



---

**RESEARCH PAPER**

**The Subaltern Cannot Speak: A Social, Political and Cultural Critique of Javeri's *Nobody Killed Her***

Dr. Ayesha Ashraf<sup>1</sup> Dr. Sardar Ahmad Farooq<sup>2</sup> Nafees Parvez<sup>3</sup>

1. Lecturer, Department of English, University of Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Lecturer, Department of English, Government Postgraduate College Mansehra, KP, Pakistan
3. M. Phil. Scholar, Department of English, Govt. College University Faisalabad Punjab, Pakistan

---

**PAPER INFO**

**Received:**  
February 22, 2020  
**Accepted:**  
March 15, 2020  
**Online:**  
March 30, 2020

**Keywords:**  
Domination,  
Gayatri Spivak,  
Marginalization,  
Pakistani English  
Fiction,  
Post-Colonial,  
Subaltern

---

**Corresponding Author**

nafees\_aries@yahoo.com

---

**ABSTRACT**

The current research seeks to explore the marginalized status of women in the context of Pakistan with reference to Sabyn Javeri's novel *Nobody Killed Her*. Sabyn Javeri, an emergent English fiction writer, in her debut novel attempts to substantiate women's suffering that cut across generations and crosses the walls of caste and class. The current research explores her novel as a representative voice of the subaltern women and it vividly articulates its focus on the evidence from the text to trace that there is no room for this marginalized section to be heard even if she/they attempt(s) to speak. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's theoretical concept of subaltern has been applied to the evaluation of the selected text. Spivak examines the colonial hegemonic influence on once colonized countries especially with reference to the double marginalization of women. This study is descriptive and qualitative while close reading is used as a research method.

---

**Introduction**

The term subaltern was initially used by the Italian Marxist and political activist Antonio Gramsci in his book "Prison Notebooks". Later on, the study expanded on this subaltern concept by various renowned critics who were also members of the Subaltern Studies Group. A significant focus was laid by Ranajit Guha, one of the forefathers of the group, and the idea was later carried by the prominent post-colonial critic, Gayatri Spivak, in her seminal essay: "Can the Subaltern Speak?". Spivak is a scholar, philosopher, teacher, activist and theorist who was born in Calcutta (India) in 1942. She got her education from her home town India and America too as she earned her honors degree in English from the University of Calcutta and also achieved a Master's degree from Cornell University New York. Later on, she earned her Ph.D. from the same university of America

under the supervision of Paul De Man who was a famous philosopher and a professor. After getting her doctorate, Spivak taught philosophy, postcolonial studies, comparative literature and English literature in several universities of countries such as China, Algeria, India and America. Her essay is considered one of the most influential works in postcolonial studies and it has been translated into various languages including Hebrew, German, Spanish and Chinese.

The contribution of other theorists also related Spivak's concept with the grand historical phenomenon of colonization, and "With this growing engagement with the works of Homi Bhaba, Gayatri Spivak, and Edward Said, subaltern studies has emerged as a project in conversation with postcolonial studies" (Chakrabarty, 2002, p. 18). The subaltern, in fact, stands in a space where she is in search of new opportunities or possibilities of voicing her worth. Spivak observes that subalterns mostly remain voiceless throughout their lives because their masters do not let them raise their voices. According to Riach (2017), "Spivak combines ideas from Marxism (here an approach critical of capitalist economic exploitation), feminism (promotion of equality between sexes), and deconstruction" (p. 11). She explores the exploitative relationship between power, gender and knowledge and she asserts, "Women are silenced by both colonialism and patriarchy" (p. 11). She uses the term for a rural woman who becomes the victim of double oppression. Therefore, the word 'subaltern' is significant in Pakistani English fiction as the prevailing patriarchal society also contributes to the marginalization of the women. The term 'patriarchy' comes from 'patriarch' that means 'father', implying a 'father-dominated family'. It forms a society that is not very conducive for the mental and physical growth of women as "patriarchy's hegemonic character creates an image of docile, vulnerable, subordinate inferior, powerless and silenced women" (Dhand, 2016, p. 314). The fictional representation of subaltern subjects is relevant in today's context as Shandilya (2014) states, "Literature allows us to read subaltern agency in the interstices of narrative voices that purport to re-present/represent her. In other words, it is in the gaps, silences and caesuras of the elite narration of subalternity that we may find subaltern agency" (p. 2).

## **Literature Review**

*Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (2005)* defines the word 'Subaltern' as "any officer in the British army who is lower in rank than a captain" (Hornby AS, p. 1541). "Etymologically, the word "subaltern" originates from Latin language word "subaltern, therefore, lexically the term (being an adjective) stands as a synonym for subordinate and inferior people" (Mashori & Zaib, 2015, p. 186). Various theorists attempted to define this very term and among them are Eric Stokes, Homi Bhaba, Dipesh Chakrabarty, David Arnold, Partha Chatterjee, Ranjit Guha, David Hardiman, Gyan Prakash, Ajay Skaria, Gayatri Spivak, Mamata Kalia, Gautam Bhadra, and K. Sivaram Krishnan. Homi Bhaba, a renowned theorist for his idea of 'mimicry' and 'hybridity', describes the term subaltern as an oppressed section who has always been suppressed by the dominated majority in the backdrop of the hegemonic system of power. Leela Gandhi defines that subaltern studies are based on "an attempt to allow people finding to speak within jealous pages of elitist,

historiography and in so doing, to speak for, or sound the muted voices of, the truly oppressed" (2019, pp. 1-2). Another renowned theorist Ranjit Guha (1989) states that the aim of subaltern studies is "to promote a systematic and informed discussion of subaltern themes in the field of South Asian studies" (p. 7). There have been performed several research studies in order to investigate Spivak's concept of subaltern that has been applied to various disciplines till date.

Azad's (2014) is a similar study that examines the suffocated status of the marginalized community during the time of British rule. He analyzes Ghosh's two novels namely *In an Antique Land* (1993) and *The Circle of Reason* (1986) from the perspective of diasporic vulnerability on the part of colonized natives. Azad finds that Ghosh highlights the existing class difference between rulers and ruled that created the tradition of binary opposition that obstructed the smooth running of Indian society. He investigates the marginalized condition of peasants, women, children and workers, especially "history victims who are forced into exile by events beyond their control casts a deep shadow on Ghosh's mind" (2014, p.125). Azad further explores the human relationship in the backdrop of the subalternate of the diasporic Indian population. He refers to the strong characterization when he states, "Ghosh's speculative research for subaltern and diasporic ethnicity of Alu, Zindi, Bomma, and Ashu surely paves the way for bringing a change in the contemporary attitudes of the hegemonic world" (p.131). The researcher is of the view that such novels attempt to promote a peaceful environment in order to replace a part of the conflict-ridden world.

Likewise, "Impact of Domestic Violence and Clash of Cultures on Subaltern Identity in *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie" is another research study, by Abolfathi and Phuspa, that aims to evaluate the oppressive status of subaltern women. The researcher's objective is to trace colonial rule and its impact on Patriarchal cultural values, politics, female exploitation, double marginalization and domestic violence. They apply Psycho-social and postcolonial theories to examine the prevalent vulnerability of women. They find that Adichie's novel *Purple Hibiscus* demonstrates the sexual abuse, domestic violence and cultural clashes, and it also reflects her inner desire to stop this human suffering. However, she portrays real-life characters through her fiction and skillful use of artistic language. The use of different literary devices and a variety of words captures the real picture of a society where women are specially kept marginalized. Abolfathi and Phuspa state:

Adichie skillfully employs the political coup in the background to portray the power struggle as well as the subjugation of women like Beatrice, Ifeoma, and Kambili. *Purple Hibiscus* present ethnic tensions and cultural clashes that flared up even in the academic institutions. It also portrays the political unrest, religious supremacy, and the patriarchal power domination within the domestic circle and the female subjugation they might stimulate. (p. 19)

Ambesange Praveen's "Postcolonialism: Edward Said & Gayatri Spivak" is another remarkable study that examines the strong impact of colonialism and

Postcolonialism on the cultures and history. The researcher is of the view that postcolonial literature attempts to deconstruct the process of colonization in order to remove the misconceptions with respect to the misrepresented Orientals. Praveen refers to the literature produced by once colonized countries like Australia, Canada, Nigeria, New Zealand, Kenya, Pakistan, India, Jamaica etc. She states that Marxist and Poststructuralist thought has a dominant influence on the theorists from Fanon to Spivak (2016, p. 47). She further highlights that theorists like Gayatri Spivak try to decenter the binary oppositions which were once formulated by hegemonic forces. Spivak critically scrutinizes the relationship that prevailed between the colonizers and colonized. According to Praveen, other than Spivak, Foucault's 'discourse', Gramsci's 'hegemony', and Derrida's 'deconstruction' focus on literary and textual representations. Edward Said and Foucault examine the textual construction of the colonizers as superior and colonized as inferior, and such portrayal unveils the domination and promotes the resistance. Similarly, Spivak has bestowed upon the subalterns a consciousness of their rights and of unjust inequality and the consequent harm to the Third World women and non-Europeans (p.48). Praveen further highlights that Spivak wants to give an audible voice to the subalterns who either cannot speak or are silenced by hegemonic forces. She tries to restore the status of widows in society, and she also wants the world to acknowledge the contribution of the women writers dominated by male counterparts.

Literature review demonstrates that several studies have been conducted on Gayatri Spivak's concept of subaltern and its representation in literature in order to show an effective literary dimension against the resistance of hegemony. However, the studies do not focus on contemporary South Asian novels from the perspective of double marginalization, and the current study aims to fill this gap.

### **Research Methodology**

The present study is qualitative and the researcher opts for close reading as a research method. In a close reading method, words, tone, characters, symbols, and the point of view are focused. This method rejects the idea to focus on sociological or biographical details rather it examines a text, its language, style and the meaning that it intends to generate. It emphasizes the particular over specific by focusing on the words, ideas and form of the text. It also focuses on similarities, contradictions, and repetitions found in the text. This study particularly strives to analyze, understand and evaluate specific and relevant sentences, characters in the light of Gayatri Spivak's theoretical insights. Spivak has presented her argument in an essay titled "Can the Subaltern Speak?" that highlights the ideological as well as historical factors responsible for the peripheral existence of the marginalized class such as minority, colonized, slaves, women and children etc. "Spivak has a postcolonial feminist approach, and she is one of the leading characters in "Subaltern Studies" that introduce homeless people, poor farmers, daily paid laborers, and women as examples of subalterns. However, Spivak focuses on subordinate females" (Sensebli & Fatehi, 2018, p.55). The concept of the subaltern is based on the term other or other-ing where self tries to dominate the other and sideline the other from the significant aspects of life. In the academic research domain, it has proved itself as a

“theoretical question that quickly establishes itself as a source of inspiration for feminists and post-colonialists” (Barrett, 2004, p.359). Spivak mainly analyses the historical record of marginalization of women and internalization of stereotypical narratives or binary oppositions. In connection to her approach, *Selected Subaltern Studies* asserts, “She repudiates the simple ideological reading, which would have made the women a mere victim of false consciousness” (Spivak, & Said, 1988, p.5).

Spivak defines the term in detail and she is of the view that “If the subaltern could speak- that is, speak in a way that really mattered to us- then it wouldn’t matter to us” (Beverly, 1999, p.1). However, the term subalternity highlights those sections of a society who have been suppressed, marginalized and dominated. The current literature portrays such unjust divisions of society where a woman lives a marginalized life and her voice is kept unheard. Similarly, Jean Francois Lyotard (1984) argues that in the current scenario the nature of knowledge has changed and thereby so has society itself. He refers to this condition of knowledge as ‘incredulity towards metanarratives’ (p.15). He views patriarchy, domination, power and politics as grand narratives that are replaced by micronarratives as “all human knowledge and values are to be placed under what Ricoeur called the “hermeneutic of suspicion” (Dasgupta & Kivisto, 2014, p.163). Similarly, Spivak investigates the status of women in a postcolonial context, she states, “The subaltern has no history and cannot speak” (Pourqoli, p. 215). She relates this marginalization with that of colonization that has cast a strong impact on visible and invisible dynamics of the marginalized lives especially women who have been kept deprived due to double colonization. She states, “Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of women disappears, not into pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the “third world woman” caught between tradition and modernization” (1988, p. 306) Heidari & Alborzi (2017) affirm this aspect when they state, “The economic and cultural as well as the military interventions of the colonizing powers were present during previous centuries. Colonization then changed its path more toward the cultural and economic rather than the military domain” (p. 337). This research paper evaluates the problems of subalternity in the selected text by contextualizing Spivak’s essay from the perspective of colonialism, labor and gender issues. In particular, the article first explores the novel in terms of representation of Rani Shah as a subaltern and, secondly, it investigates Nazneen’s voice to fight back the oppressive forces.

## Discussion

*Nobody Killed Her* highlights the core issues of Pakistani society such as the class system, identity crisis, poverty, dehumanization, devaluation of moral values and specifically women’s marginalization. The two women ‘Nazo’ and ‘Rani Shah’ represent the subaltern as they are suppressed, marginalized, and dehumanized due to their peripheral positions. They experience multiple forms of oppression on social, economic, cultural, psychological, political or religious grounds. Though they make an effort to speak, resist or fight back to make their voice(s) heard but they are

forcefully silenced. The male characters in the novel include Rani Shah's husband Balgodhi who is involved in drinking and gambling beyond the limits of reasonable behavior. There are also some minor characters such as a few political leaders, a military general, lawyers, a judge, security guards, and a cook. The military general holds an important position throughout the story as it is he who tries to Islamize Pakistan but is killed in a plane crash. The plot shows how difficult political journeys are for women in our subcontinent especially Pakistan, and how weak our democracies are, how deeply entrenched patriarchy is, and how fanaticism is unleashed in its many shades.

### **Nazneen Khan as a Subaltern**

The character of Nazneen Khan represents the true subaltern identity as she is marginalized by both males and females around her. At the start of the novel, her family has been murdered by a ruling military general and she successfully manages to escape. Later on, she goes to New York and there she becomes a servant, housekeeper, babysitter, and personal secretary to Rani Shah. She is also known as Nazo which means 'the one who is most loved' in Urdu but, ironically, her position is weak and invisible in the novel. The very title of the novel *Nobody Killed Her* shows the worthlessness of a subaltern in the society that seems to be totally indifferent towards her life or death. It portrays that a subaltern is already a 'nobody', a non-existent object, so nobody can kill her when she doesn't exist at all. However, Nazneen remains determined not to accept her fate as a subaltern, and she challenges the social norms and she attempts to gain her identity. Without letting out even a mournful sound, she tolerates every pain with a strong belief that her progress lies in her capacity to tolerate everything with patience in the male-dominated society. She calls her son a 'wrong child' as he was never wanted but was imposed on her in her rape. She was not allowed to speak against this cruelty; therefore, she stays silent but speaks up later on. Nazneen Khan makes a compromise on her identity as a mother and her son is adopted by Rani Shah who lost her own first child in a miscarriage. Nazneen avoids the expression of any soft feelings towards the child and watches his deteriorated physical condition with indifference. Then the unfortunate day comes when her son dies and, for the first time, she weeps loud from the core of her heart as a real biological mother. She was not allowed to express her love when her child was alive but his death gives her a bit of liberty. After his death, she thinks that she can possess her son, his belongings, and even his death. She feels a relief that this 'wrong child' has reached his real destination i.e. death.

Nazo herself is a subaltern but she supports and even encourages other female folks who meet a similar fate as that of her's. Nazneen helps the women, who are oppressed by society, such as the girl who wants to take admission in the college, but her father was threatened. He was afraid that his daughter's life was in danger, and some people may target her for her education. He says, "They said girls were a waste of a degree as they just got married after college, while a boy would go on to earn and feed the family. I just wanted my daughter to become independent, but perhaps it's true, women are better off married" (p.282). Nazneen wants this girl to

resist the threats, and continue her studies in order to gain some worth in society. She finds her own reflection in the girl, and she wants to take revenge from the society through this girl's success as "The semiotics of domination and subordination were what the subaltern classes sought to destroy every time they rose up in rebellion" (Chakrabarty, 2002, p.10). She encourages her: "Just study hard and show them that a woman can do something useful besides breeding. Don't let me down" (p.283). It is with this positive mindset that Nazo also comforts Rani in the latter's time of personal and political crises.

Economic exploitation is a significant aspect of the novel as almost every character including male/female, rich/poor struggles hard to gain or possess enough money. Everyone wants to achieve or maintain some social status that becomes unthinkable without money. In fact, money is the instrument of power and every character from the upper to lower class seems to be in search of this weapon. Nazo, as the subordinate of Rani Shah, seems to suffer for the lack of money and a time comes in her life when she is involved in corruption for money. She admits her desire to get more and more money when she says that, "It wasn't about greed. I wasn't materialistic. I was practical. Money was the only thing that could make me powerful. A powerless woman is a useless woman" (p. 320). She demands a lot of money for arranging a brief meeting with the prime minister or doing any other favor. There are numerous social restrictions imposed on Nazneen such as she has to obey her masters at any cost and she is not supposed to give any suggestions to them. She has to behave in a certain way, dress in a certain way or even laugh in a manner. She was into a social subordination to feudal lords, a kind of imperialism that Pakistan faces. Even after independence, certain sections of society are still in the clutches of social structures. Nazo is a talented lady who does not want to be suffocated by social conventions. She aspires to be a free human, who is admired and respected in society. Nazo due to her ego wants to be like her boss, Rani, but she is, time and again, reminded of her inferior position as 'the other'. She wants to achieve high goals but she as the daughter of a poor gatekeeper knows that "a woman could rule only if she was blue-blooded" (p.319). She as a "subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in the shadow" (Spivak, 2006, p.32). The following passage is the mark of her 'otherness' when she is deliberately kept ignorant of many things even from her female master Rani and Nazo protests in a meek voice:

Rani, for me you were the true leader, who taught me that a woman was made, not born. Remember the time when you got out that big fat yellowing book *The Second Sex*, you told me that the book said, I wasn't just someone born to bear children, marry, cook, do the whole lot. How, then, could you even think about hiding anything from me? (p. 23)

The novel highlights that Nazneen has always been caught in the so-called traditions of 'haves' and 'have-nots'. With time, she is severely trapped within a society full of oppositions. It depicts a society where, on one side, Rani is praised for

being the daughter of a prime minister while, on the other hand, Nazo is ignored because she is the daughter of a poor man. Even her effort, to earn some money, could not bring any acceptance for her: "I had thought that if I had some money, I could get your attention. But I was wrong. You were determined more than ever to ignore me. My advice was overlooked, my presence was deemed unnecessary. You made me feel like nobody" (p.293). Nazneen does not step back as the other characters, in the novel, stand witness to her strength as the lawyer says, "Read the kitchen boy's testimony where he saw Miss Khan threaten the cook with a knife when he stood in her way" (p.321). In another instance, she fights with a man, "If it wasn't for us women, you would not be here, you bastard" (p.327). She tries to solve many conflicts between women and men, and, in one of such incidents, she made a Jihadist leader realize his fault and do take an apology from her. She feels powerful due to her ability to convince a so-called reputed male: she is proud that she rose from ashes but had brought a Jihadist Elder to his knees: "No Shah in my name. No power in my game. Yet, Rani, I had done what you with all your privilege couldn't do" (p. 330).

The novel depicts that the subaltern is also judged in the light of the conflicts arising from the religious debates. In Pakistan, the major religion is Islam i.e. a religion of peace, but the interpreters have made it difficult. The lifestyle, as well as the collective behavior of people, are judged and their life is scrutinized from birth to death. Thus, the novel depicts the hypocrisy of the so-called religious 'pillars' of the society, where innocent people, especially women, are subjected to marginalization. Nazneen does not hesitate even to criticize the corrupt religious leaders, as she points, to the fact, that what they preach or practice, contradicts each other. The close reading of the novel shows that Nazneen, as a subaltern, is also subjected to psychological oppression, as she remains confused about her life, choices, and even destination, from the start till the end of the story. She becomes a victim of her own psychological state, though, at times, she attempts to fight against class discrimination and divide. She, as a human being, is aware of her worth, but as a woman, she is not accepted in society. In a state of utter confusion, she compares herself with Rani, the prime minister and mourns that both of them being women of the blood of the same color but they were different because of the glass ceiling effect and challenges: "It was time for a change (p.272).

Nazneen is caught in the oppositions of the society and she does protest against these man-made divisions. In fact, she strives to bring a change, but she is deprived of her voice. She is hopeless to find any recognition in society that makes her think that "I was worth nothing" (p.319). Finally, her tragic end represents what Spivak says that "[t]here is no space from which a . . . the subaltern subject can speak (p.103). Nazneen is raped and she is denied justice that symbolizes the plight of all such women who are silenced. Nazneen raises a voice for her when she had nowhere to go and even her family did not want her (p.324).

Similarly, the novel presents multiple points of view of different characters, such as in a conversation with Nazneen, Omar expresses his male-dominated mind by considering women intellectually inferior. He says, "Choosing love overpower is

a mistake that only women make" (p.375), and, in just a few meetings, Nazneen comes to know that this highly educated lawyer is "just another man out to break a woman" (p.375). She, irrespective of all her struggle to raise her voice, knows her position, as a woman. Though she does not agree with Omar's stance, still, she does not deny a woman's weak position especially her own. She says, "I wanted to destroy everything around me. But I knew I couldn't. I was, after all, a woman. A thing to be seen and felt but not heard, unless of course, she was to voice assent" (p.378).

### **Rani Shah as a Subaltern**

Rani Shah is a graduate from America and it happens because of her 'Daddy's' support. Her father was executed by the ruling army general. Finally, Rani returns to her native country where she was supposed to inherit her father's political legacy. After her father's murder, she enters into politics, but, being a woman, she remains conscious of a male-dominated society and powerful authorities who don't want to surrender or obey a female leader. Her friends and advisers keep on warning her of her low position based on her gender as Yasmeen, her friend, and a secretary says: "You're still a woman to them, a worthless afterthought created from a spare rib. And it's not just the Jihadists, you're fighting an entire team of people. From the top brass of the Army to the foot soldiers of the Secret Service, there's a whole host of men out there who hates you and your family" (p. 37). Therefore, Rani is conscious of the socio-political disapproval as a female prime minister: "Nazo, I'm scared. I'm very scared. I wish I could show you the fear that grips me all the time. I pretend to be brave, but inside . . . I'm shaking" (p. 41).

Rani Shah falls in love with Balgodhi, a feudal lord and they get married. The novel records the minutest details of her experience in the male-oriented society, where Rani, even after becoming a prime minister is deprived of her voice. Though unlike Nazneen, she is financially independent, but she still undergoes tough circumstances while living with a patriarchal minded husband. The novel depicts that she is disgraced and hated because of being pregnant with a baby girl as she expresses her grief with Nazo:

I said, 'You shouldn't be drinking in your state. It's bad for the baby.'  
(Nazneen says)

'It doesn't matter,' you said slowly. You rolled up your shirt and patted your belly. The

bitch is a girl.' (Rani Says) (p.227).

Baldi's hatred for his female child becomes evident when Rani gives birth to a daughter who is diagnosed as deaf and dumb, but Balgodi does not feel any pain after hearing this. In fact, he remains indifferent when he says that, "She is just a girl. In fact, it may even be a good thing - a woman who does not answer back" (p. 390).

He, like most men in a traditional patriarchal society, does not like the idea of a daughter at all, as Rani says, "He wants an heir" (p. 227). Nazneen argues with Rani that, "A girl can be an heir, look at you (Rani). Your father chose you to carry his name, not his son" (p. 227). The oppression of Rani, in the light of the Spivak concept of the subaltern, shows that every person in this universe is, somehow, subordinated to someone in one way or the other. Rani is kept under pressure by her husband who always reminds her of his importance as he says that, "without a husband, the General's men will chew you up. My dear girl, you need me" (p. 30). Although, she seems to have an independent existence but, in reality, she like Nazneen is in the clutches of a cruel system where even her husband plays a negative role. Her interdependency on her husband and her staff make her powerless even in her most powerful position of being a Prime Minister of Pakistan. She at times takes strength from her late father, "Papa! You said I was as good as a son" (p. 31) but her husband Balgodi, time and again, makes her realize that she is very much dependent on him. Though she becomes the first prime minister of Pakistan but he is ready to take the credit as he says, "Don't forget you could have never done it without me" (p. 356).

The text reveals the irony that Rani, despite being an educated girl from the elite class, feels the societal pressure as she expresses it to Nazo, "I wish I could show you the fear that grips me all the time. I pretend to be brave, but inside. I'm shaking" (p.41). Rani is aware of the rules that society has put on women only, and she raises her voice against this gender discrimination. She protests that even the rules are made in the name of religion, such as, "Forty lashes. The penalty for a woman found intoxicated. But none for a man" (p.40). She criticizes the authorities who use the name of religion, in order to legitimize their selfish and biased decisions as Tarar (2018) states that faith is used as an instrument of exploitation to widen schisms, rather than as a connection between the mortal and the divine. It is used for violence instead of forgiveness (p.5). Though Rani is a witness to the violence that is unleashed by these men made rules, but she is helpless as she cannot exercise any power to change them. She keeps her strength high and exhibits the limited resistance in the same manner as stated, "The subaltern who wholly resists incorporation by dominant state forms is 'an *ideal figure*,' a utopian concept" (Li, 2009, p.275). She sees suffocation in society especially for women, but she is not allowed to stand against the 'real power'. Rani, in a conversation, she admits her helplessness, she says:

'I'm powerless.'

I could not help but laugh. (Nazneen)

If you are not powerful in the PM's chair then what use is it? (p.267).

The novel depicts that despite being a victim herself Rani too victimizes her subordinate Nazneen whom she thinks "just a nuisance. A zero in my scheme of things" (p. 368). Spivak addresses the same idea when she states: "This marginal position where the other is unknowable does not simply mean that the other does not continue to act or live" (Morton, 2007, p.29). However, the novel shows that

Rani, at times, gets jealous of Nazneen's efforts to attain a status in society and she tries to degrade her by making her realize of her weak position. She says, "You keep forgetting, Nazo, you are a nobody. No family background, no vision, no brains, just a stupid tagalong. Even if I made you the party chair, the public would never accept you" (p. 399-400).

### **Conclusion**

Sabyn Javeri in her debut novel *Nobody Killed Her* narrates the struggle of two leading women as subaltern. The study shows that Javeri, as an author, has studied the oppression of subaltern women from political, historical and social dimensions especially in rural, or half urban settings of the society. The close reading of the novel proves that a subaltern, no matter what happens, tries to raise her voice but she is suppressed due to the various dominating masters and structures of the society. In the novel, both Nazneen and Rani try to fight back the pressure that aims to oppress them but Nazneen is killed and Rani is exploited to an extreme level. Similarly, various other emerging Pakistani English novels portray many dimensions of subaltern women where the reader may also find a ray of hope regarding the voice of the oppressed sections such as children, women, minority and lesbians/gays. These literary works need to be researched well and highlighted in order to generate awareness in the society as well as to bring awareness for the subalterns.

## References

- Abolfathi, M. G., & Pushpa, V. K. (2020). Impact of domestic violence and clash of cultures on subaltern identity in *purple hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. *A global journal of humanities*, 3 (2), 13-20.
- Ambesange Praveen, V. (2016). Postcolonialism: Edward Said & Gayatri Spivak. *Research journal of recent sciences*, 5(8), 47-50.
- Azad, M. A. K. (2014). Treatment of subaltern and diaspora in Amitav Ghosh's fiction from the postcolonial perspective. *Banglavisian research journal*, 14 (1), 119-132.
- Barret, M. (2004), Can the subaltern speak? *History workshop journal*, 58, 359,
- Beverley, J. (1999). *Subalternity and representation: Arguments in cultural theory*. Durham, North California: Duke University Press.
- Chakrabarty, D. (2002). *Habitations of modernity: Essays in the wake of subaltern studies*. USA: University of Chicago Press.
- Dhand, D. (2016). Representation of subaltern voices in Indian English writings highlighting the narrative of subalternity in women. *Research journal of English language and literature*, 1(4), 314.
- Dasgupta, S., & Kivisto, P. (Eds.). (2014). *Postmodernism in a global perspective*. India: SAGE Publications.
- Gandhi, Leela. (2019). *Postcolonial theory: A critical introduction*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Guha, R. (Ed.). (1989). *Subaltern studies VI: Writings on South Asian history*. India: Oxford University Press.
- . (1999). *Elementary aspects of peasant insurgency in colonial India*. US: Duke University Press.
- Heidari, F., & Alborzi, A. R. (2017). Postcolonial study of Ahmad Mahmoud's the neighbors in the light of Spivak's ideas. *Research in contemporary world literature*, 2(22), 337-352.
- Hornby AS. (2005). *Advanced learners dictionary of current English* 7th ed. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Javeri, S. (2017). *Nobody killed her*. India: Fourth Estate Publishers.
- Li, V. (2009). Necroidealism, or the subaltern's sacrificial death. *Interventions*, 11(3), 275-292.

- Lyotard, J. F. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge* (Vol. 10). Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press.
- Mashori, G. M., & Sabah, Z. (2015). *Subalterns can speak Shahraz's message of hope for human equality in Zemindar's Wife*. *ELF*, 17, 183-196.
- Morton, S. (2007). *Gayatri Spivak: Ethics, Subalternity and the critique of postcolonial reason*. Oxford: Polity.
- Riach, G. (2017). *An analysis of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's can the subaltern speak?*. CRC Press.
- Sensebli, B. R., & Fatehi, S. H. (2018). Analysis of the concept of subaltern for Gayatri Spivak in the novel "country of butterflies" writing by Wasini Al-Araj: A case study of women. *journal of modern critical Arabic literature*, 7(13), 55-75.
- Shandilya, K. (2014). Writing/reading the subaltern woman: Narrative voice and subaltern agency in Upamanyu Chatterjee's English, August. *Postcolonial text*, 9(3), 1-16.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). *Can the subaltern speak? Marxism and the interpretation of culture*. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg. 271-313, Urban: University of Illinois
- Spivak, R. G. G. C., & Said, E. W. (1988). *Selected subaltern studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Spivak, G.C. (2006). 'Can the subaltern speak?', in B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, H. Tiffin (eds) *The Post-colonial studies reader*, 2nd Edition, 28-37. Oxford: Routledge.
- Shandilya, K. (2014). Writing/Reading the subaltern woman: Narrative voice and subaltern agency in Upamanyu Chatterjee's English. *Postcolonial text*. 9(3), 2.
- Tarar, M. (2018). *Do we not bleed? Reflections of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century Pakistan*. New Delhi: Aleph Book Company.