



REFLECTIONS

in Indian Writing in English and in Translation

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**Subaltern Reflections in Indian
Writing in English and in Translation**

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THE SUBALTERN EXPRESSIONS IN DALIT LITERATURE: A STUDY OF ARJUN DANGLE'S *POISONED BREAD*

-Poorwa R. Naik

Introduction

'Subaltern' is a term that encompasses in itself the tragedy of the past, present and future of the human world. It is the very inevitable facet of every human relationship that populations world over have been witnessing and none may have been an exception to creating a 'subaltern' or becoming one within their own societies. As a concept, scholars may have popularised it in the post-colonial studies, but as a 'lived-reality' it has been a taken-for-granted part of life by innumerable 'subaltern' communities across the world. It is a complex term but for simplicity sake if we take recourse in *A Handbook of Literary Terms* by M.H. Abrams to define the term 'subaltern', it would be "a standard way to designate the colonial subject that has been constructed by European discourse and internalized by colonial peoples who employ this discourse; "subaltern" is a British word for someone of inferior military rank, and combines the Latin terms for "under" (sub) and "other" (alter)" (Abrams, 238).

Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist intellectual, coined the term 'subaltern' to refer to the populations that were treated as the "other", the "alter" which would not be allowed to occupy a place of power in a cultural hegemony. His leanings towards Marxism may have led to a debate that he meant to employ this term purely to the proletariats (i.e. the working class) and not to the 'culturally marginalised' in general; however it cannot be denied that the power-relations that are born out of the economic order of any state go a long way in determining who would eventually define the centre-margin paradigm in that society. It is certainly the economically and intellectually empowered class that becomes the centre and frames the socio-cultural framework in such a manner that it would conveniently leave out the ones that do not fit into its criteria of being 'cultured' and 'civilised'. Though the Eurocentric concept of 'subaltern'