



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 3. Issue.4.,2016 (Oct.-Dec. )



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

SUBALTERN CONSCIOUSNESS IN ARVIND ADIGA'S *THE WHITE TIGER*

LEKHA NATH DHAKAL

Associate Professor, Tribhuvan University,  
Nepal Commerce Campus, Kathmandu, Nepal

[lekhanathdhakal50@gmail.com](mailto:lekhanathdhakal50@gmail.com)



ABSTRACT

Adiga's *The White Tiger* expresses and exposes the issue of subaltern. By uniquely showing the protagonist, transformed from village simpleton to citified businessman through Machiavellian tricks of trade, Adiga is trying to focus on the fact that subaltern can speak at times. By also showing Balam Halwai, the protagonist, undergoing with great trial, trouble and tribulation, and at the end coming up with his being a business tycoon in a city of India, though through foul means, Adiga aspires to highlight on the growing subaltern consciousness for the betterment of subaltern people.

Key Words: Subaltern, Consciousness

©KY PUBLICATIONS

This essay attempts to explore the idea of subaltern consciousness in *The White Tiger*, Booker Prize winning debut novel of Indian writer, Arvind Adiga by applying the concept of subaltern studies, which is prominently discussed in postcolonial theories and literature. Before delving into the world of *The White Tiger* it will be pertinent to discuss about "subaltern" as a theory.

The term "subaltern" refers to any person or group of inferior rank and station whether in terms of race, class, caste, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion. Not only this it also refers to lower strata people of illiterate peasantry, non-elite cultural groups who are under-represented, under-taught, non-canonical and the subordinated group and they are always directly or indirectly influenced by ideologies of dominant class. And Subaltern Studies refers to the academic study of the lives and writings of subalterns deeply influenced by Marxist, Semiotic, Feminist and Deconstructionist ideas.

The inquisitive scholar will also find it worthwhile to read a critique of the school written by an erstwhile member of the collective. Sarkar's essay "The Decline of the Subaltern in Subaltern Studies" (OUP, 1998) challenges what he considers to be its valorization of the indigenous, its "enshrinement of sentimentality", and the shift in its polemical target from capitalist and colonial exploitation to Enlightenment rationality. A caveat might also be entered on the status of any scholarly claim to "represent" the voice, interest or agency of a preferred Subject - the historian's discipline may indeed never be free of bias, but surely it must be as committed to the ideal of truth-as-the-whole, and balance, as to polemic. Be that as it may, Subaltern Studies has raised the level of debate in Indian historiography -the corpus may be critiqued, but

certainly not ignored. It has had an impact on the orientation of many scholars, within and outside the discipline of history, and beyond the frontiers of India. Whether it will retain its original radical impetus by engaging boldly with questions posed by its own practice and the rapidly changing social and political environment in the post-Soviet global order remains to be seen.

Scholars like Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak, Partha Chattarjee, Dipesh Chakravarty, Gyan Prakash, Gyan Panday etc initiated the debate on Subaltern Studies. They published a series of volumes on Subaltern Studies since 1982 and tried to quench the thirst of the historians who were willing to know the surface the culture and existence of the subalterns in colonial as well as postcolonial India.

Gramsci thinks the history of the subalterns was as complex as the history of the dominant class. Moreover, the history of the subaltern classes in Gramsci's opinion is inevitably fragmented and episodic as they were subject to the activity of the elite groups even when they raise their voice against complacent elite groups. The subaltern classes have less accesses to means by which they can control their representation-and less accesses to social and cultural institution. The only way to get rid of subordination is the permanent victory. The victory cannot be achieved easily and immediately. Here Gramsci "is concerned with the intellectual's role in the subaltern's cultural and political movement into hegemony" (78). As the subaltern people do not have the means as well as the strategies to get accesses to hegemony they need the intellectuals to show them the way. The intellectuals, while serving the elite classes, should mobilize the people only then the subaltern classes can be turned into revolutionary figures who will strive to achieve independence.

In Gramsci's term, elitists have the hegemony, domination over lower strata sub proletariat groups in politics, economy and other social activities whose voices are heard, in case of writing literature and have the power over group of subordination. Culturally elite groups whose culture the non-elite cultural groups are obliged to follow, take the latter as other.

Gramsci gave much thought to the question of the role of intellectuals in society. Famously, he stated that all men are intellectuals, in that all have intellectual and rational faculties, but not all men have the social function of intellectuals. He claims that modern intellectuals are not simply talkers, but directors and organizers who help to build society and produce hegemony by means of ideological apparatuses such as education and the media.

Furthermore, he distinguishes between a 'traditional' intelligentsia which sees itself (wrongly) as a class apart from society, and the thinking groups which every class produces from its own ranks 'organically'. Such 'organic' intellectuals do not simply describe social life in accordance with scientific rules, but rather articulate, through the language of culture, the feelings and experiences which the masses could not express for themselves. The need to create a working-class culture relates to Gramsci's call for a kind of education that could develop working-class intellectuals, who would not simply introduce Marxist ideology from without the proletariats, but rather renovate and make critical of the *status quo* the already existing intellectual activity of the masses. His ideas about education system for this purpose correspond with the notion of critical pedagogy and popular education as theorized and practiced in later decades by Paulo Freire in Brazil, and have much in common with the thought of Frantz Fanon. For this reason, partisans of adult and popular education consider Gramsci an important voice to this day.

Hegemony was a concept previously used by Marxists such as Vladimir Ilyich Lenin to indicate the political leadership of the working-class in a democratic revolution, but developed by Gramsci into an acute analysis to explain why the 'inevitable' socialist revolution predicted by orthodox Marxism had not occurred by the early twentieth century. Capitalism, it seemed, was even more entrenched than ever. Capitalism, Gramsci suggested, maintained control not just through violence and political and economic coercion, but also ideologically, through a hegemonic culture in which the values of the bourgeoisie became the 'common sense' values of all. Thus a consensus culture developed in which people in the working class identified their own good with the good of the bourgeoisie, and helped to maintain the status quo rather than revolting.

The working class needed to develop a culture of its own, which would overthrow the notion that bourgeois values represented 'natural' or 'normal' values for society, and would attract the oppressed and intellectual classes to the cause of the proletariat. Lenin held that culture was 'ancillary' to political objectives but for Gramsci it was fundamental to the attainment of power that cultural hegemony be achieved first. In Gramsci's view, any class that wishes to dominate in modern conditions has to move beyond its own narrow 'economic-corporate' interests, to exert intellectual and moral leadership, and to make alliances and compromises with a variety of forces. Gramsci calls this union of social forces a 'historic bloc', taking a term from Georges Sorel. This bloc forms the basis of consent to a certain social order, which produces and reproduces the hegemony of the dominant class through a nexus of institutions, social relations and ideas. In this manner, Gramsci developed a theory that emphasized the importance of the superstructure in both maintaining and fracturing relations of the base.

Gramsci stated in the West, bourgeois cultural values were tied to religion, and therefore much of his polemic against hegemonic culture is aimed at religious norms and values. He was impressed by the power Roman Catholicism had over men's minds and the care the Church had taken to prevent an excessive gap developing between the religion of the learned and that of the less educated. Gramsci believed that it was Marxism's task to marry the purely intellectual critique of religion found in Renaissance humanism to the elements of the Reformation that had appealed to the masses. For Gramsci, Marxism could supersede religion only if it met people's spiritual needs, and to do so people would have to recognize it as an expression of their own experience. For Gramsci, hegemonic dominance ultimately relied on coercion, and in a "crisis of authority" the "masks of consent" slip away, revealing the first of force.

Gramsci has got a problem that he is forced to admit it: the problem of subaltern resentment of and resistance to the process of formal (i.e. state or church directed) education. But this resistance to that kind of learning is also a mark of subaltern identity, and therefore subaltern "oppositonality". Gramsci concludes somewhat pessimistically therefore that if our aim is to produce a new stratum of intellectuals, including those capable of the highest degree of specialization, from a social group which has not traditionally developed the appropriate attitudes, then we have unprecedented difficulties to overcome'. His solution is, of course the emergence of a new type of intellectual capable of translating the spontaneous character of subaltern culture into the possibility of hegemony- the famous 'organic' intellectual who would combine the resources of formal education with the point of view and commitment to the interests of subaltern social classes or groups. But even where the will of such an intellectual is to act 'organically' for the subaltern position he or she originates from, there is still the question of whether he or she actually represents the interests and views of that position, and is not speaking a necessarily different language-the language of history, aesthetics, modern literature, philosophy, law and civility.

The subaltern group which was led by Ranajit Guha endeavored to provide the subaltern people with their own voice. This group is known as a group of historians "who aimed to promote a systematic discussion of subaltern themes in South Asian Society". This group aimed to examine the general attributes of subordination in South Asian Society in terms of class, caste, age and gender. Guha regards subalterns' classes as "the social groups and elements included in the category represent the demographic differences between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the 'elite' (5518). Subaltern classes differentiate from the groups of elite" (74).

In Ranajit Guha's succinct definition, the word 'subaltern' is 'a name for the general attribute of subordination [...] whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender, and office or in any other way (27)'. Explaining the aim of Subaltern Studies in *Subaltern Studies I* Guha says:

[...] The aim of subaltern studies is to promote a systematic and informed discussion of subaltern themes in the field of South Asian Studies, and thus help to rectify the elitist bias characteristic of much research and academic work in this particular area, (i) He further argues *Subaltern Studies* study "the history, politics, economics and sociology of subalternity [...] in short, the culture informing the condition. (48)

The category that defines subaltern identity or 'will' for Guha is negation'. To access the peasant rebel as a subject of history requires a corresponding epistemological inversion. The problem is that the empirical fact of these rebellions is captured precisely in the language (and the cultural assumptions) of the elites—both native and colonial—that the rebellious were directed against: 'the historical phenomena of insurgency meets the eye for the first time as an image framed in the prose, hence the outlook of counter insurgency—an image caught in a distorting mirror'. Such a dependency betrays a bias in the very construction of colonial and post-colonial historiography in favor of the written record and ruling classes and their agents, whose status as such may be partly constituted by their mastery of literacy and writing. To recover the historical specificity of the rebellions, the historians have to read backward from the written record to practise 'writing in reverse'.

Guha's effort is to recover or represent the subaltern as a subject of history, from the welter of documentary and historic discourse that deny the subaltern that power of agency. In that sense his project is a continuation of the insurgency it. Subaltern studies are not simply discourses about the subaltern. It appears and develops as an academic practice in contemporary setting in which new relations of dominations and subalternity are produced on a daily basis and old ones are reinforced. It responds to the need of dominant groups to administer increasingly multicultural populations and a culturally heterogeneous transnational working class.

The politics of people has its own distinctive features. Guha differentiates politics from elite politics. He thinks that "it was an autonomous domain for it neither originated from elite politics, nor did its existence depend on the latter" (4). In spite of the strong impact of colonialism, it was proceeding on by adjusting to the prevailing condition in different form and content. So, it was as old as colonialism itself. The development of nationalist consciousness, in accordance with elitist historiography, was an achievement either of colonialist administrators, policy, and culture of elite Indian personalities or ideas. Obviously, such historiography claims, Guha fails to "acknowledge or interprets the contribution made by people on their own, i.e. independently of the elite" (3). In other words, it ignores the people's politics, an autonomous domain, which outlived elite politics. This is to say that the subaltern politics is different from the elite politics. The elite groups mobilize their politics through adaptation to parliamentary institutions whereas subaltern classes through traditional organization of kinship and territoriality or class association. Even the strategy of political mobilization demonstrates the link between British colonialism and Bourgeoisie nationalism. The bourgeoisie nationalists adopted the legacies of colonialism. In a way they are successors of colonial regime. The elite historiography equally claims that "Indian Nationalism was primarily an idealist venture in which the indigenous elite led the life from subjugation to freedom" (2). It illustrates how the elite historiography ignores the roles the subaltern classes played independent of elite command or headquarters during the anti-imperialist movement. Likewise, the national narrative fails to speak on behalf of the people at the postcolonial nationalist project imposes a 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.

The coexistence of elite class and subaltern class was a wrong evidence of "the failure of the Indian bourgeoisie to speak for the nation. There were vast areas in the life and the consciousness of the people which will never integrate into their hegemony" (*Subaltern Studies I*). Despite colonialism's perpetration inhuman violence and injustices on people, the colonialist historiography claims that colonialism was based on people's assent. In short, it endows colonialism with hegemony.

Undoubtedly, the incubus known as the Raj was 'a dominance without hegemony' (*Selected Subaltern Studies V11*). Ranjit Guha, in his essay "Dominance without Hegemony and its Historiography", asserts that colonialism involved dominance without hegemony. In other words, it proceeded on with the help of coercion rather than consent from people. The people resisted against colonialism. The colonial historiography, however simply overlooks their resistance. It undermines their political sensibility. Now it is busy in proving the British colonialism as a rule that was based on the assent of people. It does not reflect the injustices colonialism inflicted upon the ruled people. On the top of all these some native historiographers fall prey to

the discourse of colonialism and its so-called project of improvement. All these factors are responsible behind the emergence of colonialism as a project of imperialism that involved the assent of the ruled.

On the contrary, Guha holds that colonialism was a rule without hegemony. This hegemony was either created out of coercion or it was simply imagined by colonialism historiographers while writing British history. At the same time, they however, believed that they wrote Indian history. Actually, they had written a little portion of British history. The South Asian history was just cue stage in the colonial career of the colonialist historiography. To ignore the thousand yearlong Indian history is definitely an act of colonial arrogance. After independence, the bourgeois nationalism inherited it as a colonial legacy. It boasts of representing all people as it has won the assent of the people. Like colonialism, bourgeois nationalism takes help of coercion rather than that of persuasion. So the bourgeois nationalism, not unlike colonialism, is also the domination without hegemony. So, Guha says, " In short, the piece of blindness about the structure of the colonial regime as domination without hegemony has been, for us, a total want of insight into the character of the successor regime--elite nationalism--too as domination without hegemony" (307). They thought that the elite party led the great anti-imperialist movements like Civil Disobedience, Non-cooperation, and Quit India. Subaltern Studies has developed a rather different idea, it claims that the subalterns defied high commands and the headquarters to make these straggles their own. For this purpose they appropriate these movements by framing them into the codes specific to the traditions of popular resistance and phrasing them in their idioms derived from the communitarian experience of working and living together. So, the bourgeois nationalist historiography, here emerges deceitful as it has made such anti-imperialist mobilization into the ground for bourgeois claims to hegemony and we know better what the ground reality was. As a matter of fact, their claims were contested even by the mobilization of themselves.

From the above discussion on subalternity, it can be said that Subaltern Studies aspires to "rewrite the nation outside the state centered national discourse that replicates colonial power knowledge in a world of globalization" (20). Subaltern studies, therefore, has brought a paradigmatic shift in the perspective through revision of elite historiographies. And its outcome, of course, is that subaltern people are now identified as the-agents of change. They possess the potential to bring about change so as to counter the elite hegemony.

Elite cultural groups as taken from the historiography from preliminary exercises of colonial history, whether done on a local or global scale, "abetted directly in laying the foundation of the Raj during the last decades of eighteenth century" (SS II: 11). This rudimentary historiography was soon followed up by a more mature and sophisticated discourse when the time came for the growing colonial state already secured in its control of the wealth of the land, they reinforce its apparatus of ideological control. Political persuasion remained as the main cause for official policy throughout the formative period of Raj as indigenous elite to attach them to the colonial regime. However the historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism--colonialist and bourgeois nationalist elitism. Elitism is the product of bourgeois ideology and colonial mentality of colonizers. Guha further argues:

Elitism is the product of the British rule in India, but have survived the transfer of power and been assimilated to neo-colonialist elitist historiography of the colonialist of neo colonialist forms of discourse in Britain and Indian respectively. Elitist historiography of colonialist or neo colonist type counts British writers and institutions among its principal protagonist but has its imitators in India and other countries (SS IV: 18).

Subaltern Studies emerged as a theory of change which sustained vigorous political commitment. The academic atmosphere was witnessing a great change at the time Post modernism and Post structuralism had a strong hold at the academic field. On the other hand, cultural studies were getting more and more attention from all sides. In this environment Subaltern studies also witnessed change along with Subaltern Studies IV. The reason was that SSIV included the writings of two US based theorists like Gayatri Chakravrti Spivak and Bernard S. Colin who brought cultural perspective in Subaltern Studies. Spivak gave linguistic as well as cultural mode to Subaltern Studies to shift to representation from politics. She, therefore, gave literary mode to Subaltern studies. Spivak, in the Subalten Studies V, reinforced the literary mode as she contributed to the

translation of Mahashwetadevi's "Standayani" as well as commentary on it entitled "A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: Madasweta Devi's "Standayani."

Subaltern Studies comes as a social theory to speak against coloniality and bourgeois nationalism. The focus of Subaltern Studies is on the consciousness of the subaltern classes specifically peasants. Gayatri Spivak's introduction to selected subaltern studies IV cites about subaltern consciousness and "the colonial subject" as the basis of theorization perceive their as making "a theory of consciousness or culture rather than specifically a theory of change" (4). Postcolonial Cultural Criticism and literary theory has embraced subaltern studies endeavor in deconstructing historiography.

[...] Subaltern consciousness is subject to the elite that are never fully "recoverable that it is always asked from its recovered signifiers indeed that it is effaced even as it is disclosed that it is irreducibly discursive.'Negative Consciousness' is conceived of having historical stage peculiar to the subaltern rather than the grounding positive view of consciousness, should not be generalized as the groups methodological presupposition. (S3 IV: 339)

Negative consciousness, for instance sees it as the consciousness not of being subaltern but that of the oppressors. Subaltern provides the model for a general theory of consciousness. Subaltern Consciousness, which is unavoidably a post phenomenological and post psychological issue. Some elitists objectify the subaltern and are caught in the game of knowledge as power. So, Subaltern Studies seems to suggest that its own subalternity in claiming a positive subject position for the subaltern might be reinscribed as a strategy for our times. Dipesh Chakravarty in his seminal essay, "Invitation to a Dialogue" points out about subaltern consciousness as the "peasant consciousness" (72).

The religious consciousness of the peasantry is not subjected to any determines and is made supra-historical. It is assumed that the peasantry has an ideal for at paradigmatically pure peasant consciousness marked by religiosity existed in a pure state especially in the nineteenth century (SS IV: 365).

Guha is not proposing to study peasant consciousness and its entity but only the consciousness of the insurgent peasants. Dipesh Chakravarty in his essay "Invitation to a Dialogue" writes:

The central aim of the subaltern studies is to understand the consciousness that informed and still informs political actions taken by the subaltern classes on their own, independently of any elite initiatives. It is only by giving this consciousness a central place in historical analysis that we see the subaltern as the maker of the history he or she lives out. (374)

Chakravarty further views about two opposing totalities — the elite and the subaltern, the feudal mode of power and the present communal mode of power. This two fold division, elites and subaltern, tends to undermine and supplement the Marxist method of class analysis, if it ignores class analysis and one-sidedly emphasizes subaltern action alone, subaltern studies is also supposed to be ill equipped to analyze the role and effect of colonialism. Then the class analysis should be the latest anti-imperialism within the communal consciousness.

Spivak represents the voice of difference among the major post colonialist theorists. Spivak presents the situation of subaltern members whose spokesperson becomes their life giver and master:

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

Spivak's attempt to speak on the behalf of subaltern class comes against the intellectual elites who can only present interpretation of the subaltern voice filtered through an intellectual elitist viewpoint. The actual subaltern is relegated to the position of subject rather than participants in a two way dialogue. Spivak provokes academician to understand how their positions of intellectuals and economic privilege limit their integrity while representing the subaltern. In her major essay, "Can Subaltern Speak?" Spivak clearly assess that subaltern cannot speak. The subaltern as a member of the non- ruling class has to face the bias of the elite intellectuals.

Spivak says, "There is every chance that the elite intellectuals overshadow the subaltern people whom he represents" (41). She draws the attention to the problem of representation; it is the privileged position of elite intellectual scholars that let them serve as the spokesperson of marginalized subaltern. This kind of representation does not stand in the socio-cultural reality rather it tends to give false impression about the represented subaltern class. The privileged elite manipulate in the representation of the subaltern group and this representation brings the elite writer to the lime light at the cost of the represented subaltern.

Veena Das views subaltern as a perspective to represented, excluded, marginalized group of subaltern among elite cultural groups in her seminal essay "Subaltern as Perspective". She opines that Subaltern Studies "make an important point in establishing the centrality of the historical moment of rebellion in understanding the subaltern as subjects of their own history" (SS VI: 312).

Subaltern Studies poses a serious challenge to some of dominant conceptions about tribes and castes in anthropological theory. This project performs in our understanding of tribes, castes or other such groups to restore to them their historical being. It is no longer possible to think for instance of tribes or inhabiting a world of nature. (SS VI: 314). Subaltern studies represents the deprived, marginalized caste and tribes in the national history as Veena Das views for co-existence among castes, classes, and regional and nationalities. The international context with the consciousness is being articulated.

Primarily Partha Chatterjee has discussed about the caste and subaltern relationship in his essay "Caste and Subaltern Consciousness" included in subaltern Studies VI. He opines that we have the clue to a possible method for analyzing the consciousness of the subaltern classes. We see this consciousness as contradictory, fragmented, held together in a more or less haphazard whole the common sense" (170).

For Chatterjee, the subaltern consciousness is not an autonomous whole but the "ambiguous, contradictory and multiform concept" (170). About the formation of subaltern consciousness, he says:

The contradiction unity of two opposed elements: one, the autonomous element which expresses the common, understanding of the members of a subaltern group engaged in the practical activity of transforming the world through their own labor often at the behest and certainly under the element which is borrowed from the dominant classes and which expresses the fact of the ideological submission of the subaltern group. (170)

Regarding the consciousness of the subaltern he says that it is not fixed but always in course of change. Subaltern Studies does not regard class as the principal concept in order to form consciousness among subaltern. For him, "Indian Society is based on hierarchy not on class" (174). Hence, class is replaced by caste system within the Indian sub-continent. For Chatterjee "caste is a feature of the superstructure of Indian society [...] caste is in fact the specifically Indian form of material relations at the base with its own historical dynamic, caste in other words is the form in which classes appear in Indian society" (76).

Dipesh Chakravarty sees Subaltern Studies as a postcolonial project of writing history. Hereby, the intellectuals' reach of Subaltern Studies now exceeds that of the discipline of history. Post-colonial theorists of diverse disciplinary backgrounds have taken interest in the series. Much discussed, for instance, are the ways in which contributors to Subaltern Studies have participated in contemporary critiques of history and nationalism, and of orientalism and Euro- centrism in the construction of social science knowledge. Chakravarty says that his concentrations on the relationship between postcolonialism and historiography which overlook the contributions that the other disciplines -- political science, legal studies, anthropology, literature, cultural studies and economics -- have made to the field of subaltern studies. In his one of the major essay "Subaltern Studies and Postcolonial Historiography" he writes:

This essay is motivated by a question that has the discipline of history in focus: in what ways can one read the original historic graphic agenda of Subaltern Studies as not simply yet another version of Marxist/radical history but as possessing a necessarily postcolonial outlook? I concentrate on the discipline of history for two reasons (a) the relationship between the new field of postcolonial writing and historiography has not yet received the attention it deserves and (b) to answer critics who say that Subaltern Studies was once 'good' Marxist theory in the same way that the English tradition of; 'history

from below' was but that it lost its way when it came into contact with Said's orientalism, Spivak's deconstructionism or Bhaba's analysis of colonial discourse .(212)

*Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* by Benita Parry offers an enlightening and audacious study of colonialism and postcolonial theory. In this volume of new and reprinted essays, Parry moves away from the textualism predominant in postcolonial studies and concentrates on colonialism's socio- material conditions. She proposes an alternative reading and critical practice which focuses on the predatory nature of colonialism. From the very opening chapter she vigorously criticizes the theorists of colonial discourse for reducing colonialism to a mere textual and cultural event. As she highlights the violence and imbalance of colonial encounters, she urges the critics to evolve towards a more materialist critique that connects imperialism's epistemic violence and material aggression.

From the above descriptions, we find that many theorists speak about the consciousness of the subaltern people and in the novel too this researcher is trying to elaborate the consciousness of subaltern character, Balram Halwai who becomes consciousness about his group in such a way that he openly challenges his masters.

The novel, *The White Tiger* opens with the story of Balaram Halwai , the protagonist of the novel, a young man was born and brought up in a remote village named Laxmangarh in Bihar who narrates his story of his life in an epistolary manner to the Chinese Prime Minister who visits India in an official job . In his letters he unlocks his heart and gives full description of his life story from childhood to adulthood and finally as a man of wealthy businessman. Like a true realistic narrator he introduced his rural village, the rural Bihar, the feudal system of the village, extreme poverty of the same village, finally the shining India.

The novel is replete with the description of Zamindari system, corrupt political system, exploitation, rise of local insurgency, prostitution, degraded family structure and poor health services etc. At the outset of the novel we came to know that the epithet 'white tiger' was given by his school teacher to Balaram for his extraordinary merit and intellect who was a son of a rickshaw puller. But he was taken out of the school and forced to work in a teashop and afterwards who had to crush coal and clean the dirty tables of the teashop for his livelihood. As a child he is similar to the heroes of the Dickens's novels. His ambition to be a driver and becoming a well-trained driver leads the novel to the crisis moment of his life, who in the course of the time raises his voice and proves that the subaltern can / will speak. Adiga made Balaram a counterpart of the subaltern who of course speaks through the crime which he did in a way which is apparently as an act of psychological disorder. His turning point of life is when he is hired by the elite village landlord as the driver of his newly arrived son and daughter from London. Balaram wants to be rich like his master Mr. Ashok, when he sees the Delhi city after migrating into the capital of India. Being a subaltern counterpart Balaram tries to be a gentleman like his master through the filling of his great expectations who nourishes "the dream of escapes-of breaking away from the bank of mother Ganga into whose murky depths have seeped the remains of the hundred generations"(Adiga 7).

In Delhi Balaram experiences two kinds of India with those who are eaten and on the other side with those who ate. Balaram wants to be a counterpart of eater, someone with a big belly and being a white tiger desires to break out the cage of the freedom. Balaram decides to kill his master to fulfill the great expectation –becoming a big bellied man. The violent decision to become a free person and the desire to metamorphose himself into so called gentleman or as a counterpart of the capitalists is a turning point of the novel.

Having witnessed of all kinds of corruption, loot and murder and the gambling of money to buy politicians by Ashok, his master, Balaram decides to steal and kill Ashok. Adiga creates an extraordinary picture of the subaltern protagonist .Here the theory of the Spivak had been applied through the character of the hero in a different way. In Spivak's theory silence is the most important trope and the positive replica to the question "Can the subaltern speak" propounded in the novel of Adiga. According to Spivak subaltern is the counterpart of the society whose voice and the activities and other expression of power had been muted, whose voice had been snatched away and whose indomitable force had been lost or swept away because in respect of the power of voice, representation and above all the question of identity play a vital part in their

survival. Silence, pain and oppression are the fundamental parts of the subaltern classes who always try to fight for their survival but their voicelessness became obstacle for their survival from the daily to daily life. Hence they cannot represent themselves in the society. This can be stated in the following lines:

Since the marginalized have known only the language which has been handed down to them by their exploiters, they should, as Fanon would have probably suggested, use the language of violence at their disposal to give at back and at the same time to continue to deconstruct it from within (Randhawa 33).

Balaram is a typical figure who kills his master in order to get a life which is full of gentlemanliness, to get back his long cherished desire be a part of the glamorized world. Poverty is a curse which he tries to soothe by negating the Spivak's concept subaltern cannot speak. He finds wealth to him is the occasional invitee and the world is too much with him as everything which we called so called politeness is nothing but a vacuum. The marginalized people like him don't understand the true beauty of life which beset the whole world. But he is the eyewitness of the rampant corruption of the life of his master Ashok who possesses a degraded moral quality. But in respect of justice he cannot break all the boundaries of cruelty, injustice and humiliation.

His dwelling place is like a dustbin which is infected with mosquitoes and other insects. The condition can be stated as like- "In the middle of the night...noises woke me up. The wall was covered with cockroaches...I could see their dark bodies...they kept landing on the net and getting crushed" (Adiga 131). Again if he walks into the mall someone would say "Hey, That man is a paid driver! What 's he doing in here?" Everywhere Balaram is the victim of the utter humiliation and exploitation. Balaram does not want to be a 'rooster' in a 'coop', he does not want to be 'eaten' rather desperately wait to be part 'eaters'. Balaram gradually loses the sense of patience, justice and humanity and chooses the beaten track just to gain materialistic prosperity. He is lured by the way of crime to farewell the abject condition of his life and his consciousness leads him towards the external glamorized world. He experiences all the political, social, official and moreover all controlling power are under the control of money. The administrative system, police system and the system of bureaucracy had been gripped by the businessmen or so called rich, elite and political leaders. Balaram Halwai, a postcolonial subaltern is victim of class, caste and gender who in Delhi feels the great gap between the poor and rich and all these disparities between the two classes create in him a motive of revenge, revolt, resistance. His father's cherished plan to get out himself from the trap of the marginalized territorial condition haunts him always and regenerates in him a dream to become a rich person. Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak propounded the theory that Subaltern can't speak. But her seminal essay is on another prospect of demonstration that if the subaltern is able to speak he/she is not the subaltern. Spivak on the conclusion of her essay states that subaltern who does speak is not a subaltern. Balaram Halwai was born in Laxmangarh is typical example of darkness of India where the society is divided into two sections –the upper class and the lower class and the lower class is always exploited by the upper class. The scenario is everywhere, even in Delhi. So Balaram takes the way of murdering his master Ashok and proves that subaltern can speak.

Arvind Adiga in his novel shows creating Balaram, the protagonist of his novel *The White Tiger* subaltern can speak through crime. Murder obviously a heinous act in the eyes of the law and no civilized society tolerates this kind of vulnerable act. The law and order always maintain the peaceful and orderly atmosphere in the society. But in delineating the character of Balaram and later on Ashok Sharma a Bangalore based successful entrepreneur, Adiga shows us that the same person who was a rustic, a marginalized, oppressed and moreover a subaltern –unable to speak becomes a successful businessman, a rich, an entrepreneur, an elite and an aristocratic part of the so-called civilized society. Balaram's life from Laxmangarh to Dhanbad then to Delhi and Bangalore is a metamorphosing process of his life from innocence to experience and then a rootless person becomes a rooted and finally from a subaltern to a elite businessman. His changing can be summarized in the following lines "all these changes happened in me because they happened first in Mr. Ashok. He returned from America an innocent man, but life in Delhi corrupted him – and once the master of the Honda city becomes corrupted, how can the driver stay innocent?"(Adiga 197). Balaram's murder is the outburst of silence and the silence gets a way to express it out. He proves through this murder that the subaltern can

speak and the murdering is like the purgation of the cathartic feeling. The bitter experiences as a driver through which Balaram undergoes which narrates like that:

“You have hours to yourself while waiting for your employer.

You can spend this time chit-chatting and scratching your groin. You can read murder and rape magazines. You can develop the chauffeur’s habit- it’s a kind of yoga, really- of putting a finger in your nose and letting your mind go blank for hours (they call it ‘bored driver’s asana). You can sneak a bottle of Indian liquor into the car – boredom makes drunks of so many honest drivers.” (149)

Balaram knows all types of crime which his master has committed. But never confesses that crime to others because he is the servant or a slave of his master. The servants are the part of the subaltern classes and hence subaltern cannot speak. Balaram is disgusted with that kind of the slavery and bondage who always feels guilty of his rootlessness dumb condition. He decides to murder his master and after committing the murder he never feels guilty of that kind of heinous work. His committing the murder is like the breaking the silence of the subaltern. Balaram wants to feel the masterly act “just for a day, just for an hour, just for a minute, what it means not to be a servant” ( 321). So he speaks and rejoices through the murdering of his master.

Postcolonial writings invoked the notion of social justice, resistance, freedom and egalitarianism in its attempt to counter dictatorial structures of racial discrimination, prejudice and ill-treatment. These writings, emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonialization, and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre. (Ashcroft 2). The landowners, the industrialists and the upper classes have always exercised control over the poor peasants, laborers and the working classes. This repressive and stiffening system cannot be exterminated unless the world remains divided into two stratas, the powerful and the powerless. Ania Loomba, in her book *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* writes:

The newly independent nation- states makes available the fruits of liberation only selectively and unevenly: the dismantling of colonial rule did not automatically bring about changes for the better in the status of women, the working class and the peasantry in most colonized countries (11-12).

Negating Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s concept that subaltern cannot speak, Adiga made Balaram speak of course through crime in a manner of a typical psychopath. Jennifer Copley has rightly stated:

While most people’s actions are guided by a number of factors, such as the desire to avoid hurting other people, the psychopath selects a course of action based on only one factor—what can he get out of it. This cold-blooded mode of reasoning enables the psychopath to commit acts that most people’s consciences would not allow. (qtd. in Sebastian).

Silence, pain, oppression and exploitation constitute these marginalized classes who are now globally struggling for their survival, their voicelessness, and right to self-representation: As Randhawa puts:

Since the marginalized have known only the language which has been handed down to them by their exploiters, they should if need be, as Fanon would have probably suggested, use the language of violence at their disposal to give at back and at the same time continue to deconstruct it from within.(Randhawa 33).

Marginalized class is entwined in sub-human social subsistence, utter deficiency, economic exploitation, representing a subculture of compliance and political subjection. Arbinda Adiga’s *The White Tiger* brilliantly unravels the voice of subaltern in which marginal farmers, landless labors, jobless youths, poor, auto and taxi drivers, servants, prostitutes, beggars, and underprivileged figure. At the heart of the novel, Balaram Halwai, the protagonist, truly represents the voice of subaltern people who intensely suffer from the lack and deprivation, the resignation and silence, loneliness and alienation, and subjugation and subordination. By showing the protagonist growing from rags to riches through the Machiavellian tricks of trade and his aspiration to do something good for the underclass people, Adiga is projecting the emerging subaltern consciousness in the novel. When the unspeakability of subaltern has been given frontal focus on postcolonial studies quite contrarily, Adiga projects his protagonist having immense potentiality to speak through different

agencies and power in favor of the subaltern thereby showing that at times subaltern can go beyond the severe unspeakability.

The novel can be taken as articulation of rebellious consciousness of the subaltern people. The protagonist of novel Balram Halwai in the novel represents the severe voice of minority class that is subjected to be out of league of the society. Balram is a tragic figure of subaltern class who raises his voice at the highest level through the slaughter of his own gullible master, Ashok Sharma.

Balram Halwai, the son of a rickshaw puller is born in a village called Laxmangarh, the dark heart of Dhaka, where downtrodden and unlucky people are destined to riot. He is a smart lad and the fact was even recognized by a school inspector, who praises him as a 'white tiger', the rarest of animal, the culture that only comes along once in a generation. The school inspector promises to arrange scholarship and proper schooling for the young boy.

But his family takes him out of school and puts him to work at a teashop after the death of his father. Most importantly, he has to earn money to pay for the marriage of one of his sister in the family. As he crushes coal and wipe tables, he nurses a dream of escape of breaking away from the banks of mother Ganga into whose murky depths have escaped the remains of a hundred generation. Balram begins at the very bottom without as much as a name his family calls him only "Munna" or "boy". His mother might have named him as but she was too busy dying of tuberculosis and his father was also too busy in pulling rickshaw, weakening himself to be almost claimed by the same disease. A school teacher has to name and later, a school official decides on his date of birth in order to facilitate the stealing of his vote. Frustrated by his miserable life, Balram manages to escape his village and moves to Delhi after being hired as a chauffeur for a rich landlord's son, daughter in law and their two Pomeranian dogs. Balram is not first a driver, it turns out his expected, to cook, clean and do whatever else his master needs him to do. Balram thus comes in the whirlpool of suppression and subordination.

In Ranjit Guha's succinct definition, the word "subaltern" is ' a name for the general attribute of subordination[...] whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age , gender, and office or in any other way"(27). When Balram comes to Delhi, he is under the utter subordination of his master. When his master moves to New Delhi , Balram moves with him and drives him around the capital as he greases the palms of all the various political sizers and parliamentarians who need greasing in order to ensure the family business survives. One hundred thousand rupees lee two hundred thousand rupees thee, and Balram sits on the front seat seeing nothing but witnessing it all. From the wheel of the Honda, Balram first sees Delhi. There he finds his naïve country beliefs are challenged by the cut- throat network of city servants, the disdain of the upper classes and his outer experiences and the perceptions. City is a revelation. Balram calls himself, half-baked like many others in the country not allowed finishing schooling with only a smattering of all sorts of knowledge.

After he begins to work for Ashok Sharma he completely loses his freedom. All the time, he has to serve for the good of his master. A little dirty space is provided for his, which is full of mosquitoes and cockroaches. Balram's master is different from the average landlord, a wealthy man but also considerate to his faithful employee. However, he is forced to reassess his position when asked to carry the care after his master's wife pinky madam, accidentally knocks down and kills a street urchin dummy a drunken escapade that our subject has little control over. Balram doesn't want to spend the rest of the days at the money of his employer and starts to think how easy it would be to kill him and start a new life for himself.

Finally, he kills his master, Ashok Sharma takes his bag full of riches and starts his only company white Tigers Drives. This company was sixteen drives who work in shift with twenty-six vehicles. He advertises his company through websites to make it for known. Next, he makes a plan to start a real estate business in Bangalore because it will be much demanded in 2010. He speaks to himself that he is always a man who sees tomorrow when others see today. Not only this he even plans for after three or four years back. He thinks he might sell everything, take the many and start a school an English language school for poor children in Bangalore. He says that school will be full of white tigers unleashed in Bangalore.

Balram is born and raised in darkness which is far away from Bangalore. The earlier writes used to write of good Bangalore starts but Arbinda Adiga chooses to write more about darkness as setting is explained by Balram:

I am talking of a place at list a threat of the country of fertile place, full of rich fields and wheat fields and ponds in the middle of those fields chocked with lotuses and water lilies and water buffalo wedding through the pond and chewing on the lotuses and ladies those who live in the place call it the darkness. (14)

The setting is completely in a rustic place so it is a subaltern setting. It is in the sense that Adiga does not choose to write about cleanliness. Laxmangarh, the unknown village of India is nearly Ganga which is full of dirty things straw, saggy parts of human bodies, buffalo carrion and several different kinds of industrial acids. Not only this we can further see the defunct electricity poles, broken water taps and children to line and short and with oversized head from which vivid eyes shine, like the guilty car scarce of the garment of the India everywhere. This is a rustic glimpse of the village the settings where servants live in India is also further described minutely:

I don't know buildings are destroyed in your country but in India every apartment block every house every hotel is built with servant Quarters some time at the back as in the case of Buckingham tower B block. Underground – a woman of interconnected rooms where all the drivers, cooks, sweepers, maids and chefs of the apartment block can rest, sleep and wait. (41)

Not only has the setting, the characterization itself speaks the subalternity. The body of the mother of Balram only gets the chance to wear new clothes in its funeral ceremony. If clearly state that she has spent her whole life in a miserable and poor condition Balaram speaks to his mother:

My father and Krishna, my brother stand behind her to bear the front end of the care bed which bore the corpse; my uncles who are Munna, Jay ram, Divyaram and Umesh stand behind holding up the other end. My mother's body has been wrapped from head to toe in a saffron silk clothes, which is covered in rose petals and jasmine garlands I don't think she has ever had such fine thing to wear in her life. (16)

The plight of underclass becomes pretty clear here. The subaltern people or under class people have to face trial, trouble and tribulation amidst the rich people Balram Halwai who represents the true voice of subaltern people having some absurdities and anomalies of different kind manage to adopt tricks of trade and begins to think to talk action Dipesh Chakrabarty in his essay "Inhabitation to a Dialogue" writes:

The central aim of the subaltern studies is to understand the consciousness that informed and still informs political actions taken by the subaltern classes on their outer independently of any elite initiatives. It is any by giving these carcasses a central place in historical analysis that we see the subaltern as the maker of the history he or she lives out. (37)

Chakrawarty further views about two opposing totalities- the elite and the subaltern, the federal mode of power and the present communicable mode of power. This twofold division elites and subaltern trends to undermine and supplement the Marxist method of clears analysis that the suddenly emphasizes subaltern action alone. Subaltern Studies is also supposed to be ill-equipped to analyze the role and effect of colonialism. Then the class analysis should be the latest anti-imperialism without the communal cashness.

Spivak represents the voice of difference among the major post colonialist theorists; Spivak presents the situation of subaltern members whose spoke person becomes their life giver and master:

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

Spivak's attempt to speak on the behalf of subaltern class comes against the intellectual elites who can only present interpretation of the subaltern voice filtered through an intellectual elitist view point. The actual subaltern is relegated to the position of subject rather than participants in a two way dialogue. Spivak

provokes academicians to understand how their positions of intellectuals and economic privilege limit their integrity while representing the subaltern in her major essay can subaltern speaks Spivak clearly assess that subaltern cannot speak the subaltern as the member of the non-ruling class has to face the bias of the elite intellectuals.

Though for Spivak subaltern cannot speak, Adiga, however, subverts that notion. Subaltern not only speak but also at times they can go to the heights extreme to get their rights. Adiga superbly projects his protagonist having talked with Chinese premier very smartly, he adopts some many tricks by observing his surroundings it is through the modes operandi of so-called rich people Balram produces his idea. He, then plots some plans and pounces upon his master in the length and breadth of the novel Adiga unravels the dark side of India--social and political absurdities and anomalies non-implementation of state, policy, defunct education system, perverse superstitions dowry system, unsystematically growing organizations and so many others injustices. All these maladies are the root cause of the frustration of subaltern people that ultimately leads towards hostile relationship between rich and poor.

Partha Chatterjee also discusses on subaltern consciousness but it is similar to the line of Spivak. Chatterjee in his essay "Caste and Subaltern Consciousness" says, "[w]e have the clue to a possible method for analysis the consciousness of the subaltern classes. We see the consciousness as contradictory fragmented held together in a more or less haphazard whole the common size" (170), for him the subaltern consciousness is not an autonomous whole but ambiguous. However, Adiga disregards this idea flatly in the novel *The White Tiger* by producing the kind of protagonist who is well aware of his class and for making the life of the people of his class fertile and fruitful he plans a lot.

### **Conclusion**

The novel is centered on Balram Halwai, a son of a rickshaw puller, destined to make sweets becomes Ashok Sharma. His transformation from Munna—Balram Halwai—White—Ashok Sharma is the blue print for the rise of underclass. Balram is the strong voice of underclass in which marginal farmers, landless laborers, jobless youths, poor, auto and taxi drivers, servants, prostitutes, beggars and unprivileged figure. The underclass is the result of our polity, bureaucratic set-up, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, caste and culture conflict, superstitions, social taboos, dowry practice, economic disparity, Zamindari system, corrupt education system, poor health services, police and judicial working. These forces collectively operate to perpetuate the underclass. This underclass constitutes Dark India.

Adiga masterfully describes the city of Delhi and its influence on changing Balram's psyche. Adiga gives detailed description of the chaos perpetrated by urban life on the mind of a rural simpleton. He painstakingly describes the impact of uncontrolled urban expansion and its impact on the ecology and environment. He also satirizes the senseless development and construction going on in urban areas and the face of poverty hidden behind urban glamour. Balram's tale is one of gradual deterioration from Edenic innocence to Satanic corruption, aided and abetted by a scheming mind and the overwhelming inequality inherent in urban life which defeats all theories of social justice.

The recourse to crime is not good for the society but Balram as an outburst of suppression and oppression of subaltern people from the part of rich people in India takes the road to crime and becomes a successful entrepreneur in Bangalore. Even if he goes from rags to riches through foul means, he is conscious about the subaltern people. He plans to open schools for the downtrodden people and instill the sense of consciousness in the mind of poor people in India who have in utterly isolated and ignored by so-called civilized people. Though India is seen as a superpower country in information technology, it has dark side also--The society and community of utterly poor people covers most part of the country.

Through the character of Balram, Adiga is trying to make the the government of India aware of the fact that unless the voice of subaltern is unheard, more Balram will be produced in the society, who being conscious of the existing gap between rich and poor, can take foul means to counterattack the system itself. When trial, trouble and tribulation of subaltern people cross the limit, Balram like subaltern subject can take recourse to foul means to take revenge with the existing system as Balram has done in the novel.

**References**

- Adiga, Arvind. *The White Tiger*. India: Haper Collins Publishers, 2008
- Arnold, David. "Gramsci and peasant Subalternity in India." *Journal of Peasant Studies* II. London: New York and Rutledge, 1984. 155-77
- Bhadra Gautam. "The Mentality of Subalternity: Kantanama or Rajdharna". *Selected Subaltern Studies*. Ed, Ranjit Guha. Delhi: OUP, 1998. 63-69.
- Chakrabarty, Depesh. "Inhabitation to a Dialogue." *Subaltern Studies*. Vol. IV. Ed. Ranjit Guha. Delhi: OUP. 1986. 360-76
- Chatterjee, Partha. *Caste and Subaltern Consciousness*. Calcutta: Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, 1998.
- Das, Veena. "Subaltern as perspective." *Subaltern Studies Vol. VI*. Ed. Ranjit Guha. Delhi: OUP, 1989. 311-24
- Gransci, Antino. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. India: Orient Longman Limited, 1996.
- Guha, Ranjit. *Selected Subaltern Studies*. Delhi: OUP, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Ed. Subaltern Studies I*. Delhi: OUP, 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Subaltern Studies Vol. II*. Delhi: OUP, 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Subaltern Studies Vol. V*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Guha, Ranajit. *A Subaltern Studies Reader*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1995.
- Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London: Routledge. 1998.
- Ludden, Devid. *Reading Subaltern Studies*. New York: New York Press, 2006.
- Mathur, Rashmi. "Turbulence of Globalization in Rising Metropolis- A Case study of Toltz's *A Fraction of the Whole* and Adiga's *The White Tiger*." *Irwle* Vol. 7 No. I. January 2011. (1-8)
- Rana, Randeep. "Perils of Socio-economic Inequality-A Study of Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*." *Language in India Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow*. Volume 11: 10 October 2011 (454-460)
- Randhawa, Harbir Singh. Ed. *Dalit Literature: Contents, Trends and Concerns*. New Delhi: Swarup Book Publishers.2010.
- Sebastian, J A. "Poor-Rich Divide in Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*". *Journal of Alternate Perspectives in Social Sciences*.1.2(2009): 229-245.
- Sheen Divakar, Evelyn. "Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Adiga's *The White Tiger* as Social Critiques" *Language in India Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow*. Volume 11: 6 June, 2011. (1-16)
- Singh, Krishna. "Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*: The Voice of Underclass—A Postcolonial Dialects." *Journal of Literature, Culture and Media Studies*. Vol. I Number 2. (98-112)
- Spivak, Gyatari Chakravarty. "Can Subaltern Speak?" *The postcolonial Studies Reader*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Rutledge, 2006. 45-66
- Want, Lily. "The Poetics and Politics of Cultural Studies in Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*." *Asiatic*, Vol. 5, No. 1, June 201. (69-77)
-