

SUBALTERN STUDIES

Dr. Reenu Jain

Associate Professor & Head
Department of History
R.G. (P.G.) College, Meerut

"In critical theory and post colonialism, the term Subaltern designates the populations which are socially, politically and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure of the Colony and of the Colonial homeland".

Some definitions to start : Decolonization the process of removing an Imperial power over a colonized region (1947-1997) Post Colonial after Colonization is over, or when decolonization is complete. Post Colonial theory / studies, the study of the formerly colonized regions and their independent development.

Historians who use this term take it from Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) an Italian Marxist and Communist who was imprisoned for a long time by Mussolini's police until his death at age 46. In prison, he wrote notebooks on politics, history and philosophy. He declared that the Subaltern was the Subjected underclass in a society on whom the dominant power exerts its hegemonic influence.

Why choose the term "Subaltern"? What does it mean According to my hardy, OED It means, of inferior status or rank : subordinate; hence, of rank, power, authority action.

How historians use the term – Historians have tended to use this term in a way that takes back the History much the same way that the term queer has been brought into the language of queer theory, subaltern has been a way for historians to expand their language to recognize the historically subordinate position of the lives of various groups of people, but in recognizing then "Subalternity" giving them a voice and an agency.

Subaltern studies emerged around 1982 as a series of journal articles published by Oxford University Press in India. A group of Indian scholars trained in the west wanted to reclaim their History. Its main goal was to retake history for the under classes for the voices that had not been heard previous.

Scholars of the subaltern hoped to break away from histories of the elites and the Eurocentric bias of the current imperial History. In the main, they wrote against the "Cambridge School" which seemed to uphold the Colonial legacy – i.e. It was elite centred. Instead, they focused on Subaltern in terms of class, caste, gender, race, language and culture. They espoused the idea that there may have been political dominance, but that this was not hegemonic. The Primary leader was Ranjit Guha who had written works on peasant uprisings in India. Another of the leading scholars of Subaltern studies is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. She draws on a number of theoretical positions in her analysis of Indian History deconstruction, maxims, feminism. She was highly critical of current histories of India that were told from the Vantage point of the colonizers and presented a story of the colony via the British administrators. What she and other historians (Including Ranjit Guha) wanted was to reclaim their history, to give voice to the subjected peoples. Any other history merely reconstructs imperialist hegemony and does not give voice to the people those who experienced colonial incursion. According to the Subaltern studies group, this history is designed to be a "Contribution made by people on their own, that it, independently of the elite".

The subaltern studies introduced a new trend in the historical research in modern Indian historiography in 1960.

Subaltern a term taken from the Antonio Gramscis the Italian socialist and thinker his manuscript "Prison Notebooks" meaning of inferior ranker or common people, whether of class, caste, age, gender, etc. In brings to light the lower section of the Indian people hitherto neglected by historiography. A series of subaltern studies volumes were published on Indian national movement

under the editorship of Ranajit guha. He protests that the historiography of that Indian nationalist is best with the prejudiced elitism of two kinds, the colonial or imperialist approach. To the subaltern historians there are only two sections – the elitists and subaltern. So it is the time to write the history of subalterns. The important subaltern writers like David Arnold, Gyan Sarkar, Julie Stephens, Aravind Das, M.K. Chandra have enriched the subaltern historiography.

The Indian scholar in history has to maintain all the new western ideas in the field of historical method, digest them fully and also go back to our own traditions and examine them carefully and critically. We cannot develop without planning our feet firmly on the bedrock of our own traditions. It is only through this study of the wide range of classical and modern languages and their literature in India that we get a passport to enter the portals of Indian culture. It would be an interesting study of institute a comparison between the deviation from the correct historical standard to which Indian history has been subjected by the nationalist sentiments of Indians on the one hand and the nationalist-cum-imperialistic ideas of Englishmen on the other.

The ongoing industrialization and urbanization the population explosion, The dehumanization, criminalization of politics, the growth of materialism on the one hand and obscurantism and Anachronistic fundamentalism on the other hand are the great challenges to their. It is upto the Intellegentia to respond provided guidelines. So, the best in our heritage could be preserved and blended with rational thinking, science and technology.

In the final analysis, research methodology is like medical science in scientific sense. It has no nationality, it is universal in character, Historical research is no exception to this rule but there are more complications wrought by the national pride and sentiments, even without our conscious involvement, then a discovered at a glance. At the same time we have to study our history with over own prospective.

REFERENCE

1. Carr, E.H., What Is History, Vintage Books, New York.
2. Warder, A.K., An Introduction to Indian Historiography, Bombay, 1972.
3. Kosambi, D.D., An Introduction to The Study of Indian History, Bombay 1975.
4. Philips, C.H., Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, London, 1961.
5. Roy N.R., Sources For The History of India, Calcutta, 1978-80.
6. Thapar R., Social History of Ancient India : Vedic Age, Bombay, 1951-61.
7. Ranjit Gupta, On Some Aspects of Historiography of Colonial India, Subaltern Studies, Oxford University Press.
8. Mazumdar R.C., Nationalist Historian.