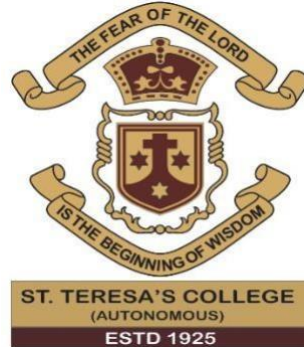


**ANALYSIS OF POWER POLITICS AND OPPRESSION
OF SUBALTERNS IN THE MOVIE JANA GANA MANA**



*Project submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) in partial fulfilment of
the requirement for the degree of BACHELOR OF ARTS in English Language and
Literature*

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project entitled “Analysis of Power Politics and Oppression of Subalterns in the Movie *Jana Gana Mana*” is the record of bona fide work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Tessa Fani Jose, Assistant Professor, Department of English.

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby declare that this project entitled “Analysis of Power Politics and Oppression of Subalterns in the Movie *Jana Gana Mana*” by Sara Susan Prekash is a record of bona fide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

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An Abstract of the Project entitled
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This project gives a detailed analysis of how power politics and subaltern theory are seen in the movie *Jana Gana Mana*. It investigates how power politics functions within society, examining the various mechanisms used to maintain power, such as the use of force, coercion, and propaganda. Then it analyses how subaltern groups resist and challenge dominant power structures. This will include examining strategies such as social movements, grass-roots organizing, and alternative forms of media and communication. Overall, the project will contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of power and resistance in contemporary society, as well as the potential for social change and the challenges of creating more inclusive and equitable societies.

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Introduction

It is normal to anticipate movies with overt political overtones to gain momentum in our polarized era. Only in the last couple of years has the Indian film industry created a number of such films. One such film is Dijo Jose Antony's 2022 Indian film *Jana Gana Mana* starring Prithviraj Sukumaran, Suraj Venjaramoodu, Pasupathi Raj, G.M. Sundar, and Mamta Mohandas. This picture came out on April 28, 2022.

A college professor is killed and her corpse is burned, causing a huge nationwide uproar. Sajjan Kumar, a police officer, is in charge of apprehending the perpetrators, and his efforts to do so aren't as easy as any other inquiry. The film shows who the real criminals behind the act are and how their plays get unmasked. The film shows caste-based discrimination and oppression of minorities, the politics of the hyper nationalistic right-wing, and how all these are working in tandem to maintain political power is shown in this film. It mainly focuses on politics. Police vigilantism has long been used by political parties to manipulate people's feelings and obtain votes. *Jana Gana Mana* raises some important issues about castes and how we, as a community, use profiling to label someone as a rogue or a criminal.

The theories used here are subaltern theory and power politics. In postcolonial studies and political theory, the word subaltern refers to the colonial people who are socially, legally, and physically barred from an imperial colony's power structure and from an empire's urban motherland. Antonio Gramsci coined the term subaltern to identify the cultural hegemony that excludes and displaces specific people and social groups from the socioeconomic Institutions of society. In this project, we analyse how the subaltern theory and power politics are discerned in the movie *Jana Gana Mana*.

Power politics is an international relations theory that argues that the allocations of power and national interests, as well as shifts in those distributions, are basic causes of conflict and system stability.

Chapter 1

Power Politics and Subaltern Theory.

Power is usually defined as the ability to influence people's behaviour by getting them to do what the person wants. Having the ability to have an effect on people is an enormous duty in politics. Being a leader means having the ability to not only convince people but also to inspire and influence them and see the sense that the person with power is acting in their best interest. Therefore, political power is about not only persuasion but also the acquisition and exercise of political power. Political power shapes and controls people's attitudes towards the leader and governing system. The leader guides the behaviour of his followers; he desires to achieve the common political objectives. Occupying a political position means having the power and ability to effect the desired change in behaviour of other people involved through persuasion or manipulation. For example, if one person wields political power over another, the extent to which the leader can motivate, incite, inspire, stimulate, and persuade others to change their political behaviour This process is termed having political power.

Some of the political behaviour or activities that can be influenced by those with political power include contributing money to political parties, attending meetings, voting in an election for specific candidates, engaging in protest, changing policies, and holding demonstrations to demand certain changes. People with political authority may occupy government jobs, or they may be referred to as "citizens." In most cases, individuals with political power who are not in government are very influential. They play important roles in mobilizing political resources and exerting pressure on the

government to modify decision-making processes, especially in public policies. An influential individual who does not occupy government positions usually comes from influential political party citizens. Political power exercised can be illegitimate or legitimate; legitimate political power is a widely accepted rule by citizens. Legitimate political power is widely accepted as a rule by the citizenry. Legitimate political power is derived from the widespread acceptance of its citizens, whereby the government is given the mandate to make rules and issue commands, and legitimate political power implies exercising powers that violate the existing rules; these may include sabotage, protests, and whistleblowing. Extremely illegitimate forms of political power pose a risk of losing membership. Since most individuals have different values and interests, this presents the potential for conflict over resources. A powerful leader utilizes his status to achieve group objectives. However, power is applied in different forms. Coercive power is based on fear. Sanctions, limitations, and force-based control are all examples of coercive authority.

Power is essential in politics because its effects can have either positive or negative implications. Power in politics is a two-way relationship that depends on how people interact based on the resources or values they hold or are in control of. Conflicts arise due to pressure to achieve specific goals that might not be realistic. That is why leaders employ their followers to serve their own interests at the expense of others. In a democratic system, the use of power should not involve force; instead, it should be more of an influence known as soft power.

There are three theories of power politics. The three sociological theories of power are discussed to better understand them while discussing the importance of power in our daily lives: Cass's theory of power, the elite theory of power, and the pluralist theory of power. Here we study the theory of power. Sociologist C. Wright Mills. The word "power elite" was coined by Wright Mills to describe his idea that the United States is controlled by a small group of the richest, powerful, and important individuals in industry, government, and the military. According to Mills, the decisions of the people dictate the policies of this country more than those of the voting public. Mills also noted that the power elite's impact overlaps in a variety of fields. A rich businessman, for example, may make significant donations to a specific political contender. Mills' theory of the "power elite" centres around the idea that elites are products of the distinct institutions within which they arise, whether it be in the military, in politics, or in business. Mills, on the other hand, does not consider whether the elite dynamics he found were simply by products of the political system as a whole rather than separate, coordinated processes within governing organizations. There was a considerable overlap between the two major political groups in the United States at the time Mills wrote. A compromise was key, and political stability was maintained through an accepted status quo of racial oppression.

The Democratic and Republican parties did not begin to develop the groups that they do today until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed. Six years before Mills published *The Structure of Power Within American Society*, the American Political Science Association issued a report titled "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System," in which "many of the country's most eminent political scientists" lamented that

party members' positions were diverse and misaligned with the actions of elites. For the writers of this report and many of their followers, the overlapping character of the American party system hampered citizens' capacity for political involvement by leaving them without party policies that matched their interests and values. Consider Mills' theory in the context of the report because it reveals a common sentiment at the time: dissatisfaction with the lack of transparency within the political system and the values, interests, and incentive structures that shaped the political processes of the time.

According to Mills, the political system was characterized by the "power elite's" displacement of conventional legislative procedures, whose ascendance subordinated the political system to the concerns of the military and corporate groups. However, it is worth considering whether Mills' claims that the "power elite" were united and that elite interests ran counter to those of the general public were simply a manifestation of the same dissatisfaction with governmental openness that the writers of the 1950 APSA report saw as the central problem in American politics.

Mills' depictions of the American political structure are no longer valid. The statement is no more accurate than "the differences between the two parties on national issues are very narrow and mixed up," as well as "Congressmen are not concerned with national party lines." The Republican and Democratic Parties are more polarized than ever, and politics has turned increasingly national, with voter turnout remaining constant in presidential elections and decreasing in state and local elections. In many respects, the American political system is more transparent than it has ever been, at least in terms of citizens' knowledge of the two main political parties' views and governing strategies.

When comparing the processes of the American political system today to those of Mills' period, one might infer that Mills' theory of the "power elite," as Mizruchi does, does not hold value as a paradigm for understanding modern society. But the view is rather narrow, placing too much emphasis on Mill's attention to the "unity" of the "power elite" and his description of it as a subversive, unknown quantity of relations between dominant interests. While Mills' theory's descriptive nature is limited to a particular time and political context, its operational character as a logic of power is astonishingly prophetic. "Virtually all political as well as economic deeds are judged in terms of military notions of reality," he says of the effect of military and corporate dominance in the political realm. In this context, power is a permeating and regulating entity whose logic determines the places it occupies. It overthrows the previous order by altering the terminology used to describe material resources and collective objectives, rather than simply bringing new forms of structure and enforcement. There may no longer be a distinct "power elite." And if there is polarization in the political system and the increasing organization of social life through signals of identity ignition, it will be harder to discern who its members could be. Even if Mills' theory is correct that power operates by moulding how we think, there continues to be a convergence of concerns within today's society that is ubiquitous and impenetrable, supported and created by hegemonic forces.

Today, the dominant form of power is the neo-liberal market ideology that structures any potential solution to issues of public concern in terms of the market. It "others" government when it acts as a representative of the people as residents and

employees and only sees government as a facilitator of capital flows. It redefines government and the law in these terms and spreads the concept of a "small" government in order to build an alliance across very diverse financial interests. The contemporary "power elite" is not a cooperation between individuals or even specific institutions.

American political system is much too organized along partisan lines for unity of that sort to ascend to power. It is, rather, a philosophy that pervades high school classes, higher education schools, non-profits, and governing bodies. It shapes our college graduates' aspirations for an acceptable "elite" future profession. Most importantly, it undermines the relationship between government and the job of ruling by adopting the logic of efficiency and profit over virtue and the public good. Now, let's talk about the subaltern theory. In postcolonial theory, a subaltern is an indigenous man or woman who lacks human agency due to his or her social status; in an imperial region, a subaltern is a native man or woman who lacks human agency due to his or her social standing. The 1980 intervention of the subaltern studies group within "subaltern studies," a word coined by Ranajit Guha, was a pivotal development in postcolonial studies. The word "subaltern" alludes to "a general characteristic of subordination in South Asian society, portrayed in terms of class, caste, age, gender, and office, or in any other way."

Subaltern studies have also been accused of reducing understandings of class to oversimplified dichotomies. David Ludden takes this up in his introduction to *Reading Subaltern Studies*: Even readers who applauded *Subaltern Studies* found two features

troubling. First and foremost, the new substance of subalternity emerged only on the underside of a rigid theoretical barrier between “elite” and “subaltern,” which resembles a concrete slab separating upper and lower space in a two-storey building. This hard dichotomy alienated subalternity from social histories that include more than two storeys or which move among them; and not only histories rendered through the lens of class analysis, because subaltern social mobility disappeared along with class differentiation. Secondly, because subaltern politics was confined theoretically to the lower storey, it could not threaten a political structure. This alienated subalternity from political histories of popular movements and alienated subaltern groups from organized, transformative politics, in the past and in the present. (16).

In 1982, these collaborators launched the Subaltern Studies journal, writing about South Asian history and culture in a manner that they believed had not been done before; this project thus birthed "subaltern studies" as a field. The group's definition of "subaltern" differs from the British imperial title of "subaltern," which applied to junior military officials. Rather, the name "subaltern" is derived from the use of the word by Italian Marxist academic Antonio Gramsci in his jail notes and their English versions, which were published in 1966. In its initial Gramscian context, the term "subaltern" applied exclusively to peasants who were not yet integrated into Marx's idea of the industrial capitalist structure. Subaltern studies then attempt to bridge the historiographic

gap between the people's history and India's perceived history—between what the British Raj recorded in an account of power and what is deemed common history. The academics of the subaltern studies group envisioned and continue to seek to grant the subaltern, peasant realm autonomy as the voice that enabled political action despite the rule of imperialism. Dipesh Chakrabarty observes that subaltern studies arose from "anti-colonial" rather than "postcolonial" theory but names Gayatri Spivak's work and participation in the group as incorporating "postcolonial" projects into the movement as a whole. Subaltern studies, according to Ranajit Guha, intervened in historical schools of belief because one could not depict the rise and fall of nationalism in India without recognizing the role of the elites in bringing the broader country into the debate. Guha claims that the current version of history disregarded subaltern contributions, so the subaltern studies group tried to "correct the elitist bias" in a discipline "dominated by elitism"—colonialist and bourgeois-nationalist elitism. The question of subalternity emerges about subordinate social groups and individuals whose historical activity is repressed, neglected, misinterpreted, or 'at the margins' of hegemonic histories, discourses, and social formations.

According to Ranajit Guha, subaltern studies intervened in historical schools of thought that could not represent the history of nationalism in India without celebrating

the role the elites played in bringing the larger nation into the discourse. This existing version of history, Guha argues, discounted subaltern contributions, and so the subaltern studies group sought “to rectify the elitist bias” in a field “dominated by elitism — colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism” (403).

Chapter 2

An Analysis of the Movie *Jana Gana Mana*.

In the court scene (1:23:30), the only daughter of Thamizaharasi had the name Shivani. A 14-year-old girl who is good at studying and supports the family is abandoned by her father. She works as a housemaid at KR Puram after school. But for the past 2 years, she hasn't been going to school and hasn't been working as a housemaid either because today she's no more. The house owner, that 67-year-old man, brutally raped her and killed her. Here we see the oppression of the subalterns. They revolted and pleaded with them, but nobody bothered. Not the public, not the media, not even the court, since they were from a lower class. They took advantage of the 14-year-old, killed her, and placed her relatives in prison. The media never bothered to publish their issue.

Mr Kuldir Yadav, 67, was a three-time legislator with Ramnagar MLA consistency. And here we see the theory of power politics. Where the 67-year-old legislator used his political powers to get out of the case. The next scene is when the lawyer interrogates Mrs Shwetha Guptha, Chairperson of the National Women's Commission. He asks her why she was shocked by the rape case involving Saba. Because every 15 minutes there is a rape case happening in our country. On the same day that Saba's death took place, a three-year-old was raped and killed. Here we see the subaltern theory, where only Saba's case was taken into consideration and was the headline of all the newspapers. When the honour of justice court says to look at the

background and to look at them for the fact that they can be identified just by their looks as criminals, here again we see the oppression of the subaltern. Judging them because of their colour and background.

Those in the margins are further marginalized to invisibility groups like rural women the temple dancer the headdress or a third gender. These schedule classes or untouchables are pushed further into margins by colonialism to varying degrees the access that the people of these groups have to the centres of power are minimal to non-existence. (Fuzzy Theory)

The other scene that indicates the oppression is when Vidya, a research scholar at Central University Ramnagar, commits suicide. Her PhD thesis wasn't signed, which she has been working on for the past seven years, reading over 700 books and publishing several articles. Every paper was rejected by her guide because she was from a lower class, which also eliminated her identity inch by inch. They were pushed to a point where they had no other option, and she was forced to quit.

The main reason behind all these issues was the power politics played by the politician Nageshwar Rao to divert his corruption; he fabricated Saba's case as the headline news of every newspaper, and with that, the police officer ACP Sajjan Kumar killed four innocents who were labelled as criminals to divert the story and save his part. Nageshwar Rao also states that "the greatest weapon of a politician is the emotion of the public," which topples over them

thoughts, intelligence, and decisions. The politics of discrimination are also seen here when the lawyer Mr Aravind Swaminathan points out a context from a second-grade textbook: The difference or segregation between fair and ugly. The politics that silence people who ask these questions; the politics that handcuff people who point their fingers in our nation, cold-blooded killings that pass for police interactions frequently glorify such crimes as "instant justice." The producers of Dijo Jose Antony's *Jana Gana Mana*, which features Prithviraj Sukumaran and Suraj Venjaramoodu in the main roles, explain why and how false encounters are harming society and how lawmakers use them to influence our "emotions" in the process. The media claims that Professor Saba Mariam (Mamta Mohandas) was raped and burned to death before her corpse was discovered. Policeman Sajjan Kumar (Suraj Venjaramoodu) is on a quest to bring those responsible to justice and arrests four additional suspects. They don't exactly make it simple for him to carry out the inquiry, and the participation of lawmakers only makes things more difficult. The trigger for the remainder of the tale is what Sajjan turns to at one point in the investigation.

The 2019 Hyderabad gang rape case and the subsequent "extrajudicial execution" are two real-life events that have undoubtedly affected the movie. Through a well-knit story, it demonstrates the exact issue with the police breaking the law in this way, how we've all been socialized to make snap judgments about people based solely on the way they dress or look, the misguided public support for such executions, and why they shouldn't be celebrated. It is

important to recognize how a popular Malayalam film with leading actors is engagingly addressing the problem. Political parties have long used police vigilantism as a weapon to manipulate voters' feelings and count on them to win votes. Suraj and Prithviraj Sukumaran both performed admirably in their parts, and the film's production team also merits praise for daring to depict such a timely tale on screen. Who is to blame if a rape occurs in this nation every 15 minutes and we are only horrified by a small number of them? Why does one person's pass mean more than another's?

The film does a good job of explaining our behaviour and the deception that underpins it. It was challenging to ignore the extremely bad quality of the Malayalam captions that were shown in the theatre while watching such an engrossing film, full of spelling errors and titles that weren't in time with the action on screen. Given that the film contains many non-Malayalam lines, it should, at the very least, benefit from being corrected before the next showing. *Jana Gana Mana*, which trains you to think, question, challenge, and more as a common man who takes news at face value, is a feast for those who enjoy a good political crime drama based on true events.

In the movie there is a subplot about institutional murders of students of marginalized section in Indian universities. Students who are discriminated against by professors and fellow students and are harassed due to their caste background the media's sexist and classist biases also find prominent mention in the court room. All these are here to remind us that these are the

things that we see every day and we have become immune to and we don't generate a response anymore. (Sucharita Tyagi)

Conclusion

In conclusion, the topic of power politics and the oppression of the subalterns is a complex and multifaceted issue that demands our attention and action. Throughout this project, we have explored the ways in which power is wielded by those in positions of authority to suppress and marginalize the voices and experiences of those who are deemed to be subalterns. We have seen how this dynamic plays out in various contexts, from historical colonialism and imperialism to contemporary struggles for social justice. One of the key takeaways from this project is the importance of recognizing the agency and humanity of subalterns and of amplifying their voices and perspectives in our discussions of power and politics. We cannot fully understand the workings of power and oppression without listening to the stories and experiences of those who have been impacted by these forces.

Furthermore, this project has highlighted the need for ongoing efforts to challenge power imbalances and promote social justice. We must be willing to critically examine our own positions of privilege and power and work towards creating more equitable and inclusive societies where all individuals can flourish and thrive. In short, the study of power politics and the oppression of the subalterns is an ongoing and essential project that demands our continued attention and engagement. By taking

seriously the experiences and perspectives of those who have been historically marginalized, we can work towards building a more just and equitable world for all. If you can overlook the hurried climactic revelations laying the groundwork for the already confirmed sequel and the mainstream nature of storytelling frequently breaking the "show, don't tell" rule, *Jana Gana* may just be the best antidote to the heart-racing aftertaste of the recent wave of top-notch blockbuster film-making and the harsh realities of everyday life in our country's increasingly intolerable society. Through the many storytelling techniques at its command, cinema can engage with the political facts of our times; the difference is in how quickly the punches are drawn in the name of artistic expression.

Jana Gana Mana is a challenging movie to categorize because it sticks to its own language of resistance to tell the tale of a group of 14 college students seeking justice from a system that easily names them anti-nationals and downplays any call for unity. The movie moves at a relentless pace, frequently echoing the thoughts of its main characters, who share a passion for democratic dissent but who ultimately come off as stereotypical placeholders for social justice activists who lack any genuine sense of rebellion beyond the thrill of first discovery. The screenplay's first half contains exposition delivered through brief cutaways and fragments of memory that refer back to the main problem at hand, occasionally overplaying the gut punch of the rebellious

teacher who instils dissent and angst in her credulous students. The movie establishes its main idea with the meticulous formality of a crime procedural, tracing back the circumstances that led to a horrifying crime and its ultimate rise into a topic of widespread media outrage. Suraj portrays a divorced police officer who is divided between trying to expose a system that is evidently corrupt and having his efforts continually thwarted. *Jana Gana Mana* is the kind of film that makes a conscious effort to incorporate recent national disasters and news headlines that have captured the public's attention as a narrative world design. Although the internal organization of these components and the cases in question is frequently tacky, this rarely comes across as dishonest name-calling to emphasize the narrative's high points. The character of Aravind Swaminathan (Prithviraj Sukumaran) is only introduced around the halfway point of the screenplay. The actor elevates the routine rhythm setup up until that point, and the movie quickly transforms from an ordinary crime thriller in the first half to a one and a half-hour courtroom drama. The change in tone, however, is seamless because of a strong courtroom confrontation between the opposing factions of the system, who are yelling at each other with one-liners from movies and broad arguments about the state of our democracy, which is currently in self-hibernation. The movie's advertising material left unsure of the cinematic tone that would be used to tell the story. Instead, we get a fairly simple plot that is non-linearly organized and contains some strong subversives in its

disclosure treatment. All the tropes of the social justice drama subgenre are present, including the obnoxious background music intended to emphasize each passing joke, the tense monologues delivered in one take, the slightly conceited, superior defence attorney taking pot-shots at the brave scepticism of his younger rival on the courtroom proceedings, the student sloganeering, the placeholder villains who plot grand political schemes within the confines of posh executive rooms, and practically hand-tied plot devices. In spite of the abundance of fresh plot turns, expository material, and abrupt character introductions, the director Dijo Jose Anthony successfully stages the movie and finds aesthetically appealing methods to fill the courtroom setting. Without relying on the gimmicky, manipulative design of mainstream social dramas and with an emphasis on the written word against any visual flourishes, Sudeep Elamon's camera moves through the events, capturing the alleged grandeur of the vision and finding a visual consistency amidst all the chaos.

When it comes to character creation, Suraj is dealt the harder hand because, when he is first presented, he is envisioned as this almost stoic, non-reactive, subtle police officer who experiences a variety of setbacks because of his steadfast belief in an idealistic service. He brings a poker-faced casualness to the role, giving almost nothing away but keeping so much there for us to see if we look closely. This makes for a masterful performance. Prithviraj is given the less endearing role, but the show's inherent

unlikability soon turns into a convincing springboard for him to stand and deliver pages and pages of punch lines summarizing the numerous wrongs plaguing our nation's cultural, social, and political attitudes. This is frequently done with the dedication of a 16-concurrently running PowerPoint presentation, focusing on each social issue such as caste discrimination in educational spaces and rising crime rates. The film warrants the casting of an A-list actor because the actor, after a string of understated performances, looks and feels in control of his screen presence, and because the film's explosive one-liners and rhetoric can only be delivered by a star of his stature and particular reputation within the industry.

The problem that most of the characters in this movie confront is that, despite having a strong commitment to individual freedom and agency, the female characters never delve deeply enough to look at their humanity. However, it's uncommon to see something like this in star-centric popular movies. The actress seems to enjoy playing the thankless token character, Sabha (Mamtha Mohandas), whose destiny serves as the triggering incident for the core premise of the film to position itself in terms of narrative. Sabha plays the stereotypical idealistic renegade who starts a student's azaadi movement of sorts. Vincy Alosious gives the role of a dissident some credence by playing it with class. There is nothing particularly noteworthy about the design, aside from the idea behind including strong, defiant women who can stand up for themselves, even though

all of this only functions on the surface. *Jana Gana Mana* is the kind of movie that aims to cause a visceral response in the audience and to spark discussion about social stigmas associated with religion, class, gender, and ethnic identities. The producers purposefully use noise as a form of opposition that is cleverly concealed in the form of a fast-moving, captivating commercial entertainer. Too many disturbing issues are raised in the movie, but none of them are ever resolved, as no work of art is ever compelled to do. *Jana Gana* might just be the best antidote to the heart-racing aftertaste of the recent wave of top-notch blockbuster film-making to the harsh realities of everyday life in our increasingly intolerant nation, if you can forgive the hurried climatic revelations laying the groundwork for the already announced sequel and the frequently mainstream nature of storytelling not adhering to the "show, don't tell" philosophy of film-making. In conclusion, power politics is a pervasive aspect of society, often leading to the oppression of marginalized groups.

The subalterns, or those who are socially, politically, and economically excluded, are particularly vulnerable to such oppression. Through the lens of postcolonial theory, we can see how power is used to maintain the status quo, with those in power often benefiting at the expense of the subalterns. This dynamic is perpetuated through a variety of mechanisms, including cultural hegemony, structural violence, and the suppression of alternative narratives. However, by acknowledging the voices and perspectives of the

subalterns, we can begin to challenge these power structures and work towards a more just and equitable society. This requires a commitment to listening, learning, and taking action, both on an individual and collective level. Only then can we hope to create a world where all individuals are able to live with dignity, agency, and freedom from oppression.

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