

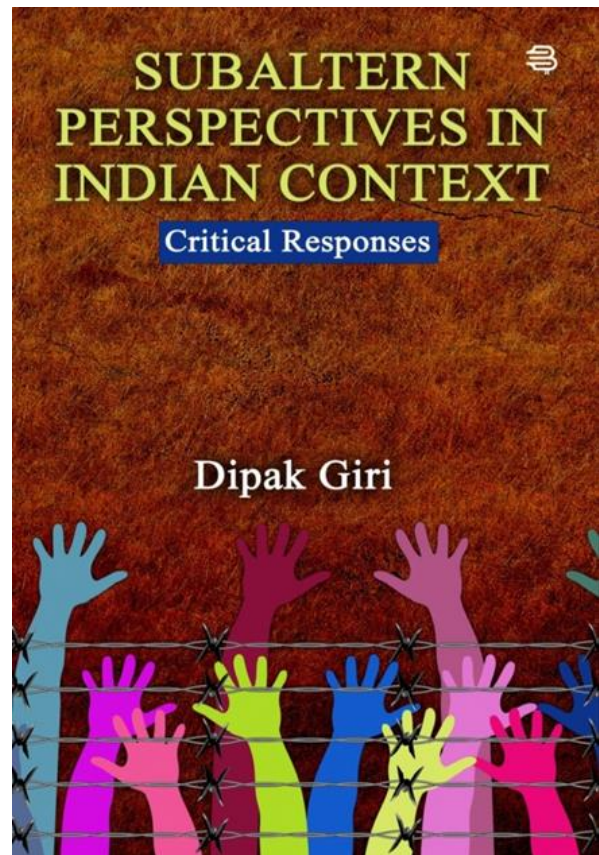
**Dipak Giri's *Subaltern Perspectives in Indian Context: Critical Responses*,
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Subaltern Perspectives in Indian Context: Critical Responses is a critical anthology of articles and essays edited by Dipak Giri who has authored 20 books till date. As the title suggests, the book deals with various aspects of subalternity contextualized in Indian perspectives. This particular context asserts the contribution of the anthology to the field of Subaltern Studies, since the field emerged as a project of writing “history from the below” in the South Asian context, particularly in the Indian subcontinental historiography. The anthology contains twenty two well-written articles by various scholars who delve into the concept of the subaltern from different perspectives. What is

noteworthy is that the book, instead of limiting its focus exclusively to literary discourse, explores the subaltern idea in diverse cultural domains – films, history, art forms, education, peasant movement and labour industry. Above all, the inclusion of an interview with the famous Dalit activist and writer Sharankumar Limbale conducted by the editor himself adds to the richness of the book.

In the introduction section of the book, Dipak Giri explicates the term ‘subaltern’, tracing the history of its inception and the emergence of Subaltern Studies as an established field of study as conceived by Ranajit Guha and other subaltern scholars. The first article in the book, “Arupa Patangia Kalita’s Felanee: The Tenacity of the Voiceless” by Anmona Bora analyses



an Assamese novel published in 2003, applying the ideas of Gramscian hegemony and subalternity. The selection of a text from the North-Eastern region of India reinforces the very idea of marginality, considering a subaltern kind of power relation between the mainland India and that cornered region full of ethnic minorities. The scholar argues how the name of the protagonist (Malati loses her name and comes to be known as Felanee which means ‘something meant to be thrown away’) firmly establishes her subaltern position, reinforcing the idea that “women in the postcolonial society is doubly marginalized due to her gender and class” (18).

In the second chapter of the anthology “Epiphany at the Heart of Silence: Amitav Ghosh’s Rediscovery of the Subaltern Voice,” Aswathy Mohan critically looks at Ghosh’s portrayal of subaltern characters in the novels *The Hungry Tide*, *The Circle of Reason*, *The Glass Palace* and *Sea of Poppies*. “By means of the subaltern protagonists of his novels, Ghosh highlights the struggles and dilemmas of the downtrodden as well as encounters the postcolonial intelligentsia on the question of the subaltern’s ability to speak” (25). Dr. Nitasha Baloria’s paper “Articulating the strangled Voice: A Critical Study of Shashi Deshpande’s *That Long Silence*” analyses Deshpande’s famous novel through the lens of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s ideas from “Can the Subaltern Speak?”. The next article “Depiction of Subaltern Theme in Rohinton Mistry’s *A Fine Balance*” by Dr. Sanober Kahkeshan foregrounds class and caste disparities inherent in Indian society through an analysis of Mistry’s novel. The novel voices the cruelty and oppression experienced by the innocent, muted untouchables. Kahkeshan considers Mistry a committed humanist for upholding “the untold misery of the marginalized section being fully exploited by the empowered, unjust social forces called the upper caste and the upper class” (45).

A number of essays focus on the origin and development of the idea of ‘subaltern’ and debates centring the concept by various subaltern scholars. In their article “Marginalised Fragments of Colonial Bengal through Subaltern Perspectives”, Saptarshi Sengupta and Dr. Mohammad Nazrul Bari briefly trace the origin of the Subaltern Studies project. The authors take into account three important essays from the Subaltern Studies series, namely “Employers, Government and the Jute Workers of Calcutta, 1890-1940 AD” by Dipesh Chakrabarty (Subaltern Studies II), Tanika Sarkar’s article on the Jitu Santhal’s movement in Subaltern Studies IV, and Swapan Dasgupta’s essay on Adivasi politics in Midnapore region in Subaltern Studies IV. These articles widen our understanding of subaltern context in Indian context, particularly the Bengal region. Saleha Ilhaam’s paper “Revisiting, Reflecting and

Relocating the Subaltern and Subaltern Historiography” focuses on the numerous positions held by subaltern studies scholars and revisits the image and role of the disadvantaged groups in the elitist historiography.

A considerable number of articles in the anthology deal with the experiences of the Dalits as subalterns in real life as well as in various artistic forms. The issue of untouchability is deep rooted in Indian society and the so-called ‘untouchables’ (the Dalits in modern euphemistic term) have been facing marginalization, exploitation and discrimination from ancient to modern times by the upper castes. In their essay “Marginalisation and Awakening of Prakriti in Tagore’s Chandalika,” Dr. Prachi Priyanka & Md Musharraf look at Prakriti (an untouchable girl) who is discarded by the society and humiliated by religion as something even worse than a crawling worm and her ascension towards the new birth as a woman. The paper argues that Prakriti—an untouchable trampled and crushed under society’s materialistic rule — attains a supremely position in her enlightened self and becomes the symbol of strong and resilient women. Raghavendra Garai’s article explores the struggle of Dalit people against rigid caste system, poverty and social ostracism as reflected in Meena Kandasamy’s poetry, Urmila Pawar’s *The Weave of My Life*, and Sujatha Gidla’s *Ants Among Elephants*. As the scholar concludes, “their writings reveal a clear consciousness of Dalits or Untouchables’ struggle with metaphorical contiguity, whereby not only women of Dalit community but also everybody, marginalized, and every untouchable, can develop an exquisite sense of independence” (155).

Anamitra Chatterjee in her paper “Perspectives on Marginalization in Literature and Cinema” focuses on Mulk Raj Anand’s novels *Untouchable* and *Coolie*. The author makes the essay more engaging by taking into consideration a popular film – Ashutosh Gawarikar’s *Lagaan*. She argues that the film highlights socio-cultural discrimination and resultant marginalization. The article highlights the issue of untouchability in the literary and cinematic texts. Harish Mangalam’s paper aims to study the Dalit nuances and commitment in Dalit films such as ‘*Tame Keva?*’ (2018), *Bhavni Bhavai* (*The Tale of Life*), *Hellaro* (*Outburst*), *Pistulya* (2009), and *Fandry* (2013). Dr. Andrey Shastri’s paper reviews social, educational, economic and political status of Dalits of India.

Arindam Mukherjee’s article in the anthology is particularly important in drawing our attention to the condition of Muslim women in India, who can be considered doubly subalterns on religious and patriarchal grounds. Mukherjee highlights the condition of education of Muslim women and the obstacles they face. Piyali Ghosh in her article “Sad State of Subaltern:

The Root Cause for Its Germination” explores the plight and sad state of Dalit women in India and also suggests the possible remedies to uplift their condition. Nitish Gogoi’s paper explores the colonial exploitation and control over migrant Coolies in Assam’s tea gardens. The scholar engages with the early migration history of tea tribes into Assam and discusses historical accounts of their exploited colonial life in Assam’s tea gardens. Biplob Ghosh’s paper “Diversity of Farmers Movement in India and a New Light” shows the diversity of the peasant movement after the green revolution and also explores how globalization has impacted the agrarian movement.

A considerable number of articles focus on the marginalization of women and their portrayals as subalterns in diverse literary works. Injela Zaini’s chapter analyses the portrayal of women in Saadat Hasan Manto’s works and argues that Manto provides an exceptionally high stature to the lowly subaltern characters like pimps and prostitutes. Zaini considers Manto a ‘crusader’ of the marginalised women. “The rebellious, intelligent and genuine women characters of Manto manage to create quite aruckus in the subaltern space by breaking all known stereotypes and pre-conceived notions” (179). Tania Baloria focuses on the portrayal of the marginalized in Arundhati Roy’s well-acclaimed novel *The God of Small Things*. The paper explores the caste conflicts and women status in the Indian context and how this has been embedded in our psyche, even in the present-day society. Sagar Rakshit’s paper “Draupadi as an Audacious Woman: Study of Subaltern Voices in Mahasweta Devi’s Counterblast Writing” focuses on strong protest by a tribal woman against the upper caste political hooligans, while Kishalaya Podder’s essay highlights the position of women in colonial Bengal through a discussion of Rabindranath Tagore’s short stories from subaltern perspective. SK Saiful Rahaman’s article, through an analysis of the female subaltern in Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable*, demonstrates the subordination and oppression of women and women’s surrender to patriarchy, caste or societal power structure ruled by the upper class.

Sindhura Dutta’s article in the book is quite interesting in drawing our attention to the illustrative works of Chittaprasad Bhattacharya, whose paintings depicted the oppressed peasants and poor villagers affected by the Bengal Famine of 1943. As Dutta argues, the peasants inherently belong to the subaltern class and represent the unheard voices of the rural community. In the ninth chapter of the anthology, Dr. Debarati Nandy carries out a study of tribal art market in India. The article is unique in focusing on the nuances of various tribal art forms from different regions of the country.

The final chapter of this anthology is an interview with famous Dalit writer Sharankumar Limbale taken by Dipak Giri himself. Here Giri has tried to raise almost all possible issues related with Dalit subalternity in order to reach the fact whether Dalit community comes under the category of subalternity or not. Apart from this, this interview also covers some other aspects related with Dalit literature in general and Limbale's works in particular. The interview is crucial from both Subaltern Studies and Dalit Studies perspectives.

Subaltern Perspectives in Indian Context: Critical Responses is an important addition to the corpus of subaltern studies. The essays cover a wide range of topics, including caste, gender, tribal issues and regional disparities, providing a holistic view of the subaltern condition in India. This volume aims to highlight the voices that have historically been silenced and provides critical insights into their struggles and resistances within the socio-political framework. The book will be an interesting as well as engaging reading for students, researchers, and general readers too, who are interested to understand the idea of the subaltern in the Indian context.