

A Study of Subalternity in Muhammad Hanif's "Our Lady of Alice Bhatti" and "Red Birds"



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Abstract: *The study is an exploration of Haneef's novels, Our Lady of Alice Bhatti (2011) and Red Birds (2018). The study aims to explore the condition of the subaltern in both novels. Spivak's theory of subalterns from her essay Can the Subaltern Speak? is used to understand the subaltern condition and their developing resistance against the existing power structures. The research is qualitative in nature. Purposive sampling of textual lines is done to analyze the text related to the subaltern. Findings reveal that Alice and Mother Dear (subalterns) face othering in different forms throughout the novels, search for their true identity and develop resistance against patriarchal society. The study is significant as it contributes to understanding the trends of contemporary Pakistani literature in representing women.*

Key Words: Alterity, Feminism, Othering, Postcolonial theory, Spivak, Subalternity

Introduction

As described by Guha (1982) " a phrase used to describe the widespread phenomenon of servitude in South Asian civilization, regardless of the form it takes—class, caste, age, gender, or any other factor ". Subject constitution and object formation, between patriarchy and imperialism, the woman vanishes into thin air where sexed Subaltern has no place to talk from (Spivak, 1988, p.307). The subaltern subject of the colonial times was those who were colonized; postcolonial cultures produced their own subaltern. Women who were denied authority in all cultures were the underprivileged in postcolonial ones. The possibility of women being represented in literature has decreased because to phallic legacy. A group cannot be represented when it is dubbed "subaltern". Totally rejected by Spivak is the notion of subaltern representation. It has been named the Margin or the Silenced Center by Spivak. According to Spivak, our "subjects" are shown or presented as belonging to a "us/them" dualism, wherein we help, support, and elevate "them." Anytime someone tries to speak for

another person, they are automatically caught up in the "us" against "them" divide.

Spivak is interested in the oppressed, disempowered, and marginalized. Her goal is to provide voice to the weak in a society. Her battle begins with coming up with a suitable term to dispute the portrayal of the oppressed. Whenever subjugated or powerless groups are referenced in a conversation, Spivak argues that a "Crisis in Vocabulary" exists. Although she believed that the dominant terms "women," "workers," and "the colonized" were "insufficient" in their ability to accurately represent those who are disadvantaged and marginalized segments of society, she also believed that they are frequently employed to refer to the powerless or subjugated group (Spivak, 1995, p. 221). This discontent drove her to look for alternative terminology that better portrayed the disadvantaged. A term that Spivak has chosen to use for the society's oppressed members is "Subaltern."

More eloquent and nuanced, subaltern refers to the many hardships and sufferings of the oppressed.

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According to Spivak, the weaker became the periphery in both the mainstream political discourse and history writing. This research refers to the women of Pakistan as "subaltern," a loose word. The definition of Pakistani women cannot be found in abstractions or in simplifications. They are many different people living in many different situations.

Representing the subaltern is a terrible job, made more difficult when they are women. As Spivak (1988) points out, some native images are equally problematic as colonial ones. Spivak has appropriated the phrase Census "Native Informants" Her attention has been drawn to the issues and politics surrounding representation. Being native informants and speaking for the subaltern, these writers are unable to give voice to the Intellectuals of the first world. This is the reason behind the censorship of information regarding the subaltern Pakistani women. Only once these Native informants' works are appropriated, promoted, and acknowledged as "counter canonical" will they be accepted (Ahmad, 1992, p. 20).

Since the entire counter-canon is created in the West, the only acceptable depictions of subaltern women are those that adhere to the preexisting White lady/colored woman dichotomy. Educated or uneducated, strong or weak, a woman. This will further elevate Western women above their Asian counterparts. This Western yearning, according to Muhammad (1983), is less concerned with particular magicians or imagined Otherness than with the individual advantages of the Manichean allegory, which in turn produces unique stereotypes. By speaking out against Pakistani women, these writers are making an attempt to support Western women's position in contemporary times. Secondly, the advantages of these native writers prevent them from advocating for Pakistani women. Their comprehension of Pakistani women is hindered by their relative privileges. These writers are compelled to depart from their epistemologically advantageous positions due to the comprehensive array of experiences that Pakistani women with theoretically disadvantaged identities encounter. These privileges are considered losses. According to Landry and Maclean (1996), our advantages, regardless of their nature in terms of race, socioeconomic status etc. may have impeded our ability to acquire certain types of knowledge. This includes not only the information that we have yet to acquire, but also the knowledge that our social positions have rendered impossible for us to understand (p.20).

Leading lady Alice Bhatti is the focal point of Mohammed Hanif's book *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*. She is the sole child of Christian janitor Joseph Bhatti. We first meet her as a junior nurse at the Sacred Heart Hospital for All Ailment in Karachi when the book opens. She is three times ostracized throughout the book because of her social class, gender, and religion. Hanif has portrayed Alice Bhatti as a static, stereotyped Pakistani woman who has been the victim of social, cultural, and religious abuse. She is in constant pain and humiliation in all aspect of her existence. We meet her in a bad state right from the start of the book. Being an alienated woman, radical social groups constantly take advantage of her. In his *Red Birds*, Mohammad Hanif captures the changing voices of women demanding recognition and hearing. In the book, "Mother Dear" for instance, spends her early years as a submissive subaltern wife, but in the end, she took on the responsibility of fighting her war and finding her missing kid. When the male subaltern does not speak up, she steps in as the leader. Entering the realm of American Hangar, where no one dares oppose this mother-general who successfully fights her way back, *Mother Dear* leads her little army of Mutt and Momo in a fantasy world of war on terrorism. Even while *Mother Dear* represents all the moms whose boys have been taken away and the war is fought in fantasy, the same voice grows forceful and heard by everyone throughout. Thus, the authors of south Asian postcolonial fiction—particularly that of Pakistan—are giving voice to the thus far doubly colonized subaltern in their stories in the twenty-first century and thereby making their voices heard. This is a very important shift used by South Asian postcolonial writers since it not only corresponds with the contemporary life and women's participation in life of the twenty-first century as a kind of cross-border feminism but also shows that subalterns are now unable to be silenced. More successfully than men's voices is the voice of the twofold colonial subaltern (women).

Literature Review

Haneef's novels have been popularized due to his humor, wit and satire on the cultural code of society. Haneef's novel *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) and *Red Birds* (2018) were also popularized due to similar appeal. Academia has already analyzed the works through different perspectives which is the core discussion of this section. A comprehensive review for both the works is done to narrow down the gap in the existing literature which needs to be filled.

Our Lady of Alice Bhatti (2011) is studied through different perspectives. Mirza (2014) conducted a study on resistance of subaltern and he found that despite her efforts to escape her subalternity, she dies suddenly and brutally. He further analyzed that Alice's father Joseph claims her sainthood, prompting questions about the romanticization of her death in the narrative and text. In short, analysis revealed Alice's subalternity, survival strategies, and death to demonstrate Hanif's novel's rejection of idealizing both living and deceased subalterns. Altaf and Shehzad (2019) studied subalternity through Gramscian lens. They attempted to examine subaltern resistance against capitalist tyranny in Hanif's 'Our Lady of Alice Bhatti' Using Gramsci lens, they found that the protagonist struggles and perseveres in this novel. She opposed poverty, patriarchy, religious extremism, and the capitalist class. Mohammad Hanif creates a subaltern who speaks, resist, and challenges the system. She is ultimately defeated by the system's brutality. Her acid killing represents a subaltern protest against oppression. Nazar (2016) also conducted study to examine the portrayal of women in Pakistani literature. He found that women are usually depicted as victims of religious, cultural, and social violence in these works. She found that stagnating stereotype tactics used to depict Pakistani ladies. She did a close textual analysis. She found that Pakistani women are often portrayed as submissive and powerless, without uniqueness. It silenced Pakistani women more.

Afzaal et al. (2021) analyzed problem of women identity through discourse analysis of *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011). They investigated how gender construction leads to power connections between men and women, in addition to studying identity building through performance. They examined novel excerpts through the close reading of text. They found that female characters in the novel face challenging conditions, leading the protagonist to fight patriarchal society. The patriarchal system fosters oppression by limiting women's roles. In addition to limited independence, women experience discrimination and physical, emotional, and mental assault from men. Siraj et al. (2021) examined patriarchy's ancient norms and its agonizing effects on Pakistani women. They investigated how patriarchal traditions, class inequalities, and triple marginalization in the novel disrupted female lives. Using Spivak theory, they found that though women's standing is generally better than in the West, they still lack basic rights and empowerment. Asghar et al. (2020) investigated Roy's

The God of Small Things (1997) and Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011). Using Marxism, they found the struggles of the lower class against the upper class and highlighted their suffering. They further found the change in the status of marginalized women, the status of women in Pakistani and Indian societies and patriarchal harshness.

Paul and Rai (2018) analyzed Hanif's novel *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011), by addressing sexual assault and its impact on the social, political, and cultural aspects of sainthood, highlighting similarities between two religions based on humanity and nature. They found that her magical skills could not save her from being a victim of sexual violence. Body intimidation breaks spiritual holiness. Alice's magical abilities are viewed as witchcraft rather than a healer's touch, demeaning her as simply accessible. Ahmad and Nasir (2022) investigated Hanif's novel *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) using postcolonial feminist lens. They found that female protagonist experienced obstacles only due to her Christian minority background. Her struggle for survival faces strong pushback from patriarchal society. This hinders the socio-political status of minority women in postcolonial countries like Pakistan, limiting their opportunities for fight. They came to the conclusion that discrimination and social exclusion are commonplace for women of minority status in postcolonial nations like Pakistan.

Nazakat et al. (2018) explored *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) using Marxist lens. They found that oppression which Alice was bearing may be seen as a class battle between the capitalists and the proletariat. They further explored that religion and gender discrimination stems from unequal economic systems and dominant capitalist power structures. They concluded that ideas of faith, caste, and color are commonly utilized to separate people, particularly the lower classes, through capitalism. It highlights the importance of educating individuals on how to unite based on their true selves. Ahmad (2019) examined the economic struggle of the marginalized minor class in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) using Marxist theory. He found that the hegemonic aspects caused socioeconomic marginalization, and this marginalization is depicted through the oppressed class of society through Alice Bhatti, a Christian in a Muslim state who struggles in Karachi, Pakistan, a French colony. He concluded that Alice Bhatti fought against religious extremism and the elite class within the existing social order. He also emphasized the persistence of colonialism and hegemonic forces.

Haneef's *Red Birds* has also been analyzed through different lenses. Saadia (2023) identified war trauma in the *Red Birds* (2018) using Psychoanalysis Theory (1901) and Trauma Theory (1996). She found that the novel's heroes suffered from mental problems caused by war and combated victims struggle with inferiority complexes, leading to self-shattering. She further noticed that war trauma has lasting effects on children. The characters in the book suffer from various psychiatric problems due to the stress of the war. This view is reinforced by Shakir et al. (2023) and Khan et al. (2021) who found that war traumatizes individuals, hindering innovative social activities and economic talents. Sadaf (2022) explored benevolent violence depicted in the *Red Birds* and found that Hanif depicted a dystopic, paradoxical universe where everyone is both victim and violator in a cycle of global civilizational conflict. She concluded that *Red Birds* conveyed a wider existential message alongside depicting the futility of the war on terror, which only led to violence. Ullah et al. (2023) analyzed positive and negative emotions in *The Unwomanly Face of War* (2017) and *Red Birds* (2018) using Intern Check for sentiment analysis. They found that the word 'war' appeared 69 times in *Red Birds* and 662 times in *The Unwomanly Face of War*. References to "kill", "cry", and "death" occur 31 times in *Red Birds* and 126, 73, and 86 times in *The Unwomanly Face of War*. They concluded that most commonly referenced words in both novels convey emotions of anger, despair, fear, and disgust, whereas the least cited words convey delight and surprise.

Ahmed et al. (2022) examined how indigenous women are portrayed as submissive and third-world compared to white women in the Haneef's *Red Birds* (2018). They particularly focused in the representation of Lady Flower Body, Mother Dear, and Cathy. The study found that third-world women face feminist dystopia due to white women's failure to share the movement's benefits. Khan (2022) used Edward Said's theory of Orientalism to analyze the orientalist tropes in *Red Birds* (2018), a novel by Muhammad Hanif. An unnamed place in the Middle East was bombed by US plan fighter Major Ellie, according to the researcher. Similar to Edward Said's work, he discovered that Major Ellie made use of orientalist and stereotypical language. Ellie's preconceived notions about Orientals as "primitive, goatherd, and horrible people" stem from her own historical experiences learning about these cultures. Aurangzeb and Saeed (2021) explores *Red Birds*(2018) as a refugee depiction post-9/11

using Said and Behdad's theoretical model to explore the Neo-Orientalist perspective. They found that American bombing is viewed as a potential danger to American sovereignty. After 9/11, Pakistani English fiction has countered the Neo-Orientalist American perspective on the war on terror and its negative portrayal. Islamophobia. *Red Birds* highlights the Neo-Orientalist treatment and the predicament of refugees in temporary camps, who rely on USAID waste. Nasir et al. (2020) analyzed Hanif's novel *Red Birds* (2018) using Huckin's CDA model to examine the absurdity of war and humanitarian help. They found that the aid programs have been criticized for creating orphans and then adopting them, which contradicts the true spirit of aid. Shoukat and Aurangzeb (2021) explored *Red Birds* in aim of reconstructing human links and a desired history in a simulation-era endeavor by a prominent figure. uses Jean Baudrillard's simulation theory to analyze war-stricken, displaced people in camps, their missing loved ones, and American brutality through various signs and symbols to convey dark desires and found it postmodern fiction in true sense.

Red Birds (2018) has also been analyzed specifically through Postcolonial lens. Tilwani and Hassan (2024) analyzed *Red Birds* (2018) to examine the struggles of the 'Other' and their resistance against imperialist agendas using Said's Orientalism and Gramsci's hegemony theory. They found that hegemony, a geopolitical method of indirect imperial dominance, is maintained through ideology rather than economic force or coercive strategies. This view is supported by Karim (2022) who contended that the Third World Muslim countries are satirized for their dogmatism, lack of growth, and cultural decline. But this view is contradicted by Naz (2022) as she noted that Fanon argues that the colonizer's violence not only maintains power but also initiates decolonization, resulting in the incarcerated subject's greater strength and force to combat oppression. Ali (2023) examined Hanif's *Red Birds* (2018) through Postcolonial magical realism and examined the role of setting and war-torn location He found that magical realism shaped a strict critique and presented the unreported perspectives of both colonized and colonizers on war and its consequences. Anjum et al. (2022) investigated the role of Hanif (2018) in portraying Muslims and found that he portrayed Muslims as backward and violent through Major Ellie and Momo in his story opted Neo-Orientalist approach.

After comprehensive review of existing literature, it is evident that there is a sufficient gap regarding positioning of subaltern. This study aimed to bridge this gap by delving into the subalterns' social, financial, psychological aspects, and by critical understanding, evaluate its position in the contemporary times.

Research Methodology

The research stands on the transformative paradigm as defined by Mertens (2010) in the words "However, the transformative paradigm directly addresses the politics in research by confronting social oppression at whatever levels it occurs (Oliver, 1992; Reason, 1994 qtd in Mertens, 2010). However, claiming this paradigm is further justified by explanation that This analysis examines the manner in which disparities rooted in gender, ethnic origin, disability, gender identity, and socioeconomic status are manifested in unequal power dynamics. (Mertens, 2010). The present study is grounded in the qualitative research methodology. Kothari (2004) defines qualitative research as an empirical approach that does not rely on numerical data. It is a methodical procedure for delineating various types of challenges. The researchers employ a naturalistic approach to explore phenomena in their authentic environments, whereas qualitative research encompasses human experiences, visual materials, observations, and the exploration of challenging aspects. Purposive sampling of the textual lines is done as it is explained by Denscombe (2021) that purposive sampling involves deliberately selecting specific individuals or elements for inclusion in the research sample. The term is used to describe scenarios in which the researcher have prior knowledge about specific individuals or events and intentionally chooses certain ones based on the expectation that they will yield the most significant results. Essentially, these individuals or events are picked deliberately and with a specific intention, which aligns with their distinct features and their significance to the subject of the inquiry (Denscombe, 2021, p.17).

Theoretical Framework

Spivak's Can the Subaltern Speak? (1988) is used as a theoretical framework to analyze both the novels. Postcolonialism is an academic field that examines the theoretical and literary aspects of the consequences of colonialism, namely the impact of the colonizer on the colonized. An indispensable aspect within the domain

of Postcolonialism is the Subaltern, a word that was introduced and popularized by Marxist philosopher and thinker, Antonio Gramsci. The phrase is employed to denote the colonized South Asian sub-continent and comprises a region within the fields of history, culture, human geography, sociology, anthropology, and literature.

Defining Subaltern: Subaltern, in broad terms, refers to a marginalized group that is barred from the existing political systems of society and hence lacks the means of having a voice in their community. The term "inferior" in this context encompasses individuals or groups who hold a lower rank or social status due to factors such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or religion. Some intellectuals employed the term in a broad sense to denote marginalized communities and the socioeconomically disadvantaged - "an individual stripped of their ability to act due to their social standings (Young, 2016). Tyson (2001) defined it in the different way as described by her, "*Subalterns are those persons who occupy the bottom rungs of the colonialist social ladder, whether their inferior status is based on race, class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or any other cultural factor*" (Tyson, 2001, p.249). She further elaborated the term "subaltern" provides a means to describe those who occupy the lowest position within a society's hierarchical structure. Subalterns are marginalized by those belonging to the colonizing society and are denied both equal access to improve their lives and equal treatment in the legal system. Subalterns encompass persons who are marginalized due to many forms of discrimination, such as racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and religious discrimination, including anti-Semitism (hate against Jews) and Islamophobia (pathological fear and hatred towards Muslims). Some of the most prominent instances of subalterns in the United States include individuals who are homeless regardless of their race, Native Americans, and people of color who are experiencing economic difficulty (Tyson, 2001, p.249). Spivak (1988) defined term "subaltern" encompasses individuals from the third world, working-class individuals, and those who have been marginalized or deprived of their rights by Western culture.

Can the Subaltern Speak? (1988)

Insights have been taken from Spivak's ideas expressed

in his nominal essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988) to interpret the text of *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) and *Red Birds* (2018). In her essay titled "Can the Subaltern Speak?", the author examines the issue of marginalized groups such as women, tribal people, and those from the Third World and the Orient, and raises doubts about their ability to express their own perspectives. In this essay, the author highlighted the irony that the subalterns have become aware of their own rights through tangible expressions of resistance against unjust domination and inequality. She condemned the negative impact inflicted upon women, particularly those from developing countries and non-European backgrounds. She aimed to amplify the voices of the marginalized individuals who lack the ability to express themselves or choose to remain silent. She concentrated on the conjectures around widow sacrifice. She endeavored to revive the prominence of female writers who have been overshadowed by their male counterparts. She criticized the Eurocentric perspectives held by Western societies. She asserted that knowledge is never morally neutral; it is always influenced by the economic interests and power dynamics of the Western world. According to Spivak, knowledge is treated as a commodity or product that is transferred from the western countries to the Third World. Western researchers consistently portrayed themselves and their understanding of Eastern cultures as impartial. The understanding of the third world is consistently shaped by the political and economic motives of the western countries. Spivak critiques Foucault and other critics, accusing them of colluding with capitalism and imperialism. She views deconstruction as a political instrument to establish and maintain the concept of reality and truth. She is an adherent of Derrida and serves as his translator Spivak expressed concerns and confronts the first world for disregarding the overwhelming mass of the global population that experience extreme poverty and oppression. She critiqued the representation of the world from the dominant viewpoint of the developed countries, highlighting the exclusion of marginalized and disadvantaged populations, also known as the subaltern. Spivak argued that in order to accurately depict the subaltern or the oppressed individuals, it is imperative to utilize a vocabulary that is unambiguous and easily understood. Systems of representation, both linguistic and philosophical, served to conceal the true social and political inequities. The daily existence of several subalterns, particularly women from the

third world, exhibit a high degree of complexity. The individuals in question are unable to communicate verbally, hence their interests and perspectives are represented by individuals who possess a higher social status and intellectual capacity. Spivak argues that there is a risk in advocating on behalf of subalterns, as their voices may be suppressed within the framework of Western critical thought.

Data Analysis

Textual analysis of both novels is done separately. Subalternity is seen in character of Alice in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) and character of Mother Dear in *Red Birds* (2018).

Subalternity in Our Lady of Alice Bhatti (2011)

Our Lady of Alice Bhatti (2011) is a novel by Muhammad Hanif that aims to depict the struggles of a postcolonial subaltern. Apparently, Alice is not depicted as a multifaceted character; rather, she is a subaltern and stagnant stereotype. Alice is subjected to marginalization due to her gender, religion, and caste. Her status is that of a triple marginalized individual. Throughout her existence, Alice is depicted as a figure of complete oppression and humiliation. She is excessively fixated on her appearance and humiliation. The novel is centered around Alice Bhatti, a Christian nurse who recently got back from Borstal Jail for Women and Children. She is depicted as a woman who is in a state of distress. She is profoundly frustrated and overly fixated on her femininity. She is repeatedly exploited, maltreated, and degraded. The entire environment is oppressive to her. Alice Bhatti has been taught by life that each tiny move forward in life is followed by a ritual degradation, as Muhammad Hanif writes. Every moment of joy necessitates a deposit. Her fate is permanently in the red due to an interminable voyage and an abundance of humiliations. She acknowledges that responsibility (*Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*, 2011, p.55).

According to Spivak (1988), the typical portrayal of the subaltern is that of a weak, meek Pakistani lady like Alice. She plays the role of a pawn in the game of men's chess. The protagonist, Alice, is a lady who must contend with the savage appetite of a wolfish culture. She is not authorized to answer. She cannot help but give in. Angry men are there to slay her and rip her apart. Similar to the impotent Pakistani woman, Alice has become trapped in an outdated framework. Despite not having any power, she has managed to

get through her situation. According to him, "She has a comprehensive doctrine that has been refined over the years to address all of that." (Our Lady of Alice Bhatti, 2011, p.9). She knows she can't fight back or even respond to their physical attacks. Being in the spotlight makes her feel helpless, which is why she avoids it. She seems to have a significant but innocent appointment to attend, because Hanif describes her as walking with a somewhat rushed gait. She looks away from others and glances slightly behind them, as if she is protecting someone. (Our Lady of Alice Bhatti, 2011, p.98).

Hanif has accurately represented subalternity as a representation of Pakistani women through Alice Bhatti. In Pakistan, they are murdered, mutilated, and shot on a daily basis. Alice Bhatti's views of the entire situation are reflected. Women are depicted as passive creatures who are destined to endure hardship. They are incapable of advocating for themselves. They are slain in the name of honor, love, and occasionally for the sake of sport. Within Hanif's fictional universe, male members regard it as their inherent right to negotiate any agreement that pertains to women. The position of women in Hanif's text is both central and marginalized. In one location, she is a victim of domestic violence, while in another, she is not. Alice has adhered to the century-old practice of characterizing women as helpless creatures. The novel's exploitation is centered on Alice's body. She is identified by her physique throughout the novel. The masculine members of society exert control and oppression over the female body and sexuality. Alice's physique is examined. All of the men she met in her life proved exploiters. According to Hanif, "Her twenty-seven-year-old body is a compacted war zone where playing warriors crushed and left their imprints" (Our Lady of Alice Bhatti, 2011, p.174).

Alice, a member of the subaltern and lower class, is subjected to discriminatory attitudes and hostility not due to her Christian faith, but rather because she is the child of a sweeper who scrubs waste from the streets. This is a form of economic subalternity. "These Muslas will make you clean their shit and then complain that you stink," Joseph Bhatti expresses his inner anguish in these words. And our own comrades at the Sacred? They will provide you with education, and subsequently inquire as to why you are unclean (Our Lady of Alice Bhatti, 2011, p. 01). The oppression and class disparity that are evident in Alice's workplace are readily apparent. The comments made by her elders cause her to experience feelings of inferiority. "Alice,

have you completed the floor cleaning?" What is the reason for your failure to clear the floor? Alice, who do you believe will be responsible for cleaning the blood that is on the floor? Who is your father? (Our Lady of Alice Bhatti, 2011, p.2). Derogatory language and lascivious gestures are the most common norms, and the underclass is the most frequently affected. Alice Bhatti and her family are subjected to oppression not due to their Christian faith, but rather due to their status as members of the inferior class.

Women are treated as sexual objects as "others" or "subalterns," and society appears to be substantially hypocritical when it comes to touching a woman. Alice, a Christian, is considered obnoxious for consuming from any cup she has used. However, the same men would be delighted to feel her body whenever and wherever they can. She fails to control the attitude of the individuals she despises the most. In her opinion, she is capable of accepting the status of an untouchable, but she yearns for the sole privilege that accompanies it: that individuals refrain from touching her without her explicit consent (Our Lady of Alice Bhatti, 2011, p. 77). She is compelled to confront this sexually perverse attitude in all environments, and she would be derided if she fails to acknowledge her involvement. At one point, she was compelled to strike an elderly man who was exhibiting his genitalia while she was conducting an assessment of his cardiac condition. The elderly man threatens to dismember her and dispose of her corpse to the dogs. Despite her considerable concern for her public speaking and walking styles, these incidents persist.

Similarly, as pointed out by Spivak (1988) and Tyson (2011), Alice, who is the daughter of a minority man, has learned to be quiet and to speak only when absolutely necessary, a quality often associated with women or subalterns in conventional gender roles. Her "ritual of humiliation" (Our Lady of Alice Bhatti, 2011, p. 47) follows each victory and happiness in her life with a sting. It worsens the dangers and difficulties caused by men's attitudes, especially when minority women are involved, who see weak women as easy prey for their sexual desires. A large portion of society views Alice through the lens of a sexual object and a toy, especially the wealthy and physically powerful. While his mother is sick in the affluent class ward of the hospital, a depraved young guy occupies a room there and attacks Alice. He has the ability to influence any woman into having sex with his pistol, money, and attitude, therefore he uses these things to force Alice to engage in sexual activity. Alice has always been

cognizant of this idea, yet being a minority woman in Pakistan is not totally accurate, as she has now realized. While on the clock at her hospital, Alice is confined to a room to tend to a female patient. But right now the so-called powerful are playing a game in this room. One of the individuals plans to sexually exploit a stunning female nurse they see. He uses his weapons to force her to have oral intercourse, completely unaware that his mother is about to die and needs the girl's help. His older brother is in the room with Alice's assailant, but he can't stop him. The powerful and influential class see women, especially those from marginalized groups, through this lens.

Alice Bhatti has also combated the sexist society throughout her life, as Spivak (1988) suggested that she was aware of the marginalization and subjugation of the subject and had a reaction to it. Alice is the type of individual who will reciprocate a favor by saying "fuck you" as well, according to Noor. These are her methods of survival. Her tragic flaw is not her familial heritage, but rather her complete incapacity to express basic concepts such as "excuse me" and "thank you." (Our Lady of Alice Bhatti, 2011, p.32). Her acts of bumping a doctor and slitting the genitalia of a thug elite stand out as the most heroic manifestations of her bravery and bravery. But Hanif has used the politics of interdependence to describe her again. Persistent insecurity forces her to choose one of the males in the male-dominated society who are portrayed as killers, exploiters, or oppressors. For the time being, she must depend on a male partner to keep her safe. It is strongly embedded in her perception that she is vulnerable, helpless, and miserable when a male member is not there. She is so afraid no one would think she is all alone and that no one will come to her rescue that she walks with hurried steps both inside and outside the hospital. (Our Lady of Alice Bhatti, 2011, p.98). Nobody will value her or take her seriously if she doesn't have a man to lean on, and she knows it. No one will think twice about targeting her. Here, Hanif's Amazon Queen fits the traditional image of a helpless, dependent woman by playing the role of a passive observer. Despite appearances, Hanif's heroine Alice is strong and independent.

Subaltern women's fight for recognition in a patriarchal culture is further illuminated by the research. Through our research, we aim to answer the following question: "how does an ordinary girl from the French Colony of Choorahs resist the dominant system?" (Our Lady of Alice Bhatti, 2011,

p.199). Surprisingly, the French colony that is known for its sanitary labors also turns out a soldier. "How is it possible for an individual to resist a tyrannical system while experiencing multiple frustrations and an empty stomach?" (Our Lady of Alice Bhatti, 2011, p.201). She is an incredibly brave person. While on this journey, she becomes known as "our lady of Alice Bhatti." Except for those few, everyone else is busy clearing out the trash from the city's mansions. But Alice Bhatti isn't your average person. She marries Mohammad Hanif after escaping the filth and devastation of her hometown. Each disaster has her fighting back. She is more driven than ever to find herself after her mother's death. The dominance of the bourgeoisie class produced her. Despite the fact that getting an education under these conditions is an absolute miracle, she manages to achieve it. In the French colony, sending a daughter to school is unusual. Her trials make her stronger and give her the wisdom to question who she is. "I am aware of the everyday individuals who walk the streets." Upon studying their looks, I behold the faces of the dead, and I know that they are about to die:"(Our Lady of Alice Bhatti, 2011, p.61). She faces intolerance head-on and is a strong subaltern because of it.

Subalternity in Red Birds (2018)

Mother Dear, despite possessing numerous attributes of intellect and compassion, was enduring a life of anguish as a subaltern due to her birthplace. Haneef comments about that "If she had been born in another place, she would be a socialist leader ruling a mid-sized nation with an iron hand. But here she is just a mother with a plastic rosary" (Red Birds, 2018, p.184). This remark once again underscores the distinction that women experience as a result of their birthplaces and upbringings. Due to her status as a third-world woman, Mother Dear endured an interminable existence and was impoverished.

This is simply one more way that exploitative and repressive forces push subaltern women to put the needs of their male family members above their own, all in the name of being a nice woman. Mother Dear is constantly on the move, searching new territories to call her own, much like a refugee or displaced person. Part of her has accepted her circumstances and is content with her life as it is, while another part of her wants to find a way out. Because she is an innocent bystander to the effects of the war on terror, she is powerless to alter her circumstances. Time and again,

people have pointed to her maternal fervor as evidence that she is an excellent parent.

Subaltern has to fit in with all the societal expectations about dress and behavior. As *Mother Dear* reveals that she began hiding her head after her husband demonstrated that it was an issue of honor for her, the writer portrays her as conforming to the long-standing tradition of male-dominated oppression of subaltern women, which persists even in the modern era. "I was covering my head and becoming respectable, but I still had to bring water from the pond" (Red Birds, 2018, p.495). If she does not cover, the man's honor could be disgraced, which is why covering is an important subject. Unfortunately, the woman had to go out for work, which meant that her dupatta would often slip and drift around, embarrassing her husband and turning it into a running joke. When the woman misplaced her head covering, she had no choice but to cover it with her shirt. According to the story, the husband had to endure shame because his wife was nude. The foolish woman insisted that covering her head was an instruction, and that her arms had nothing to do with it. She says, "I realized that day that I am stuck with a confused little husband. Here's my man who will go around licking the boots of every white man he can find, who will grovel in front of an office file, yearn for an insulting cable from his Headquarters, but my exposed arms bring him shame" (Red Birds, 2018, p.565). Thus, one's wife and her appropriate covering are matters of honor and disgrace. The oriental woman's clothing choices are dictated by the guy she lives with, who has a strong sense of honor and shame.

Despite her outward strength, *Mother Dear* is actually a subaltern who has suffered greatly at the hands of the system. She must remain vigilant in her pursuit of food for her family, which keeps her confined to the kitchen. The outer world has less of an impact on her life than her kitchen. Not even she can find the salt she needs for her meals. In addition, she is expected to bring water from far away and closely monitor all systems of the body, just like any typical wife would. All marital rituals are to be observed by woman, and she is supposed to serve her husband. Her whole focus is on returning her missing son to her home, despite her lack of mobility, education, money, and outside world contact. "*Mother Dear* was still trying to start a fire, tears in her eyes, when he sat on *Father Dear's* motorbike and went away." (Red Birds, 2018, p.42). *Mother Dear* was informed that education was the key to solving many of the Orient's

problems, and as a result, educational institutions were set up. However, she was too preoccupied with her responsibilities as a lady and a female to accomplish this. "Education, they said. Education gonna solve all our problems ... Newton, science teacher said, sat under an apple tree. I drew pitchers, I thought about Newton" (Red Birds, 2018, p.43). The water pitchers she had brought with her continued to occupy her thoughts. In her perspective, doing household tasks was more important than getting an education that may have changed her life.

The entrance of *Lady Flowerbody*, a young and attractive woman, and *Mother Dear's* recollection of her son's captivity both put her in a vulnerable position at home. Not because she fears interference with her family's routine, but because she cannot bear the thought of having more people in a place where food and salt are already in short supply. In order to confront her husband about his infidelity, she drags him to the kitchen. Up until he threatened to divorce her, she did not consent to his demands. Even though she has grown her children into manhood and spent many happy years in this marriage, she is still living in constant fear of a divorce. I want I could play with my son, adore him and his articles, and give him the greatest food possible. *Mother Dear* misses him very much. She is downhearted because she is oblivious to his existence and unable to communicate with him. She feels the frustration of being a mother and a wife. The invaders, in her mind, "bomb us because they assume we are related to bad Arabs," she says of the foreigners. Because all else fails, we resort to stealing from them. They assume that our lads are our only assets, so they abduct them. They dispatched their tallest soldiers and flashiest vehicles to entice the youths (Red Birds, 2018, p.150).

Many dangers and uncertainties await the subaltern. When *Mother Dear's* father is furious with her and makes fun of her for not being able to retrieve salt from the salt mines that her father owned, these traits become clear in the story. It seems like the guy here thinks the woman should do whatever it takes to make the food taste good so she can go back to her family, rather than him. "If you don't like it here go live somewhere nice. You can go back to your salt mines!" (Red Birds, 2018, p.242). This situation exemplifies the patriarchal system and tradition-bound society in which a wife is expected to provide her husband with a dowry, love, and necessities, and to continue doing so in order for her to exist in his world. The oppressed lady of the developing world remains here, waiting for

her freedom. But there's this weird scenario where it's shown that women have some innate advantage over men when it comes to dealing with the harsh realities of life. Haneef writes that 'Maybe women have superior navigation skills. Maybe they are not foolish enough to venture into it without first mapping their route' (Red Birds, 2018, p.251).

The Mother Dear character, like Alice Bhatti, possesses paradoxical traits. Spivak (1988) emphasized how, as a subaltern, she experiences both the oppression, subordination, and traditional role conformance that come with her status and the desire to challenge these norms through her consciousness. Her ambition, however, appears to be as feeble as her resources. Because its underlying ideology of orientalism will never shift, the orient remains the "subaltern" at its core. Manifest orientalism is the only path to change. Being in her twilight years, Mother Dear believes in miracles and patiently awaits them, but she lacks Alice's bravery. She said, "let things take their own course, turn my grief into my strength, put my loss into a global perspective. She wants me to be a strong woman who makes her own decisions" (Red Birds, 2018, p.473). To contend with the society in which Mother Dear resides, however, her instruments are insufficient. For instance, the Salt dagger knife that she carries around is merely a cosmetic knife; it has no practical use whatsoever as a weapon. It does, however, show Mother Dear's newfound determination as an Orient lady to stand up for what she believes in and achieve her life goals.

Findings and Discussion

Findings reveal that Alice is totally subjugated and marginalized due to which she is extremely frustrated and depressed as every moment of joy is accompanied by maltreatment and adversity. However this idea is contradicted with Robins (2000) who defined the term "woman" is used to describe a pathological state that is linked to "concerns," "grieving," and "pain" (Robins, 2000, p.2). In case of

Alice, she was actually the victim of circumstances. As a subaltern, she is treated as a sexual object by the male members of the society which confirmed the idea of Spivak (1988) and Tyson (2011) about subaltern. She is shown powerless which is contradicted and negated by Parmar

and Mirza (1981) who condemned this stereotypical representation. Lastly, Spivak (1988) idea about consciousness is also found in Alice as she searches for identity and stands against patriarchal society.

Mother Dear is living as another or subaltern in many ways. Her role seems confined to the four walls of the house as she seems stuck in the traditional gender roles and position of women in the society as contested by Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* (2010) that women is not born as women, but social construction shapes her life. She is doing her best as a mother as defined by Durant (2011) that is the most satisfying thing for a woman. However, by the end, she seems developing resistance against her subaltern position which is the result of subject consciousness.

Conclusion

The study of *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) and *Red Birds* (2018) show that both novels portray women as subalterns. Being subalterns, they are marginalized, subjugated, and degraded by the male members of society. Alice is sexually exploited, economically marginalized, and socially degraded as she belongs to a minority. She is severely marginalized. Being a brave subaltern, she showed resistance to oppression and patriarchal society. On the other hand, Mother Dear faces marginalization due to her place of birth. Traditional gender roles confine her to the four walls of her house. She made a concerted effort to embody the ideal of a good mother, a role often associated with women in third-world countries. By the end, she seemed to be developing resistance against the marginalization, subjugation, and power structures of society.

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