

History

THE INFLUENCE OF SUBALTERN STUDIES ON INDIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY: A STUDY OF SEVERAL APPROACHES

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The goal of this article is to evaluate the influence of Subaltern studies on contemporary Indian historiography. Subaltern studies, an offspring of the postmodern paradigm, offered a new program for studying Indian history, the main aim of which is to construct an authentic Indian history devoid of Eurocentric concepts. I analyse four texts (the authors of which do not belong to the Subaltern collective) that discuss postcolonial Indian historiography, in order to find out how well those authors are acquainted with Subaltern Studies and how the problems of history writing in India that they raise in their texts correlates with the problematics of Subaltern research. My analysis shows that the relation of native Indian historians with the Subaltern Studies is quite limited, because Subaltern scholars tend to rely on Western concepts to construct the authentic Indian history, an unfeasible project from the native Indian perspective.

The main objective of this article is to find out the extent to which postmodernism has influenced the way Indian historians write about their own Indian history. At first glance one could plausibly claim that contemporary Indian historiography has already been transformed as a result of postmodernist influences. For instance, Subaltern studies, created as a result of postmodern postcolonial studies, formulated new concepts and methods of Indian historiography. Subaltern studies is an indigenous Indian theoretical movement that explicitly challenges the “Eurocentricity” of earlier approaches to Indian history; its goal is to construct an authentic Indian history devoid of Eurocentric conceptions of how history should be constructed and just what from the past should be considered valuable and worth inclusion in history texts. Subaltern Studies even changed some of the fundamental concepts of postmodern historiography in order to adjust itself to the Indian context.¹ Despite the evident popularity of Subaltern studies in the West, one wonders if the

¹ See, for instance, R. Guha, “On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India,” in *Subaltern Studies I*, ed. R. Guha, New Delhi, 1982; G. Prakash, “Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32, 2 (1990); G. Prakash, “Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism,” *American Historical Review* (December 1994, 1475–1490.

school also took root in India, since most of the key names in Subaltern studies teach in England, Australia or the United States.

In this paper, I look at how Indian historians see the development of postcolonial Indian historiography² beginning with Subaltern studies scholars and later other Indian historians who are not members of the Subaltern school. More inclusively, I seek to describe the issues that formulate current debates among Indian historiographers. My inquiry led me to examine four Indian texts that discuss and summarize postcolonial Indian historiography. The authors of these texts do not belong to the Subaltern Studies Collective. I examined these texts specifically to find out: (1) how well the authors were acquainted with the Subaltern history school; (2) how they understood the development of postcolonial Indian historiography; and (3) how the problems of history writing in India that they raised correlated with the scope of Subaltern research.

To jump ahead, my analysis of the four texts clearly showed that Subaltern studies are not popular among Indian historians and the influence of postmodernist thought on Indian historiography is limited. However, as I will also show, the issues addressed by the Subaltern school are also issues that concern Indian historians. As I will later show, there is also a communalist/nationalist tension unique to India, which affects Indian historiography. I begin with a brief synopsis of orientalism and postcolonialism; second, I provide a synopsis of the Subaltern school emphasizing the critique of postmodernism raised by subaltern historians; third, I examine the four texts to discern traces of postcolonial or Subaltern concepts and methods in these texts. My overall goal is to evaluate the influence of the Subaltern school on contemporary Indian historiography.

Said, Orientalism and the Postcolonial Attack on Western Appropriations of the Past

Recent (i. e. approximately post 1980) studies of Indian history have been influenced by the development of World historiography and by the formation of new intellectual paradigms – post-structuralism and postmodernism. The Subaltern studies movement was initially launched in

² There are several possible definitions of the term “postcolonial” in Indian historiography: 1) it can be defined in the context of historical time when “postcolonial” refers to the period after the colonial period; in this case, postcolonial Indian historiography means historiography written after the year 1947. 2) Postcolonialism can be understood as a movement and ideology associated with all cultural and political activities that arose as a response and resistance to the colonialism. In this second sense of the term, the type of response to colonialism can determine the definition of postcolonial historiography: if the resistance is raised through the postcolonial studies started under the influence of poststructural theories (here the paradigmatic text is E. Said’s “Orientalism”), postcolonial historiography is considered to be historiography that exercises this “Saidian” critique (In India this, first of all, means Subaltern studies); if the response is understood in the broad sense as conditioned by various theoretical orientations, postcolonial historiography refers to all histories that were written in response to the Western colonizers. In this article, I have mostly relied on this last definition of postcolonial historiography. That is, I have sought to use this term to refer to various forms of Indian responses to Western historiography. (T. DeHay, *What is Postcolonial studies?*, [cited 20/04/04]. Available from: <<http://www.sou.edu/English/IDTC/Issues/postcol/postdef.htm>>; Emory university postcolonial studies website, [cited 20/04/04]. Available from: <<http://www.cmory.edu/English/Bahri>>; *Postcolonial studies website* [cited 20/04/04]. Available from: <<http://www.postcolonialweb.org/poldiscourse/whatpoco.html>>.)

Calcutta in 1982. The scholars of the Subaltern Collective announced that they had started a new project of Indian history; their goal was to construct an authentic Indian history by eliciting narratives and finding texts and other writings of its own people and not relying on the “official” texts of their colonizers. The main method of the Subaltern school is derived from the postcolonial critique. This critique seeks to “deconstruct” or undo the colonial or oriental discourse that Edward Said defined and dissected in his book “Orientalism.” Said came to the postmodernist idea that the conveyance of truth is impossible, because the language we use to convey “truth” inevitably distorts the facts as these facts are never unreflective and cannot be transported without altering them from life to paper. The truth is wrapped in discourses that are themselves generated by various political, cultural, gender (and other) interests.³ According to Said, “Orientalism” is knowledge about the Orient, which is constructed by the Occident in order to control and even to create “the East.”⁴ An important point of his critique is that the colonial discourse doesn’t end with colonialism; that is, it continues after colonial empires apparently collapse and the colonizing nation-states no longer have *direct* political control.

The theoreticians of postcolonialism argue that although overt political colonialism has ended as official policy, the power of colonialism remains and is still expressed through colonial discourses which are constantly reproduced in the marketplaces, government offices, schools, media and cultural formations of the previous colonies. Further, the gist of these discourses is the acquisition and imitation of Western ideas and values. The colonized have reproduced the ideological “weapons” of the colonizers often at the behest and with the aid of the former colonizers. The weapons of colonization have become more sophisticated and less obvious.

Subaltern historians went a step further, by rejecting all colonial and postcolonial Indian historiography as Eurocentric, claiming that postcolonial historiographers very often, albeit unconsciously, repeated the colonial mode of discourse about India, sometimes even adopting the same content as “historical events” and “facts” worthy of inclusion in history texts.⁵ As an alternative to the whole of Indian historiography they offered the history of Indian “subalterns;” a history that through its subject matter – i. e. the history of ordinary Indians – refutes Eurocentricity, the universal themes of Western modernity and progress and restores the voice of Indian people in

³ According to Iggers, postmodernists rely on the language theory formulated in the beginning of the twentieth century by Ferdinand de Saussure and later developed by Jacques Derrida. This theory postulates that language does not necessarily correlate with reality but in fact can create reality. In other words, reality does not construct the text but the text constructs reality. (G. G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, Hanover, 1997, 121.)

⁴ E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York, 1979, 3.

⁵ G. Prakash divided all Indian historiography that doesn’t belong to the Subaltern studies into nationalist and Marxist historiography. According to Prakash, both nationalists and Marxists use the European model of historical evolution; they only changed the old essentialist categories that were created by Europeans. Nationalists and Marxist historians provided a new set of categories that identified the permanent features and identity of India either in terms of nationalist or class features. Nationalists proclaim India to be an active, modern and united national state that participates on equal terms with all other nation-states in its progressive history. Marxists condense Indian history into a schema of capitalist development. (Prakash, “Writing Post-Orientalist Histories”, 388–391.)

Indian history. The term “subaltern,” taken from Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci’s “prison writings,” refers to subordination in cultural, economic, social and other terms. In this way the monolithic Indian history is replaced with a refracted Indian history, which like a kaleidoscope reflects the multiplicities of dialogues and identities representing the dynamics and multiplicities of power relations at the local level, both through time (different historical periods) and across space (regional differences).⁶

The Subaltern Motif Revisited: neither Postmodern nor Indian

The primary aim of the Subaltern studies was to restore voice and agency to the classes of India’s Subaltern groups. Subaltern scholars did not doubt that, once found, these people were able to “speak” for themselves, to reflect insightfully on their subordination and marginalization, and to (at least verbally) liberate themselves from their subordinate position. But after finding out that the Subalterns haven’t left any sources about themselves, the attempts to recover the Subaltern subject were replaced by the attempts to find out how marginalized Subaltern classes were constructed by dominating discourses. The primary aim of the Subaltern studies – to restore the agency to the Subaltern groups – had to be reconciled with the concept of colonial discourse which, according to the postmodernist thought, was completely determinant in constructing the Subaltern, and denying any possibility of emancipation.⁷

The voice of the Subalterns could be heard only in the elite texts. But Subaltern groups do not disappear in those texts as postmodernists would postulate. Subaltern historians save those groups stating that “Subalterns and Subalternity do not disappear into discourse but appear in its interstices, subordinated by structures over which they exert pressure.”⁸ In this way Subaltern studies distance themselves from the postmodernist discourse, acknowledging the independent existence of historical object from historical subject, though this historical past is not unambiguously defined or completed. The past can be continually and is constantly re-created and re-appropriated into new discourses suitable to different epochs and interests. However, the Subaltern school, unlike the postmodernists, argues that the past is not infinitely plastic; that is, it can be reinterpreted, but it also has its own “face” and is not clay that can be wilfully reconstructed simply at the author’s fancy. Subalterns reject the possibility that the past is completely dependent on interpretation. The historiography of Subaltern historians is like a dialogue between the researcher and historical sources: not only does the historian offer and doff his questions, so to speak, to the past, but also the past comes with its own garments, its own history. Neither the historical subject nor object are autonomous to make their own cultural context, as both subject and object are molded by

⁶ Ibid., 398–408.

⁷ Richard Eaton talks about the reception of postmodern methodologies by the Subaltern School and tensions that it produced: R. A. Eaton, “(Re)imag(in)ing Otherness: A Postmortem for the Postmodern in India,” *Journal of World History* 11, 1 (2000): 60–65.

⁸ Prakash, “Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism,” 1482.

various cultural structures, traditions, institutions. At the same time that Subalterns resist the postmodern discourse, they aver the possibility for historians, wrapped in the enigmas of their own respective times and autobiographical pasts, to emancipate themselves from the master discourses that construct them and to recognize forms which resist these dominating and subordinating master discourses.

It would seem that the Subaltern school would take a central position in the writings of Indian history, given that this was an opportunity for Indian historians to reclaim Indian history as “their own.” As we shall see below when we discuss more specifically the epistemology and methodology of the Subaltern school, their approach was novel, particularly since the Subalterns had to find novel methods to uncover the voices of ordinary “authentic” Indians. While their particular methods were not, as we shall see, taken up by mainstream Indian historians, their goal of creating an authentic Indian history does resonate among the various schools of Indian historiography.

To evaluate the influence of Subaltern theory on contemporary Indian historians, I examined four texts that discuss Indian historiography: (1) a volume edited by S. P. Sharma titled “Historiography and Historians in India since Independence”, this edited volume contains 11 articles written by 5 authors; (2) K. S. Lal’s book “History and Historiography,” (3) an article by I. Habib, “History and Interpretation: Communalism and Problems of Historiography in India” and (4) an article by Sh. Moosvi “Open Door in Indian Historiography.”⁹ The texts were chosen randomly after a research in libraries, bookstores and Internet resources. Given the difficulty of conducting an exhaustive search of all Indian writings on Indian history, my analysis of four texts cannot serve as a conclusive statement about all of Indian historiography, however, I believe that these four texts are suggestive of contemporary “mainstream” Indian historiography. This article doesn’t strive for a full-scale analysis of all texts on Indian historiography and the conclusions describe some (though not all!) tendencies in the present-day Indian historical research.

Reflections of Subaltern Studies in the Four Texts

This section considers the question: “do the authors of the above mentioned texts refer to Subaltern studies while analysing postcolonial Indian historiography, and if they do what is their approach to those studies?”

The Subaltern school is mentioned by I. Habib and Sh. Moosvi. Though these authors confine themselves only to the enumeration of the streams of independent Indian historiography and then only to fragmentary representation, it is important to look at the context in which the Subaltern

⁹ *Historiography and Historians in India since Independence*, ed. R. C. Sharma, Agra, 1991; K. S. Lal, *Historical Essays: History and Historiography*, vol.1, New Delhi, 2001; I. Habib, *History and Interpretation: Communalism and problems of Historiography in India*, [cited 30/10/04]. Available from: <http://www.sacw.net/India_History/IhabibCommunalHistory.html>.

S. Moosvi, “Open Door”, in *Indian Historiography* [cited 30/10/04]. Available from: <<http://www.members.tripod.com/ahsaligarh/opendoor.htm>>.

school is presented. While discussing medieval Indian historiography since the 1970s, I. Habib marks two distinct but converging currents. The first current is associated with Burton Stein's theory of "segmentary state," which originated from the British school of African anthropology and was subsequently applied to medieval South India. The second current is identified with the leader of the so-called Cambridge school, C.A. Bayly (1983). According to Habib, Bayly argued the continuity between the previous indigenous policies and the colonial regime. Bayly observed the operation of innovative "corporate groups" behind the Mughal imperial decline, groups that later shifted their loyalties to the East India Company. Though Habib mentions several Indian supporters of Stein and Bayly, he nevertheless points out that neither thesis has been accepted by significant numbers of Indian historians. According to Habib,

the Indian (in part NRI) counterpart of the two Western theories has been the "Subaltern" school, whose members have worked as a "collective" since 1982. Sharing the Cambridge School's skepticism of Indian nationalism, these historians have emphasized "the cultural autonomy" of tribal and local communities, and protested against those (including such as are conveniently termed "Nehruvian Marxists") who have assumed cultural syntheses and unifying factors to be an important element in Indian history. While the Subalterns' work has been mainly concerned with the period of the national movement, their beliefs enmesh fairly well with the criticism of nationalist and Marxist historiography of pre-colonial India that historians like Stein and Bayly have initiated.¹⁰

The article by Sh. Moosvi is divided into two main sections: though the author does not explicate the reason for dividing the article into two sections, we can presuppose that the first refers to more traditional "local" schools of Indian historiography (nationalist and marxist); the second section describes the newest trends in Western historical studies. In this latter section, the author discusses, in sequence, the Cambridge and Annales schools of history; Postmodernist historiography and its Indian votaries; Subaltern historians. According to Moosvi, Subaltern studies are the Indian variant of "History from Below" and not really novel. Moosvi notes that initially the Subaltern school was a continuation of the Marxist tradition (as intended by Gramsci), but eventually the Subaltern historians concentrated on the elite versus Subalterns motif rather than on class analysis. Subaltern historians reject the concept of nation, and their conception of the nationalist elite is, according to Moosvi, virtually identical with that of the Cambridge school.¹¹

The brief discussions of Subaltern studies in both Habib's and Moosvi's articles do not, of course, encompass the research parameters of this school. Nonetheless, we can see that both these historians of Indian historiography did not consider Subaltern studies to be a unique Indian product and, though both are concerned with authenticity in historical representations of India, neither are supplicants of the Subaltern school nor see it as liberating Indian historiography from the clutches of the West.

In their extensive reviews of Indian historiographies, neither K.S. Lal nor R. C. Sharma mention Subaltern studies. What then, we may ask, is the picture of postcolonial Indian historiography

¹⁰ Habib, *History and Interpretation*, *ibid.*

¹¹ Moosvi, "Open Door", *ibid.*

that is constructed by the authors of those four texts? If Subaltern theory is elided, what are the current trends or schools of historical writing in India and how do they approach the problems of history writing and how do these problems correlate with those addressed by the Subaltern school?

The Subaltern Strain – Insinuations of Authenticity

After a careful reading of those four texts, I can state with some confidence that the problem of writing an authentic Indian history is very actively though not always explicitly discussed in them. All four texts address the two options available to Indian historians: whether to write a Western-style Indian history or to look for their own Indian conception of history. This debate is especially wellmarked in the volume edited by R.C. Sharma (included are articles by the following authors: Gyaneshwar Chaturvedi, Jayati Chaturvedi, Sugam Anand, Atul Kumar Singh).¹² The authors discuss general problems of Western and Indian historiography, the development of Indian historiography from olden times till now and separately analyze the academic activities of eight famous Indian historians.¹³

The volume's authors categorize the historians of independent India into the "traditional", "progressive", and "Marxist" schools and add a "one-man school of K.M. Pannikar", because Pannikar "successfully added a geographical dimension to Indian historiography."¹⁴ A critique of Ishvari Prasad, a representative of the traditional school, is presented in one chapter. Prasad is criticized for his "pathetic faith in strong rulers and the elite whom he considered to be the most outstanding factor in historical evolution"¹⁵. Prasad is further criticized for not adequately understanding how economic forces, rather than individuals, operated on shaping India's history. The other two traditional historians presented in this book, J. N. Sarkat and R. C. Majumdar, face the same critique, i. e. "hero-worship" of famous kings or historical figure; the "cult of facts"; purporting to write "objective history" based on political events and with an occasional focus on biographical minutiae.¹⁶ So, the authors of the volume criticize the traditional historians for following the footsteps of European historians who started academic historical research in India and who wrote it mainly in political terms.

The authors are also critical of Marxist historians like D.D. Kosambi. Kosambi is criticized for blindly following Marxist theory instead of creatively applying it to the specific Indian context.¹⁷ The authors seem to be much more positive about other Marxist historians like Irfan Habib and Bipan Chandra whose interpretation of Marxism is less constrained by Marxist dogma and there-

¹² It should be pointed out that though the Table of Contents indicates that each chapter has a different author, the authors repeat large passages from each other and thus, the volume reads more like a collaboratively written monograph.

¹³ Namely J. Nehru, K. M. Panikkar, J. Sarkar, R. C. Majumdar, I. Prasad, D. D. Kosambi, B. Chandra and I. Habib. The authors do not explain why they choose necessarily those historians.

¹⁴ *Historiography and Historians in India since Independence*, 150.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 171.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 144–168.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 200–202.

fore “more free”: “Despite his Marxist orientation, Irfan Habib doesn’t discern in history a plot, a rhythm, a predetermined pattern...”¹⁸ The authors of the volume themselves offer what they call a “Realist Conception of History” which seems to be a correction of Marxism that denies the universality of Marxist theory and its unilinear evolutionist view of history.¹⁹ The authors stress the need for historians to adopt a creative relation with Marxist theory and not to be confined within the “four corners of a fixed doctrine.”²⁰

Pannikar is praised for his innovative conception of Indian history as the growth of Indian civilization. What the authors of the volume esteem in Pannikar is that he, consciously and competently, interweaves multiple theories and employs a multidimensional research method that includes Marxist, geographical, social, political, cultural and economics materials. All these data and perspectives are grist for his analytical mill. Further Pannikar’s attention to India’s dynastic history is accepted, because, unlike the traditionalists, he views the dynastic cycles as backdrops for analyzing larger political processes.²¹

Though Pannikar’s conception of history is usually referred to as a “one-man school”, he is put alongside Nehru as an ideal historian, one whom all Indian historians should emulate, and who seems to be free from the taint of Eurocentrism. They urge historians to overcome Europocentricity in Indian historiography: “We must therefore extricate our historiography from the British, the American, and the European point of view and free ourselves from their subtle propaganda”²² and, instead, to write Indian history “as the growth of a people and their existence in time as a civilized community” – as Nehru and Pannikar did.²³

If we look at the schools/trends of postcolonial Indian historiography that the authors of the four texts enumerate, we discover a strange symbiosis of methodological and ideological paradigms. In his book on Indian historiography, K. S. Lal lists nationalist and communalist schools alongside such (more legitimate) historical schools as economic and social history/Marxism.²⁴ The nationalist and communalist schools are defined by ideological concepts such as “Indocentrism”, “promuslim–prohindu position.” According to Lal, the national historiography schools serve the larger aim of creating an undivided and politically integrated Muslim–Hindu nation.²⁵ Conversely, the aim of communalist histories is based on the theoretical axiom of irreconcilable hostility between Hindus and Muslims from the moment Muslims arrived in India.²⁶ Lal, himself, only discusses Muslim communalist historiography, pointing out its flaws while ignoring Hindu communalist writings. It seems that the author belongs to the Hindu communalist

¹⁸ Ibid., 251.

¹⁹ *Historiography and Historians in India since Independence*, 80–95.

²⁰ These are Nehru’s words which they quote in *ibid.*, 47.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 128–129.

²² *Ibid.*, 35.

²³ *Ibid.*, 34.

²⁴ Lal’s historical overview is comprised of two volumes; the first discusses the general problems of Indian historiography and the second consists of a collection of articles by Lal on medieval Indian history.

²⁵ Lal, *Historical Essays* 1: 117–119.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 111.

camp, as the main object of his medieval history writings is to restore the historical truth and detail Muslim atrocities in Indian history.

I. Habib and Sh. Moosvi also discuss the ideological trends of nationalistic and communal historiography, mentioning them in context with more accepted methodological paradigms such as Marxist, Subaltern and Cambridge schools. Both authors acknowledge that nationalist and communalist trends in historiography, while popular, fail in their critical reading of historical sources. Yet the authors still give them indirect legitimacy by placing them alongside other historiographical positions. Sh. Moosvi notes that nationalist historiography is “less scientific” than it should be, but still categorizes it with scientific theories. While critical of both nationalist and communalist perspectives, the authors hesitate to delegitimize them, perhaps because both perspectives do what the more “scientific theories” fail to do, and it is the present theories of history that are, unfortunately, authentically Indian in their ideological and communalist agendas.

Clearly there are tensions, perhaps irreconcilable ones, in developing a method of writing Indian history as free from Eurocentric corruptions and seen as authentic and scientific. The main tension pointed out in this paper is the difficulty in writing an Indian history that meets the requirements of both science and authenticity. The Subaltern Studies program has come closest to doing so, but for the reasons not yet discussed seems to have failed to become a very influential school in mainstream Indian historiography. The problems of trying to clean up Indian historiography from nationalist/communalist distortions, to write in authentic Indian traditions, to distance Indian historiography from the West and at the same time remain scientific, while not focusing on everything that is strange to Indian culture and therefore uniquely Indian, is perhaps an impossible project. Different epistemes generate different tensions, and the present tension is rooted in the dual processes of situating India as an autonomous international political and economic power vis-à-vis the West, with an equally rich history and culture; and second, to reconcile communal tensions within India and between India and its Muslim neighbours. These “realpolitik” conditions manifest themselves in the problems of finding an Indian historiography that is not subordinated to the West and at the same time free from communal biases. Trying to overcome these tensions can take very interesting forms – like in the stand that K. S. Lal takes in his active propagation of critical, true, objective history, though at the same time he is supporting Hindu causes. Lal incidentally gives unwitting voice to the difficulty of reconciling the tensions that exist in Indian historiography when he writes: “But although opinions in history differ, it is not always difficult to distinguish the truth from untruth” and cites a fourteenth century chronicler Ziyauddin Barani who claimed that “...the historian should write nothing but the truth...”²⁷

Conclusions

In this paper I show that Subaltern Studies claimed to create an authentic method and theory for writing Indian history; I then present a description of their claims and examine if their theory and

²⁷ Lal, *Historical Essays* 1: 61–62.

methods have been incorporated into Indian historiography. My analysis of four texts shows that the relation with the Subaltern school is limited; the Subaltern school is, in these texts, treated as a foreign import that does not talk for Indians nor does it offer useful analytical tools for creating an authentic and unique Indian historiography. However, this exploratory investigation does show that Indian historians are concerned with the same problems as are the Subaltern scholars. There is a general tendency, it appears, to be concerned with how to portray India and to write about Indian history in a way that does not appropriate or depend on “Eurocentric” models for writing about and analyzing historical events and processes. The conundrum we face, in the end, is why Subaltern theory, which addresses the problems that most Indian historians seem attentive to, was not more influential among Indian historiographers. I conclude by presenting below two explanations of why Subaltern theory and methods are not accepted by Indian historians.

1. *Subaltern Studies – a question of authenticity*

For native historians, Subaltern Studies might not seem authentic either in terms of their collective or in their methods or and theory. Each of these points will be discussed below.

One reason why the Subaltern Studies collective seems not to have had much of an influence on Indian historiography is that they are, from the native Indian historians’ perspective, guilty of their own charge of Eurocentrism. Most of the influential Subaltern scholars are writing and teaching in the West, and from their podiums at Cambridge, Oxford, or Princeton and Stanford they claim that as Indians they can posit an authentic Indian theoretical and methodological perspective for writing Indian history. Obviously, their own claim to authenticity is questioned, and seen as hypocritical by native Indian historians working at Indian universities. There is an Indian government category of Indians that is titled “Non-Resident Indians,” which is popularly reduced to its acronym NRI. Among resident Indians a standing joke is that NRI stands for “not really Indian”. Non resident Indian scholars’ claims to some authentic Indian identity cannot be rejected by non-Indian colleagues abroad but can be by “authentic” resident Indians. Hence their claim to creating an authentic Indian history contra Eurocentric models fall on deaf ears at best and is rejected as hypocritical at worst by native Indian historians.

In terms of methods, Vinay Bahl points out: “In spite of their criticizing Western concepts and methodology, the Subaltern Studies school depends heavily on postmodernist ideas (which emerged in the West) and on other Western methods for textual analysis.”²⁸ Regardless of the effectiveness of these methods, the fact that they originated in the West undermines the claim that they can be used to discover the “authentic” Indian, at least for native Indian scholars who are seeking indigenous concepts and methodologies for historical analysis.

Further, theoretically the Subaltern school grants a priori status of hero to the Indian Subaltern. As O’Hanlon writes, to portray “the figure of the subaltern as self-originating, self-determining, in

²⁸ V. Bahl, “Situating and Rethinking Subaltern Studies for Writing Working Class History,” in *History after the Three Worlds*, ed. A. Dirlik, V. Bahl and P. Gran, Maryland, 2000.

possession of a sovereign consciousness... is [in effect] to readmit through the back door the classic figure of Western humanism – the rational human subject.”²⁹

2. Global versus local

A second major category of reasons for why the Subaltern school is not any more popular among Indian historians is its emphasis on the local rather than the global. Contemporary India faces the problems of nation-building and arresting communalist tendencies that can split the country apart. India seeks to portray itself as a powerful nation equal to Western nations, and able to compete successfully in the global economy. The Subaltern is more likely to be a Hindu or Muslim fundamentalist rather than a Gandhian. This goes against the grain of nationalist historians who seek a pan-Indian authenticity. Its concern with its status in the world and for stability within its borders and in the South Asian region would seem to motivate Indian historians to create a grand picture of Indian history on the scale of France, Britain or China. These historians would be interested in the analysis of the global process over time and India's role in world history. The Subaltern project is staunchly and stubbornly local, the history of India appears to be the inverse of that, staunchly and stubbornly transnational and transregional, with waves of foreign groups entering India for trade, conquest, and a new life. Training the subaltern lense on local politics and local agents would seem to go against the grain not only of Indian history but also of the contemporary global *Zeitgeist* in which Indian historians write and are influenced by.

The evidence we have collected strongly suggests that Subaltern Studies didn't take root in India, as would be expected given its aim of writing an authentic Indian history, because of its close association with the West. We haven't proved the relationship between Subaltern Studies and Indian historiography, but we set up an agenda for studying the relationship.

SUBALTERN STUDIJŲ ĮTAKA INDIJOS ISTORIOGRAFIJAI: KELETO POŽIŪRIŲ ANALIZĖ

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S a n t r a u k a

Šio straipsnio tikslas – išsiaiškinti postmodernizmo teorijų įtaką pokolonijinei Indijos istoriografijai. Ar galima sakyti, kad Indijos istorijos moksle jau įvyko perversmas – dėl postmodernizmo, pokolonializmo studijų gimusi „Subaltern“ („Pavaldžiuojų“) istorikų mokykla suformavo naujus Indijos istorijos uždavinius ir metodus, užtikrinančius autentiškos Indijos istorijos rekonstravimą bei europocentrizmo įveikimą, ir kartu netgi spėjo pakoreguoti postmoderniosios istoriografijos konceptus. Kokių Indijos istoriografijos vaizdinių yra „Subaltern“ mokyklos paribiuose? Straipsnyje analizuojamos keturios Indijos istoriografijos apžvalgos, kurių autoriai nepriklauso „Subaltern“ istorikų cechui, siekiant išsiaiškinti, kiek šių tekstų autoriai pažįstami su „Subaltern“ istoriografija, kokius nepriklausomos Indijos istoriografijos vaizdinius jie konstruoja savo tekstuose, kaip jų gvildenamos Indijos istorijos rašymo problemos koreliuoja su „Subaltern“ tyrimų problematika. Pasirinktų istoriografinių tekstų analizė leidžia teigti, kad „Subaltern“ studijos nėra gerai pažįstamos Indijos istorikams, o jų torija ir metodologija neretai traktuojamos kaip vakarietiškos, negalinčios apeliuoti į autentiškos Indijos istorijos pertekimą.

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²⁹ Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Recovering the Subject: Subaltern Studies and Histories of Resistance in Colonial South Asia," *Modern Asian Studies* 22, 1, (1988): 191 (cited in Bahl, "Situating and Rethinking Subaltern Studies").