

Representation of the Subaltern in Pandey's *Sallipir*

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“Man’s history is waiting in patience for the triumph of the insulted man.”

(Tagore 328)

Abstract

Shifting away from the trend of main stream literature that chronicles the heroic deeds of the powerful people, Nayan Raj Pandey's novels document the grim tales of those downtrodden, voiceless and marginalized people whose desperate attempt for survival have gone unnoticed for years. Unlike the tradition of romanticizing the Sherpa community's experience of climbing snow clad mountains in terms of courage and bravery, in his latest novel 'Sallipir' he poignantly but realistically documents the grim experiences of the Sherpa community, who have been climbing the mountains as the porters of the elite adventurers for generations. Why do these people, though reluctant, continue the same occupation despite the tragic experiences? Based on qualitative mode of analysis, the present article aims to answer this question by analyzing the novel from the perspective of Subaltern Studies. It claims these people are forced to negotiate and continue the same occupation at the cost of their life because they belong to the bottom of power relation as subaltern. Since the novel is in Nepali language I use transliteration and my own translation based on free translation while taking extracts form the novel.

Key Words: Subaltern, Subaltern Studies, marginalized, hegemony, voiceless and power-relation

1. Emergence of Subaltern Studies as a Non-Western Academic Discipline

Etymologically subaltern refers to someone below the rank. Initially, the British military officers used this term for their junior subordinates. *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term subaltern as, “an officer in the British army below the rank of captain, especially a second Lieutenant” (1434). Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist, for the first time used this term in a non-military term to refer to peasants, workers, laborers and other groups who are denied access to power (Prakash 1476). In Post-Colonial theory it is used as a reference to colonized people in the South Asian context. As a non-Western, Post-Colonial concept, in literature it is commonly used to refer to the downtrodden belonging to the lower caste and class, weak sex and economically poor groups in the hierarchical social system of the Third World. It is commonly used as “a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian Society” often expressed in terms of gender and caste (Childs and Williams 16). Now, it is commonly used to refer to people who have had to continue to have limited, if any, access to institutions of socio-economic-political power across the society.

As an intellectual project or discipline Subaltern Studies came to exist in 1980s with the aim to “promote the study and discussion of subalternist themes in South Asian Studies” (Prakash 1477). Appropriating Gramsci’s notion of “subaltern” a group of historians in India initiated Subaltern Studies Group (SSG) to rewrite the historiography of Indian nationalism. Ranjit Guha, one of the founder members of the group and the founding editor of the *Subaltern Studies* series, in *Subaltern Studies III* clarifies the aim of the group is to make “subaltern groups the subjects of their own history, we are indeed opposed to much of the prevailing academic practice in historiography and the social; sciences for its failure to acknowledge the subaltern as the maker of his own destiny. This critique lies at the very heart of our project” (vii). It is an advocacy for the voiceless. The Subaltern Studies scholars propose to rethink history from the

perspective of the subaltern. Now the Subaltern Studies has moved beyond the national boundaries of India into Brazil, Latin America, Japan and Africa. In the literary discourse, the issue of subaltern is brought to the front by Spivak's seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Her answer to this rhetorical question is 'no.' She explains when a subaltern speaks s/he is no longer a subaltern. She is concerned with representing the silent subaltern. The subaltern literary scholars engage with the task of examining subaltern lives and experiences in literary narratives.

The novel, *Sallipir* is about subaltern characters. They represent subaltern position within the dominant structure of Nepali society. To the extent that subaltern is made central character, literary discourse complements the agenda of SSG. It is the role of the intellectual to speak for the subaltern, by granting literary space to them. This article argues Pandey as an intellectual engages with the delicate responsibility to represent the issues of the subalterns and aims to analyze the novel from the subaltern perspective.

2. Textual Analysis

2.1. Background

Set in Khumbu region, *Sallipir* portrays the hard life of three generations of Sherpa Community, Chhiring, the father, Pema, the daughter and Phurwa, the grandson and the people associated to them residing in the region. Being located in the hinterland of the nation the people of this region are deprived from the basic facilities like transportation, communication and education. The hard rocky land of the region yields very less food products. Consequently, besides farming and animal husbandry most of the males work as porters for the mountaineers. The only support for them is the yak which is used as beast of burden along the life sustainer that provides them all sort of milk products. So they keep yaks but in the lack of pasture land they keep on moving from one place to another within the Himalayan region and across the border to Tibet. In the process they become

victims of different type of injustices along with the natural calamities. However, they take no action against those injustices and silently negotiate with the situation for they represent the silenced, marginalized and oppressed group of the hilly region of Nepal. Most of the Sherpa males die being buried in the snow while climbing the mountains. But the government turns the blind eyes to these tragic incidents and romanticizes their death as an act of bravery and courage and provide nominal amount in the name of compensation. But the irony is, the dependent of the decease are illiterate and even cannot read the government documents and get the amount in time. Besides they need to go to the capital city, which is hostile towards the others, to receive the compensation, walking on foot for many days, and then changing many buses.

Contesting the master narrative constructed by the nation's elite that valorizes the experiences of climbing the snow peaked mountains by these Sherpa people as an adventurous activity, in *Sallipir* Pandey poignantly traces the sad and tragic fate of these people who are forced to climb the mountain to sustain themselves. He depicts the suffering of these Sherpa, having no existence and significance they live like the beast of burden and untimely die being buried in the snow. They suffer because of the incongruities and domination of the ruling elite. Through this novel, Pandey has given a voice to these voiceless marginalized people in the society.

2.2 Pema as a Subaltern Woman

The novel commences with the introduction of a skilled, happy and healthy girl, Pema the protagonist of the novel, an orphan Sherpa girl from the Khumbu region playing with her friend Karma. The plot of the novel, then, progresses tracing her misfortune, foregrounding her struggle as a socially, politically, economically and historically insignificant character. She is up bred as an orphan since both of her parents left her alone. Being subalterns they are

unaware about the child right and cannot realize the importance of their presence in Pema's life and leave her to be another subaltern.

Though Pema has been provided with shelter and food that saved her from starvation and death she did not have happy child life. She is aware that her parents did not love each other because of poverty. If they had enough money they would have maintained a harmonious relationship. If her father was rich Gyalmo would not have remarried the rich foreigner and Pema would not have been deprived from the love of her parents. Born as a subaltern she has not only been deprived from the physical facilities but has also been deprived from the love and affection of her biological parents. When her mother was leaving her she wanted to say that she too wanted to go along with her. But being a subaltern child she could not voice her desire to her mother. Pema, as a helpless, destitute subaltern has now forgotten to desire, to aspire and dream for life. The eyes devoid of desire and aspiration look quite heavy and tired (Pandey 16). She has no one who she can confide and share her woes – so she will go to the shed and talk to the yak.

Though her desires have not met, she did not die of hunger, she could survive because of her grandparents who fed and sheltered her. Hence, she has no grudges against them. She has had the belief that she was destined to live the deprived life. Gramsci views that through consent “subalterns participate in the hegemony created and controlled by the dominant group. The subalterns have no independent space from which to articulate their voice because hegemony conditions them to believe in the dominant values” (Chaturvedy 28). It shows her subaltern consent to the dominant feudal belief; the poor suffer not because of the unequal distribution of the sources but because of their fate. Gramsci insists that intellectuals have the responsibilities to “search out signs of subaltern initiative and class consciousness and effective political action” (ibid).

Indeed, the novelist is able to arouse our sense of pity and sympathy for Pema as a silent, submissive, defenseless and deprived woman. Her subaltern position is highlighted by the stories that she heard from her father, Chhiring who would tell her sad stories full of hardship, trouble, suffering and death. There had been no traces of joys and happiness in his stories. But Pema would like to listen happy stories. She would wonder why her father could not tell her happy stories (Pandey 7). In this way, the plot of the novel commences foregrounding the hard life of Pema as a subaltern. Even she did not have the experiences of listening stories full of love and romance in which miracle would happen.

As a subaltern she silently negotiates with every situations. She even does not ask about the background of her future husband. Without knowing the meaning of marriage she gets married to Dawa and leads the life that is full of hardships. However, with the passage of time she understands the importance of book in one's life in order to transform into a human, and both Dawa and Pema determine to work hard and save some money so that they can manage to buy books for their son. But Dawa dies being buried in the snowfall in the mountain without materializing his dream. It shows how the subaltern are put into the state of perpetual suffering by the feudal ruling system. Education can be considered as responsible for removal of ignorance and opening avenues of new life styles. If there had been schooling facilities, they could have materialized their dream. But now it seems next to impossible for Pema. In the whole village there is no one who can read and write. So it takes them time to know the content of the letter that includes the news of Dawa's death.

Her endless suffering as subaltern is accelerated after her husband dies. She determines to educate her son at the cost of her life. Thus, she sets for the journey to Kathmandu to buy books for Phurwa. Her journey to Kathmandu reveals how the government systematically manages to keep the marginalize people at the bottom. Even to get the nominal compensation, the poor are made to

make so many formalities besides difficult journey that many of them give up the idea of taking the compensation. Despite the fact that she knows nothing about the process, following a group of porters she reaches to Kathmandu. But she finds her own capital quite hostile towards her, finds herself all alone in the host of strangers. She wants to talk to them, wants to show her documents and get further information, but she cannot speak because she lacks the vocabulary of the ruling elite.

*chheuchhaumaa hidirahekaa kehi byaktilaai aaphusita bhaeko
chitthi dekhaaera kehi sodhna khoji. tara kehile apasakunnai
hunch ki jasto garera usako anuhaar tirai herenan. kehile usle
bolekaï bujhenan. niraas bhai pema. usko aatmaa biswaas
phatakka galdai gairaheko thiyo. [She tried to ask something to the
pedestrians walking by her side showing the letter she had. But
some of them did not turn to her as if it would be a bad omen to
look at her. Whereas, others did not understand her speech. Pema
got depressed. Her self-confidence was being utterly damaged.]
(166)*

This shows how the elite dismiss the concerns of the subaltern. Pema, as a subaltern is unable to make them listen to her. This, justifies Spivak's assertion that subaltern inability to speak. The function of speech is to communicate, it requires the speaker and the listener. As soon as the subaltern speaks or gets heard his/her status of subaltern gets changed and s/he would cease to be a subaltern (Mohamed and Mohamed n.). Spivak emphasizes the voicelessness of the oppressed group as subaltern. She insists, "The subaltern is not privileged, and does not speak in a vocabulary that will get hearing in institutional location of power" (ibid). Obviously, as no one listens to Pema she fails to speak.

Another example demonstrates how the hegemonic culture keeps the subaltern at the margin:

*ke yahaakaa sukila manawaharule Khumbukaa manchhe ra
chhaurilaaai ustai thanthe? nantra kina kasaile dekhi raheko
thiyena usako anuhaarko atyas?* [Do these tidy people think people
of Khumbu are just like yaks? Otherwise why do they not see the
horror of her eyes?](167)

Subaltern is defined as a difference from elite (Spivak 27). Pema as a subaltern finds herself different from the tidy people of Kathmandu, the elite. Spivak insists that the authentic subaltern female voice can never be 'heard' because she is always spoken for by supremacists or elites who control and delimit the agency of the subaltern. Pema matches to Spivak observation of the subaltern:

By 'speaking' I was obviously talking about a transaction between the listener and the speaker. That is what did not happen in the case of a woman who took her own body at the moment of death to inscribe a certain kind of undermining . . . a certain kind of annulment of all the presuppositions that underlie the regulative psychobiography that writes sati. . . . And even that incredible effort to speak did not fulfill itself in a speech act. And therefore, in a certain kind of rhetorical anguish after the accounting of this, I said, 'The subaltern cannot speak!' (Spivak in *The Post-Colonial Critic* 289).

The narrator reports Pema's subaltern situation saying that ever since she has left Jiri she has become voiceless because no one understands her (Pandey 168). In the hostile society of Kathmandu she finds herself all alone. She has an eerie sense of alienation in the capital of her own nation.

She is exploited by the officials as they make her dance and entertain them further reveals the fact that Pema as a subaltern is manipulated and oppressed by the oppressors. She is made to dance on the occasion of the Boss son's reception party at free of cost just to get the compensation. The subaltern have to follow the

rules and orders of the authority, whether they are right or wrong. The suppressors justify that they live in perpetual ‘mirth and enjoyment’ whereas, the subaltern are expected to serve them at free of cost. They suffer the subaltern in one way or another and exploit them physically, economically and emotionally as well. After watching her dance the Boss pats on her back saying how beautifully she danced the *Sebru dance*. Being a subaltern she has to dance to please the Boss, bear his erotic touch just to get the thing which she legally deserves. Pema chooses not to speak in order to protect her fragile condition.

She receives fifty thousand rupees as the compensation for her husband’s death. The officer points her subhuman status saying that it would be enough to buy a yak. Nema being angry answers back: *ho sir Sagarmathamaa maarieko euta sherpaako mulya eutaa chauri baraabar ta ho ni* (178). [Right sir, a Sherpa’s, that died in the Mt. Everest, value is equal to that of a yak.] It justifies how the subaltern are dehumanized by the authority. Oppressed people are so dehumanized by the oppressors that the oppressed even forget the fact that they are human beings (Freire 27).

Yet another instances of hegemonic power dominating and subordinating the subaltern can be traced in the text by the fact that the state dominates them by imposing language other than their mother tongue. When Pema and Nima go to the state run biggest publishing house in the capital they find no book published in Sherpa’s language. The government publishes the text books of Compulsory Nepali, to promote Nepali language. But it does not publish books written in Sherpa’s language because it will not be sold in high quantity (Pandey 180).

The subaltern voice is being misinterpreted by the authorities as they have no power. So the act of communication does not take place between the speaker and the listener as the message is being distorted by the other elements. The subaltern is destined to remain in silence, even when they try to articulate it to the authorities (Gaijan and Prasad 242). Pema’s attempts to defend herself both

against the Maoists and the army fail when she is kidnapped by Maoist and later is found by armies. Consequently, as a subaltern she submits to the hegemony of the elite, and entraps in their captivation for several days. Which becomes the major cause of her tragic separation with her son resulted in turning him into another subaltern because if her voice is heard by the Maoist and the army her son has got different life to live in.

Finally, she gets released from the army and starts her difficult journey back to her home. But because of the snow fall she cannot trace the right track, gets lost in the Himalayan region and goes on walking endlessly. Tired and helpless Pema cannot walk further, in the state of subconscious she recalls the tragic story told by her father. The end of the girl in the story, told by her father, is exactly alike her own end. She is going to die all alone forlorn and forsaken in the mountains. Though her ending is a particular incident this is the general condition of all the subaltern women as the story has not changed ever since her father told her. Pema dies helplessly all alone in the forlorn ice land being buried by the snow.

Pema's struggle for better life, which never materialized, can be interpreted as her aspiration from marginalized to the center. Her position as a subaltern belongs to the subaltern section of the society, a backward Sherpa community and represents the numerous marginalized, poverty stricken women residing in the hilly region of Nepal. She is a good daughter, a loyal wife and affectionate mother, no fault in her but dies without the taste of life. Pema is a subaltern among the subaltern. She has suffered much and dies all alone, unknown to the other in the remote hinter land of Himalayan region being buried in the snow; her voice remains mute forever. I conclude this section that Spivak's statement that subaltern cannot speak hold true to her case.

2.3 Portrayal of other Subaltern Characters

As stated earlier, the novel records the suffering of an oppressed and dominated group of people, the Sherpa community residing in the Khumbu region. The existence of this group of people in the novel is portrayed in the subordinate condition of the big people as represented by the King, party leaders like Dal Bahadur, and the bureaucrats, the agents of the bourgeoisie, the oppressors who shape and control their lives. My central concern in this section is to analyze Chhering, Dewa, Phurwa and the other characters as subaltern. All these people as poor peasants, shepherds, and porters are portrayed as silent subaltern who have been deprived from the access to power and pushed into the bottom of the human development index from generation to generation.

Chhiring who belongs to the first generation, is portrayed as a silent subaltern. He suffers because of his subaltern position. He has understood the worth of reading books and is obsessed with reading and writing. But his subaltern status does not allow him reading. Being a Sherpa, in a Nepali society ruled by caste system with the emphasis on caste based occupation his bookish knowledge is useless as he is denied from any job that requires reading and writing. Reading is against their caste based duties. Misled by this dominant ideology, Gyalmo cannot stand his activity and sets fire on his books as she reasons:

Sherpaako chhoro bhaepachhi himaal po chadhanu parch. yak ra chauri po dulaunu parchha. yasari kitaaba padhera kaslaai muddaa haalnu chh ra? [Being a Sherpa's son you need to climb the mountains. You need to look after the yaks. Who are you going to file a complaint against by reading books in this way?] (6)

It is an example of self- depreciation which Freire points as another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalization of the opinion that the oppressors hold for them (45). The elite say that Sherpa are inferior, noncreative,

ignorant and good for not reading. Gyalmo and other Sherpa as subaltern have internalized this and think themselves as good for not reading. It shows how ideologically they are put in the marginalized position by the ruling elite.

Chhiring as a helpless subaltern cannot protest. He weeps silently and leaves his home silently. This incident shows the prevailing effect of caste based discrimination in Nepal. Chhiring is portrayed as the victim of caste-based discrimination that denied him reading and writing. The Action Aid, Nepal's study report on caste based discrimination, including untouchability in Nepal, identified 205 existing practices of caste-based discrimination in the eight sample sites. Of these, 54 are related to denial, which includes 10 related to entrap, 14 to service, and 6 to access to common resources, 10 to kinship and other relationships and 14 to participation (Bhattachan et al 3). In such scenario it is relevant to say that these Sherpa are debarred from education and access to resources rendering them in the subaltern position.

Dawa, Pema's husband is the next major character portrayed as a subaltern. He is portrayed as a kind, benevolent, hard-working and supporting husband and loving father. He has no fault on his own; he suffers not because of his deeds but because of his birth as a subaltern. As soon as Pema reaches to his cottage he explains the hard life of the people like him whose life gets spent moving from one place to another in search of pasture land for their yaks. He sadly confesses that he cannot afford comfort to his newly married wife.

Since they are made to work for politician like Dal Bahadur, because their existence is determined by people like him, they are the subaltern. It is not that the subaltern do not attempt to change their status, but they cannot overcome the position in which they are positioned. Dawa, hopes that Dal Bahadur will help him to find a better occupation other than porter since he has helped him win the election as a representative of his region. So he goes to Dal Bahadur, who now denies recognizing him, though he has provided him details about his father and

forefathers: *tara Dal Bahadurle chindai chinena Dawalai. Gaauko naau ra tinpuste bhanda pani chinena.* [But Dal Bahadur did not recognize him. Though he had given him details about his village and about his three generations] (Pandey 34). Rather he retorted in his rough voice, “What is the use of your help. I did not get more than twenty votes from your village. Rather my opponent had got more votes” (ibid). It shows how their voice never reaches to the power and how they have denied access from the power and how they are forced to make consent to the hegemony.

Having no option, Dawa decides to continue the old occupation of grazing yaks and moving behind them in search of pasture land. He joins his fellow people and they start their journey to the high altitude walking behind their yaks. They all are the poor and destitute ones, the subaltern. They all had near death experience in their expedition of searching pasture land for their yaks. Landslide, snowfall and falling from the steep slippery hills are the common experiences. For them saving the yaks is more important than saving themselves:

Pahilaa chauri bachau. Ani aaphu bacha. Himaalkaa timi jasta garib manchhe bhanda cahuri mahatwapurna ho. [First save the yaks and then save yourselves. The yaks are far more important than the poor people of Himalayan region like you.](42)

It shows the insignificant existence of the subaltern. But the pasture land that they had been using has been captured by the government. Now there are two gun men guarding it and they do not let them and the yaks enter there. Though they have no option they cannot protest; their request is not heard by these gun men. Hence despite their voice they remain mute. Since their attempt to communicate fails they remain voiceless as argued by Spivak.

They appear more cowardice and meek than the yaks because the state has rule to punish these poor shepherds, the subaltern but not the animals. Pema

remembers her father's song which says that the subaltern have forgotten to speak remaining silent for years:

*nabolda naboldai bolnai birseko ta ho ni haamile/ pharkera
naherdaa nahedai aaphailai yaatra harumaa/ aaphailai china
birseko ta ho ni haamile. . . . haami hidane belaamaa, bolne
belaamaa, hasne belaamaa manchhe bhayenau/ haami rune
belaamaa maatra manchhe bhayeu. [We have forgotten to speak
by not speaking/ not looking back in the journey/ we have
forgotten ourselves. . . . We have never acted as human while
walking, speaking and laughing/ we acted as human only while
weeping.] (45)*

They are obliged to be exploited by the hegemony of the ruling elites. The novel brings various instances in which they are treated as subaltern. They “have no scope for convincing things and they are forced to maintain age old tradition of silence” (Gaijan and Prasad 238).

According to Paulo Freire, prescription serves as “one of the fundamental elements of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed” (28). When an individual's choice is imposed upon another, and when the prescribed person's consciousness is altered into one that corroborates the effect of prescribes consciousness. Usually, oppressors impose their choices into oppressed people taking away their freedom at various levels making them subaltern. The subaltern people's behavior is the prescribed behavior. Being the ethnic people they have every right to live and utilize the public resources of their ethnic places. But they are not allowed to use the pasture land and collect the honey of the wild honey bee. The forest officers cunningly managed to take all the wild honey that they have gathered staking their life. The officers threaten them that they will be arrested for violating the forest law, collecting the honey without taking permission from the authority. The officers take away all the honey beside Tenji's

necklace, though an imitation one, as bribe. Despite these the Dawas are happy because they are not physically brutalized. It is possible for the authority to exploit them because of the subalternity of these Sherpa. It proves the less powerful are dominated and subordinated through both ideological-symbolic means and physical force (Chakabarty 17).

The state has agents to punish, penalize and terrorize the innocent peasants but not to provide security and safe guards to their life and property. Their yaks are killed by the leopards at night. Being helpless they cried. They have no insurance for their life and property. They are made to believe that they are destined to suffer.

Hamrota bhagyamai dukah gaasiyera aayeko ho. jati garepani yesbaata haami mukta huna sakdainau. Hijopani yastai dukha bhogekaa thiyau. Bholi pani bhognai parchha. Bhgnai parne kuraa sita daraayera kaha bhagne? [We are destined to suffer. We cannot get release from the suffering no matter how much we try. We had the same suffering in the past and we will have the same in the future. Since we are bound to suffer it is no use being afraid and trying to run away.](56)

Again in the border between Nepal and Tibet, they are cheated by the guards of Tibet whom they have to bribe with cheese and ghee to get entry into the pasture land of Tibet (Pandey72).

Though they have never lived like the human beings they all like to live like the human:

Uniharulai pani manchhe banne rahar thiyo. tara, uniharulai kasle manchhe banna dieeraheko chhaina? raajaale? Sarkaarle? Ki Dal bahaduharuko jamaatale? Anaha, yo kura uniharu kasailaai thaahai thiyena. [They too have desire to live like humans. But, who has deprived them from living like humans? The king? The

government? Or the group of people like Dal Bahadur? No, none of them knew about this.] (75)

The subaltern are those who do not have any opportunity to express themselves and are thus reliant upon the language and methods of the authoritative class to articulate them. They have been silenced and obey the officers. They are forced to give the honey, the hard earned stuff, because they cannot reason and argue. They do not have the agency to express themselves or resist to injustices done upon them because they are weak and thus subaltern. They even cannot enjoy the status of human. The officer is explaining the rule on his own benefit that prolongs his superiority and continues to keep these Sherpa as Subaltern. Spivak's question "Can the subaltern speak?" gains importance here. These intimidated shepherds cannot speak and her answer "no" rings true to their case. Their realization shows their weakness and helplessness thus making them subaltern. It reveals how those who have power utilize the powerless, and how their voice is taken away from talking and fighting for justice.

In literary and cultural theory subaltern refers to the members of those marginalized groups in society who are subjected to the hegemony of the ruling class (Ashcroft, Bill et. al (218). For them everything is decided by the others. Because of the poverty and geographical hindrance they cannot afford for learning, an activity associate to elite, they have no scope for other job opportunity. One can observe meekness, silence, and helplessness in them. Their non-existence entities is revealed by their frequent acknowledgement that they have never lived like the human. Chhiring, Dewa, Tenji, Galjen and others thus fit well into Spivak's typology of 'subaltern' because of their position in the society politically and socially. They cannot speak means their voice is not heard by the power. However, they share their pain and agony, anxieties and worries with each other. For example, after Pema becomes pregnant, his friends congratulate Dewa

for he is going to be a father. But thinking about the hard fate of his children Dewa wearily explains the bitter condition of the subaltern:

Haami ra hamra santanle ta jiwana bachne haina, bitaune po rahechh Galjen. Chauri ra haamima thoraimatra phark rahechha. Chauri haru boldainan haamiharuru runche swrmaa bhaye pani bolchhau. [Galjen, we and our children are not to enjoy and live the life but we spend the life. There is a thin difference between yak and we people. The yak do not talk we talk in weeping tone.](80)

The somber grimness is not without reason. Dawa is an orphan whose parents died being buried in the snow. It is not that Dawa is unaware about his and the villagers beastly existence. He is aware that owing to lack of education and, therefore, good employment opportunity they remain backward. He tries to improve his position. This desire encourages him to go for mountain climbing as a porter, carrying the load that doubles his weight. He wants to educate their son, Phurwa, who would be able to live like a man, not beast of burden like them. Determined to educate his son, Phurwa, Dawa joins the foreign trekkers and climbs the mountain so that he can earn enough to educate his son, but dies being buried in the snowfall without materializing his dream.

The tragic death of his parents leaves Phurwa to the state of subaltern forever. Despite his hunger for learning he cannot satisfy his urges. The incapability of these people to overcome this dire situation and negotiate with their traditional occupation is justified by the end of the novel. Desperately waiting for the arrival of his mother, tired Phurwa sets out from his home and joins the porters.

tyaspachhi gaungka aru thita sangai bhuima jhareka naram sallipirmaa tek dai Phurwa pani jiwanko kathintam yaatraama niskiyo. Trekking hidekaa bidesiko bhariyaa hunechha u ra

boknechha usle aaphno wajan bhanda garungo bhaari. [After this, Phurwa too joins the other youth steeping over the soft *sallipir* in the hardest journey of life. He will be a porter to the foreign trekkers carrying a load heavier than his own weight.](227)

Now he will carry loads heavier than his own load and climb mountains to ease the foreign mountaineers' mountaineering expedition. Now he will never dream of reading books and being a Rimpochhe (228). Though they try their best to come out of this miserable condition their attempts remain futile. They are subject to hegemony of the ruling classes.

In this way, by portraying the hard life of these poor and destitute people and providing them central space the novel matches the aim of SSG's attempt "to allow people finally speak with the jealous pages of elitist historiography and in so doing, to speak for, or to sound the muted voices of the truly oppressed" (Gandhi 2). Obviously, the novel deals with the subaltern characters and records the experiences of subalternity. All these Sherpa people are portrayed as subaltern who are subjected to suffer culturally, socially, politically and professionally in the hand of the bourgeoisie. They are helpless to raise their voice and resist the exploitation and humiliation entrusted upon them. Though they have the strong desire to come out of this situation which they are confined to, because of their vulnerability they are compelled to negotiate.

2.3 Conclusion

Subaltern Studies primarily deals with the history from the perspectives of the losers. As a form of "counter history," it is very often placed in contradiction to mainstream discourses like nationalist narratives, orientalist images, and ethnic stereotypes. It takes into consideration of reading history from the below. By recording the sad story of the Sherpa people, Pandey produces a counter narrativization of the official history – that tells the heroic deeds of the Sherpa as brave mountaineers who are economically affluent being engaged in Trekking

business. He privileges subaltern experiences and voice in the novel and, at the same time, demonstrates how the voice has been suppressed by the hegemony of the ruling elite. By providing space for these subaltern people to communicate and share their experiences he helps them voice their voice. These marginalized characters help us perceive life, events and issues from their point of view. The strength of the novel lies in the truthful portrayal of the plight of the poor and downtrodden people located at the outskirts of the society which supports the Subaltern Studies perspective of the novel.

The purpose of the text seems not to give aesthetic pleasure. It conveys the sufferings of the subaltern and demands an antidote for it. The main ideological function of the novel is to critique the corrupt, bourgeoisie state mechanism of the nation by highlighting the position of the people living in the remote rural hilly region who never experience the presence of the state except in rare instances in which they are made to cast votes to the feudal politicians and pay taxes and other liabilities to the government for using the natural resources for livelihood. In this way, he brings to the light the problems of those marginalized people unnoticed by the stakeholders of the state and wants the capital, the government show its presence in the remote areas as well.

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