



An Outsider: A Subaltern Narrative

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Globalization has made a great impact on every sector of life. The revolution has taken place in social, political, economic and literary world. The thoughts of the people are changed in the course of time in the modern world. Transformation is occurred in every sphere of life. The concept of humanism and cosmopolitan is aroused in the modern world. The subaltern and postcolonial theories revolutionized the traditional thoughts and looked forward to establish democratic principles such as liberty, equality, fraternity and justice.

Subaltern studies explored the experience of social, political oppression in post-colonial societies such as India. It is asserted that "Subaltern studies have great relevance to the understanding and interpretation of contemporary society in the third world country like India." (Das 140) It challenged the discrimination in class, religion, language and gender etc. According to Antonio Gramsci the term 'Subaltern' underlines a subordinate position in term of class, gender, caste, race and culture. It is furthermore defined that the colonized and oppressed subject's voice has been silenced. According to Spivak 'subaltern' means the oppressed subject. Gramsci's account of the oppression aptly describes the continued operation of the rural peasantry, the working class and the untouchable in post-Independence Indian society.

The term subaltern has a relevance to the study of third world countries especially to India. The concept of subaltern has been defined by Julian Wolfreys the definition has composed the group that are marginalized oppressed and exploited on the cultural, political, social and religion ground. Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia defines subaltern as: "Subaltern is a term that community refers to person who are socially, politically and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure." (Web 22.04.2010) The term subaltern refers to the marginalized groups and the lower classes. It is used to denote the



marginalized and oppressed people. Subaltern Studies borrow postmodern ideas and method to textual analysis. Subaltern Studies make a 'new approach' to restore history. It is theorizing that the elite in India played a dominant role.

The word 'subaltern' is derived from the Latin word 'sublterns'. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary has following interpretation:

1. (n.) an officer in the British army below the rank of captain, especially a second lieutenant; 2. (adj.) of lower status (OALD 1434) It means any officer in the British army who is 'lower in rank' than captain. The term covers the subjects, the masses, and the deprived and neglected section of the society. The subaltern provides the base for understanding the condition of the poor, the lower class and peasantry in India. The term has a relevance to the study of third world countries especially India.

Dalit literature can be studied under subaltern point of view, because subaltern studies bring into notice the suppressed, oppressed and downtrodden class. These deprived classes have been segregated in the name of caste, religion, untouchable and gender. DrMilindPandit says, Subaltern is an area that attracts a lot of discussion. And if we apply this definition to Dalit literature, think subaltern can be taken for an Umbrella term. (Dr.Pandit 44)

Dalit writing can be interpreted from subaltern point of view. Dalit literature is manifestation of agonies and suffering of Dalit. It is not only reflecting the pathetic condition of lower class but also providing the democratic values. Dalits are exploited socially, economically and politically. This exploitation of Dalit is artistically presented through Dalit writings. There is an attempt to depict suffering of marginalized people on different levels and between different people. It is concerned with the life of the lower strata of the society.

Upara, a Marathi Autobiography by Laxman Mane is translated into English as *An Outsider* by S.T. Kamat. It is a milestone in Marathi Dalit literature. The present subaltern narrative is an evidence of exploitation of Nomadic Tribe named Kaikadi. It is a typical realistic picture of Kaikadi community. This narrative can be studied subaltern point of view. The writer Laxman Mane tried to reveal the sufferings of nomadic tribe. The nomadic tribe



Kaikadi is moving from place to place for their lively hood. The narrator of the memoir is a representative of Kaikadi community. The narrator is one of the victims who come across a number of problems in his way of living. The writer Laxman Mane declares, “Whatever I say about the book? Whatever I lived, experienced and saw, I poured into my writing.” (Mane 06) This declaration bring into our notice that the memoir is based on the writer own experience of life. He reveals a realistic, picture of victimized Kaikadi community. The narrator draws our attention towards untouchability, poverty, hunger and superstition in nomadic tribe. The entire narrative presents humiliation, suffering and suffocation of Kaikadi community at the hands of the upper caste Indian society. The world portrayed in the present memoir is a miserable and deplorable one. All the micro experiences of kaikadi community can be analysed under subaltern point of view.

The picture of women in Dalit memoirs is very significant. They are subjugated as women by lover and upper class. It is discussed that “A Dalit woman carries the double burden of patriarchy and caste system and suffers doubly discrimination” (Dr. Patil 56) The problem of women can be interpreted from subaltern point of view. An Outsider also narrates the struggle of Kaikadi women. Laxman Mane clears that a woman is exploited not only because of her sex but also on the basis of her class, race and caste. The pitiable and helpless condition of women is notably mentioned in the present subaltern narrative. There are a number of incidents in this memoir where women have been given inhuman treatment. Punappa is the charactor talking before Panchayat and says,

I have mortgaged my wife to Dharma these last four years. He gave me five times fifty rupees. I had promised to return this amount to him in four years. I remit it today.... But the fellow is not willing to return my wife. (Mane 56).

The women are supposed as a commodity to be sold in exchange of money. She is portrayed as an object of suffering, contempt and hatred in the present narrative. She is neglected both in home and outside. She is tortured and ill-treated right from her birth. Such kind of status of women narrated in this memoir appeals for subaltern study to get equal justice for women.



The present representative subaltern narrative gives a realistic picture of down trodden class. The struggle starts from the very birth of a child in Kaikadi community. The beliefs of this nomadic tribes in their gods, goddess such as 'Khandoba' and 'Kulubai' is typically narrated in the present memoir. The cultural and religious picture of Kaikadi is well narrated to analyze the real world of this community. The Superstitious beliefs of this community such as offering goats to the gods and goddesses are realistically narrated. The picture of hunger also attracts our sympathy towards the tribe. Laxman Mane, the narrator struggles for carrying hearth and home on the back of the donkeys. The donkey of narrator strays through a fencing of women. As a result she abuses him in uncivilized language.

The People were not sympathetic towards Kaikadi community. Even they are branded as thieves. When the people of the community leave from one place to another place, the villagers check up their bags. They have to inform their stay, men, women, children, animals to the chief of the village where they want to stay. Many a time Kaikadi women are blamed and beaten as thieves. Humiliation and torture are common in the Kaikadi tribes. They have been given subhuman treatment by the established upper class. The children of this community are not been permitted to get education. When the narrator is admitted to the school, he is not allowed to sit in the classroom. He is to go out of the class because of his birth in lower caste.

Subaltern studies expect to bring downtrodden, marginalized and lower class in the main stream of the society. It revolutionized the ideas and thoughts of the self-asserted writers. The narrator is trying to create self-identity and existence among the subjugated and segregated class. An Outsider is representative memoirs of suffering and exploitation of Kaikadi community. It is observed as a subaltern narrative with its realistic account of marginalization and oppression in the name of caste, religion and gender.

The experiences and the daily accounts of the community are the subject of subaltern study. The problems created with this community are directly concerned to the subaltern study. The thematic concerns of this work are related to down trodden and marginal world. The world presented in this memoir is to



be studied under subaltern point of view. It is an attempt at self-identity and self-assertion observed through the experiences of the narrator in the present work. The journey of narrator is towards the liberation of this community. Apart from that the narrator has tried to uplift Kaikadi people from the age old habits.

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