

THE SIGNIFICANT SUBALTERN HISTORIANS AND THEIR HISTORIOGRAPHY

Mr. B. K. Bhosale,
C. K. Thakur, arts, Commerce and Science College,
New Panvel

Abstract:

The main object of the subaltern study is to bring to light the woes and accumulated of grievances of deprived section of the society. The subaltern study cover the collection monographs on various unconnected issues of human kind. There are several historian who have written on the theme of subaltern which come to be known as subaltern hyetography.

Keywords: Subaltern, Monographs, upsurge

The Subaltern study is labour oriented, it has Marxian tone, premise and analysis. The main object of the Subaltern study is to bring to light the woes and accumulated grievances of peasants, factory workers tribal and lower classes and leading them in rebellions against their constituted authority. The lower classes used revolt as their means and method to attract the attention of the elite in order to get improved their conditions and force them to act to actuate the reforms during the colonial period but no concrete gains the lower classes or Subaltern could get so far. Ranjit Guha says that peasants never drifted into rebellion easily but they consciously rebelled when they came to realize that their all efforts of various kinds and pleadings failed entirely without any concrete results. The workers in factory , villagers of the plains and the Adivasis of the uplands deliberately undertook insurgency as a desperate way-out of an intolerable conditions of existence which were created by wicked landlords, extortionate usurers, dishonest traders venal police, irresponsible officials and partisan processes of law. Naturally, the revolts of these people and their impact on Indian nationalism constituted the major themes for historians, which came to be known as subaltern studies.

According to Irfan Habib, there are several new trends in historiography. subalternity is a new and different trend which was neglected by the historiography so far. But Ranjit Gupta developed it in the 20th century, made it the most popular approach of history and converted it into a Subaltern school of Historiography.

The Subaltern the title is taken from Antonio Grimace's manuscript writings, which means of inferior rank whether of class, caste, age, gender or office. The subaltern studies cover the collections of monographs on various issues, diverse and unconnected topics of human kind. Their

theme is one that is insurgency of the lower classes against injustice. The Subaltern studies bring to light the lower sections of the Indian people which the historiography had neglected so far.

The Subaltern studies came into existence in the last two decades of the 20th century, which brought into practice a new approach of writing history on modern India. Ranjit Guha, the protagonist of the Subaltern studies says that the historiography of Indian national movements was biased and prejudiced with elitism and no contribution of subaltern or lower classes considered in sharing the views that developed the national consciousness and in making the Indian nation.

Ranjit Guha further says that the elastic historiography never explained the popular initiatives asserting them as the anti-Rowlett upsurge of 1919 or the quit India movements of 1942. He says that there was a domain of people in politics which was parallel to elite politics in that domain the principle actors were the subaltern classes and groups, which constituted the mass of the population. The elitist historiography never recognized this fact.

There are several historians who have written on the theme of subaltern which came to be known as subaltern historiography.

Ramchandra Guha:

He is the most important historian of the subaltern school of historiography. His popular essay known as 'Forestry and social Protest in British Kumaun' is on the period between 1893 and 1921. It shows that the Chipko Andolan movement started from 1973 in Kumaun was against the commercial exploitation of forest, has a history which began from the nineties of the 19th century and lasted into the 20's of the 20th century.

Darshan Perusek:

He is another subaltern historian, who tells a story of his great grandfather. Baba Karaak Singh after reading the first essay, published in 1982. The essay was written by a group of post independent historians of Subaltern Studies on South Asian History and Society under the general editorship of Ranjit Guha, Australian National University Canberra. Ranjit Guha, in his first essay says that the historiography of Indian nationalism had been dominated by elitism colonialist elitism and bourgeois nationalist elitism. He further says that elitism which projected the making of Indian nation was predominantly the achievement of the ruling class ideas, institutions and personalities. That elitism excluded the politics of the people or whatever they presented.

This reality led Darshan Perusek to write about the story of Baba Karaak, the great grandfather of his own. He says that Baba Karaak Singh was awarded a jagir by the British for his loyalty towards the British during the Uprising of 1857. Baba Karaak was one of the mutinous sepoy's, he used to give detail secret military plans of the rebel employees to the British officer in charge. Darshan Perusek says that the name of his grandfather never appeared in any official's roll-call of either heroes or villains or in pre-independent or post-independent history. Baba Karaak Singh was

considered too minor or very insignificant to attract the attention of historian to refer to his activities anywhere.

David Arnold:

He is another subaltern historian. He studied the conditions of hillmen in the hill tracts of Guden and Rampa of Andra Pradesh between 1839 and 1924 and wrote stories on their long series of disturbances and rebellions against the British. He also studied the Madras famine of 1876-78 and brought to light the peasant consciousness and peasant action for their subsistence and survival.

Gyan Pandey:

Brings to light the peasant revolt of Awadh during the period between 1919-1922 and shows how it created much more impact on Indian nationalism.

Arvind Das:

Another subaltern historian tries to prove that the agrarian changes in Bihar brought in the form of land reforms were not the elite sponsored event. He says that the land reforms in Bihar between 1947-1978 were the direct combined result of the agitation started by Swami Sahajanand as well as the movement started by the powerful Kansan Sabha. The discontent among the peasant in Bihar was supported by the militant communist led peasant movement in Telengana of Andra State.

N.K.Chandra:

Is one of the important historians of the subaltern historiography He studied all the conditions of the agricultural workers in Burdwan and brought to the light the appallingly poor conditions of the masses in and around Burdwan.

Dipesh Chakrabarty:

Is a good observer of the conditions of the jute mill workers between 1840 – 1940 as their salary, working hours, holidays, working situation and financial implications were not just. In the same way he also studied their conditions between the years 1920-1950 and wrote two separate essays.

Tanika Sarkar:

Another historian of the Subaltern School, studied the tribal movement in the north western Bengal between 1824-1932. Tribal leader, Jitu Santhal began this movement in Malda area of Bengal, which was against the landlords, who used to exploit the tribal as their tenants.

Gautam Bhadra:

As per Gramsci multiple elements of conscious leadership, Gautam Bhadra has written four essays on the rebel character of Shah Mal, Devi Singh, Gonoo and Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah. They were the rebels of the revolt 1857 but no historian tried to write right or wrong on them. They were totally left out of the historical writings and literature of the Great Uprising of 1857.

Sumit Sarkar:

Gives detail account of the non-cooperation Khilafat movement of 1921-1922. He mentions in his essay that the movement was much more popular than the anti-partition agitation of 1905. The anti-partition movement was confined only to the Hindu upper class. The Non-cooperation movement was a popular initiative, which eventually alarmed the British government but forced the leaders to withdraw it to avoid further loss of lives and properties.

Conclusion

The title the Subaltern is taken from Antonio Gramsci's writing which means of the inferior rank, whether of class, caste, age, gender or office. The Subaltern studies cover the collection of monographs on various issues, diverse and unconnected topics of human kind. The insurgency of the lower classes against the injustice is one of the most important themes of the Subaltern school of Indian Historiography. It brings to light the lower classes of the society, which were totally neglected by the Indian Historiography so far. It addresses to a range of topics extending in time from the Mughal period to the 1970's in themes from communalism to industrial labour and in manner from the descriptive to the conceptual topics.

Ranjit Guha, the protagonist of the Subaltern Historiography says that this is a new approach and popularly came to be known as the historiography of protest. Because the historiography of Indian national movement never considered the contributions of the lower classes in sharing the views and led to the development of Indian national consciousness.

The Subaltern study is labour oriented. It has adopted the Marxian tone, its premise and analysis is also based on Marxist philosophy. The main object of this study is to bring to light the woes and accumulated grievances of peasants, factory workers, tribal and leading them in rebellion against their constituted authority. The revolt of these people and its impact on Indian nationalism constituted the major themes for historian, which came to be known as the Subaltern studies.

There are several historians who have written on the above subjects. Some of them more important Subaltern historians are as Ranjit Guha, Ramchandra Guha, Darshan Peruse, David Arnold, Gyan Pandey, Arvind Das, N.K.Chandra, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Tanika Sarkar, Gautam Bhadra, Shahid Amin, Sumit Sarkar, Hardiman David, Hobsbawm E.J.,Kumar Kapli, and several others.

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