

Locating the Subaltern Voice through Pre-Capitalist Modes of Exchange in R.K. Narayan's *The Guide*

Agnibho Chakraborty

Abstract

The subaltern as a subject has undergone several transformations on the path to being established as both a historiographical tour-de force and an enabling weapon in the hands of South Asian bricoleurs. In its present avatar it continues to be contextualized and decontextualized in spaces of contestation in post-colonial scholarship, with the noticeable departure that these sites of contestation have now graduated from the periphery to somewhere near the center of postcolonial interlocution notwithstanding the irony that the true voiceless subaltern remains rooted to the margins. It was Antonio Gramsci who first anchored the term to its present ideological bearing, paving the way for Oriental bricoleurs to dress it in the context of South Asian and Oriental insurgency. Ranajit Guha alongside eight collaborators, who would come to be known as the Subaltern Studies Group published a series of essays titled, *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (1997/1982) which provided the much needed impetus for Gayatri Spivak's contextualization of the term in her seminal study-*Can the Subaltern Speak*. Gayatri Spivak is well aware of the strict confines within which Marx operates. Marx's implied reader is necessarily 'the worker within capitalist logic. My focus is on Exchange or rather a rethinking of the idea of exchange through as a possible means of escaping subalternity through the much documented figure of Rosie in R. K Narayan's *The Guide* (2011/1958) I also want to explore why it is problematic to dogmatically persist with the foundational binary of an economic base and ideational superstructure.

Keywords: Bourdieu, Karatani, Revisionism, Subaltern Studies, Vekkehr.