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What do you see and hear from down below:

Mapping the cultural and literary history of the Subaltern within India

Many concepts – Truth, Nation, History, Language, the Literary – have been de-centred and destabilized. What they entail is elusive and remains in a constant state of flux. What we have encountered in this age is a fresh consciousness towards inescapable contamination due to blurring outlines. Spivak writes:

“On the ethical register, pre – capitalist cultural formations should not be regarded in an evolutionist way with capital as the telos... It does... operate as a baseline critique of the social Darwinism implicit in all our ideas of development...” (33)

It is widely believed that the consciousness towards crossing boundaries, interdependence, crosscultural exchange and the openness towards alterity is a more recent phenomenon. It is indeed a recent phenomenon, but in its capitalistic form. Mapping the historical, cultural and literary activities of the Subaltern, one finds out that the consciousness in question has its roots in the history and culture of the Subaltern – cultural practices which display openness towards alterity, interdependence on nature and cross – cultural absorption and exchange; a life – honouring, regenerative force which precedes the telos Capital. With Capital as telos follows a Globalization which is State – obliging in nature and renders the Subaltern as mere collateral of the development and evolution it brings about.

We delve into the works of Perumal Murugan, Mahasweta Devi, Vachanakars from the Bhakti movement in Karnataka, Baby Kamble and a few other Dalit authors, and tribal literatures from India. We trace the literary history of the subaltern, through Kathputli artists, and understand how history in the hands of the subaltern frees itself from the clutches of singular, transcendental truth and makes space for the would be or the will have happened. Learning from below we take cognizance of the convergence of all disciplines, from Humanities to Science, at a point where the Subaltern proliferates and claims itself as the all – encompassing life force – working within History, Literary studies, Cultural studies and the laws of Nature and Science.

Works Cited

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. “Collectivities” *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003. Lib.gen.rus.ec. Web. 5 March 2021.