

RETHINKING SUBALTERN, BORDERS, AND BORDERLANDS IN INDIAN AND ALBANIAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH**Literature**

Keywords: Subaltern Studies, Borders, Borderlands, Indian and Albanian Literature, Border Conflicts, and International Law.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to decipher the postmodern development of subaltern studies to find out the past and present state of the subalternity so that today's students, teachers, researchers, scholars, and critics of English literature can apply the theories and the approaches of subaltern studies. To find out the inner meaning of subaltern writing creatively and critically, literary genres can be interpreted in the light of subaltern studies that reflect the social environment. To investigate Literature concerning the theme of subaltern studies, teachers, students, scholars, and critics ought to be devoted to going into the deeper meanings of the literary texts. To understand borders and borderlands, the study aims to focus on the contemporary political challenges of the world very faithfully. Conflicts of borders and borderlands in the light of Indian literature and Albanian literature by Ismail Kadare in English have been given priority.

Subaltern

The word 'subaltern' as given in the Oxford Dictionary stands for the general attribute of subordination, expressed in terms of a caste, class, age, gender, office, or any other way. It includes the characteristics of defiance and submission. Historically, Subaltern is a word used by the British army to denote a subordinate officer, and "subaltern studies" is coined by Indian scholars to describe various approaches to the situation of South Asia, particularly in the colonial and postcolonial era.

In postcolonial theory, the term 'subaltern' denotes the lower social classes and the other social groups displaced to the margins of society; in an imperial colony, a subaltern is a native man or woman without human agency defined by his and her social status. The working class is oppressed. The term subaltern produces subordinate. It means a lower-ranking, even an inferior, individual.

Ranajit Guha is a historian of the Indian Subcontinent who has been vastly influential in the Subaltern Studies group and was the editor of several of the group's early anthologies. Subaltern Studies Group is a group of South Asian scholars interested in postcolonial and post-imperial societies. The term *Subaltern Studies* is sometimes also applied more broadly to others who share many of their views. They are often considered "exemplary of postcolonial studies" and one of the most influential movements in the field.(Connell) Their anti-essentialist approach is a history, focusing on what happens among the masses at the base levels of society than among the elite. (Green 385)

Historians who use this term take it from Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), an Italian Marxist and Communist imprisoned for a long time by Mussolini's police from 1926 until his death at 46. In prison, he wrote notebooks on politics and history, and philosophy. Subaltern studies analyze the "binary relationship" of the subaltern and ruling classes and thus study the interplay of dominance and subordination in colonial systems, most notably India. However, the movement methods have been applied to other nations, spaces, and historical moments. Even the Indian Home Ministry fear revolution. Indian studies of Indian rebels seek to recuperate insurgent mentalities. (Ludden 2003)

Subaltern in Indian Literature in English

Guha's *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* is considered one of the well-reputed works of the subaltern studies group. Guha marks the bias of the historiography and archive of colonial India's governing documents and the inclination of the folklore, which has traditionally been perceived and touted by nationalist groups as authentic untainted by the colonizer Britain. Thus, for Guha, any colonial historiography of the peasant in India is tainted by a bourgeois lens, either through the colonial agenda or through the nationalist agenda. Guha's intervention is to trace the mounting everyday actions silenced in favor of the larger event. In this intervention, he dispels the notion that Indian colonial subjects are powerless during the colonial rule, specifically from 1783-1900, and instead seeks to describe from the peasants' point of view the complex relations of subordination, dominance, and subsequent rebellion.

Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* presents a controversial discussion among critics and scholars. The novel is regarded as a camouflage of contemporary socio-political problems relevant to subaltern studies in the Global South context. The novel is about everybody and everything happening in rapidly changing India, particularly about displaced and marginalized communities. Through the protagonist Anjum (A Hijra), the transgender issue has been reflected. Gender discrimination, caste inequality, capitalism, and also socio-political concerns have been presented very faithfully. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is an outburst of Roy's treatment of the "The New Subaltern", who is the victim of social and political crisis. (Jahan 1)

Anjum has been portrayed as a subaltern: The central character of the novel is a Hijra. In terms of rights, they are the most marginalized people in society, particularly in India and Bangladesh. In terms of transgender, socio-political deprivation, patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism, and human psychological conflicts combine to erase them as subalterns. Nimmo, a transgender person, residing at Khawabgah, tells Anjum:

D'you know why God made Hijra? [...] It was an experiment [...] a living creature that is incapable of happiness [...] for us the price rise and school admissions, husband's beatings, wives' cheatings, Hindu-Muslim riots, Indo-Pak war [...] all inside us. The scream is inside us. [...] The war is inside us. Indo-Pak is inside us. It will never settle down (Roy 23).

The transgender people as subaltern have no history, but they are always there in society. Though Hijras are denied their identity, they are not out of the influence of the global chain.

(Jahan 5-6) *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* presents the unbearable conditions of the subaltern. Characters are portrayed as subaltern in terms of gender, caste, class, etc. Anjum, the transgender protagonist, is the victim of socio-political deprivation and sails to build a paradise. Roy's treatment of the vulnerability of subaltern in the globalized city and capitalist society is a new dimension of Indian literature in English indeed.

Mulk Raj Anand is one of the novelists of subaltern studies in Indian literature in English. Anand is influenced by Maksim Gorky's *Creatures That Once Were Men* (1906) while he writes his first novel *Untouchable* (1935), which is about the day's life of an eighteen years old latrine cleaner, Bakha, in the Punjabi town of Bulandshahr. Anand borrows the theme from James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Aristotle's concept of "three unities": time, place, and action. His novel resembles the Odia novel *Harijan* by the Jnanpith awardee, Gopinath Mohanty, which is also about the lives of the latrine cleaners.

Bakha's friend says, "They think we are dirt because we clean their dirt." This old Indian habit of associating work with caste and class structure is "a hideous nightmare unknown to the West" ("Preface" to *Untouchable*). This is indeed a pollution complex. A sweeper has to announce "posh, posh, sweeper coming" to avoid contact with caste Hindus. Bakha's brushing with a high caste Hindu on the city road, his secret entry into temple premises, and his collection of bread thrown out by the mistress of a house from the gutter are three events in which Bakha had to digest the pangs of humiliation: "He boiled with rage. He shivered. His broad impassive face was pale with hostility. But he couldn't do anything. He hung his head and walked with a drooping chest" (Anand 134). The protest boils down to silence—an impotent rage. Three characters appear in the novel, each with a solution to the stigma of untouchability: the missionary encourages conversion to Christianity which regards everybody as sons of God.

However, the novel, *Untouchable* has been translated into twenty languages of the world. It is an impassioned plea for social justice and equality. It shows the evil effects of untouchability and criticizes social, psychological, moral-philosophical, historical aspects of human life. The novel focuses on the pathetic, unbearable conditions of the untouchables and penetrates deep into their psychological dualities of conditions. (Bhuyan et al. 2-3) In this regard, we can mention Forster's opinion regarding the sweeper:

The sweeper is worse off than a slave, for the slave may change his master and his duties and may even become free. Still, the sweeper is bound to his master and forever born into a state from which he cannot escape and where he is excluded from social intercourse and the consolation of his religion. Unclean himself pollutes others when he touches them (Forster iv).

Thus, Anand's novel, *Untouchable*, has projected the subalterns in Dalit Literature.

Criticism

One of the group's early contributors, Sumit Sarkar, entitles one of his essays "Decline of the Subaltern in Subaltern Studies," criticizing the turn to Foucauldian studies of power-knowledge leaves behind many of the empiricist and Marxist efforts of the first two volumes of *Subaltern Studies*. He writes that the socialist inspiration behind the early volumes leads to a more significant impact on India. In contrast, the later volumes focus on western discourse reifying the subaltern-colonizer divide and then rising in prominence, mainly in western academia. (Sarker) Even Gayatri Spivak, one of the most prominent names associated with the movement, has called herself a critic of 'metropolitan post-colonialism.' (Spivak)

Indian sociologist Vivek Chibber has criticized the premise of Subaltern Studies for its obfuscation of class struggle and class formation in its analysis and accuses it of excising class exploitation from the story of the oppression of the subaltern. In the book *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*, his critique focuses on two Indian scholars: Ranajit Guha and Dipesh Chakrabarty. According to Chibber, subaltern scholars tend to recreate the Orient as a place where cultural differences negate analyses based on western experience.

According to Ranajit Guha, subaltern studies intervene in historical schools of thought that cannot represent the history of nationalism in India without celebrating the role of the elites in bringing the larger nation into the discourse. This existing version of history, Guha argues, discounted subaltern contributions. So the subaltern studies group aim "to rectify the elitist bias" in a field "dominated by elitism — colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism" (403).

In *Gramsci and Peasant Subalternity in India*, Gramsci's use of the term 'subaltern' invites us to appreciate the common properties of subordinate groups as a whole - the shared fact of their subordination intrinsic weaknesses, their limited strengths. The unique, revolutionary character of the industrial proletariat as envisaged by the Marx and Engels of the Communist Manifesto is correspondingly played down. Gramsci does not dispute that the proletariat has certain advantages of organization and consciousness, and, as has been seen, he expects it to establish its hegemony over other subordinate classes. But it has many negative attributes of the peasantry - passivity, disunity, spontaneity, etc. (*SPW II* 453, 462, quoted in Arnold 33).

Gramsci's observations on the Indian peasantry are scattered throughout his writings. To treat the peasantry in isolation is one of the strengths and attractions of his contribution to the theoretical and empirical study of the peasantry. Peasants are always represented as a class concerning others, always a subaltern group, subject to others, whether to feudal lords, bourgeoisie, or the proletariat's leadership. He attributes subalternity to the poverty of the peasant, to his location within a feudal or capitalist mode of production. He realizes the part that the raw coercive power of domination might play in establishing peasant subordination. His purpose is to explain why state power, especially in modern capitalist societies, is so difficult to overthrow and why subaltern classes accept their subordination. He finds little evidence of autonomy in peasant

movements, both in the specific sense of their failure to generate their leadership and organization and to formulate their demands effectively and in the broader sense of being unable to mount an ideological and political assault capable of overthrowing the domination and hegemony of the ruling classes. (34)

The concept of hegemony provides him with an alternative explanation of why peasants remain disunited and passive and seem to consent to their subordination. Gramsci's reading of Italian history and the politics of the day leads him to believe that hegemony is responsible for the strength of state power and ruling-class supremacy in modern capitalist society and accounts for the seeming reluctance or inability of the city's masses and the countryside to rise against them. (Arnold 46-48)

Borders

Border means-a boundary, especially of a country or state; the outer edge of something the border of the woods; and a decorative strip on or near the edge of something. We live in a very bordered world. The daily news is filled with controversies concerning the political, cultural, and economic borders that crisscross the Earth's surface. Borders are central features in current international disputes relating to security, migration, trade, and natural resources. They also factor prominently into local debates over land use and property rights.

Countries protect their borders for several reasons. One is to keep out invaders. This is especially true in areas where two or more countries have fought over the same land for many years. Palestine and Israel, for example, have disputed the territory since 1967. Borders are established through agreements between political or social entities that control those areas; creating these agreements is called boundary delimitation. Some borders—such as most state's internal administrative borders or inter-state borders within the Schengen Area—are open and completely unguarded. The government of a region can only create and apply laws within its borders. Sometimes the people in one area take over another area. Sometimes land is traded or sold peacefully. Borders are political and geographic boundaries of political entities or legal jurisdictions, such as governments, sovereign states, federated states, and other subnational entities. Borders may even foster the setting up of buffer zones. (Mura 58)

Classification of Borders

Political Borders

Political borders are imposed on the world through human agency. Although a political border may follow a river or mountain range, such a feature does not automatically define the political border, even though it may be a major physical barrier to crossing. Political borders are often classified by whether or not they follow conspicuous physical features on the earth. (Robinson 93)

Natural Borders

Natural borders are geographical features that present natural obstacles to communication and transport. Existing political borders are often a formalization of such historical, natural obstacles.

Landscape Borders

The landscape border is a mixture of political and natural borders. The landscape border is not demarcated by fences and walls but instead landscape features such as forests, mountains, and water bodies. It is different from a natural border in the sense that the border landscape is not natural but human-engineered. Such a landscape usually differs from the borderland's natural geography, and its building requires tremendous human labor and financial investment.

Geometric Borders

Geometric boundaries are formed by straight lines, such as lines of latitude or longitude, regardless of the physical and cultural features of the area. Such political boundaries are often found around the states that develop out of colonial holdings, such as North America, Africa, and the Middle East.

Frontier

A Frontier is a border that is open-ended to one side, identifying an expanding borderland. This type of border has been identified as a particular state of mind for human activity. (Mura 58)

Maritime Borders

A maritime border is a division enclosing an area in the ocean where a nation has exclusive rights over the mineral and biological resources, encompassing maritime features, limits, and zones. Maritime borders represent the jurisdictional borders of a maritime nation and are recognized by the United Nations Convention on the Sea Law. (Valencia 149)

Airspace Borders

Airspace is the atmosphere located within a country's controlled international and maritime borders. All sovereign nations hold the right to regulate and protect air space under the international law of Air sovereignty. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*. "Air law.") With the international agreement, a country can assume the responsibility of protecting or controlling the atmosphere over International Airspaces, such as the Pacific Ocean. Nations and local governments set airspace regulations within the airspace; rules of airspace differ by country and location.

Border Conflicts

Border conflicts occur because we do not know or do not like where the line is. Disputes that cross boundaries are more complex. They are likely to involve other bordering areas between the two countries, often otherwise not in dispute.

Border conflicts refer to disputes over the division of land or water bodies among two or more independent countries. Boundary disputes may evolve from historical and cultural claims or may be brought on by competition for resource exploitation. Border conflicts are often related to natural resources such as rivers, fertile farmland, mineral or petroleum resources, although the disputes can also be driven by culture, religion, and ethnic nationalism. Border conflicts are currently seen among some countries of the world. They include India-China, Palestine-Israel, North Korea-South Korea, Kashmir-India, China-Tibet-Georgia, America-Mexico, Russia-Ukraine, etc.

However, international peace and security, like UNSC, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice.

Borderlands

Borderlands are the geographical space or zone around a territorial border. Borderlands define land located on or near a border, or an indeterminate area, situation, or condition: the borderland between sleeping and waking. The border represents the limits of a capitalist system within the global paradigm, while the lands are the countries involved in this issue. The military oppression and gender violence so familiar to rural Myanmar in conflict zones is now affecting the urban middle and working classes – groups that were long sheltered from the country's *borderland* conflicts. (Hlaing 2021)

India-Bangladesh Borderland

A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. (Anzaldúa 3) The term 'borderland' addresses the regions that surround international borders. These are places where power relations become particularly evident (Sparke 53) and where different cultures either mix or clash, creating a particular political, spatial, cultural, economic, and social situation. Most geographical studies on borderlands aim to describe what may be called the everyday border-life: daily practices, economic activities, and cultural connections of people that live in borderlands and that cross the borders of nations. (53)

Previously, the border was somewhat fluid, and there existed fewer distinctions between India and Bangladesh. "In those days, there was a rule where one could exchange lands in these

two countries, so a Hindu in Bangladesh could trade his piece of land with a Muslim in India. They had many relatives here, and because there was no fence, people would keep visiting. Until recently, people in the area did not have phones or Internet connections. How did they remain in touch with their families across the border? The answer presented itself in the form of the Milan Mela.

Around 50,000 Bangladeshi girls are reportedly trafficked into India every year. Most are told they will find a better job, some get kidnapped, and few knowingly cross the border. A handful is rescued and sent to shelter homes until their repatriation, which can take around four years, especially when their families refuse to identify them to protect familial prestige.

A majority of the girls in these shelter homes are either victims of trafficking or have escaped it. Most of them aren't even aware that they are being trafficked; they are either tricked with the promise of a job or a chance to be in the Indian entertainment industry. Some of these girls don't want to go back to their homes because their own families are complicit in the trafficking. Despite this, as per the norms, the girls are sent back to their families without considering their own choice. Notably, when a family crosses the border and gets caught and rescued, the parents and children are put in separate shelter homes. After some time, the parents are repatriated, but not their children.

Reasons for Borderland Conflicts

Borderland Conflicts are a significant cause of wars and terrorism, as states often try to assert their sovereignty over a territory through invasion, and non-state entities try to influence the actions of politicians through terrorism. International law does not support the use of force by one state to annex the territory of another state. The UN Charter states, "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations" [Chapter I — "Purposes and Principles," Article 2(1)– (5)].

In some cases, in which the boundary is not demarcated, such as the Taiwan Strait and Kashmir, the parties involved define a control line, which serves as the *defacto* international border. The term *border conflict* applies to cases in which two or more states dispute a limited territory, and each contending state would publish its maps to include the same region which would lie along or adjacent to the recognized borders of the competing states, such as the Abyei region which is contested between Sudan and South Sudan. With border conflicts, the existence of the rival state is not being challenged, such as the relationship between the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China or the relationship between South Korea and North Korea. Still, each state recognizes only the shape of the rival state as not containing the claimed territory, despite who governs the land and how it is recognized in the international community.

An occupied territory, in general, is a region distinct from the recognized territory of the sovereign states but which the occupying state controls, usually with military forces. Sometimes, a

long-term occupation is maintained as a means to act upon a territorial claim. Still, a domain may also be strategic (such as creating a buffer zone or preventing a rival power from obtaining control) or a means of coercion, such as a punishment, to impose some internal measures or for use as a bargaining chip. The term *irredentism* applies to border disputes but also more expansive territorial claims:

If a nation emerges when declaring independence from a more significant state, its ultimate recognition may not always grant the new state control over the territory; it is like a part of the declaration. Those lands remain *unredeemed territory* in the eyes of nationalist movements from the state but do not cause a problem between the governments on each side of the border. In cases that territory is achieved through historical conquests such as an empire, traditionalists may view former colonies as unredeemed territory. (Sumner 2016)

Role of International Law

Territorial disputes have significant meaning in international society, both by their relation to the fundamental right of states, sovereignty, and because they are essential for global peace. International law has significant ties with territorial disputes because territorial disputes tackle the basis of international law; the state territory. International law is based on the persons of international law, which requires a defined territory. Therefore, the breach of a country's borders or territorial disputes poses a threat to a state's very sovereignty and the right as a person of international law. In addition, territorial disputes are sometimes brought to the international court of justice. Territorial disputes cannot be separated from international law, whose basis is on the direction of state borders, and their potential settlement also relies on international law and the court. (Sumner 2016)

Borderland Conflicts in Literature

In the novel *Train to Pakistan*, Khushwant Singh presents the bizarre story of the partition of India and Pakistan; and the events are deemed one of the blackest chapters of human history. Singh wants to explore the brutal and hypocritical image of man. Partition is the age of darkness everywhere in India and Pakistan. Millions of refugees' homes are evicted and displaced forcibly and illegally. Partition is a traumatic experience in the postmodern era. It brings to a short, long, and communal shared history and cultural heritage. Thus, Singh's treatment of partition and communal riots is faithfully presented in the novel *Train to Pakistan*.

Amitav Ghosh has focused on political interference in a contemporary world in his work *The Shadow Lines*. The novel represents Ghosh's confrontation with nationalism and national identity and simultaneously about each character's identity. It presents the consequences of the Partition and mainly concerned with the Partition on the Bengal border. There is the character name Thamma, the grandmother of the unnamed narrator through whom the issue of the Bengal Partition and the whole idea of Nation, Nationalism, and Nationhood has been discussed. The characters and stories are rooted in the solid soil of the reality of human life. *The Shadow Lines* can be read as destabilizing the fixed, binary logic imposed on a nation of otherness, identity, history, and memory in constructing nationalist boundaries. Thus, Ghosh represents national

identity in a way that forces us to acknowledge the ambivalence of limitations, even as we accept that partition is necessary. (Shirley 106)

The Shadow Lines is the partition novel examined in this book that questions the concept of the border, questions very seriously whether the shadow line that we inscribe to separate people into different nations has any validity, or whether it is an absurd illusion. Ghosh's contention in this novel that borders themselves are fictive and elusive, that they defeat and negate the very reason behind their apparent existence. The partition is a vivid manifestation of the claim that a post-colonial nation is founded in a bloody severance of the umbilical cord, fortifying border between nation-states with irrational and remorseless violence. The discourse of nationalism, however, affects to make sense of the excessive loss of lives that occurs; the novel has made the reader discover that the world is not a simple place that can see in an atlas, but there are so many inevitable facts hidden in those solid lines as it leads to political aggression and violent bloodshed. Boundaries between nations are like shadow lines, of hatred and hostility out of national sentiments. The novelist shows how ordinary people try their best to seek mutual sympathy among various ethnic groups of the subcontinent. There are some people like Thamma who believe in not only drawing lines as part of faith but also respecting them with blood. The border that carves at the time of partition leads to further brutality in those riots, pogroms, and organized historical distortions and cultural depletions with which the history of independent India replete. (Shirley 108)

Moreover, this study would like to focus on Ismail Kadare's treatment of the 20th-century Albanian dictatorship. Ismail Kadare has experienced a life of controversy. In his own country and internationally he has been both acclaimed as a writer and condemned as a lackey of the Albanian dictatorship. Kadare produces some of the most brilliant and subversive works to emerge from socialist Eastern Europe. He uses whatever opportunities arise to disseminate the literary works which speaks so eloquently of his country's plight. His literary record remains impeccable. He was committed to Albanian language, culture, and national identity; he believes in European humanist ideals and is attracted, to begin with, by the communist model of modernization in his socially and economically backward land. He expresses defiance through his representation of the grimness of everyday life under socialism and through his powerful evocations of an Albania more ancient and more durable than the new Albania of Enver Hoxha.

The term 'Albanian' acquires a strong significance as a marker of group identity on the basis of shared language, which is the dominant core value prior to political, social, cultural, or religious identity. He defends language, customs, and culture of his people against oppressive external forces. His writing over the forty-five years of the dictatorship is extraordinarily coherent in terms of its themes and its focus on aspects of Albanian life. The writer continues to write, to speak as a witness of socialist dictatorship, and to represent his country at home, in Europe, and the world. His novels bring the battle between the writer and the dictator, of freedom and oppression, to readers beyond the borders of Albania and Eastern Europe and across the decades which separate us from the era of Eastern European socialism. (Kadare, 2010)

Finally, subalternity in Anand's *Untouchable* and Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* through applying the theories of subaltern studies has discussed in this study. To understand borders and borderlands, the study has investigated the contemporary political crisis. Classification of borders, including political borders, natural borders, landscape borders, geometric borders, frontier, maritime borders, airspace borders have been investigated. In most of his literary works, a globally reputed Albanian novelist and story writer Kadare has faithfully presented the border and political conflicts of his homeland. Dictatorship has occupied a special place in his works. Borderlands, India-Bangladesh borderland, reasons for border and borderland conflicts of Indian subcontinent in the light of Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, and Kadare's *The Writer and the Dictatorship 1957-1990* have faithfully been projected in this study.

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