Chapter: 2

Review of Theoretical Framework and Text Related Literature

2.1: Introduction:

This chapter is about the review of related literature. This chapter reviews the theories which are used as scaffold to discuss the texts and text specific literature. The chapter begins with Antonio Gramsci’s concept of subaltern as he was the first to use the idea of subaltern. The chapter also includes Gayatri Spivak’s critical essay, Can Subaltern Speak? It is very much important to know how the concept of subaltern is changing from Gramsci to Spivak. Spivak has developed the concept of subaltern from Derrida’s theory of Deconstruction. She has linked it with feminism so the chapter also throws light upon feminist theory. Though the concept of subaltern differs from Gramsci to Spivak, the researcher tries to link them together to view the works of Ngugi Wa Thiong’o and Buchi Emecheta.

The Subaltern study has become one of the major branches of post-colonial criticism in India. In India, Subaltern Studies is a new movement in political and cultural historiography. It is launched by a group of scholars of which the most of them were from Bangla. They collectively have produced a series of volumes entitled Subaltern Studies during the 1980s. Subaltern studies derive its force from Marxism, poststructuralism and becomes a part of post-colonial criticism. The term subaltern ‘owes its origin to Antonio Gramsci’s writings and underlines a subordinate place in terms of class, gender, caste, race and culture. The ideology of subaltern historiography is derived from Gramsci, who thinks of history in terms of —multiple elements of conscious leadership. (Gramsci, 1973:27)

Antonio Gramsci’s account of the subaltern provides a key theoretical resource for understanding the conditions of poor, the lower class and peasantry in India. Spivak proposes the more nuanced, flexible, post-Marxist definition of the subaltern, informed by deconstruction, which takes women’s lives and histories into account. In the 19th century, Karl Marx proclaimed the situation of the industrial working class compared with other people. Antonio Gramsci
focused the situation of the rural peasantry that lacks coherence with Marx’s traditional perception of the subaltern. Spivak goes one step ahead and discusses the situation of women as subaltern in the post-colonial world.

As the idea of subaltern is at the centre of this research, it is not possible to review other works without reading Antonio Gramsci’s writing of the concept of subaltern. Gramsci is one of the first Marxist theoreticians to recognize that culture is not simply the expression of underlying economic relations. Gramsci’s works opens up by considering other forms of social and cultural relationship, i.e. gender, race, sexuality, religion and so on. For Gramsci if there is not a change in the social condition of working class, it is no change at all. Gramsci has developed his concept of subaltern by keeping in mind the oppressed and subordinates.

2.2: Antonio Gramsci’s views about the Concept of Subaltern:

An Italian critic, Antonio Gramsci, has developed a concept of subaltern over a period of time. He uses the term “subaltern” in a literal sense in his first notebook (1929-30). He refers to the non-commissioned military troops who are subordinate to the authority of lieutenants, colonels and generals (notebook-1). In his other notes, he has used the term in a figurative way, in non-military instances, in regard to positions of subordination or lower status.

Toward the end of Notebook-1, Gramsci states that “[Church] is no longer an ideological world power but only subaltern force.” (Gramsci, Prison Notebooks) In Notebook-4, Gramsci has pointed out that how the unfinished works of Karl Marx edited by Engels can be studied. Here Gramsci’s intention in raising the issue is to see and analyze Engels’ position as a subaltern is relation to Marx. It is in this figurative or metaphorical sense that Gramsci uses the term ‘subaltern’ when he refers to subordinate social groups or class. In Notebook-3 (p.g. no-14) Gramsci has for the first time used the term subaltern with regard to social class. He writes,

“Subaltern classes are subject to the initiatives of the dominant Class, even when they rebel; they are in a state of anxious defense.” (Gramsci, Prison Notebooks)
It is in this sense that subaltern groups are subordinate to ruling group’s policies and initiatives. A title of one of the last Notebooks *On the Margins Of History*, Gramsci has identified slaves, peasants, religious, women different races and the proletariat as subaltern social groups. Gramsci himself produced his work in a subaltern or subordinate position. He developed the concept of the “subaltern” when he was subject to the prison authorities. From the note it is clear that Gramsci was interested in producing a methodology of subaltern historiography, a history of the subaltern classes and a political strategy of transformation based upon the historical development and existence of the subaltern. In his works, Gramsci is interested in how the subaltern came into being, what sociopolitical relations caused their formation, what political power they hold, how they are represented in history and literature and how they can transform their consciousness. Gramsci’s concept subaltern is interested with his concepts, thoughts and strategies of radical sociopolitical transformation. To understand Gramsci’s understanding of subaltern one must relate his concept of the subaltern with his thought as a whole- because it is very much difficult to isolate his notion of subaltern from his thoughts. His analysis of the subaltern is interested with his political, social, intellectual, literary, cultural, philosophical, religious and economic analysis. Through his analysis emerges the concept of hegemony and subalternity.

According to Gramsci the ruling groups control political society and they must also exercise a degree of hegemony in civil society in order for subaltern groups to consent to their own subordinate position and to the authority of the ruling groups. In civil society ruling or dominant social groups manufacture, organize and maintain consent by promoting their hegemony- that is, their ideology, philosophy, ways of life and so forth. Gramsci’s concept of integral state is the mixture of political and civil society and dictatorship and hegemony. The ruling group in the political society tries to protect the authority with the help of coercive apparatus such as law, court, and police. The ruling group protects its authority and hegemony by controlling leaders and intellectuals from counter hegemonic struggle. The ruling group can control or suppress the association or assembly of the counter group by declaring that the counter group’s activity is illegal or they are terrorists. The ruling social groups work in unity and attempt to maintain power over the subalterns. Gramsci has analyzed the concept of subaltern in historical context. In his views the history of the subaltern is not documented. It is difficult to find the evidences of subalterns’ existence. He attempts to understand the subaltern as a
historically determined category because it exists within particular historical, economic, political, social and cultural contexts. Gramsci attempts to understand the process, development, and lineage of the subalterns; how they came into existence, how some survived at the margins and how other succeeded in their ascent from a subordinate social position to a dominant one. Gramsci wants to understand the present, the past and the future of the subalterns. In short he wants to understand the overall condition and development the subalterns and their lived experience.

Gramsci has listed sixteen main topics that he planned to address in his notebook. The first listed topic was on “Theory of History and of historiography” (Notebook 1). The way Gramsci has developed methodological criteria to study the subaltern, can be viewed as a contribution to the fulfillment of this proposed plan. In Notebook 3, 90, Gramsci lays his “Methodological Criteria” (Gramsci, Prison Notebooks) for the historical research of the subaltern in six steps or phrases each step indicating an area in which the integral historian should study the subaltern. According necessary to study the following:

I. The objective formation of the subaltern class through the developments and changes that took place in the economic sphere; the extent of their diffusion; their descent from other classes that preceded them;

II. Here passive and active adherence to the dominant political formations; that is, their efforts to influence the programs of these formations with demands of their own;

III. The birth of new parties of the ruling class to maintain comfort of the subaltern classes;

IV. The formations of the subaltern classes themselves, formations of a limited and partial characters;

V. The political formations that assert the autonomy of the subaltern classes but within the old framework;

VI. The political formations that assert complete autonomy, etc.

These phases represent the phases in which a subaltern group develops from a “primitive” (Gramsci, Prison Notebooks) position of subordination to a position of autonomy. In that sense these phases represent the sequential process in which a subaltern group develops and
grows into a dominant social group or in other instances, is stopped in its ascent to power by dominant social groups or political forces.

In these six points each point is a step as if it were a stage in development. In the first point the change in economic sphere is a change in property relation and this change alters the organization of society and regards a social group to a subordinate social position. The second point illustrate that the subaltern group either actively or passively adheres to a new dominant political formations or the group attempts to influence the new formations with its own demands. The third illustrate that the dominant groups by using power creates a new parties or governments programs with an intention to maintain control of the subaltern groups. The fourth illustrate that the subaltern group realizes the need to form its own organization because the new formations, parties and institutions formed by the dominant group do not account for its need. The fifth point illustrate that to reach its need the subaltern group organizes a political formation, the formation which represents its concerns and expresses autonomy and its will to participate in the established political framework. In the sixth point the subaltern group realizes that its interest will not be met within the current sociopolitical system so it organizes its own social and political formation that will eventually replace the existing one.

If we analyze subalternity in this notion, we come to know that it exists in degrees or levels of development: some groups maintain higher levels of political consciousness and organization than others and some groups exercise more autonomy and initiative than others. The notion also implies that socially and politically undeveloped and unorganized groups are harder to research in historical records that groups that have organized political parties or other institutions that represents their views. A group of farmers is an example of unorganized group because they are individually or collectively, not conscious about their position within the prevailing social relations. This group of farmers would be more difficult to trace than a trade union or political party organized by urban proletarians because the farmers would be less likely to leave evidence documenting their activity or have their activity documented by others. This example which is at some extent consistent with the situations in Italy that Gramsci addressed, illustrates that subaltern groups are not equivalent that they are differentiated by their level of political organization.
In the *Prison Notebooks*, there are number of instances where Gramsci’s terminology reflects the idea of subalternity in degree. For example, in his Notebook 14, published in 1991 he discusses about *The Betrothed* (Manzoni) a novel by Alessandro Manzoni. In this discussion Gramsci states that the subaltern “‘have no history’: [that is to say] there are no traces of their history in historical documents of the past” (Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*) (Notebook 14, 39; 1991, 294). If this statement pertains to all subaltern groups, then Gramsci’s methodology for subaltern history would be meaningless for it would be impossible, or nearly impossible at the very least, to study the subaltern for there would be no evidence of their existence. On Gramsci’s part this is not an inconsistency. In Notebook 3, 48, in his discussion of spontaneity and conscious leadership he writes: “One may say that the element of spontaneity is...characteristic of the ‘history of subaltern class’ and especially of the most marginal and peripheral elements of this classes who have not attained a consciousness of the class per...and who consequently do not even suspect that their history might possibly have any importance or that it might be of any value to leave documentary evidence of it.” (Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*)

From the analysis the above written note it becomes clear that there are “marginal” or “peripheral” elements of the subaltern that are not developed, meaning that they have not achieved political consciousness of their position or attempted to organize politically. This is the reason that these groups do not leave evidence of their activities in historical records; it becomes difficult to “trace” the groups. One could say that groups with these characteristic fall into the first phase of subaltern development.

In the some notes Gramsci provides another example of the degree in variation of subaltern development, with an example that corresponds to the sixth phase of development. He writes: “The ‘spontaneous’ movements of the broadest popular strata make it possible for the most advanced subaltern class to come to power. There is a distinction in the words “marginal” and “peripheral” used in the former quotation and the word “advanced” in the later quotation. By using these words Gramsci identified variations in subaltern development. Some groups lack consciousness and political organization and leave no traces of their development, while others have the ability to come to power.
In his Notebook 3, 14 Gramsci writes “The history of subaltern classes is necessarily fragmented and episodic; in the activity of these classes there is a tendency toward unification, albeit in personal stages, but this is the least conspicuous aspects and it manifests itself only when victory is secured.” (Gramsci, Prison Notebooks) Gramsci recognized that the development of subaltern group was in various degrees and levels.

In Notebook, 3 and 16, Gramsci describes the development of the medieval commune. To prove his point he refers to an article written by Ettore Ciccotti (trans. “Elements of ‘truth’ and ‘certainty’ in the historical tradition”). For Gramsci the article is significant because it provides a historical case study of how a subaltern group can become a dominant group. To gain power and liberate themselves the common people held arms and became one. In the thirteenth century, the common people in the communes of Siena and Bolongna gained enough political power to overcome the power of the nobility. The phases in which the people gained power and eventually created their communes is consistent with Gramsci’s six phases of development. Due to the wars among the communes during the period, most of the common people possessed arms. Because of activities during the war time in the military forces the common people became aware of their strength. The result of this awareness was that the common people consolidated their ranks, unified, created councils, and appointed officers. The same thing is mentioned in the fourth phase of development by Gramsci. Though this concentration and organization of power, the common people held most of the power in the military which was originally intended to protect the commune from external forces. It began to grow and include the protection of the people from the nobles. When people entered in the fifth phase they demanded emancipation and participation in the major public offices and they formed themselves into a real political party. When the authorities failed to meet the people’s desired reforms, the people entered the sixth phase of development, seceding from the commune completely.

Gramsci’s perspective is about how a subaltern group that was subordinated to a dominant group gained power and eventually became the new dominant group. It also illustrates Gramsci’s desire and ability to trace the subaltern in various texts.

Gramsci’s Notebook 3 later became the first note on the subaltern. In Notebook 3 and 12 Gramsci refers to an article by Domenico Bulferetti, in which Bulferetti discusses a number of
different books on David Lazzaretti and his political movement. Gramsci is interested in the note because he wants to know how the movement is interpreted and represented by Italian intellectuals. People thought of Lazzaretti as the messiah of a new moral and civil order and that he was going to establish a republic of God that include land and crop redistribution. However, on the day Lazzaretti ceremoniously came to present himself to thousands of his supports as the messiah and to proclaim his establishment, he was shot and killed by military police. (Hobsbawn 1965, 65-73).

The example of Lazzaretti and his movement represent an attempt by a subaltern group to establish a new state and conception of the world based upon various religious, political and economic principles. The case of Lazzaretti also represents an instance in which a subaltern group was politically organized and historically traceable, yet failed in its political ascent due to the power of the state. Gramsci is interested in the way Lazzaretti and his movements are portrayed and represented by Italian intellectuals. Cesar Lombroso was known for his views about criminality. He believed that criminality was biologically determined. Gramsci described him as “positivist”. Cesare Lombroso viewed Lazzaretti not as a member of a marginalized group but as a psychologically abnormal, madman. For Giacomo Barzellotti, Lazzaretti’s movement was purely religious, not political. According to Gramsci Balzellotti did not consider the socioeconomic, political, or historical conditions, Lazzretti and his movement confronted. Gramsci thought of both Lombroso and Barzellotti as contributing to a broader custom of the time in which Italian intellectuals tended to neglect the historical origins of an event and provide “narrow, individual, pathologic, etc. explanations of single explosive incidents,” such as finding “the protagonist to be a madman.” (Gramsci, Prison Notebooks) (Notebook 3, 12)

Gramsci’s analysis of intellectuals and his interest in constructing a subaltern history are related to his analysis of popular literature, especially with the development of the historical novel and its representations of subaltern activity. For instance, Gramsci focuses on the work of Alessandro Manzoni because both of them share their interest. They are interested in creating a portrait of the common people. Manzoni refers to them as “humble classes,” meaning peasants, artisans, servants, villagers, and so on- in Gramscian terms, the subaltern classes. What interests Gramsci in Manzoni’s work is the way in which Manzoni presents the common people. Gramsci describes Manzoni as having an “aristocratic” and Catholic disposition because of his “jocular
sympathy” and “caste attitude” toward the common people. Gramsci points out that in Manzoni’s historical novel *The Betrothed*, there is not one common person who is not teased or laughed at. They are depicted as wretched and narrow people without an inner life. Only the nobles have an inner life. Although Manzoni positions common people as the principle character in his novel, he portrays them as not having an “inner life” or “deep moral personality.” Gramsci compared Manzoni’s work with Shakespeare because both of theirs presentations of the class differs. Shakespeare favours the upper class people and presents the common in a “scornful or repugnant manner (Notebook 3, 51, 1991, 289-91). Gramsci was not displeased with Manzoni’s interest and focus on the common people the way he did it, but rather he was interested in the greater significance of how and why Manzoni did it. The way Manzoni portrayed the people as humble and the noble, for Gramsci, it was symptomatic of Italian intellectual, as exemplified in the cases of Lombroso and Barzellotti. Unlike Dostoyevsky Italian intellectuals did not think that the people must be free from their “humble” positions. In Gramsci’s view, Italian intellectuals traditionally separated themselves from the people in a superior and paternalistic manner.

It is like the relationship between two races, one considered superior and the other inferior, like the relationship between adults and child in the old schools or, worse still, like that of a ‘society for the protection of animals’. (Gramsci, Prison Notebooks)

In his Notebook 21 published in 1991 Gramsci has written that he was concerned with how literary representations of the subaltern reinforced the subaltern’s subordinated positions (Pg. 293-4). Although Gramsci has given example from literary criticism, his focus is not art. Gramsci’s interpretations and understanding of the subaltern is in cultural, political, and social criticism, in a critique of social life. By analyzing the social life Gramsci attempts to destroy certain beliefs and attitudes towards the world and the life because he is against such beliefs and attitudes that are presented as truth but are in fact “narrow and impoverished” (Notebook 23, 51; 1991, 291). Gramsci’s analysis of the subaltern on literature illustrates the position of the subaltern as passive, humble and subordinate. He intends to show that such works do not help in
improving the position of the subaltern rather they reinforce the positions of the subaltern and contributes to their further subordination. The analysis reveals that such views contribute to the consciousness and common sense of the masses to an extent that they do not question such views and accept them as facts rather than opinions. In this sense the integral historian has to see the development of the subaltern by analyzing the historical processes in which the subaltern are perceived, presented, and depicted in literary and historical document because texts depict the subaltern in various way and the historian has to understand the implications of these depictions because they will certainly influence the opinions of the historian. It means in historical or literary documents the subaltern may be presented as humble, passive, or ignorant, but their actual lived experiences may give a contrary image. That’s why; it becomes a duty of the integral historian to critically analyze the way in which the intellectuals represent the conditions and aspirations of the subaltern (Notebook 25, 7,; 1991, 238-41).

Gramsci’s analysis of subaltern group helps to come at many points. The very first point is through producing the history of subaltern classes is an arduous task Gramsci believed in the possibility of it. The second point is, Gramsci argued that the subaltern groups develop in various degrees that correspond to the level of political organization, which the historian has to take into consideration. Third the subaltern groups are faced with the single idea of political, social, cultural, and economic relations that produce marginalization and prevent group autonomy. Fourth, although subaltern groups face many difficulties, they have the ability to transform their subordinate social positions. In fact, Gramsci’s ultimate goal was the transformation of the subaltern’s subordinate social position. He formulated a political strategy for such transformation.

Gramsci analyzes the position of the subaltern and his analysis reveals the subaltern as passive, humble and subordinate. He expresses his views after reading literature on the subaltern and comes to the conclusion that such works do not help in improving the position of the subaltern rather they reinforce the position of the subaltern and contribute to their further subordination. Power remains in the hands of the dominant class but Gramsci is interested in improving and strengthening the condition of the subaltern. This is the reason that Gramsci’s idea of the subaltern can be linked with Spivak’s concept of the subaltern. She is also concerned with the positive change in the position of the subaltern. She has used Derrida’s Deconstruction
theory to break the dominant ideology. Spivak used the method of deconstruction to challenge the dominant idea of patriarchy. As Spivak has used deconstruction as a method it is necessary to know about Derrida’s concept of Deconstruction.

2.3: Deconstruction:

According to deconstruction, no work of literature, whatsoever, has been able to express exactly what it wanted to say. Thus the critics deconstruct and recreate the work of literature taking their words as not the outward form of their meaning but only the —trace of a quest. Deconstruction is the oppositional logic of structuralism. Deconstruction presumes that an author at once affirms and ‘unaffirms’, says and ‘unsays’ his meaning. Thus the business of deconstructionist is not to deconstruct the text but to show how the text has deconstructed itself. Rajnath writes:

One can safely argue that deconstruction is a dismantling of the structure of a text. (1984:17-18) (Rajnath)

In Deconstruction and Criticism Derrida suggests: “A text is […] is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces. Thus, the text overruns all the limits assigned to it so far […] all the limits, everything that was set up in opposition to writing (Speech, life, the world, the real history and what not every field of reference to body or mind, conscious or unconscious, politics, economics and so forth) (1979-84). (Harold Bloom)

Deconstruction is not a ‘method’ in the sense of a systematic pursuit of the text, but a ‘vigilant practice’ to explore a ‘textual division’. According to Derrida deconstruction frees the text from the fixity of meaning by giving it a status of interpretation which Derrida calls a ‘free
play’ of meaning. Gayatri Spivak outlines the meaning and method of Deconstruction in her translator’s introduction to *Of Grammatology* in the following words:

“Deconstruction seems to offer a way out the closure of knowledge by inaugurating the open-ended indefiniteness of texuality—thus placing it in the abyss. It shows us the allure of the abyss as freedom. The fall into the abyss of deconstruction inspires us with as much pleasure as fear. We are intoxicated with the prospect of never hitting bottom.” (Derrida, *Of Grammatology*)

In deconstruction the text deconstructs itself so deconstruction rejects all the earlier methods of criticism. In this method the critic is not a mere interpreter of the text but he is a co-creator and sometimes a critic becomes more powerful than the author. With the deconstruction method Spivak intended to challenge the dominant ideas. She highlights the difference created between the ‘First World’ and the ‘Third World’ and states that the entire world is represented from the dominant perspective and the geopolitical situation of the ‘First World’. In her translation of Derrida’s book *de la grammatologie*, Spivak expands Derrida’s deconstructive thinking beyond the framework of Western philosophy, and sets it to work in diverse fields ranging from ‘Third World’ women’s political movements to postcolonial literary studies and development studies. The third world intellectuals such as Homi Bhabha, Robert Young and Gayatri Spivak use the deconstructive strategy as a binocular to see the conceptual framework of the non-western societies that how they are exploited by the dominant ideologies. Spivak has used Derrida’s Deconstruction theory and expands it to show the exploitation of the ‘Third World’ workers and women by the ‘First World’.

Spivak has foregrounded the textual elements that shape our understanding of the social world, and thereby questioned the binary opposition between philosophical or literary texts and the so-called real world. According to Spivak, deconstruction in the narrow sense domesticates deconstruction in the general sense. She states further as:
“Deconstruction in the general sense, seeing in the self perhaps only a (dis)figuring effect of a radical heterogeneity, puts into question the grounds of the critic’s power. Deconstruction in the narrow sense, no more than a chosen literary-critical methodology, locates this signifying or figuring effect in the text’s performance and allows the critic authority to disclose the economy of figure and performance.” (Derrida, Of Grammatology 22)

She used the concept ‘deconstruction’ with a specific intellectual and political purpose to focus the reality of the dominant culture and to escape its stereotyped identifications. Spivak is interested in Derrida’s theory of Deconstruction because it empowers her to challenge the dominant system of knowledge and representation of the ‘First World’. According to Spivak, deconstructive reading practice guards against the universal claims of Marxism, national liberation movements or Western feminism, means to all the oppressed. She pointed out that the language of universal political have injurious and harmful effects on disempowered groups such as: the colonized, women or the workers. Spivak states that the binary opposition is problematic because it presents deconstruction as abstract philosophical method which is divorced from the material conditions of concrete political events. Spivak appreciates the greatest gift of deconstruction that questions the authenticity of the investigating subject without paralyzing the asker.

For Spivak the concept of Deconstruction is neither a conservative aesthetic nor a radical politics. When Spivak applies the strategy of Deconstruction to postcolonialism, she intends to undermine the power of centralized discourse in order to make a space for marginalized voices. For her, deconstruction is not simply breaking things down but her interest in the theory is to see how truths are produced. To see how truths are produced Spivak goes to the level of cultural and political formations. She studies and interrogates the things from the margins of the central discourses. She goes further and relates the concept of Deconstruction with the feminist activity and states:

“Because in ordinary sexist households, educational institutions or workplaces, the sustaining explanation still remains that the public sector is more important, at
once more rational and mysterious, and, generally, more masculine, that the private, the feminist, reversing this hierarchy, must insist that sexuality and the emotions are, in fact, so much more important and threatening that a masculinist sexual politics is obliged, repressively to sustain all public activity.” (Devy 140)

From the above quotation Spivak seems to be feminist-deconstructionist. The above quotation highlights the sex discrimination tradition. The opposition is thus not merely reversed; it is displaced. So she states further that this practical structure of deconstruction of the opposition between private and the public is implicit in all, and explicit in some, feminist activity. And then feminist activity would articulate or strive toward that fulfilled displacement of public (male) and private (female): an ideal society and a sex-transcendent society. It means that deconstruction teaches one to question all transcendental idealisms.

Spivak’s ideas are shaped by Derrida’s theory of Deconstruction. She is concerned with the disempowered subaltern groups of the ‘Third World’.

Deconstruction plays a vital role in shaping Spivak’s ideas. Her major concern is to make a space for the voice of the marginalized by breaking the centralized discourse. In Can Subaltern Speak? Spivak has included women. With feminist approach she studies women’s lives so it is necessary to link it with feminism.

2.4: Feminism:

Feminism is an ideology which seeks to overthrow the social practices which lead to the oppression and victimization of women in patriarchy. The feminist critics’ quest is the quest of self-knowledge and self-actualization and they intend to turn the world in favour of women. The theory works on the main two principles. The first is representation of ‘woman’ by male writers and the second is ‘woman’ as presented by female writers. The first premise gives rise to phallocentrism criticism and the second gives rise to gynocentrism. The biological distinction between man and woman is an accepted fact but the feminists the so called created fact that a
woman is inferior to man so the feminist critics try to establish relationship between man and woman based on mutual understanding and respect.

Feminist writers or critics refuse the image of woman created by male writers as it lacks the authenticity. They present women the way they have thought of them so a ‘woman’ created by male writers is fully from a man’s perspective. Gynocritics formulate a female framework based on the experiences and lives of women from a woman’s perspective. Women writers reject a male gaze in literature and rewrite and recreate a text from a feminist perspective. Feminist critics view literature from women’s point of view and see women as producer or creator of textual meaning. Spivak has entered the theory from Deconstructionist-Marxist perspective. She studies position of women in relation to men and the main focus is women of the ‘Third World’. Working class women of the ‘Third World’ are exploited and they are the worst victims of the international division of labour.

Spivak provides a definition of woman from a deconstructive perspective by rejecting the common definition of woman which is in relation to man. Spivak opposes Marx and Freud and writes:

“In terms of the physical, emotional, legal, custodial and sentimental situation of the woman’s product, the child, this picture of the human relationship to production, labour and property is incomplete. The possession of a tangible place of production in the womb situates the woman as an agent in any theory of production.” (Lodge 497)

Spivak gives the idea of womb as a place of production. She reject Freud’s notion of penis-envy by writing about womb-envy. With the notion of womb-envy Spivak challenges male dominancy. She prefers the situation in which a woman is allowed to enter into the age of computers. She favours the modernization of women in development and talks about women’s freedom to work outside the house.
Spivak has questioned the universal claims of some Western feminists to speak for all women regardless of cultural differences. In relation to the historical experiences of the disempowered women of the ‘Third World’ Spivak sees the limitation of Western feminism. She points out the Western feminism has overlooked the conditions, histories and struggles of the ‘Third World’ women. Spivak expressed her views on the geography of female sexuality. Spivak’s reading of Devi’s short story *Breast-giver* focuses upon the ideology of 19th century. Spivak is concerned with the plight of subaltern women and focuses upon the failure of nationalism to transform the lives of subaltern women. She reads that the practice of ‘child bearing’ is framed within a domestic ideology and places women in a socially, politically and economically disempowered position. This type of framed image of a woman makes her an object of private property. Spivak claims ‘feminist individualism’ in the age of Imperialism and postcolonialism.

According to Spivak, the discontinuity, heterogeneity and typology used for a sex analysis fails to obliterate the problems of race and class. It will not necessarily escape the inbuilt colonialism of the First World feminism toward the Third. The definition of woman, —legal object as subject of reproduction, would persistently seek to de-normalize uterine social organization. Spivak wishes to participate in feminist debate and neglects the sterile debates of deconstruction or comments on them only obliquely. Spivak sees that many feminist critics have wished to stress an essential feminine, an area repressed by male domination. Spivak feels that in the male dominated area it is difficult and rather impossible to find the methods and values to build a different and better society. Spivak’s opposition to essentialism is deconstructive rather than psychoanalytical. Woman, like any other term, can only find its meaning in a complex series of differentiations, of which the most important, or at least the most immediate is man.

Pointing to the radical different directions, Spivak talks about the significance of the female body. The first is, she stresses the clitoris as the site of a radical excess to the cycle of reproduction of production and the second is, she emphasizes that the reproductive power of the womb is absent in any account of production in classical Marxist. Spivak tries to differentiate psychoanalytical feminism from Marxist feminism and states that:
“With psychoanalytic feminism, then an invocation of history and politics leads us back to the place of psychoanalysis in colonialism with Marxist feminism, an invocation of the economic text foregrounds the operations of the New Imperialism.” (Lodge 502)

Here Spivak differentiates psychoanalytical feminism and Marxist feminism. She points out that the former reminds the history and politics and the later is about economics. Spivak points out that the formation of gendered identity in the 19th century is re-worked by colonial discourse so that the white European female individual is defined as socially and culturally superior to the non-Western woman. In her two essays: *French Feminism in an International Frame* (Morton) and *Three Women’s Text and a Critique of Imperialism* (Spivak), Spivak argues that the history of Western feminism is implicated in the larger history of European colonialism. Spivak’s argument, that Western feminism has been historically complicit in the project of imperialist expansion, is one of the most difficult and troubling aspect of Spivak’s contribution to feminist thought. Spivak emphasizes some important points to lead her thought. They are: the important political and intellectual transformations that Western feminism has achieved, the need to challenge the Western feminist thought that all women’s lives and histories are the same, the need of considering different non-Western women’s lives and histories to form universal feminist thought, the importance of a global political awareness of the local economic, political, social and cultural conditions that structure women’s oppression in different parts of the world. (Morton, 2003:90)

Gayatri Spivak’s *Can Subaltern Speak?* is the base of this research work. By linking up feminism and subaltern theory in this critical essay, she has set a mile stone. Spivak’s this critical essay is the major pillar to study the works of Ngugi Wa Thiong’o and Buchi Emecheta. Spivak’s concept of subaltern will provide a great help to study post-colonial culture and position of colonized and neo-colonized men-women and their relation with the dominant culture. It is in this sense that the research will study the language of the subaltern. Spivak’s critical essay will help to break the powerful discourse of the ‘First World’. Moreover it is through this essay the
researcher will try to make the voice of the subaltern be heard. As Can Subaltern Speak? is the base of this research work it is necessary to review the essay.

2.5: Can Subaltern Speak? By Gayatri Chakrovarti Spivak

Gayatri Spivak’s Can Subaltern Speak? is a kind of conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. This essay is a landmark in the field of Subaltern Studies and has earned Spivak fame as the most important critic of Subaltern Studies. Spivak has used deconstruction to examine how truth is constructed. In this essay she has touched upon the three major issues. She has talked about harms done to non-Europeans and the poor by the West. Moreover she differs in her study or treatment of ‘subaltern’ because she has brought in ‘woman’ as a subaltern subject. Spivak has meaningfully brought gender issue in Subaltern Studies.

In this radical critique she continuously interrogates the politics of the open end in which people, events or ideas that are radically ‘Other’ to the dominant worldview. She has written against the violence done by discourse knowledge by setting a particular kind of ideology. In this essay she has self-consciously explored the structure of violence.

Can Subaltern Speak? is Spivak’s best known and her most controversial essay. In this essay Spivak as a postcolonial critic like many other feminists tried to give voice to the silenced others. To prove her point Spivak draws our attention to the Hindu practice of burning a widow on her husband’s funeral pyre. In The Post-Colonial Studies: Reader edited by Bill Ashcroft Spivak pointing at the British outlawing of Sati writes in her essay Can Subaltern Speak?:

“White men were saving brown women for brown men.” (Bill Ashcroft 33)

She does not favor self-immolation of women but by giving this example she points out that intervention of Britishers in this matter secured their power in India. This draw a line of difference between British and Indian culture- as it proved the former as “civilized” and later as
“barbaric”. This was the reason the Hindu culture was driven underground, written out of law, denied any legitimacy.

Though the dictionary meaning of ‘subaltern’ is a person holding a subordinate position, originally a junior officer in the British army, Spivak has used the word in rich connotation. Spivak has talked about both; imperialism and patriarchy. She sees the similarity between feared natives in complex colonial hierarchy and use of women as a scapegoat in masculine imperialism. The Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci applied the term to the unorganized masses that must be politicized for the workers’ revolution to succeed. In the 1980s the Subaltern Studies Group appropriated the term, focusing their attention on the disenfranchised people of India. The ‘Subaltern’ always stands in an ambiguous relation to power-subordinated to it but never consenting to its rule, never adopting a dominant point of view or vocabulary as expressive of its own identity. In Indian context Subalterns are defined as the lesser rural gentry, impoverished landlords, rich peasants and upper middle class peasants. “One must never the less insist that the colonized subaltern subject is irretrievably heterogeneous,” (Bertens 212) declares Spivak. Spivak, by focusing upon female subaltern writes: “If in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow.” (Bertens 212) Concerning about the subaltern in the colonial context, Spivak begins her essay by turning to the workers of post-structuralist thinkers such as Foucault and Deleuze. Both these thinkers have challenged the notion that human individuals are sovereign subject with autonomous agency over their consciousness. As post-structuralist theory puts it human consciousness is constructed by shifting discourse of power which speaks through us endlessly. This discourse of power situates in a particular position and relation. In this sense we are not the author of our own self. Identity is not constructed by the subject but it is written for us. So the subject is decentred and its consciousness is always being constructed from positions outside of itself. So an individual is not a transparent representation and effect of discourse. Spivak argues surprisingly for these figures, when Foucault and Deleuze talk about oppressed groups such as working classes they fall back into precisely these uncritical notions of ‘sovereign subjects’ by restoring to them a fully centered conscious. In this sense they also assume that the writing of intellectuals such as themselves can be served as a medium through which the voices of the oppressed can be represented. The role of the intellectual is of a reliable mediator for the voices of the oppressed. The oppressed speak clearly through the intellectuals. Spivak articulated
that Foucault views intellectual power as functioning discursively to produce the very subject over which it then exercises mastery. Of course, no discourse succeeds in obliterating all alternative discourses with the hope of connecting with the oppressed own act of resistance. Spivak in this critique attempts to liberate the other and to enable the other to experience and articulate for themselves those parts of themselves that fall outside what the dominant discourse has constituted as its subjecthood. She attempts to ask whether such work can succeed. She examines that can with or without the intervention of the intellectuals the subject speaks? She frankly and bluntly answers: ‘NO’.

As the subalterns exist to some extent, outside power, theorist and advocates of political transformation have consistently looked to them as a potential source of change. Marxists speak for the proletariat, feminists give voice to the oppressed women, and anti-colonialists speak for the third world people. In part, Spivak is reacting against the persistent tendency of radical political moments to romanticize the other; especially against the notion of that third world people must lead fight against multinational global capitalism. In colonialism the non-Europeans were forced to follow western scripts. Spivak points out that the suggestion that all third world people stand in the same relation to global capitalism and should respond to it in the same way is essentialist.

Essentialism names the belief that certain people or entities share some essential unchanging nature that secures their membership in a category. In the 1980s, essentialism was the target of much feminist criticism because activists recognized that generalizations about ‘woman’ inevitably exclude some women. One response was difference feminism which stressed alliances among women across their differences and hoped to replace solidarity based on shared essential qualities and experiences. Spivak’s landmark contribution to this debate was the concept of ‘strategic essentialism’. Spivak also argued that it was important strategically to make essentialist claims, even while one retained awareness that those claims were at best, crude political generalizations. Spivak points out, that a person’s or group’s identity is relational, a function of its place in a system of difference. In actuality there does not in a true or pure sense, exists the other. They do exist only in relation to the discourse that would name them as other.
Spivak sees the other as dependent on the western intellectuals. She argues that western intellectuals speak for the subaltern and their condition but it does not allow the subaltern to speak for themselves. The whole world is now organized economically, politically and culturally along the lines of western discourses. In a broad sense we can say that western discourse became criteria to judge the whole world, especially non-western countries and the subalterns. Although those discourses are not perfectly aligned, their multiplicity generally reinforces rather than undercuts the marginalization of non-white people and the dual marginalization of non-white women.

Spivak has talked about Freud to develop an appropriate model of intellectual work. Freud analyzes that the very identity of the white is created in part through the self-proclaimed benevolence of colonial action. Spivak’s sentence ‘White men are saving brown women for brown men’ has layer of meaning. It presents white men as saviors of brown women and brown men as oppressors. Spivak thinks that Freud can aid us to keep the sentence open to explore the dynamics of the unfolding human relationship without foreclosing narratives by assigning determinate roles. In this regard the subalterns remain fix, and other. Their position is of a victim, and scapegoat. Both, Spivak and Freud make various determinate claims and Spivak says, reveal their political interests in those claims. The intellectuals always remain at home within the dominant discourse but the subaltern can never get the same privileges. They do not get a space when they can be heard form. The subaltern rarely gets official and intellectual discourses. If we analyze the overall situation it seems that the subalterns can hardly speak. In the third part of the essay Spivak gives the example of Bhubaneshwary Bhaduri. Her suicide was misunderstood by everyone. Spivak laments over the gravity of the problem and wrote: the subaltern cannot speak.

Spivak points out that after colonialism there was a historical shift from feudalism to capitalism and middle-class colonized subjects were treated as nation subjects. She asserts that though after colonialism the middle-class colonized subjects were treated as national subjects but the same historical account does not include the lives and struggle of disempowered group including peasants, women and indigenous people. So, her focus in this critical essay is on the social movements of the disempowered, subaltern groups. Ranjit Guha has equaled subaltern group with Marx’s notion of class consciousness which does not focus upon the struggle of
particular subaltern groups. Spivak disagrees with Guha and turns to Derrida’s concept of deconstruction for subaltern studies. Spivak strongly oppose the idea that the subaltern is a sovereign political subject in control of her own destiny, on the grounds that the sovereign subaltern subject is an effect of the dominant discourse of the elite. She further states that the political will of the subaltern is constructed by the dominant discourse as an after effect of elite nationalism. She says that this discourse contains the subaltern within the grand narrative of bourgeois national liberation and totally ignores the different, local jute workers, Awadh peasant rebellion etc. The subaltern historiography demonstrates that the subaltern is made subaltern through the discourse of power and politics. The dominant political discourses do not include different social position in the category of subaltern but Spivak has made a flexible use of the term and prefers to accommodate social identities and struggle of women and colonized. She attempts to bring neglected group into the main stream.

In the subaltern movement Spivak is committed to articulate the lives and histories of socially inferior group in an appropriate and non-exploitive way. Spivak’s writing is based on her observation of social and political oppression in post-colonial society. The theory of subaltern is the theory of consciousness or culture rather than the theory of change. The group of critics in Subaltern Studies was conscious of the position of the disempowered in a culture. The writers and critics are conscious about how peasants, women and other marginalized people are treated in a culture by the dominant culture, by the politics. The same consciousness of culture is applicable to Buchi Emecheta and Ngugi Wa Thiong’o.

The term, ‘Subaltern’ was popularized by Spivak’s essay entitled, —Can the Subaltern Speak? (1985) written in The Post-Colonial Studies: Reader edited by Bill Ashcroft, where she says:

“The Subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with ‘woman’ as a pious item. Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual as intellectual has a circumscribed task which she must not disown with a flourish.” (Bill Ashcroft 35)
The above quotation announces a new approach to restore the history to the subordinated. It gives a new dimension to study the society, post-colonial culture. The subalterns in the colonial era have become intellectuals and they try to come into the front in the post-colonial period. Spivak writes this sentence in the context of sati and she makes a very interesting move by not only evoking the moment speaking for but also of a speaking about. For this positive change the credit goes to the new writers who wrote in English. The writers of the ‘Third World’ tried to gain recognition and acceptance among the Anglo-American intellectuals. It is in this sense subaltern studies have acquired a new dimension. This new approach includes the struggles and experiences of women from the ‘Third World’. With this new approach Spivak emphasis on the gendered location of subaltern women and expands and complicates the established concept of the subaltern. Spivak is against Western female dominancy and male dominancy in the social activities. By asking the question Can Subaltern Speak? Spivak has challenged the gender blindness of the earlier post-colonial period of from the feminist stand point. The question demonstrates that how Spivak has expanded the term ‘Subaltern’ to include women into the category. As women are treated as sex subjects Spivak argues that there is no space for the sexed subaltern where they can speak from. Further Spivak states that the subaltern cannot speak because the voice and the agency of subaltern women are so embedded in Hindu Patriarchal codes of moral conduct and the British Colonial representation of subaltern women as victims of a barbaric Hindu culture that they are impossible to recover. She also states that in a male-centred national independence struggle female as subaltern cannot be heard or speak. According to her, when a subaltern make an attempt to speak to death, he or she is not able to be heard. In other words, their speech acts are not heard or recognized within dominant political systems of representation. Disempowered subaltern women receive their political and discursive identities within historically determinate systems of political and economic representation. Spivak states the importance of subaltern consciousness in the following words:

“To investigate, discover and establish a subaltern or peasant consciousness seems at first to be a positivistic project – a project which assumes that if properly prosecuted, it will lead to firm ground, to something that can be disclosed. This is all the more significant in the case of recovering a consciousness.” (Spivak, In Other Worlds: Essays In Cultural Politics 278)
Here Spivak points out that subaltern consciousness recovers our own consciousness that can make us able to stand firmly and evaluate ourselves as well as others.

In her writing, Spivak stresses the equal importance and space to subaltern women in the literary representation of postcolonialism. But it does not guarantee that the particular subaltern group will be recognized or their voices will be heard. So the theory has some limitation in applying it to the representation to the lives and histories of the disempowered women in the ‘Third World’. Spivak states that unless the Western intellectuals begin to take the aesthetic dimension of political representation into account, they will continue to silence the voice of subaltern women.

This essay combines her political reformulation of Western poststructuralist methodologies with a rereading of the 19th century colonial archives in India. Her focus is upon the historical experiences of the subaltern women, whose voices have generally been ignored by the Subaltern Studies.

Spivak highlights the importance of subaltern as it provides the model for a general theory of consciousness. By writing *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (Bill Ashcroft) Spivak contributes to politicize Derridean deconstruction in order to elaborate a method for emancipator readings and cultural interventions. She defines her work as a project having following aims:

i) Problematize the Western subject and see how it is still operational in poststructuralist theory.

ii) Re-read Marx to find a more radical decentring of the subject that also more leaves room for the formation of class identifications that are non-essentialist.

iii) Argue that Western intellectual production reinforces the logic of Western economic expansion.

iv) Perform a close reading of *Sati* to analyze the discourses of the West and the possibilities for speech that the subaltern woman has within that framework.

Spivak’s name is associated with post-colonial criticism for she has demonstrated the rhetorical and political agency of postcolonial literary texts to question and challenge the authority of colonial master narratives. Spivak’s engagement with postcolonial texts is
motivated by a desire to challenge the totalizing system of colonial discourse by focusing on instances of subaltern agency or resistance.

Antonio Gramsci recognized that social power is not a simple matter of domination on the one hand and subordination or resistance on the other. According to Gramsci to maintain the authority the ruling power must be flexible and respond to the new circumstances and to the changing wishes of those it rules. The ruling power must be able to reach into the minds of and lives of its subordinates. Gramsci views power as an ongoing process. He sees power as something actively lived by oppressed. Spivak also challenges power. She articulates the lives of inferior groups as she is very much conscious about the disempowered groups and how they are treated by the dominant group and by the politics. By focusing upon the movements of the disempowered groups she has put them at the centre. Foucault views power as productive. For him power is co-extensive and it is interwoven with all kinds of social relations. According to Foucault power comes from the below and to understand the power one should begin with the micro-level of individual as power cannot be understood simply by looking at the monarch. The three critics can be linked up since they talk about the negotiation between the different groups. Moreover they talk about ‘change’, change in the lives of the disempowered groups. In the three critics’ views inferior groups are at the centre. So Foucault’s views about power will help to understand the concept of power and subaltern in depth.

2.6: Michel Foucault’s views about Power:

Michel Foucault is hailed for his works like *The Archeology of Knowledge* (Foucault), *The History of Sexuality* (Foucault, The History of Sexuality) and *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison). He has given his theory on power, freedom and subjective. He is considered as an experimenter and unsystematic thinker. Foucault, specifically, is concerned with promoting change that counters domination and oppression and fosters what he refers to as “the work of freedom.” (Taylor, Michel Foucault: Key Concepts 02). According to Foucault power is productive. He sees a relation between power and freedom. In his book *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts* Dianna Taylor writes that in an interview Foucault explained the relationship between power and freedom:
“What does it mean to exercise power? It does not mean picking up this tape recorder and throwing it on the ground. I have the capacity to do so...but I would not be exercising power if I did that. However, if I take this tape recorder and throw it on the ground – in order to make you mad or so that you cannot repeat what I’ve said, or to put pressure on you so that you’ll behave in such and such a way, or to intimidate you – Good, what I’ve done, by shaping your behavior through certain means, that is power...If...that is to say, I’m not forcing you at all and I’m leaving you completely free – that’s when I begin to exercise power. It is clear that power should be defined as a constraining act of violence that repress individuals, forcing them to do something or preventing them from doing some other thing. But it takes place when there is a relation between two free subjects, and this relation is unbalanced, so that one can act upon the other, and the other is acted upon, or allows himself to be acted upon.” (Taylor, Michel Foucault: Key Concepts 05)

Foucault’s theory of power describes general characteristics of power. It was believed that power had been understood as being at the top. In his theory of power Foucault talks about disciplinary power and bio power. In Foucault’s view power is omnipresent so it can be found in all social interactions. As written in Dianna Taylor’s *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts* Foucault in his *The Archaeology of Knowledge* writes:

> It seems to me that power is ‘always already there’, that one is never ‘outside’ it.” (Taylor, Michel Foucault: Key Concepts)

Power is co-extensive with the field of social relations; that power is interwoven with all kinds of social relations. It does not mean that power functions as trap or a cage in society. Power alone is not enough to answer all questions. Foucault tries to give a specific definition of power by analyzing it. As written in Dianna Taylor’s *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts*, Foucault develops his own theory of power and writes:
The word power is apt to lead to a number of misunderstandings—misunderstandings with respect to its nature, its form, and its unity. By power, I do not mean “Power” as a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state [such as characterize many liberal analyses]. By power, I do not mean, either, a mode of subjugation which, in contrast to violence, has the form of the rule [typical of psychoanalytic approaches]. Finally, I do not have in mind a general system of domination exerted by one group over another [i.e. class oppression], a system whose effects, through successive derivations, pervade the entire social body [as in many Marxist views]. (Taylor, Michel Foucault: Key Concepts)

Foucault’s understanding of power is positive. He develops a new framework and a new theory of power. He begins:

It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as [1] the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which and which constitute their own organization; as [2] the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as [3] the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as [4] the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies. (Taylor, Michel Foucault: Key Concepts)

Foucault begins with the power at the micro-level as a relation of force. In other words Foucault begins with individuals’ behaviors and interactions. Power works as gravity and magnetism.
Another point Foucault raises is that, “power comes from the below; that is, there is no binary and all encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the roof of power relations and serving as a general matrix.” So power is not reducible. By saying power comes from the below Foucault means that one cannot understand power by looking the monarch. To understand power one has to go the micro-level of individuals. Power affects our daily life, our habits, what and how we think. Power decides our life style that how we will live.

Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power concerns individuals. Foucault writes: “We are never dealing with a mass, with a group, or even, to tell the truth, with a multiplicity: We are only ever dealing with individuals.” (Taylor, Michel Foucault: Key Concepts 28). Foucault insists that disciplinary power creates a cellular form of individuality by ordering individuals in a space. In Foucault’s views power works through culture and customs, institutions and individuals. With power and knowledge Foucault gives the theory of resistance and freedom. The concept of freedom is an elusive one. It is concerned with metaphysical and political status. Foucault is concerned with the liberty and for liberty resistance is necessary. Liberty and resistance is necessary for individual. With the development of prison Foucault says that bodies were exploited. People were tortured for any type of crime. By using the method and technique of torture the bodies were made docile and passive. According to Foucault docile and passive bodies are easy to dominate, the docile bodies become obedient to authority. Foucault believes that power relations exist if the subject is made free. He writes:

One must observe that there cannot be relations of power unless the subjects are free. If one or the other were completely at the disposition of the other and became his thing, an object on which he can exercise an infinite and unlimited violence, there would not be relations of power. In order to exercise a relation of power, there must be on both sides at least a certain form of liberty. (Taylor, Michel Foucault: Key Concepts 78)

Foucault puts the body at the centre to understand the influence of history and the mechanisms of modern power. The bodies are shaped by society. They are used and experienced in many different ways according to the cultural practices. That’s why bodies are capable enough
of displaying a dimension of freedom. Bodies are manipulated by power. Sexuality works as a repressive system of power in which the dominant group operates the power and brainwashes the other group. The relations are unequal. But in Foucault’s views the sexual body represents the possibility of resistance against such dominant discourses and techniques.

With these concepts in mind Foucault writes about language. He sees that language has its limit. The effect of power cannot be felt completely in the language. The power effects can be seen in the human relations, in social activities, in people’s experiences. Language has its limits and cannot express human emotions through linguistic patterns. Especially the emotion of pain is difficult to express but writers try their best to express their emotion. Foucault’s views of body have much influenced feminist theory. Based on Foucault’s ideas of sexual body Judith Butler writes that gender identity is constructed as a normative and regulatory ideal in the networks of power and knowledge. Individuals perform gender by repeating behavior. This repetition of behavior creates ideal and through this ideals the sex is understood. People are defined and they must think and live according to such construction. Sexual bodies and identities are constructed through the oppressive power relations that our politics must attempt to challenge and to resist.

Foucault’s views on sexual bodies have also influenced gay and lesbian studies at large extent.

2.7: Review of Related Literature:

**African fiction and popular struggle: The case of *A Grain of Wheat* by Michel Vaughan** (Vaughan)

Michel Vaughan in this paper sees the novel in relation with socio-political history of Africa. Vaughan studies literature as a historical process which shows the development of human societies. In this context *A Grain of Wheat* is a historical content and a historical content never remains private or individual as it becomes general. The novel is a presentation of some social practices and articulates political ideas. The narrative is composed around the interconnecting experiences of significant characters. The issue in the novel is not an individual life but social
substance. The society is the protagonist of the novel. In general the main focus is on the ideology.

The paper studies the socio-political history with the help of the novel and shows the development of societies. The analysis is not enough to bring in the voice of the subalterns. The focus is upon the social substance so the questions like, what happens to individual characters, how and why they suffered remain unanswered. According to Foucault power can be understood from micro level. Based on this argument without studying individual characters one cannot study the culture.

Gender, Unreliable Oral Narration, and the Untranslated Preface in Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross* by Evan Mwangi (Mwangi)

In this paper Evan Mwangi tries to cover the issue of gender and oral narration in *Devil on the Cross*. Evan examines the dialogic relationship between the novel’s formal features and their cultural context, especially the gendered implications of the oral narrative strategies that Ngugi deploys to frame the narrative. The paper studies the use of oral narrative in the novel.

This paper studies the issue of gender and oral narration in Devil on the Cross. It can definitely help to study the gender politics but only the oral narrative technique cannot help to study the discourse of the individuals which is very much necessary to understand the structure of power. Language of the common people helps to read their mind and their reaction against the dominant group.

The Gendered Politics of Untranslated Language and Aporia in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* by Evan Mwangi (Mwangi)

*Petals of Blood* is the last novel which Ngugi Wa Thiong’o has written in English. The present paper brings in light the novel’s untranslated moments as metonymic of the frustrated struggle to convert revolution into final liberation. Evan Mwangi sees the world of the novel as
strongly gendered. Mwangi points out that Ngugi relates gender with language. He proposes that this relationship complements structural contradictions in figuring the failed condition of post-colony. Moreover the writer of the paper argues that the text remains in the clutches of patriarchy and colonial hegemony despite its use of elements of African language. Mwangi writes that the novel is the reflection of concrete conditions around us of which we perhaps might be unaware.

The paper is very much related with the research work. It gives a hint to study language from different perspective. The use of language differs from person to person. There is definitely a difference in the use of language between a male and a female, between the colonizer and the colonized. The research work will expand this idea of relating gender and language. The use of language by the subalterns will be centre of this research work.

The Resemblance of Colonial Mimicry: The Revisionary reading of The River Between by Apollo O. Amoko (Amoko)

The novel has been read as the classic text of anti-colonial Gikuyu traditionalism. The novel affirms Gikuyu (African) culture and it also attacks on traditionalism and endorse Christian doctrinalism. The novel depicts colonialism as a disruption of the national order of things. The central opposition in The River Between is within Gikuyu polity rather than between the Gikuyu polity and white colonizers. The text struggles to heal the internal conflicts. It is the story of Waiyaki, the tragic hero and his romantic relationship with Nyambura. This relationship is allegorical as it symbolizes the reconciliation and reunification between Makuyu and Kameno. The rift is unnatural. The novel attempts to establish the rationality of pre-colonial African culture. The novel also presents before us the calamity of colonialism. The novel also covers the monopolization of political power by the ruling elites. It is a contradictory discourse on the connection between the natural and the human world and the African were subjected to Christianity and civilization. The novel is about how the central character reaches to the level of self-actualization. The novel figures out the struggle of cultural renewal and anti-colonial resistance. The River Between also mimics the aesthetics of tragedy. Muthoni, Joshua’s daughter, a young Christian woman who dies during a secret clitoral dichotomy, prefigures Waiyaki’s tragic quest for reconciliation.
The present paper focuses upon the colonialism and Gikuyu traditionalism. The characters of the novel are involved against the fight with internal enemies. It also covers the issue of circumcision. The ideas picked up in the novel have vast coverage and can be studied with reference to feminism and the concept of body. The research will help to see that how women sing the song of patriarchal discourse. They all belong to the category of subaltern as they are suppressed and manipulated by men.

Works have been done upon Emecheta’s novels also. Critics write that Ngugi Wa Thiong’o is political in his vision but about Emecheta, it can be said that she has focused upon the problems of women first. Through her novels Emecheta strongly oppose the patriarchal structure of society. She has focused upon the subjugation of women in male dominated society. Her stories are about banishment of women from the central position.

Banished from Oedipus? Buchi Emecheta's and Assia Djebar's Gendered Language of Resistance by Brenda Cooper (Cooper)

The paper is written by Brenda Cooper. The paper is about the patriarchal law and symbolic and dominant western metaphors. In this paper Cooper studies protagonists of Emecheta and Djebar. The focus is that how the protagonists are treated as subjects within multiple dimensions, knowledge, culture and traditions. Cooper is concerned with the women of the ‘Third World’ or colonized nations and writes that they were culturally banished. Cooper studies Lacanian theory and his Law of the Father and applies it in the works of Emecheta and Djebar. Cooper writes that language is constructed from the perspective of the Law of the Father. Furthermore the writer writes that everything in language is symbolic and wears the phallic veil on the name of the father and that’s why women are banished from the dominant culture. Black women are subjected to racism and silenced in patriarchal society. In this paper the major concern of the writer is to examine the reason of the gap and to see how gapes are constructed and represented by the language.

In this paper Cooper analysis the position of women in patriarchal society and studies that how women are banished from the patriarchal culture. Based on the Lacanian theory and his
Law of the Father Cooper writes that language is wears a phallic veil. The paper helps to examine the use of language by Emecheta and Djebar though their protagonists. The subalterns are ‘speaking back’ in the novels and to hear the voice of the suppressed it is necessary to understand their point of view. The research will carry the idea further.

**Gendered Haunting: The Joys of Motherhood by Stephane Roblin** (Robolin)

This paper examines the novel and juxtaposes it with the culture and post-colonial studies. In this paper Roblin throws light upon the gendered role of women and how they are Balkanized in phallocratic society. Roblin has examined sexual politics as it plays a vital role in the novel. Sexual politics is based upon the biological difference between men and women and it has a so called ideal space for women in the form of motherhood. Motherhood is not joyful for women as it exploits female body. The writer studies the life of women. Roblin writes that in womanhood the role of women is conditioned and to treat a woman as second to man has become a common practice in any culture. The present paper examines Nnu Ego’s life tortured by culture, politics and society of the time.

This paper is very much related to the present research as it studies the stereotype roles of women and exploitation of female body on the name of motherhood. Motherhood makes women weak and men use this to rule women. In this paper the idea is applied to The Joys of Motherhood only but this can be applicable to all the novels of Emecheta. The researcher will apply it to all the women characters of Thiong’o and Emecheta and will study them contextually.

**Representing the African culture in Buchi Emecheta’s The Bride Price - A Study by G. Sankar and T. Rajeshkannan** (Rajeshkanna)

The paper is an analysis of the African system of marriage and the tradition of paying bride price in Buchi Emecheta’s novel The Bride Price. In the present paper the focus is upon the tradition of marriage. The writers of the paper see that the identity of women in society is
dependent upon the ritual of marriage. Marriage puts women in subordinate role and makes them weak. Women are given stereotypical roles and women’s procreative power is used. A woman’s first and foremost duty is to give her husband an heir who will make her husband’s name immortal. The second thing a woman has no choice in her life. She is considered as a property or a thing to be owned and possessed by men. In African culture it is a tradition that after the death of her husband the brother-in-law of the widow has legal right to inherit her and her children. Ma Blackie is inherited by her brother-in-law and becomes his fourth wife. Everything in life and each and every decision of a woman is decided by men in patriarchal society. The writers of the paper write that Emecheta is a womanist as she has presented the plight of black women in her novel *The Bride Price*.

This paper also focuses upon the ritual of marriage and a strange tradition of bride price. The ritual of bride price makes a woman slave of her husband. In all her novels Emecheta has used this idea to express the condition of women. She has put her women in different situation. Her women characters are subalterns and Emecheta raises her voice against the phallocratic society. Emecheta claims for the equality between men and women. The research will throw light upon the use of language by women to show how they claim for their equality and what the effect of it is.


In *Modern British Women Writers: An-to-Z Guide* Jerilyn Fisher has written a review of Buchi Emecheta’s novels. The writer has given brief autobiographical information of Buchi Emecheta which helps to build an idea that how the writer was fueled with the energy to create such masterpieces. The autobiographical information help to see that Emecheta’s novels are deeply affected by her personal experiences of life. Her major concern is to focus upon the position of women in African culture especially Nigerian culture. In her novel Emecheta criticizes the culture which is shaped by patriarchy as it plays a central role in conditioning a woman’s mind. Emecheta’s women characters are weak and suppressed by men. They are forced
to play a subordinate role before their fathers, brothers, husbands and later on before their sons. They do not have rights to express their emotions. Marriage and motherhood can be viewed as the weapons against women to suppress their voice. Emecheta claims for the equal rights of women and tries to create an environment in which women’s voice cannot be stifled or buried. Her dream was to make women free but unfortunately it remains a dream only. These points will be elaborated in the research work.

The subaltern theory will help to study that how by self-subjugation the writers of the ‘Third World’ will express themselves. Foucault’s concept of power Spivak’s subaltern theory will help to examine that how the writers as colonized others fight with the supposed centres of power. Furthermore the research will shed light upon the speaking subalterns that the writers, with the help of their characters, have given an aggressive voice to their painful experience.
Works Cited:


