

## Chapter 2

### SUBALTERN CONSCIOUSNESS: THE THEORETICAL DISCOURSES

The origin of the modern concept of consciousness is often attributed to John Locke's essay concerning *Human Understanding* (1690). Locke defined consciousness as “the perception of what passes in a man's own mind”. His essay influenced the 18<sup>th</sup> century view of consciousness, and his definition appeared in Samuel Johnson's celebrated dictionary (1755). The earliest English language use of the words like ‘conscious’ and ‘consciousness’ dates back, however, to the 1500s. The English word ‘conscious’ originally derived from the Latin *consciūs* (*con* - ‘together’ + *scio* ‘to know’), but the Latin word did not have the same meaning as the English word which meant knowing with, in other words having joint or common knowledge with another (Johnson 1755).

The philosophy of mind has given rise to many stances regarding consciousness. Any attempt to impose an organization on them is bound to be somewhat arbitrary. Stuart Sutherland has exemplified the difficulty in the entry he wrote for the 1989 version of the Macmillan Dictionary of Psychology: Consciousness—the having of perceptions, thoughts, and feelings; awareness. The term is impossible to define except in terms that are unintelligible without a grasp of what consciousness means. Many fall into the trap of equating consciousness with self-consciousness to be conscious it is only necessary to be aware of the external world. Consciousness is a fascinating but elusive phenomenon: it is impossible to specify what it is, what it does, or why it has evolved. Nothing worth reading has been written on it.

#### THE DISCOURSES ON CONSCIOUSNESS

In 19<sup>th</sup> century so many important theories and books are articulated with Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1874), William Jam's *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), Frued's *Interpretation of Dreams*. Particularly, William James is usually credited with popularizing

the idea that human consciousness flows like a stream, in his *Principles of Psychology* of 1890. According to James, the consciousness is a “mixture of all those feelings which we have experienced and continue to experience. Every thought is part of one’s personal consciousness and is unique and adoptable. Every moment one is changing because of the experience one undergoes, and one’s mental attitude towards a particular circumstance is result of this experience which one has accumulated upto then”. One knows the consciousness as feelings, desire, cognitions, reasoning and decisions. William James never used the word ‘consciousness’ he always used the word ‘thought’. According to him, ‘thought goes on’ in every human mind and he called it ‘stream of thought’. According to him, the “stream of thought” is governed by five characteristics: “(1) every thought tends to be part of a personal consciousness. (2) within each personal consciousness thought is always changing; (3) within each personal consciousness thought is sensibly continuous; (4) It always appears to deal with objects independent of itself; (5) it is interested in some parts of these objects to the exclusion of others” and lastly (6) James traced the ‘Self’ and there are four characteristics of self; viz., material self, social self, spiritual self, pure ego (James 1890).

In the year of 1900, Sigmund Freud published the book ‘*Interpretation of Dream*’. The book introduces Freud's theory of the unconscious with respect to dream interpretation, and also discusses four stages of consciousness; viz., (1) preconscious stage, (2) conscious stage, (3) unconscious stage and (4) subconscious stage. On the other hand, in the book *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms*, J. A. Cuddon writes that consciousness is ‘the flow of inner experience’ and ‘it refers to that technique which seeks to depict the multitudinous thought, feelings which pass through the mind (Freud 2010).

## **The Marxist Discourses**

Class consciousness, as described in Georg Lukács's famous *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), is opposed to any psychological conception of consciousness, which forms the basis of individual or mass psychology. According to Lukács, each social class has a determined class consciousness which it can achieve. In effect, as opposed to the liberal conception of consciousness as the basis of individual freedom and of the social contract, Marxist class consciousness is not an origin, but an achievement (i.e., it must be 'earned' or won). Hence, it is never assured: the proletariat's class consciousness is the result of a permanent struggle to understand the 'concrete totality' of the historical process. According to Lukács, the proletariat was the first class in history that may achieve true class consciousness, because of its specific position highlighted in the Communist Manifesto as the 'living negation' of capitalism. All other classes, including the bourgeoisie, are limited to a 'false consciousness' which impedes them from understanding the totality of history: instead of understanding each specific moment as a portion of a supposedly deterministic historical process, they universalize it and believe it to be everlasting. Hence, capitalism is not thought of as a specific phase of history, but is naturalized and thought of as an eternal solidified part of history. Says Lukács, this 'false consciousness', which forms ideology itself, is not a simple error as in classical philosophy, but an illusion which can't be dispelled.

Marx described it in his theory of commodity fetishism, which Lukács completed with his concept of reification: alienation is what follows the worker's estrangement to the world following the new life acquired by the product of his work. The dominant bourgeois ideology thus leads the individual to see the achievement of his labour as taking a life of its own. Furthermore, specialization is also seen as a

characteristic of the ideology of modern rationalism, which creates specific and independent domains (art, politics, science, etc.). Lukács argues that only a global perspective can point out how all these different domains interact. He also points out how Kant brought to its limit the classical opposition between the abstract form and the concrete, historical content, which is abstractly conceived as irrational and contingent. Thus, with Kant's rational system, history becomes totally contingent and is thus ignored. Only with Hegel's dialectic can mediation be found between the abstract form and the abstract notion of a concrete content.

Even if the bourgeois loses his individual point of view in an attempt to grasp the reality of the totality of society and of the historical process, he is condemned to a form of false consciousness. As an individual, he will always see the collective result of individual actions as a form of 'objective law' to which he must submit himself (liberalism has gone so far as seeing an invisible hand in this collective results, making capitalism the best of all possible worlds). By contrast, the proletariat would be, according to Lukács, the first class in history with the possibility to achieve a true form of class consciousness, granting it knowledge of the totality of the historical process.

The proletariat takes the place of Hegel's Weltgeist ('World Spirit'), which achieves history through Volkgeist ('the spirit of the people'): the idealist conception of an abstract Spirit making history, which ends in the realm of Reason, is replaced by a materialist conception based not on mythical Spirit, but on a concrete "identical subject-object of history": the proletariat. The proletariat is both the 'object' of history, created by the capitalist social formation; but it is also the 'subject' of history, as it is its labour that shapes the world, and thus, knowledge of itself is also, necessarily, knowledge of the reality and of the totality of the historical process. The

proletariat's class consciousness is not immediate; class consciousness must not be mistaken either with the consciousness of one's future and collective interests, opposed to personal immediate interests (Lukas 1968).

The possibility of class consciousness is given by the objective process of history, which transforms the proletariat into a commodity, hence objectifying it. Class consciousness is thus not a simple subjective act: "as consciousness here is not the consciousness of an object opposed to itself, but the object's consciousness, the act of being conscious of oneself disrupts the objectivity form of its object" (in 'Reification and the Proletariat's Consciousness' or 'The proletariat's point of view'). In other words, instead of the bourgeois subject and its corresponding ideological concept of individual free will, the proletariat has been transformed into an object (a commodity) which, when it takes consciousness of itself, transforms the very structure of objectivity, that is, of reality (Bottomore 1963).

This specific role of the proletariat is a consequence of its specific position; thus, for the first time, consciousness of itself (class consciousness) is also consciousness of the totality (knowledge of the entire social and historical process). Through dialectical materialism, the proletariat understands that what the individual bourgeois conceived as "laws" akin to the laws of nature, which may be only manipulated, as in Descartes's dream, but not changed, is in fact the result of a social and historical process, which can be controlled. Furthermore, only dialectical materialism links together all specialized domains, which modern rationalism can only think as separate instead of as forming a totality (Bottomore 1963).

Only the proletariat can understand that the so-called "eternal laws of economics" are in fact nothing more than the historical form taken by the social and economical process in a capitalist society. Since these "laws" are the result of

the collective actions of individuals, and are thus created by society, Marx and Lukács reasoned that this necessarily meant that they could be changed. Any attempt in transforming the so-called "laws" governing capitalism into universal principles, valid in all times and places, are criticized by Lukács as a form of false consciousness (Bottomore1992).

As the “expression of the revolutionary process itself”, dialectical materialism, which is the only theory with an understanding of the totality of the historical process, is the theory which may help the proletariat in its “struggle for class consciousness”. Although Lukács does not contest the Marxist primacy of the economic infrastructure on the ideological superstructure (not to be mistaken with vulgar economic determinism), he considers that there is a place for autonomous struggle for class consciousness (Bottomore1963).

In order to achieve a unity of theory and praxis, theory must not only tend toward reality in an attempt to change it; reality must also tend towards theory. Otherwise, the historical process leads a life of its own, while theorists make their own little theories, desperately waiting for some kind of possible influence over the historical process. Henceforth, reality itself must tend toward the theory, making it the "expression of the revolutionary process itself". In turn, a theory which has as its goal helping the proletariat achieve class consciousness must first be an "objective theory of class consciousness". However, theory in itself is insufficient, and ultimately relies on the struggle of humankind and of the proletariat for consciousness: the "objective theory of class consciousness is only the theory of its objective possibility".

The Marxist theory can be broken into two major postulates. Several consequence including sociological elements arise from the postulates. The first postulate is that the economic factor in society is the fundamental determinant of the

structure and development of society. The means of production determine the social organization, that is, the relations in which men enter in order to produce goods more effectively through co-operation and division of labour. What he terms "productive forces" refers to the cooperative power which is a prerequisite of the large scale productive activity of human beings. Arising further from this notion of economic determinism is the concept of relations of production which transcends property relations; these reflect the relationship between the owners of the means of production (capitalists) and the workers (proletariat). According to Timasheff, "These relations, according to Marx develop independently of human will. Moreover, the organization of production (called by Marx 'the economic substructure of society' not only limits but also, in the final analysis, shapes the whole superstructure: political organization, law, religion, philosophy, art, literature, science, and morality itself". The assertion that "relations develop" independently of human will suggests more mysterious force which propels individuals in collectivities known as society. However, Marx's explanation of this phenomenon is made in the second postulate (Elster 1986).

The second postulate seems to be an exemplification of his materialistic premise that matter is the only thing that exists and it does so in a dialectical form 'the negation of the negation'. Human "consciousness is an epiphenomenon; a manifestation of motion in the brain cells." The implication is the premise become wide reaching as evidenced in the second postulate. The postulate mainly accounts for the process and cause of social change. Marx states that by a three phase dialectical process, social change occurs in society. Through conflict between classes, the bourgeoisie (capitalist class) and proletariat (workers), over ownership of the means of production, revolutionary change occurs with victory being on the side of the workers. The new mode of production, socialism and communism, will be the

synthesis. Confirming this summary, Timasheff says; "Everything in the world including society itself, passes through the three stages of affirmation or thesis, negation or antithesis, and reconciliation of opposites or synthesis. On this higher level of synthesis, the dialectical process continues with new conflicts and accommodations always making the historical process (Elster 1986).

Marx's sociology of alienated labour and class consciousness is a further reflection or confirmation that his sociological theory is based on the premise of the concept of collective consciousness and good formation. The essence of alienation is that the labour of human beings becomes a debasing activity because of the advanced level of division of labour. Marx cites the guild system and the craftsmanship in which man engaged his full creative capacities in the production of a commodity. But the industrial development to the level of the factory system required each worker to perform a small monotonous task as a contribution to the production of a commodity. Alienation "referred to the growing dehumanization of man under capitalist industrial conditions" (Elster 1986).

Finally, Marx conceives the solution to all the social problems associated with capitalist development as being the establishment of communism after the societal epochs of development had passed through the various preceding stages. As opposed to the alienating nature of the capitalist society, Marx says: "while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing to-day and another to-morrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic. This fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an



objective power above us, growing out of control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up till now” (Elster 1986).

As evidenced in this quotation regarding Marx's views on communism, the concept of collective consciousness bears its ultimate prominence and centrality in his theory. The communal provision of basic social services can be viewed as collective good formation which is good in itself. Human beings will be able to realize and express their creative capacity in life. It is assumed that human beings will be happier as they will be less alienated, they will have suitable shelter, adequate food and technology will be serving society (Elster 1986).

### **The Weberian Discourse**

Max Weber (1864-1920) developed his sociology as a response to and being interested in the issues and problems Marx had raised. Commenting on this fact, Zeitlin says; "Though Weber was influenced by the German historical school - itself engaged in a critical examination of Marx's (and Hegel's) conceptions - the main character of his total work was shaped by his debate with Marx; and among those who took up the Marxian challenge, Weber was perhaps the greatest". These assertions suggest that Weber was influenced by Marx. Prima facie a case of the existence of the concept of collective consciousness in Max Weber's theory can be assumed. However, only prominent parts of Weber's theory are highlighted. Here the sociological theories of Max Weber have two postulates; namely, action theory and ideal type. From these two postulates, he developed methodological corollaries and conceptions of social and political institutions of industrial society. Besides, while making a critique of the Marxian theory, Weber has been influenced by the idea that the validity of values is a matter of faith, not of knowledge, therefore the social sciences must investigate values

but cannot provide binding norms and ideals from which directives for controlling practical activity can be derived. Accordingly, for Weber the social sciences must be value-free. He further asserted that social science must be an empirical science based on concrete reality. In this respect therefore, he never made generalizations embracing wide cultural types (Weber 1958).

It is evident from his theory that Weber did not entertain, at least explicitly, the concept of collective consciousness since according to his conviction generalizations could not be made until an objective study of the particular aspect of society had been made in several societies. For example, after studying religion in India and China, in accordance with the method he employed in his work on *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, he concluded that 'specific economic conditions do not guarantee the rise of capitalism; at least one other condition is necessary, one that belongs to man's inner world. There must be in other words, a specific motive power, the psychological acceptance of values and ideas of favourable change' (Weber 1958).

Criticizing the Marxian theory, Weber said that it seemed prejudicial to the explanation of social phenomenon is that the theory is "mono-causal". In other words, the economic factor was not necessarily the only determinant of social and historical development of society. Gerth and Mills (1946) state that Weber paralled Marx's economic materialism by his (Weber's) political and military materialism. Weber says that Marx failed to distinguish between what is economically determined and what is economically relevant. Weber tries to back this claim by conducting studies on religion and tries to prove its mere relevance to economic activity. Since it is not clear whether political and military materialism transcends economic materialism or vice versa, it becomes increasingly difficult to determine whether the notion of collective

consciousness and good formation is reflected by making economic or political power a central or fundamental factor in sociological analysis. However, this does not rule out greater possibility that the notion of collective consciousness as inherent in the earlier theories also prevails in the Weberian theory (Weber 1965).

### **The Durkheimian Discourse**

The concept of "collective consciousness" has a variety of meanings. Collective refers to any characteristics or social phenomenon that is made by individuals acting as a group. One can then refer to 'collective effort', 'collective decision'. The dictionary defines 'collective' as: 'formed by collecting, assembled or accumulated into a whole; pertaining to, characteristics of, or made by a number of individuals taken or acting as a group.' 'Consciousness' is a total sum of attitudes, opinions, and world out-look that an individual or a group has. There is also a consciousness relating to different levels of individual or group awareness of specific issues. The dictionary defines 'consciousness' as: 'the state or condition of being conscious. The essence or totality of attitudes, opinions, and sensitivities held or thought to be held by an individual or group' (Durkheim 1938).

Collective consciousness is the attitudes, values, and beliefs of the group that define its outlook or how things are or are supposed to be. It is what can be called the group ethos, consensus, and the world outlook of a group, common understanding, or *weltanschauung* that transcends individuals but binds the whole social group (Durkheim 1938).

As an eminent sociological theorist, Durkheim has provided a watershed in the history of collective consciousness. He dealt with it explicitly and analyzed it to a point, to which most of the renowned contemporary schools of sociological theory owe their inspiration. These are generally the structural-functionalist schools.

According to Timasheff “Durkheim took from Comte both the positivistic stress on empiricism and the emphasis on the significance of the group in the determination of human conduct”. He attributed social reality to the group and not the individual and asserted that social facts are irreducible to individual facts. There are ways of thinking, acting and feeling which are external to the individual and they are given to him by a power which is external; given in a coercive fashion. He gives examples of morality, family religious ideas, and beliefs. "Social phenomenon is rooted in the collective aspects of the beliefs and practices of a group” (Durkheim 1938).

According to Durkheim, social facts are closely related to the concept of collective consciousness. For example, in his *‘The Division of Labour in Society’* (1893), he discussed social solidarity and states that social phenomenon is greatly influenced by levels of division of labor. Comparing archaic and advanced societies he states that archaic societies have mechanical solidarity while advanced societies have social cohesion by organic solidarity. These two types of society and social solidarity serve a basis for the study of collective social phenomenon.

Basing on the concept of social solidarity, he studied into suicide in industrial Europe and concluded that egoistic suicide is a product of weak group integration. For example, he found a high prevalence of suicide among the unmarried. Anomic suicide is a result of a breakdown in social norms particularly after sudden social changes. And altruistic suicide occurs as a result of a large magnitude of social solidarity. Pushing further the concept of collective consciousness, Durkheim analyzed of religion in another classical work *‘The Elementary Forms of Religious Life’*, attributing the origin of religious ideas, beliefs, myths, and practices to the collective nature of group; societies. He said that the ideas of divinity and religious norms provide cohesion for the society. Timasheff says “Durkheim develops his

fundamental theses; that group life is the generating source or efficient cause of religion; that religious ideas and practices symbolize the social group; that the distinction between sacred and profane is found universally and has important implications for life as a whole” (Durkheim 1933).

Perhaps Durkheim’s the most useful contribution to the analysis of society in terms of collective consciousness and his ideas about the origin of knowledge. He says that since religion and other social phenomena are collective, knowledge of concepts in society is something the individuals hold in common in their collective bond. By virtue of this the conceptual definition lies in the dynamics of individual societies. Therefore, knowledge is bound to be dependent on society and its pace of growth is bound to be determined by what types of development occurs in the society as a whole. According to Durkheim; "Since the world expressed by the entire system of concepts is the one that society regards, society alone can furnish the most general notions with which it should be represented” (Durkheim 1957).

#### THE DISCOURSES ON SUBALTERN CONSCIOUSNESS

‘Discourse’ denotes written and spoken conversation and the thinking that underlies it. According to Michel Foucault, discourse is sociologically important because how we talk and think about the world shapes how we behave and the kind of world we create consequently. It is through discourse that we construct what we experience as reality, and as soon as we learn to think and talk about reality in a particular way, we cannot help but shut off our ability to think of it in countless other ways, such as: in semantics and discourse analysis: a generalization of the concept of conversation within all modalities and contexts. The totality of codified language (vocabulary) used in a given field of intellectual enquiry and of social practice, such as legal discourse, medical discourse, religious discourse, et cetera. In the work

of Michel Foucault, and that of the social theoreticians he inspired: discourse describes “an entity of sequences, of signs, in that they are enouncements” (Nagla 2008).

### **The Conceptual Discourse**

From the 1970s, scholars have produced so many studies of societies, histories, and cultures ‘from below’. Reflecting this trend, *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1993) included history for the first time as a context for defining ‘subaltern’. The word has a long past. In the late medieval English, it applied to vassals and peasants. By 1700CE, it denoted lower ranks in the military, suggesting peasant origins. By 1800 CE, authors writing ‘from a subaltern perspectives’ published novels and histories about military campaigns in India and America; and G.R.Gleig (1796-1888), who wrote biographies of Robert Clive, Warren Hastings and Thomas Munro, mastered this genre. The Great War provoked popular accounts of subaltern life in published memories and diaries; and soon after the Russian revolution, Antonio Gramsci (1891- 1937) began to weave ideas about subaltern identity into theories of class struggle. Gramsci was not influential in the English reading world however until Raymond Williams promoted his theory in 1977 CE, well after translations of *The Modern Prince* (1957) and *Prison Notebooks* (1966) had appeared. By 1982, Gramsci’s ideas were in wide circulation. Ironically, though Gramsci himself was a communist activist whose prison notes were smuggled to Moscow for publication and translation, scholar outside or opposed to communist parties have most ardently embraced his English books. Subaltern studies set out some Gramsci’s ideas at the critical juncture in historical studies. By late 1970s a rapid decline in state centered historical research had already occurred and social history from below was flourishing. E.P. Thompson’s (1963) book, *The Making of the*

*English Working Class* is often cited as an inspiration for the growing number of 'bottom up' studies of people whose history had been previously ignored. By 1979 women's history was popular enough in the US to merit source books and guides to research. In 1982 Eric Wolf published what can be called the first global history from below. In South Asia, history of subaltern was thriving, though it was not called by this name, then. In the 1970s two new journals featuring studies of South Asian peasants had begun in the US and UK. Hundreds of titles on rural history had appeared. In 1976, Eric Stokes announced the 'return of the peasant' to colonial history. These promoted more local history (Ludden 2001).

The word Subaltern came from Italian word '*Subalterno*'. This is a foreign as well as European trend of philosophical thoughts. The notion of the subaltern, meaning 'inferior rank', was adopted by Antonio Gramsci as a concept referring to the groups in society subjected to the hegemony of the dominant ruling classes. In *The Times Magazine*, E.P. Thomson, the British historian used the words 'History from Below'. Gramsci used the word 'subaltern' for minor, poor, downtrodden people. Subaltern means overlooked, neglected, disregarded, and treated with unconcern and indifference (Sahoo 2014). From the linguistic point of view, the word 'subaltern' is used to mean subordinate, common people, lower class, underprivileged, exploited, inferior minors, weak, secondary person, assistant, person of lesser rank, adherent, attendant, auxiliary, deputy, follower, junior, satellite, below the mark, casual, dependent, inconsequential, inconsiderable, lesser, minus, negligible, paltry, petty, piddling, slight, small, subsidiary, tacky, trifling, trivial, under, unimportant, conditional, dependent, enslaved, slavish, subjugated etc. and Gramsci gave the name 'subaltern'. *Webster's Dictionary* defines subaltern as 'A commissioned officer below the rank of captain/a person holding a subordinate position/particularly with reference

to a related universal (*www.webster'sdictionary.org*).’ This definition links subalternity with the notion of *marginality* and Derrida’s notion of ‘presence’ as the subaltern subject, owing to either race, class or gender, marginalized and placed in a subordinate position in relation to the determining authority of ‘the centre’ (*www.bookrags.com*). More concretely, Gramsci first used the term as a euphemism or original covert usage for the proletariat in his *Notes on Italian History*; it appeared in his *The Prison Notebooks* (1973). In his theory, the term ‘subaltern’ is linked up with the ‘subordinated consciousnesses’ of non-elite groups. According to Concise Oxford Dictionary, the term ‘subaltern’ means ‘inferior rank’. On the other hand, literally this word is used in the defense for a lower graded army, who has to obey the upper graded officer or their boss, again which shows the picture of subordination. Subordination cannot be understood except as one of the constitutive terms in a binary relationship of which the other is in domination. The subaltern classes, by definition, are not united and cannot unite until they are able to become a ‘state’ ... the history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic. There, undoubtedly, exists a tendency to (at least provisional stage of) unification in the historical activity of these groups, but this tendency is continually interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups... in reality, even when they appear triumphant, the subaltern groups are merely anxious to defend themselves..... (Gramsci 1971:52. 54-55) In ‘Subaltern Studies, Vol., V’, Asok Sen writes, “*the subaltern is used to denote the entire people that is subordinate in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way*”. Historian Sumit Sarkar said, “*I am employing the term Subaltern as a convenient short hand for three social groups; tribal and low caste agricultural labourers and share croppers; landholding peasants, generally of intermediate caste status in Bengal (together with their Muslim counterparts); and labour in plantations, mine and industries (along with urban casual labourers)*” (Sarkar 1999). Today, critical theorists are thinking about this subaltern who is neglected in society in many ways, which is collectively called ‘Subaltern Studies’.



## **The Discourse on Hegemony**

The term 'hegemony' originating from ancient Greek 'hegemonia' literally expresses the dominant and oppressive status of one element in the system over the others. The concept of hegemony greatly contributes to a better understanding of current international relations and power relations. Antonio Gramsci who has significantly contributed to the articulation of this concept suggested that power is not only dependent on force but also on 'consent'. According to Gramsci, hegemony represents the status of the most powerful country in the international system or the position of a dominant state in a specific region. For Gramsci hegemony entails 'cooperation ensured by force', combining social and political supervision, force and consent (Barrett 1997: 239). Gramsci's thoughts guided many scholars, who came after him. The hegemony of Gramsci used to advocate hidden or appropriated hegemony at the back side. It can be starting from a traditional dichotomy, characteristic of political thought from Machiavelli to Pareto between "force and consent. Gramsci states that the supremacy of the social group or class manifests itself in two different ways; viz., domination or coercion and intellectual and moral leadership. The latter type of supremacy constitutes hegemony. Social control, in other words, takes two basic forms; besides influencing behaviour and choice externally, through rewards and punishments it also affect them internally, by moulding personal convictions into a replica of prevailing norms. Such internal control is based on 'hegemony' it refers to an order in which common social/moral language is spoken, in which one concept of reality is dominant, informing within spirit all modes of thought and behaviour. It means that hegemony is the pre-dominance obtained by consent rather than force of one class or group over other

classes whereas domination is realized, essentially through the coercive machinery of the state, intellectual and moral leadership is objectified in and mainly exercised through 'civil society', the ensemble of educational, religious and associational institutions. Hegemony is attained through myriad ways in which institutions of civil society operate to shape, directly or indirectly, the cognitive and effective structures whereby men perceive and evaluate problematic social reality. Moreover, this ideological superiority must have solid economic roots; if hegemony is ethno-political, it must also be economic and it must also have its foundation in the decisive function that the leading group exercises in the decisive nucleus of economic activity (Femia 1981). A follower of Gramsci, the Canadian scholar Robert W. Cox utilized Gramsci's study to criticize other theories of international relations. According to Cox, theories like realism and neo-realism were coined to preserve the status quo serving the interests of rich dominant Western countries and their elite (Cox 1981: 16-155). These theories aimed to make the international order seem natural and unchangeable. Hegemony enabled the dominant state to spread its moral, political, and cultural values around the society and sub-communities through civil society institutions. Civil society consists of the net of institutions and practices that are partly autonomous from the state. Hegemony produces social and political systems which are applied on the nations targeted. There are many ideas about the relationship between hegemony and imperialism. Imperialism is defined as enlarging the dominance of one nation over the other by way of open political and economical instruments (Heywood 2007: 392). To explain the basic difference between the imperialism and hegemony Keohane says that as hegemony manipulates the relations with no superior body, imperial powers set their superiority with a senior political body (Keahone 1991: 435-439). However, imperialists have an approach for

expansion by conquering new territory. Another scholar, Duncan Snidal divides hegemony into three types; namely, hegemony implied by conviction, kind but forceful hegemony, and colonialist hegemony based on force (Snidal 1986: 579-614). Discrimination between hegemony and dominance is another subject of study argued by many scholars including Machiavelli, Gramsci, and Nye. According to those three intellectuals, major power should not just rely on dominance, force, and hard power. Machiavelli advocates 'respect' as a source of obedience to major power (Wright 2004). Gramsci says that major power itself evokes willingness and cooperation instinctively (Cox 1993: 49-66). Nye believes that a superior power becomes a hegemonic power by persuading others to cooperate. Persuasion would be ensured by the utilization of soft power that makes other countries believe in common interests (Nye 2002). However, according to hegemonic stability theory, major powers achieve their position unilaterally with the deployment of hard power but retaining consent and conviction (Keahone 1984: 11). In another definition, hegemony is the position of having the capability and power to change the rules and norms of international systems based on one's own motivation and desire (Volgy 2005: 1-2). If you don't have enough power to affect global events in line with your own road map, that would be a dangerous illusion. Susan Strange envisages that hegemony requires two kinds of strength; namely, relational and structural (Strange 1989: 165). Relations based power is the strength to persuade and force the other actors one by one or in groups. Structural power is the essential capacity to realize the desired rules, norms, and operations in the international system. A hegemon creates or maintains critical regimes to cooperate in the future and reduces uncertainty while other states are in pursuit of their own interests (Femia 1981).

Power is the main source of hegemony. Power may be legitimate or illegitimate. On the other hand, the concept, 'power is everywhere' in Foucault's analyses and theory. He defines power as "the name that one attributes to a complex strategically situation in a particular society; power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with..." (Foucault 1978: 93). Power is 'omnipresent'. As it comes from everywhere and is produced at every moment. Similar to Gramsci, Foucault also sees power as a relation of force that only exists in action. Power is intrinsic to the relations of force and the following basic features characterize it:

1. Power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared but it is exercised from many different points
2. Power relations are not exterior to other relations (i.e., economic). Relations of power are not super-structural
3. Power comes from below and therefore there is no binary opposition between the rulers and the ruled.
4. Power relations are both intentional and non-subjective. There is no power without aim and objective but there are no 'headquarters' of power either (Foucault: 1978).

Therefore, Foucault's basic difference from Gramsci is that the latter saw power relations in terms of binary oppositions of the leaders and the led, the rulers and the ruled etc. Though for Gramsci as well, power can only be discovered in the relations of force within a society, it is localized in some points (in the symbolic persona of the Prince). For Foucault, power and the resistance it generates are both diffused and not localized in some points. He prefers analysis of power from the points where it produces its real effects and thereby he engages in an 'ascending' analysis of power. Foucault separates ideology from the analysis of power, maintaining

that power puts into circulation apparatuses of knowledge which are not ideological constructs (Foucault 1978:102).

## THE SUBALTERN STUDIES

Now the theoretical discourse is taken up into the subaltern history. The Word 'Subaltern' was the brainchild of Antonio Gramsci (born in Italy on 22 January 1891 and died on 27 April 1937) a founding member and onetime leader of the Communist Party of Italy. He was imprisoned by Benito Mussolini's Fascist regime. In that time he wrote 33 note books which are called Prison Notebooks published in the post-war period. In *The Prison Notebooks* Antonio Gramsci defines the 'subaltern' classes as those excluded from any meaningful role in a regime of power that subjugates them. Through consent these 'subalterns' participate in the hegemony created and controlled by the dominant group. The subalterns have no independent space to articulate their voice because hegemony conditions them to believe in the dominant values. Gramsci believed that the intellectual has the responsibility to "search out signs of subaltern initiative and class consciousness and effective political action".

In the early 1980s, a small group of Marxist scholars influenced by Antonio Gramsci's 'Prison Notebooks' introduced "subaltern" as a new analytic category within modern Indian historiography. The scholars, led by Ranajit Guha, were dissatisfied with the interpretations of India's nationalist movement, which had long neglected "the politics of the people", or the subaltern classes, in the making of the Indian nation. For Guha, this historiography had been dominated by an elitism of colonialists, bourgeois nationalists, and even orthodox Marxists, who had failed to take into account "the contributions made by the people on their own, that is, independently of the elite". Guha argued that the vast historiography of the freedom

movement of the nineteenth and twentieth century was “un-historical”, “blinkered”, and “one-sided” because it primarily focused on the domain of elite politics while silencing and refusing to interpret the subaltern past. He further explained that elitist historiography was narrow and partial as a direct consequence of a commitment by scholars to a particular “class outlook” which privileged the ideas, activities and politics of the British colonizers and dominant groups in Indian society. Guha founded the Subaltern Studies project in collaboration with Shahid Amin, David Arnold, Partha Chatterjee, David Hardiman, and Gyanendra Pandey with the specific aim of providing a corrective to the historiography by “combating elitism” in academic research and writings. Starting in 1982, the collective began publishing thick, detailed essays in a series called Subaltern Studies in which the subaltern classes were at the center of history writing. In the “Preface” to the first volume of Subaltern Studies, Guha explained that the term “subaltern” would be used by the authors in the series as a “general attribute of subordination in South Asian society”. However, Guha was not simply interested in examining questions of subordination in a classical Marxist framework defined by the logic of capital. Instead, he argued that the subaltern condition could be based on caste, age, gender, office, or any other way, including, but not limited to class. Guha further stated that he was centrally interested in interpreting the culture that informed subalternity, while also addressing concerns about history, politics, economics, and sociology. Needless to say, this was a departure from Gramsci’s own writings on the subaltern classes in his *Notes on Italian History*, which, according to Guha, had directly influenced the founding of his project. Gramsci had used “subaltern” in his writings as a substitute for “proletariat” while in prison in the 1930s to avoid government censors who wanted to prevent Gramsci’s political writings from entering the public sphere. But Guha and his

collaborators were not interested in simply applying Gramsci's own definition of the term subaltern or his interpretations of subaltern history within their own scholarly work. Instead, the Subaltern Studies collective sought to construct a critical theory of subalternity that was initially inspired by Gramscian Marxism and then reconfigured to interpret and analyze South Asian history and society beyond the parameters which could have been anticipated by Gramsci himself. Guha argued that the politics of subaltern classes in colonial India did not exhibit the characteristics of the rural groups described by Gramsci. Specifically, he disagreed with one of Gramsci's central claims that "subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up". Guha stated that the domain of subaltern politics was autonomous from elite politics: that is, "it neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter". He claimed that subaltern politics tended to be violent because subaltern classes were forced to resist the conditions of elite domination and extra-economic coercion in their everyday lives. Yet, Guha explained that factors of domination and coercion were not simply based or determined by the class dynamics in Indian society. He pointed out that British colonialism had left an "uneven" impact on economic and social developments in India; therefore, it was necessary to understand how different sections of society were affected from "area to area". Within Indian historiography the emphasis on understanding politics on the basis of class structures had obscured the fact that one group which was dominant in one region or locality of India, was actually dominated in another. Guha claimed that by moving away from an analysis of politics from an all-India level focusing on class dynamics, it was necessary for the historian to understand the heterogeneity and ambiguity in society and sort out these tensions "on the basis of a close and judicious reading of evidence". For Guha, the broader

framework outlined by him provided a new direction for new enquiry. In the early volumes of Subaltern Studies and in Guha's own masterful study of rural revolts in *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, there were echoes of the Marxian themes of class struggle and class conflict to describe subaltern political mobilization, but the turn towards a cultural analysis of the subaltern condition was already present. Guha and his fellow collaborators had supplanted the analytics of class from a classical Marxist framework in favour of a critical subalternity. Guha had been dissatisfied with the unreflexive, techno-economic determinism of a Marxian orthodoxy which dominated the Indian historiography. His initial turn towards Gramsci and the assertion of a subaltern perspective into history writing was a way to rethink the nature of class-based analysis in the making of the Indian nation. Further, Guha's own writings exemplified a further engagement with theorists like Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Levi-Strauss, and Roland Barthes. However, it should be remembered that Guha had no intention to abandon the idea of class altogether, but argued that it was one of several factors for historians to consider when analyzing the subaltern condition. Guha's intervention provided an opportunity for the Marxists scholars associated with the project, and beyond, to write new political histories of colonial India without abandoning the tradition of historical materialism. In away, by the onset of the Subaltern Studies project, the contours of post-Marxism were already demarcated in the early writings of Guha and fellow Subalternists. While there was general agreement with Guha's arguments in founding the Subaltern Studies project, individual scholars who formed the collective often diverged in their own respective writings while interpreting the subaltern condition. In fact, the plurality of theories and methodologies were not only celebrated as central to the project, but they were thought to be necessary in understanding the diverse nature of subaltern politics in



India which was thus far ignored in the historiography. A commitment to the social history tradition of writing “history from below” certainly loomed large in the scholarship of several subalternists, but others were hinting towards cultural history where the ideas of Gramsci and Marx were integrated with Foucault and Derrida (Ludden 2001).

In India, Subaltern perspective was first used non-academically by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and M.K.Gandhi on the ground of untouchables (Dalitization) as well as weaker section, states and minorities and annihilation of caste system. But Ranajit Guha was the first academic subaltern historian who rejected the traditional history and talked about the ‘people’s history’, in which he called subaltern history the history of the downtrodden people. One very powerful perspective on Indian society is that of subalternism. The subaltern studies have immense possibility of projecting, constructing and analyzing the people’s lives, institutions, problems, movements, values and the processes of their formation, structuration and restructuring of local and regional levels (Nagla 2008).

On the other hand, Ambedkar was also weaving view in his way. The word Dalit or untouchables is really made for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. In common political discourse, the term ‘Dalit’ is so far mainly referred to Scheduled Castes. The term, ‘Scheduled Castes’, was used for the first time in the Government of India Act 1935. Prior to these untouchable castes were known as depressed class. Mahatma Gandhi gave the name *Harijans* means God’s people. Traditionally, in general public discourse, the untouchables were placed at the bottom of hierarchy and had different names in different parts of the country. They were called Shudras, Atishudras, Chandals, Antajas, Pariahas, Dheds, Panchamas, Avarnas, Namasudras, Aspusthas, etc. The Dalit is a common usage in Marathi,

Hindi, Gujarati and many other Indian languages, meaning the poor and oppressed person. Ghanashyam Shah argued in his book *Dalit Identity and Politics* as “Dalit includes all the oppressed section of the society. It does not confine itself merely to economic exploitation in terms of appropriation of surplus. It also related to the suppression of culture – way of life and value system – and more importantly the denial of dignity. It has essentially emerged as a political category. For some, it connotes an ideology for fundamental change in the social structure and relationships” (Nagla 2008).

Dalit is thus a by-product of Ambedkar movement, indicating a political and social awareness among the historically suppressed sections. He had started a struggle against caste hegemony and a caste system. Thus, the resistance movement begun against enforceability was essentially a self-respect movement, aimed at securing basic human rights for untouchables. Ambedkar developed the theory of social and political resistance, contemplating that his chief opponent was the caste based on Hindu feudalism. Throughout the British period, the caste Hindus did not enjoy the political power. Democratic socialism is the core of his political thought which is to be achieved by constitutionalism. Ambedkar launched different social movements to secure basic human rights for the untouchables and therefore, he wanted the depressed classes to resist caste Hindus who had deprived them of their basic rights. According to him, the consciousness is the ‘rationality’ or ‘image’ of ‘self’. He laid down the five principles of self, ‘Pancha Sutra’; namely (i) self improvement: making one’s own-efforts for one’s improvement without expecting much from other, (ii) self-progress: making self efforts for achieving progress in life, (iii) self-dependence: learning to lessen one’s dependence on others and attaining finally self reliance, (iv) self-respect: maintaining self dignity and never sacrificing it for any reason and (v)

self-confidence: developing confidence in oneself, in one's capacities and in one's efforts. Using this point of view, he put forth the following demands regarding social, political and economic rights of untouchables (Ambedkar 2010):

- 1) All educational facilities should be made available to depressed classes.
- 2) Depressed classes should be given representation in the state and central legislative councils on the basis of their population, needs and importance.
- 3) Jobs in the state and central government services should be reserved.
- 4) They should be given representation in all the democratic bodies of the country.
- 5) Provision of a separate electorate should be made for the depressed classes.
- 6) Separate settlement should be constituted for the depressed classes and toward that end; the government should establish a settlement commission with the grant of Rs. 5 crores.

Finally the discourse arrives at Ranajit Guha, a main architect and influential figure in post-colonial south Asian history, i.e., subaltern studies. It was primarily conceptualized in three ways; namely, *empirically* as the labouring peasant, *structurally* as a semiotic rupture in the prose of colonial counter-insurgency, and *deconstructively* as the abject figure of the gendered developing world subject both inside and outside the circuits of social mobility. In the 1990s the subaltern's narrative trajectory expanded as it gained global provenance in Latin American studies, African-American studies, and indigenous studies and, most significantly, in the synthetic interdisciplinarity of feminist and postcolonial studies (Nagla 2008).

The notion of class and equality is not an Indian concept; rather, these ideas started in the West. In the modern world these unsuccessful notions have moved from the western notion and unfortunately till the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the word 'class' remains one of the major issue in the Indian society. From the ancient time the class distinction first appeared in our great Puranas, Shastras

through the Chatur Varna system, where the upper classes (Brahmins) made differences with the lower class for their own benefit. Carrying this system in the progressive society can make a revolution. In our society, there are basically three types of people; viz., the mainstream who has full power to fulfill their wish in the society and constitute the upper class, the second one is alternative, who have less power than the mainstream, but have much power than the others, who constitute the middle class and the voiceless or lower class people, who are always dominated and neglected by the former two classes of people. According to social scientist and historian, which dominated and neglected groups are called the voiceless people.

In sum, subaltern studies are the most important phenomenological pan-world concept of the 18<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> centuries around India as well as world. From non-academicians like M.K.Gandhi and B.R.Ambedkar to academicians like Ranajit Guha and his group studied it empirically from the historical perspective of 'from below' or to catch the subaltern 'voice from marginal people'. But hegemony could never be removed from the society as state, politics; power and capitalism exist in the society. Subsequently hegemony also exists in the same way, or hegemony can co-exist with the state, politics, power and capitalism and to some extent it is constant and universal reality/social fact which appears in every society in the world.