

## LINGUISTIC MARGINALIZATION AND THE VOICE OF THE UNVOICED

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### ABSTRACT

The present paper has its say on how linguistic marginalization challenges the very existence of a person as a social being. It also attempts to show that how linguistic marginalization is also a serious issue which requires serious critical acclaim. To be marginalized and to get marginalized are the rudimentary features of the so called socially social human life. Varieties of marginalization differ on the basis of culture, geography, political scenario, economical set up, physical condition, psychological state and linguistic set up, etc. The fundamental need of communication is restricted in the name of standardization of language simultaneously marginalizing the linguistic identity of a group away from the centre. Saussure's concept of sign as a combination of signifier and signified loses its way when people, not the part of the central power structure, lose the right to use their own language as a means of communication since their language do not confirm with the rules of standardization of the group in power. If at all they tried, their words did not signify anything for the group in power. Linguistic marginalization at further acts as a weapon to wipe out the very essence of the target group's history, thus making it a group without identity of any substantial importance. The group does not have its say in terms of its past, present and future since linguistically it is suppressed. Language as a medium of expression of the self is being denied. In the rat race of the modern world everyone feels to ascertain his/her existence and only language stands by a person to ascertain his/her position. People not having the right to use their own language are not able to express their inner self and have to take shelter in the language of the people in power.

## 1. Introduction

Marginalization is not necessarily in work when there is an established legal power and the victims of the same; but it works more at psychological or thought level on the part of the marginalizers and the marginalized. However, there is an every attempt on the part of the marginalizers to show their superiority over the marginalized. Simultaneously, there is an every possible attempt on the part of the marginalized to present them as not belonging to the so called victimization. They try to bring in the superfluous identity of standardization set by the people in power/centre which is not constitutional in any way. People in power determine their existence on a large group of people whom they govern. All aspect of the group in the power exercises a subconscious influence over the lives of the people not in mainstream. Reason of not any kind account for this influence and the superfluous expectations and attempts of the marginalized ones to be on par with the lifestyle of the marginalizers. Marginalization in the past was well defined in terms of two separate and easily identified groups. Nonetheless, now these strict identities do not share a dividing line as vital as it used to be. The nature of marginalization is flexible and therefore unpredictable. It is not permanent in any sense. A marginalized one does not always remain so. He/she does get interchangeable identities of the marginalizers and the marginalized. A person in a marginalized state may be the marginalizer in another sense. For instance, a person may be a marginalized one at a workplace; however, the same may be marginalizer at home for his spouse or children.

## 2. Marginalization

Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary of Contemporary English defines marginalization as

“Marginalization is the social process of becoming or being made marginal (especially as a group within the larger society); "the marginalization of the underclass"; "the marginalization of literature"

Marginalization in its denotative sense engulfs two distinct identities. These identities are interdependent. They are in place in the name of geographical, social, economical, political, psychological, physical, historical, intellectual and religious set up. These maywork in isolation; however, their combination is also in place working at several levels simultaneously. Saussure defines language as a composition of signs. Sign is the product of signifier and the signified. Analogically marginalization is the byproduct of the marginalizer and the marginalized. The linguistic sign ‘marginalizer’ implicates the existence of the marginalized. These terms connotatively refer to two distinct groups or individuals having power relationship. It is always the power factor which ascribesthese identities. These identities immediately force the individual to paint the picture of a group of individual as a marginalizer and the marginalized as the case may be. Nonetheless, these signs help us to make a list of characteristics akin to each of them and at further describe a group or an individual in terms of these two.

Marginalization can also be defined and explained in comparison with post colonialism and feminism. These two theoretical issues throw light upon how marginalization works at several levels. Post colonialism as a literary theoryrejects the notion of universality of Eurocentric and the so called classic literature. It even criticizes the process of evaluation the whole canon of literature irrespective of cultural, social, regional and national difference, with the standard of illogically standardized classic literature. By doing so, the postcolonial critics view that *'We demote or disregard differences of all respects in outlook and experience. The aspect of univerlization is rejected by postcolonial critics, whenever a universal signification is*

*claimed for a work or experience, then, white, Eurocentric norms and practices are being promoted by a sleight of hand to this elevated status, and all others correspondingly relegated to subsidiary, marginalized roles' (Barry Peter 'Beginning Theory' p.185).* Similarly people in power set their own standard of language use. The standard is not determined on the basis of some preconceived features of standard form of speech. Instead, the way they use the language is analyzed and thus features are brought out which at further are declared as the features of standard use of language. The only criterion that applied here is that the form is considered standard because it is used by the people in centre. Moreover, asking a question which revolts against this standardization would be a sin and the person may be a matter of humiliation and repugnance.

Feminist literary theorists have their say in the similar fashion. Here we find marginalization in the name of gender. They view that women having no social right to write were subjugated. They had their intense feelings of agony and suppression but did not find appropriate medium (as they were socially bound in using language to revolt against the patriarchy). Their self was portrayed by male writers with the language of their choice which feminist do not approve. Thus, women writers had this belief that the present language used by male writers is patriarchal and thus women are marginalized linguistically along with politically, physically and socially. *Virginia Woolf* in her polemical essay '*A Room of One's Own*' (1929) in sections four and five suggests that '*Language use is gendered; so that when a woman turns to novel writing, she finds that, there is no common sentence ready for her use.* The great novel writers have written a natural prose, swift but not slovenly, expressive but not precious, taking their own tint without ceasing to be common property'.

Dale Spender in early 1980s in her book '*Man Made Language*' (1981) says that language is masculine. Further, she adds, '*Language is not a neutral medium but one which reflects its role as the instrument through which patriarchy finds expression*'. In the essay '*Sexual Linguistics: Gender, Language, Sexuality*' *Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar* view that '*Language is manmade, it reflects many experiences*'. Thus, they might mean to say that women have been marginalized in the name of language, which is by nature patriarchal and thus women lag behind due to not having their own language to assert themselves.

### 3.0 Types

The process of marginalization works through different perspectives. Factors like culture, region, and political, economic, physical, and psychological status build ground for marginalization. The factor having more power to affect people's lives determine the kind of marginalization people are victims of. However, such power factor serves as the centre in the process and other kinds are compatible with the centre. This nature of influence categorizes for our convenience the kind of marginalization.

#### 3.1 Political Marginalization

This kind works on a large scale. Political status changes every aspect of human life. Other known kinds of marginalization are duly affected and determined by political status. Now a day, people having political power have everything of theirs as powerful and thus get the right to marginalize others.

#### 3.2 Cultural Marginalization

A group or an individual affect the lives of another group or an individual in the name of the so called superiority and inferiority structure of cultural system. There is no logical criterion to

determine the superiority of a particular culture over the other. The criterion usually used to do this is the sources of power a group or an individual has in its/ his command. Cultural details are not analyzed in any sense. The notion of support to the culture makes it powerful. People, not in power suffer humiliation as not being the part of great culture and thus treated as less important beings.

### 3.3 Geographical Marginalization

Here superiority and inferiority structure works in the name of a particular geographical area or region where people in power reside. Substantial importance, sometimes undue, is attached to the territory having such people. Others, however naturally rich and resourceful, they may be treated as subordinates.

Other kinds of marginalization as we can view for our convenience are:

3.4 Economic 3.8 Social

3.5 Physical 3.9 Psychological

3.6 Historical 3.10 Educational

3.7 Religious 3.11 Gender

### 3.12 Linguistic Marginalization

Among all these, the present paper attempts to throw light upon the last in the present linguistic marginalization. Now it would be interesting to see what the nature of linguistic marginalization is and how it exercises its influence. Basically linguistic marginalization is crucial in terms of the way a group or an individual produces sounds, uses stress, and intonation patterns. The so called standard form is the yardstick against which other forms of the same speech are evaluated. The yardstick no doubt is that form of speech people in power use. The forms which are similar to the standard form are well received; however the forms not confirming with the standard features are entitled as nonstandard. The process does not stop here but resume further by neglecting the existence of these people who use the non-standard form. Moreover, it is very easy to identify the standard and non-standard speech and so the speech. External behavior does not always bother people to be together, but linguistic status immediately draws a dividing line between the people further dividing them into two groups. The moment a person speaks a word or sentence he/she is characterized as standard or non-standard. Thus, people who do not wish to get ostracized in a formal gathering do keep quiet and respond in a word or two when absolutely necessary.

For the present purpose, I would like to cite a few examples of Marathi language which would throw light upon the way language use matters more in forming social status and at further defines a person or a group as marginalize or marginalized. Marathi as the mother tongue of many people in Maharashtra has many dialects. The dialect spoken in pine and especially by those, who are socially called as Brahmin, is called the standard dialect of Marathi. Other dialects are considered as substandard. People who speak local dialects of Marathi do try to polish and refine their variety to match the standard form. Their poor attempt of doing so, as they view, may save them from being ostracized. Nonetheless, it's a universally accepted fact that a language has many varieties. Each of them is akin to the cultural, social, economic, political, educational, regional, historical and religious set up of a group of people who use it. In reality none of them is standard or substandard. They all are standard in a real sense. Thus, it is only the power structure which makes one form as standard and the rest substandard.

Language helps people to express their feelings, longings, emotions, and the deepest sense of understanding. It is inhuman to bereave a group of human beings socially or economically excluded from the mainstream, from their fundamental right of expression. Comparatively, linguistic marginalization creates more havoc to social identity than any other type of marginalization. Marginalized live the life of enslaved ones. Their longings most of the time need to get some free space of their own. This space is strictly prohibited. Thus the marginalized ones are always in search of a private place where they would unleash the flood gates of their inner self in the company of their mates or have expression at the thought level or in loneliness. If at all, the marginalized dare (which is very rare) to speak his inner self and reflect upon his agonies, his language becomes absurd, nonstandard, and the issue of teasing and ragging for the marginalizer. Marginalized are being unleashed a forced and usually humiliating identity, sometimes in the name of cultural tradition and economic standard. Subjugation of the marginalized people is akin to frightening them in not to speak and thus use their language. Language is an essential element of identity formation. Production of sounds reflects and at further determines a person's geographical, social, economic status. In a case where a marginalized one is decorated to become like a marginalizer, the moment he/she utters an utterance is very well defined and rubbed like a black spot on a clean white sheet of standardization.

There are examples where different dialects of Marathi use different words for a same thing. A variety of Marathi spoken at local levels in most of the parts of Nanded district uses words which have other counterparts in Puneri Marathi. Following are a few words from the same local dialect.

**Table 1**

Local dialect (Nanded District)	Marathi (Puneri)
Lekaru (n)	Mul (child)
Bhogone (n)	Patele
Angada (n)	Shirt
Kawad (n)	Darwaja (door)
Tatali (n)	Tat (plate)
Gallas (n)	Pela
Vahan(n)	Chappal
Kadipeti (n)	Aagpeti (matchbox)

**Table-1** shows words (N) in local dialect with their counterparts in standard form

In the similar way there are certain verbs in Marathi dialects (spoken in Nanded District) people use a particular suffix at the end of the verb. For instance:

Karmayalekaramataahe

Yayale

yet aahe

Jayalejataahe

Thus, linguistic marginalization takes place at the level of pronunciation, stress, and intonation patterns along with the words having local flavour. If such words are the part of a general speech

of a person, his/her form is regarded as substandard. So a person needs to take care of such words well in advance and search these words acceptable in standard form.

However, this seems some irregularities in the use of standard form by the people who speak that standard form. Let me cite here a few examples of some words used by the people considered as the users of standard form. They use some words in spoken form which are actually not standard if observed carefully. These irregularities are evident in their speech. However, I lack documentary evidence to prove it. I found people using such words through oral interaction. Following are the words heard as the part of a speaker speaking standard form of Marathi, viz. Puneri Marathi:

**Table-2**

Words (spoken)	English	Standard Form
Ashil (v)	will be	Asashil
Ashanar (v)	will be	Asanar
Kelas (v)	done	Kela
Ekalas (v)	Heard	Ekala
Aahes (v)	To be (is)	Aahe
Nahis (v)	To be (is not)	Nahi

Table -2 shows words (V) actually heard, in English, and in standard form

This shows how the so called standard form also has some irregularities. These shall not be called as incorrect. But they are akin to the socio- cultural set up in which they are used. Likewise, other dialects of a language shall not be considered as substandard and so the people who use them.

#### 4. Conclusion

Marginalization is subjugation in the name of two separate identities governed by the power structure. The roles in the process of marginalization are ever-changing. They do not remain as they are for a time unknown. Differences in culture, society, region, education, economy, psychology, etc. do exercise a considerable amount of influence over the way marginalization takes place. Moreover, all kinds of marginalization are interrelated. The existence of one implicates the existence of others. The only point of focus is which among these kinds more is more intense in degree. Linguistic marginalization as one of the kinds is not much discussed and the matter of serious debate. This immediately cripples a group or an individual by losing the democratic right of expression. People having a lot to say do not dare to speak in a formal gathering because they think that they are not good at using the so called standard form of speech. If they do, they become a matter of fun and humiliation. To avoid this, people suppressed their inner self and have an immutable cry within. If marginalized people do not voice their inner self, feelings, emotions, longings, expectations, dreams, etc. how would they fight against the marginalizers and get freedom from the same. Thus, it is prerequisite, if at all we wish to get freedom from marginalization; we need to dare to speak out irrespective of the notion of standard.

**References:**

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