



Marginalization, Patriarchy, and Religion: A Feminist Study

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ABSTRACT

Even though organizations have been developed to eradicate, marginalization is still in vogue for third-world women. Prima Facie evidence in support of the fact can be found in profession, religion, or gender. The patriarchal setup with works of literature and media as co-actors leaves nothing unturned to achieve this ultimate objective. However, the mutinous pen of a Pakistani writer, Muhammad Hanif, presents the rebellious ideology and marginalization of suppressed women. Hanif's portrayal of Alice in his work entitled "Our Lady of Alice Bhatti" is an accurate picture of a wretched third-world woman facing marginalization based on her gender, religion, and profession. The researcher has studied chunks of text under the theoretical lens of Spivak and Said's proponents that a third-world woman is doubly marginalized (Spivak, 1993), and she is created as a traditional Asian woman (Said, 1991). The most probable outcome of the study of Alice's marginalization is that the minority is prone to be suppressed, and if it is a female, then the chances of betterment are near zero.

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1. Introduction

One being a human, a male by gender, and an Asian geographically is not enough; one has to attach many other characteristics to define oneself, such as religion, caste, appearance, and profession. The world has attributed these categories with many adjectives that qualify a person as a strong, prosperous, highly paid individual, etc. These categories not only separate people of one part of the world from another but also demarcate the line between people within the same jurisdiction. Here is the basis for gender discrimination: one gender is considered superior. That unprivileged gender is "Female," who is also penalized based on her religion/caste and profession in a society integrated within a patriarchal framework that emasculates the abilities of women and diminishes their identity. Tyson defines the term "patriarchy" as sexist because it endorses the notion that females are naturally lesser than males. The idea seems to emerge from biological essentialism that shows women as weak by nature and is inadvertent (Tyson, 2006).

1.1. Research objectives

This research aims to

1. To highlight that women (minority in subcontinent) are doubly marginalized and are Subaltern.
2. In the subcontinent, lower class women do not have access to the same privileges as upper class women.
3. Women in East are portrayed as "traditional oriental women" by the literature.

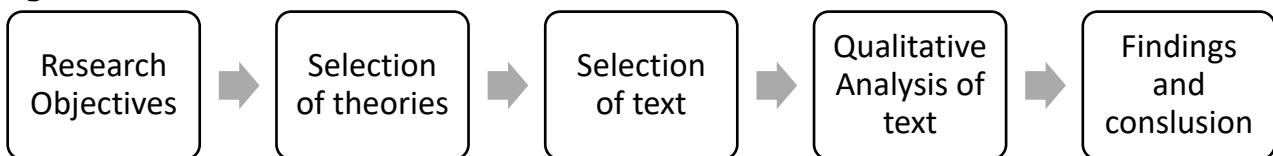
2. Literature Review

Kendall uncovers the issue of female suppression by stating that we often see miserable conditions faced by women based on caste differences, female birth, death due to dowry issues, agrarian violence, protest against workers, and tribal upheavals. The larger groups and movements take up such cases, and the government responds, but none could improve the situation (Kendall, 2021). The problem is further aggravated when the major movements selfishly focus on their development or narrow their concerns to a specific class or group, ultimately ignoring the rest. Our focus here lies on a global movement, namely "Feminism." Kendall rightly argues that mainstream feminism has shifted its focus from a collective to a specific class movement, and all the problems, such as hunger, housing, etc., are left for others to solve (Kendall, 2021). Singh seconds Kendall by stating that with time, feminism has limited itself to a movement of the elite class and a political campaign rather than an equality-based struggle (Singh, 2004). This condition is much aggrieved in Third world countries, where the majority of the population lives below the poverty line. Nubile reveals that in modern India, even today, women are seen through the lens of traditions and cultural norms. Ambedkar gives us a clear picture of suppressed women in India by drawing a picture of a surplus woman in Indian society who loses all the rights to live peacefully and respectfully with her husband's death in Indian culture (M. Mohanty, 2004). Living as a woman in the lower class is even more difficult than living in the upper class. Upon the same belief, Mohanty spills the bean that this assumption of ethnic supremacy and racism can adversely affect the women of third-world countries (C. T. Mohanty, 2006).

3. Methodology

The research employs qualitative method of analysing the text keeping Spivak's and Said's theories of Subaltern and Orientalism respectively, as a reference.

Figure 1



The chunks novel entitled "*Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*" by Muhammad Hanif are studied in this investigation after segregating the novel into 4 categories. These categories display how the antagonist is suppressed and thus leads the research to achieve its objective.

4. Conceptual Framework

Marginal, opines Ashcroft, is being on margins. Marginalization is basically casting out someone or a group of people, on the bases of binarity of different dominant discourses that are respectively as patriarchy, ethno-centrism and imperialism. These dominant discourses are determined to imply certain experiences as peripheral. (*Post- Colonial Studies, The key concepts*, 2007). Communities that have been excluded from mainstream social, economic, educational, and/or cultural life are commonly known as marginalized communities. Moreover, groups that have been excluded because of their color, sexual orientation, age, physical capabilities, gender identity, language, or immigration status are some common examples. It happens because of uneven power dynamics within social groups. Hence, marginal therefore indicates a positionality that can be best defined in terms of the limitations of a subject's access to power. (*Post- Colonial Studies, The key concepts*, 2007). Woman in the subcontinent is not above marginalization, and Spivak labels such a woman as a "SUBALTERN." The term "Subaltern" in post-colonial terminology refers to those colonial populations who are marginalized based on social, political, and geographical grounds and are denied all power under the rule of colonizers. Spivak highlights that the reason behind the continuous disagreement in society is that subalterns cannot communicate. Only the colonizers during the colonial era had a voice, and they could speak. While on the other hand, subalterns were forcefully subjected to colonial rule and were tagged as 'Other,' which shows that the subalterns do not have their own voice. Following the colonial domination, the aristocratic upper class once again subjugated these subalterns, which made their situation even more terrible.

In contrast, the circumstances of the subaltern women remains worst, with little to no chances of advancement (Spivak, 1993). In an interview, she explains that while speaking and hearing complete the speech act, the subaltern cannot be heard when she tries to speak (Spivak, 2010). Since only the colonizers have the voice and right to speak, they oppress the colonized by determining them with the term "Other," thus oppressing the subaltern by depriving them of their right to speak. Subalterns remain Subalterns even after the end of colonial rule, as the condition does not change much. The elite class takes up the vacant position of authority and continues to suppress society's lower class. While looking at the plight of women from the lens of Spivak, Stephen, in his book, says, "The female subalterns for her (Spivak) are doubly marginalized' because of their economic disadvantage and gender subordination" (Moore & Rivera, 2011). Spivak gives us a clear picture of women surviving under the title of "other' in the third world. In addition to this, Beauvoir says that the word "woman" does not make any difference in meaning than the word "other" (De Beauvoir, 1972). These notions invite our attention to ponder the miseries of the marginalized women (preferably women of the sub-continent) who are doubly colonized and marginalized.

Kim, supporting Spivak's proposition of doubly marginalized women, states that women in third-world countries are caught between the two forces that are patriarchal tradition and the 'white' imperial system. Spivak calls this situation worse than remaining voiceless (Kim, 2004). Edward Said, while explaining the binary opposition of East/West, educated/uneducated, civilized/uncivilized, gave the notion that there exists a complete process of creating the East as "other." In his book, Said explains that one way to conceptualize orientalism is as a school of thought that draws ontological and epistemic distinctions between "the Orient" and "the Occident" (Said, 2014). He further describes that this distinction is strengthened in the hands of think tanks society. Thus, the fundamental difference between the East and West has been accepted by a vast majority of writers, including poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, as the foundation for complex theories, epics, novels, social descriptions and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, mind, destiny and so forth (Said, 2014). Presently, orientalism is a western discourse, which overpowers the East and shapes its identity. Thus, orientalism is a process of "otherization" of the East (Tombul, 2021). In light of Said's arguments, the third-world woman falls under the category of the orient. Consequently, Spivak's "doubly marginalized" and Said's "Oriental" third-world woman, when represented in the literature as submissive, dependent, frail and voiceless beings, becomes the picture of the third-world woman.

5. Theoretical Framework

The research, following Spivak's and Said's proponents, investigates the double marginalization of women in Pakistani fiction on the following grounds:

- a. Gender
- b. Social status
- c. Religion
- d. Profession

These characteristics are deeply looked upon in the novel namely "*Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*" by Hanif, who portrays sufferings and struggles faced by the lower class living in Pakistan. His female characters are the true epitome of what Spivak calls a Subaltern, facing the "Othering" at every level; these female characters are justifiably called "Orientals" by Edward Said. One such female character, "Alice," in Hanif's novel "*Our Lady Of Alice Bhatti*," shall be studied deeply in this research.

6. Analysis

Alice, the novel's protagonist, loses her mother in her childhood and is raised by her father, a janitor. Alice is a Christian and lives in a Slum area named "French Colony" in Pakistan. Struggling and battling through the demonic eyes of society, she achieves the status of a junior nurse at a government hospital. Valor and bravery are a part of her personality, and the strength she takes from her strong faith makes her courageous enough to face devastating situations. Asghar, in his article, pens down that Hanif has highlighted the pitiable life of the minority, who are downtrodden under the prevailing divisions of caste and class system in Pakistan. Women of such marginalized groups are even more suppressed under

cultural and religious injustice, in addition to dominating patriarchal customs. Hanif exemplifies how women are disempowered and reduced to become a subaltern in a post-colonial society (Asghar, Ahmed, & Fatima, 2020). Let us unfold Alice's character and find out how such a brave woman is subjugated by patriarchal suppression, considering the abovementioned four characteristics.

6.1. Gender

Alice Bhatti is a "woman," so her suppression in a patriarchal society is mandatory. When seen by the male members of her society, she is looked at first as a "Woman," and everything comes second. She is considered a woman vulnerable to suppression and expected to resist violence or subjugation. Hanif, in his novel "A case of exploding mangoes" highlights the low value of a woman in the patriarchal society in these words woman can be exchanged for a loose change in a deal at a street corner (Hanif, 2011). So is the merit of Alice in the eyes of her society. Alice, from the very first page of the novel till the end, is shown to be objectified sexually. Her plight is visible in the very situation when Alice Bhatti has to deal with lewd gestures, whispered suggestions, and unsanctioned hands on her butt all the time. (Hanif, 2011). From Alice being in jail to her interview for the job, she is viewed through lustful eyes. Battling all the lecherous eyes, she gets hold of every situation successfully. Dealing with the son of Qalabash (the actress) in the hospital room, she is a warrior. Her physique is gazed upon through most of her interactions with the males of the society, be it a doctor, her patients, or her colleague.

Hanif describes, that it's likely that Alice might have learned to ignore the looks, fortified herself against the prying eyes, and avoided the rubbernecks. She might have chosen to accept the fact that men believe weighing a woman's anatomy is the finest use of their sight, but when she starts her career, she discovers that people are more interested in doing more than simply observing. They seem as though they are unsure whether what they have seen is genuine when they suddenly want to touch her. She is aware that there will be various norms that apply outside the French colony: for example, some people won't drink water from the same glass that she did and other won't eat the banana from the same branch that she did. It's their problem she believes. She can survive with being untouchable, but she longs for one privilege that comes with it that is without her consent those individuals won't come in contact with her. However the opposite has observed that the same individual who would refuse to drink from the same faucet that she had touched while having no trouble sticking his elbow into her breast or bending over to rub her heathen behind (Hanif, 2011). In the same way, Alice has learnt from her society that she is someone who is believed to be filthy and untouchable because of her minority status, yet so vulnerable to be lusted for by the so-called respectable upper-class men of the society.

Alice, though harassed and objectified everywhere when bravely overcomes such a situation, shows us another trait of her strong personality, that she may be termed as Said's "traditional oriental woman" but is originally a "Neo Oriental Woman." Hanif, knowing how pitiful life a minority woman in Pakistan bears, displays Alice's misfortune in her continuous struggle and her unjust death. A struggler she might be and a warrior she may be, she could not escape her misfortune in the form of her murder by her husband. Alice's death is not ordinary; it leaves a big question for us to ponder. A woman belonging to a minority class is murdered based on an unreasonable suspicion, never receives justice, and is not worth filing a case in court. Despite Alice's all efforts, she remains a woman from a lower class throughout her life and dies with the same status. This tag of being a woman, especially from the minority, is attached to Alice, and it keeps on passing from one generation to another. Her death was not much different from her mother's. So this burdensome label of gender keeps on haunting the lives of minority women. Sara Siraj, in her article, opines that Hanif has keenly observed that women in Pakistani society are deprived of their legal rights, and their position is made worthless by the hands of a patriarchal mindset. If she has to survive, women must find preventive measures to avoid unfavorable situations. Undermining women is an old-age tradition proudly and profoundly carried by men as it is credited to men (Siraj, Anjum, & Samad, 2021).

In Hanif's opinion, Alice has learned the lesson that sport of cutting up women is older than cricket, but still it's very popular and full of complicated customs and hidden traditions

that nobody seems to know about, including her (Hanif, 2011). A woman is a woman in a male-oriented society, be it a qualified nurse or a janitor's daughter. Alice, in the novel, explains her feelings that majority of the time she is referred to by the people as their daughter or sister and then treated the same way by them as they would treat their own daughter or sister that is like a slave they purchased at a sale (Hanif, 2011). All these circumstances made Alice a warrior. She has learned through these circumstances that she is the one who has to fight for her, and no one would come for her help. This was why Sister Hina Alvi handed over a gun to Alice. If a woman has to survive in this patriarchy-stricken society, she must learn to defend herself. Baig (2017) in her article shares her view that Hanif's Alice is an example of resistance from the subaltern's side. She, with her strong character, overcomes her marginalization and raises her status above all the ordinary women of minority classes.

6.2. Social Status

Alice belongs to the Christian minority in Pakistan, whose unfortunate fate befalls her as a daughter of a janitor Joseph Bhatti. Joseph makes his living by cleaning the country's gutters and ending his day in his wrecked house in the slum of Pakistan, namely "French Colony." Since childhood, Alice has seen her family's miserable condition, and being a lower-class member of society; she could not hope for much betterment. Hanif tracks the pitiable living of Alice and her father through a detailed anatomy of Alice's physique. He writes that Alice's physique is a remarkable example of malnourishment leading to dense breasts and a fragile bone structure. Dalhousie is aware that Alice's family is the kind that passes off famine as fasting and drinks tea without milk, also they celebrate marriages and deaths with meat and only dhal and rice as Sunday special. It is mandatory to observe lent on the fourth Sunday of each month. In these homes, even an empty stomach gurgles, Yasso be praised (Hanif, 2011).

Society has taught Alice that the meaning of "French Colony" is filthy and gross. Also, mentioning French Colony might get her an awkward gaze from the community. People having social status, like Alice, need to hide their name and identity to get better jobs and status. Hanif clearly explains this phenomenon in Joseph Bhatti's observation that he has witnessed people adopting Musla names, leave the French colony, and merge with other species (Hanif, 2011). This makes Alice realize that her status is not more than an insect from the French Colony gutter, and her struggle against it will be her lifelong battle. The Interview for a junior nurse is an instant where Alice is seen to comprehend her value as an insignificant being. Hanif uses excessive animal imagery to define Alice more or less as an animal in the eyes of her society. His words exemplify it clearly as Alice lets out a croak that sounds like a newborn frog whining about being too little for this world (Hanif, 2011).

Through Alice, Hanif has daringly represented a bleak picture of the lower class in Pakistani society. He unveils the mindset of the people of Pakistan about the minority Christian class explaining the phenomenon that people would claim that they should never have given her job at all, that patient-carer separation should have been strictly enforced and that she ought to have followed her own path and wed in accordance with her faith (Hanif, 8). Here we find how Alice has been marginalized by her society. The intermixing of the upper and lower classes in Pakistan is denoted as a sin. So, Hanif's Alice is a victim of social pressure because of being a part of a minority group, and hoping for any betterment is ridiculous. This vast gulf between the upper and lower classes of Pakistan is an outcome of the regular practice of "marginalizing" and "othering" Minority classes. Alice is what Spivak calls a "subaltern woman" of a third-world country and is bound to remain Said's "Traditional oriental woman."

Later it is seen that Alice is humiliated even in the court, all because she is an unfortunate woman from a lower class. She was sentenced to eighteen months in jail for a trivial crime. Furthermore, a single person from higher authorities or human rights officer did not attend her hearing. Her poor father could not afford to bribe the court or a lawyer who could fight for Alice's case, resulting in a long and unjust punishment. Thus, Hanif delineates the unsympathetic feelings of people of the upper classes and authorities towards lower and minority classes. He also highlights that justice does not exist for a lower-class citizen, especially if it is an unprivileged minority-class woman. The journey of Alice's life with a tortured self-esteem and humiliated self-image continues with never ending reproach. All her hopes for a better life end up in smoke. Alice marries Teddy in the hope of achieving a

respectable place in society by this only adds to her miseries. Hanif explains Alice's plight that she has discovered that every small victory in life is accompanied with a customary humiliation. All enjoyment is contingent upon a sown payment. Likewise, her destiny is doomed to remain in the red due to an excessive number of humiliations and a circuitous trip (Hanif, 2011). The marginalization of Alice based on her lower status is what Alice has grown up with. At every stage of her life, she faces bitter shame for being a daughter of a "choorah" (a janitor) living in a French colony. Whereas every cell of Alice's body struggles to defy this reality in front of society, she never succeeds. When Alice tells about her residence in the French colony to sister Hina Alvi, she marginalizes Alice with disgracing remarks, complaining about the uncleanness of all the people living in French colony and also out casting Alice by naming the people of French colony are "her people" (Hanif, 2011). Alice is fully aware about the misconception that everyone living in the French colony are considered as janitor or works for the corporation. Thus Alice is created a Subaltern in her society and her workplace.

6.3. Religion

Pakistan is a country where most people are Muslims, whereas other religions fall under the minority. Living in such a society with a religious minority makes one vulnerable to marginalization. Alice is one such example. Along with many other reasons for her marginalization, religion too adds to her misery. Being a Christian, Alice is considered filthy and untouchable. In Pakistan, people belonging to minority religions are not offered white color jobs but rather considered menial jobs. The Father of Alice Bhatti remained a "choorah" throughout his life and suffered marginalization on these grounds. Similarly, being considered of a lowly caste and religion, Alice was never respected and offered a job not above that of a junior nurse. To get rid of her status as a minority, Alice married a Muslim, but this also did not help. Instead, marrying a Muslim caused distress among her colleagues. To survive in the Muslim-majority society, Alice's father learned a few verses from Quran and used them to heal people. Similarly, Alice knows half of the karma and a few verses. Therefore Alice's religion determines her faith.

6.4. Profession

Alice's struggle against marginalization starts from day one of her jobs. Either it is Dr. Malik, who satisfies his patriarchal ego by imposing his power over the slain junior nurse, or be it, Noor who secretly lusts for Alice and makes her workplace a hell for Alice. Every hospital man considers Alice an opportunity to satisfy their lust. At the same time, with the strength of her character, Alice fights back against everyone who undermines her. In a society where women are admired not based on their talent but their beauty and appearance, the survival and success of a working woman become near impossible. Ahmed opines that Hanif, through Alice, has highlighted the marginalization of working women in a society where the patriarchal mindset leads to the brutal end of women's freedom (Ahmed, 2022). Alice's profession as a nurse is not considered a respectable profession in Pakistan. This messiah, who works hard to save people's lives, is considered filthy by the same people.

7. Findings

The discussion so far emerges a notion that Alice, despite being a warrior who never gave up, had to struggle hard to survive in the Patriarchal society. What resulted in her struggle was not a glorious success but Alice's unjust and miserable death, leading to an unceasing struggle for justice, even after her death. As a result, Alice remained unheard during her life and after her death. Unfortunately, Alice was born in such a society where being a woman from a lower class and caste is considered a sin. Also, one is punished throughout life for this uncommitted sin. Thus proving that women in subcontinent are doubly marginalized and are still Subaltern even in their own society. This research focuses not only on the cause of miseries of Alice but also on the role of institutions in this regard. The novel does not produce a single incident where any institution comes up with some help to relieve Alice's hardships. Instead opposite has been observed. Alice was left with no choice but to become combat herself in order to defend herself from the cruel society. In Alice's case, all the so-called woman empowerment organizations and law enforcement institutions have failed to protect a lower-class minority-based woman in Pakistan, whereas opposite has been observed in the case of upper class women. Hence proving the 2nd objective of the research. Hanif's Alice has portrayed the wretched life of a lower class/caste woman in a third world country, whom Spivak has already labeled as a "voiceless subaltern" and Said has pronounced as "a

traditional oriental woman." It has been found that Alice is a true example of an Asian voiceless subaltern of Pakistan. Hence, the third objective of the research is achieved.

8. Conclusion

The research has reached the following conclusions that The unprivileged women in third-world countries still struggle for their rights and respectable societal recognition. These women are never heard in the chaos of the dirty politics of the world, and hopes of their improvement are dying with each passing day. In such a scenario, looking for help from welfare organizations or state institutions wastes time. All the institutions have focused on the developed countries and the hardships of upper-class citizens while ignoring the people struggling to survive in society. A sex- object, an unwanted responsibility, and an abhorred liability are all the adjectives with which society defines a woman. If she stands up for herself and decides to work to bear the burden of her family, the hurdles are even more significant for her. Society cannot bear to see a woman working shoulder to shoulder with men and even exceeding them in many fields. Even in the 21st century, women live primitive life in some parts of the world, which requires the world's attention. Many " Alices " struggle to come out from the marshes of patriarchy but are murdered in the name of honor, raped, or killed in property inheritance issues. Many survive, but as acid attack victims or rape survivors. Today's world needs to see from a broader lens where people from the lower class and caste are also visible, and 21st-century writers need to sharpen their pens so that the misery of such marginalized women is visible in their write-ups. This research may provide a firm ground for the further research on feminism and post-colonial researches. Also, this research invites other researchers to explore theory of orientalism and Subalterns from multiple aspects. Furthermore, the phenomenon of double marginalization can be enhanced and deeply explored in future researches.

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