

**MODULE IV-HISTORIOGRAPHICAL TRENDS IN INDEPENDENT INDIA**

# **TRENDS IN INDIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY**



**TOPIC5-SUBALTERN STUDIES AND RANAJIT GUHA**

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# CHARACTERISTICS OF SUBALTERN STUDIES



- Subaltern studies represent a recent Historiographical trend in independent India.
- In the 1960s there occurred a world wide initiative by a group of historians to ‘include the history of the history-less people’ in the mainstream historical writing.
- The history of the history-less people came to be known under different labels in different countries such as ‘history from below’, ‘peoples history’, ‘grassroot history’ etc
- A group of historians working on the national movement started a new school of historical writing, called the ‘Subaltern studies’ in the 1980s.
- Elites- ‘more legalistic and constitutionalist’ in their movements while the subaltern ‘more violent and spontaneous’

# RANAJIT GUHA



- A series of volumes with the title ‘ Subaltern Studies’ began to be published with the main focus on the Indian national movement.
- The first volume of this series was published under the editor ship of Ranajit Guha with the title, ‘Subaltern studies 1: writings on south Asian history and society’ in 1982.
- The term ‘Subaltern’ was borrowed from the writings of the Italian thinker, Antonio Gramsci who used the term as an alternative for the ‘ common people or the inferior people.
- Ranajit Guha has outlined the purpose and necessity of bringing up the subaltern studies, in his introduction to the first volume.
- He stated that ‘hitherto historiography of Indian nationalism has been dominated by elitism-colonial elitism and bourgeois elitism-both originated as the ideological product of British rule in India’.



- Indian national movement failed to acknowledge the contribution of the common people and their politics had been left out in the existing historiography.
- His another significant work is the ‘Elementary aspects of peasant insurgency in colonial India’.
- In this work, he explores the common elements present in the rebel consciousness during the colonial period in Indian History .
- He describes the relations of dominance and subordination from peasant view point, in rural India between 1783 and 1900.
- He challenges the idea that peasants were powerless agents who rallied blindly against British imperialism and oppression.
- Ranajit Guha was the editor of the Subaltern studies series of the first six volumes.



- He and his eight collaborators, who formed the ‘inner circle’ of the series have written thirty four of the forty seven essays during his editorial period.
- He retired from the editorship of the subaltern studies in 1989 and thereafter from the VIIth volume onwards the series were edited by different scholars like Partha Chatterji, Gyanendra Pandey, David Hardiman, David Arnold, Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty.
- The XIIth and last volume was edited by Shail Mayaram, M.S.S Pandyan and Ajay Skaria in 2005.