaltern and to give them their due in the historical process. With this in mind the subaltern studies group or subaltern studies was founded by Ranjit Guha comprising South Asian historians, social critic and scholars from common wealth countries in 1980. From the beginning of this subaltern studies has under gone many in south Asian historiography, and faced wide range of challenges from the existing historical scholars.

The subalterns pointed out, that caste and religion were the crucial factors govern the Indian history. But the Marxist felt difficult to accept this concept. In order to study the subaltern groups, “Gramsci designed a plan composed of six steps in his book. He intends to study firstly their objective formation by changes taking place in economic production. Secondly the active or passive affiliations attempts to dominant political factions, and to influence their program. Thirdly the birth of a new parties and dominant groups, were mainly created for subjugation and maintenance of the subaltern. Fourthly the formation which the subaltern group themselves made to vindicate limited rights. Fifthly new formation was to maintain the subaltern group autonomy within old frame work. Sixthly those formation which may help to affirm their autonomy [gramsci 1971]” (4). The subaltern studies of Guha, was highly influenced by Antino Gramsci. Initially subaltern study was influenced by English Marxist, Latter Dipesh Chakraparty described “The subaltern studies project as having emerged from Indian Marxist histories” (5). Through the subaltern studies the agony, tortured mentally, bodily injury suffered by the subalterns were brought to the knowledge of the world class. It threw fresh light on the sufferers. This awakened the thought that the subalterns were also human being to think themselves.

This new trend of writing the history, gave the way by crossing, the traditional way of writing. It provided new latitude, amplitude and direction which helped to begin new chapter. The moist activist, Guha was directly participated in the peasant insurgency and he witnessed the contribution made by people “on their own” (6). In the subaltern studies project, had applied different method to find out the mute voices immersed in the bottom of the sea to see the sun by setting new trend of writing new chapter in the history.

The shift in the intellectual focus and change in the membership of the editorial committee drifted away from Subaltern Studies project from its South Asian particularly Indian roots. In 1990 the shift in the project was away from its original relevance to India was the caused considerable criticism by Sumit Sarker “his main criticism of the project it is to turn towards cultural studies between colonial and pre-colonial, India and journal tendency to criticise relations and exploitations in the former whilst the latter was absolved” (7).

The changes in the project’s focus and methodology of the project were changed in the publication of Subaltern Studies XI, 2000. This was due to the fact that the members of the committee were not from the history department. The goal of Subaltern Studies project was to change in consonance with membership, readership, intellectuals and political context.

The project needed to be understood in the broader and wider concept Spivak played a major and vital role in shaping the focus and direction towards the decline of Marxism and the growth of post colonial cultural, literary studies. The Marxist influenced focus of the Subaltern Studies between elite and the subaltern had been changed to the study of interdisciplinary project between literary and cultural studies.

The Subaltern Studies received criticism right from the inception of this project by Marxist Nationalist and Cambridge School of historians. The criticism was due to separate autonomous domain for the Subaltern and latter to its shift. Javeed Alam criticised the Subaltern Studies, according to him “the autonomy of the subaltern politics predicated on perpetuity of rebellious action was consistent resistance on the part of the rebellion” (8). Sumit Sarkar initially he is associated with the project of Subaltern Studies latter he shifted his approaches and criticised the project of Subaltern Studies (9). Smit Sarker wrote two essays *The Decline of the Subaltern in the Subaltern Studies* and *Orientalism revisited*. For various reasons he shifted his stance due to teleology and related sins while claiming special immunity for doing the same oneself.

Gayathri Chakravathy Spivak was one of the most knowledgeable and influential person in the field of Post Colonialism, Feminism, Deconstruction and Marxism. She was a follower of Derrida. She was the author of preface to the book “of Grammatology” written by Derrida. Spivak was known for her best known essay “Can the Subaltern Speak” Through this essay she awakened the consciousness of their rights by making them to voice against unjust domination and inequality. She wanted to give voice to the Subaltern who cannot speak or who were silent. She drew the attention on the speculations made on widow sacrifice. She attacked Eurocentric attitude of the west. Their knowledge about the third world was always constructed upon the political power and economic interest of the west. Spivak criticises Foucault and Edward Said by accusing in cooperating with capitalism and imperialism.

The following English writers were projecting the concept of Subalternity. The *Tempst*(1611) was written by Shakespeare. In this novel Caliban was depicted as Subaltern and secondary to Prospero who was a learned person and appeared to be the manager. Caliban was primitive and devoid of written language and he accepted the supremacy of Prospero(10).

Robinson Crusoe (1719) was written by Daniell Defoe In this novel Rohinton was depicted as Hercules while Friday was Negro. Robinson imposed upon Friday his language, religion and god .He taught him to call him Master (11). The Outsider was written by Albert. In this novel Arabs were depicted as murders but were killed by Meursult (French Algerian) (12).

Rohinton Mistry wrote three novels and short stories. He was one of the best writers of the Post Colonial era. His theme of novel was the exploitation based on political, economic and social aspects. Among the very few writers in English he was one of the novelists who dealt with the plight of untouchables. “A Fine Balance” was written by him. In this novel Rohinton depicted characters like chamir, Dina, Mameek and Parsees who were all born to leather making family and related to each other. The upper class people brutally and inhumanly treated them. Rohinton clearly exposed barbaric in human acts of a man perpetuated on another man and also deprivation and inequalities experienced by the down trodden people in India. It continued still in India unabatedly through laws for them to protect (13).

Spivak disapproved Gramsci’s assertion of the autonomy of the Subaltern Groups. Her justification of this rejection of Gramscian view was biased on her view that this autonomy results in homogeneity of the Subaltern Group and Subaltern subjective identity. Spivak’s second criticism of subaltern Studies Group lied in her belief that no methodology even the most ambitious Marxist one can avoid a sort of essentialism in its attempt to define who or what constitute the subaltern group consequently. Spivak chooses to adopt the notion of subaltern essentially because it is truly situational. Spivak faced with difficulty in defining and specifying the realm of subalternity. Therefore shifted her stance and considered the issues of subaltern Groups with the problems of gender based during the colonial times. She analysing the status of women under the British Colonial rule. Sati women as a subaltern Group Spivak her argument was lost between two polarities. The British humanist calling for individual freedom of Sati women and Hindu native policy calling for voluntary participation in the ritual ”Whiteman (are) saving brown women from brown man” the other maintains that ”the woman actually wanted to die (Spivak1991) (14). Hindu woman lost her voice in such situation when particularly two discursive groups tried to give their voice. The last declaration of Spivak in her essay was controversially interpreted.

The subaltern School contributed a lot in the study of economic and social science in the Third world countries at the end of 20th century. The Subaltern Studies forms part of post

colonial theory in literature. It was very useful to study Dalit and women. B.K.Das says “Literature is not a branch of social science and therefore can’t be evaluated according to the methods adopted by Subaltern Studies”. The present global scenario of research about the concept of Subaltern became more prominent and very attractive study in the various fields such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, and literature. The Subaltern literature was the same as Subaltern Studies with regard to the subject and object of the Subaltern. Therefore Subaltern Literature was a separate branch came from post modern literature to the study political and cultural. B.K.Das opinion that Spivak was given prominence to the plight of women Ranjit Guha interprets the Subaltern Studies “as name for the general attribute of Subaltern in South Asian Society whether that is expressed in terms of caste ,class, sex, age, gender, or any other “(15). At the time of inception Antonio Gramsci had of opinion that the Subaltern class means any lower rank of person or group of citizen suffering in the hands of hegemonic domination of the ruling elite Spivak used the term “Subaltern “is flexible and it can have room for social identities and struggles. Therefore the word Subaltern is situational. Spivak has attempts to justify the life of subalterns who are exploited economically and oppressed politically .Her writings clearly exposes the experience of social and political oppression in the postcolonial societies. The close study of the term meaning subaltern and it could be applied in literature. The Subaltern Literature is the most powerful tool to reach the vast masses cutting across the boundaries of the nation than the Subaltern Studies.

Conclusion

Post Colonialism critically examines the relationship between colonizers and the colonised. Drawing on Foucault’s notion of “discourse” Gramsci’s notion of “hegemony” and Derrida’s “deconstruction” focus the role of text, literary, in the post colonialism. Subaltern defined in the descriptive way a referred to particularly marginalised subject in any cultural or social context. At present people are willing to come under the umbrella protection of subaltern because whose silence possibly voiced through the representation of intellectuals and hence the subaltern studies asserted itself as a new form of history-writing. Generally when writing the history till now it is one sided partial and not showing the true picture of low level group in the society. Subaltern studies pave the way for to rewrite the history into a new history from below. These types of history alone are true history without any influence of dominant forces of any type or any national constraints. It depicts repicturing the existing history into a new form of history in the post colonialism particularly in India.

Further the subaltern studies form a part of the post colonial theory in literature. It was much helpful to study of dalit and women particularly. The subaltern literature is the same of subaltern studies with regard to the subject and object term of the subaltern. Therefore subaltern literature is one of the sub divisions of the subaltern studies. The post modern literature is branch of the post colonial studies. The theme of subaltern is applied in literature. It is nothing but similar to application of the formula in mathematics and hence subaltern literature is more powerful tool to reach the vast majority of the people cutting across the boundaries of nation than the subaltern studies.

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