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EXPLORING THE VOICES FROM THE MARGIN IN SABYN JAVERI'S AND ELIF SHAFAK'S FICTION

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ABSTRACT

This study is an endeavor to explore the voices of the Subaltern in Elif Shafak's 10 Minutes and 38 Seconds in this Strange World (2019) and Sabyn Javeri's Nobody Killed Her (2017). It further investigates the systematic suppression of the ones who find neither any share in the center nor any right on the discourse of power to express themselves. This research gains insight from Gayatri Spivak's Can the Subaltern Speak? and encompasses Elif Shafak's 10 Minutes and 38 Seconds in this Strange World (2019) and Sabyn Javeri's Nobody Killed Her (2017) as a primary source of data. This study, after a thoroughly conducted textual analysis reaches the findings that Elif Shafak's 10 Minutes and 38 Seconds in this Strange World (2019) and Sabyn Javeri's Nobody Killed Her (2017) are imbued with the instances of Subaltern's speech which is neither heard nor acknowledged. This study analyzes the dilemma of the transgender community, objectification of women and pangs of the poverty-stricken people... The researcher concludes that those lying on the margin despite their utmost effort to represent themselves are silenced or suppressed in a noise of ideologies, and discourse of power which do not let them be heard. The research contends that identity is a process constantly being redesigned and refashioned by the dominant discourse and ideologies and the sincere representation of the Subaltern's identity can redefine their identity which does not make them Other or Inferior.

INTRODUCTION:

The particular research goes to explain the fictions of Elif Shafak's 10 Minutes and 38 Seconds in this Strange World (2019) and Sabyn Javeri's Nobody Killed Her (2017) in the perspective of Subaltern studies. The main focus of this present research is to give light to the point "can the subaltern speak"? The researcher investigates the concept of Javeri as well as Elif Shafak about the suppression of women in the society who want to be heard but is unable to communicate. Even if the person is speaking, no one is ready to listen him either he is talking in his defense or remembering everything before death. The present research exposes the oppression of different classes who are not allowed to talk for their own rights in the society. The whole research has a base of Gayatri Spivak's concept Can the Subaltern Speak? The subalterns are those who know their rights but they can't fight, they can't even raise their voices as they know that there is no one to listening them.

According to Graham Riach (2017), the core problem for the poorest and most marginalized in society (the subalterns) is that they have no platform to express their concerns and no voice to affect policy debates or demand a fairer share of society's goods. Subalterns can't demand about their rights even not of living a simple life. They are only the suppressed one who have to follow others but do not have their own will. They may have will but they are not allowed to speak for their will or rights. They have to live according to the criteria made by the civilized or the superior ones.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

This study aims to answer the following questions;

What are the major causes and consequences suppressing the subaltern's voice in Elif Shafak's and Sabyn Javeri's fiction?

- 1) What are the perspectives of Elif Shafak and Sabyn Javeri about the voice of subalterns and the institutionalized practices for suppressing their voices.?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

The idea of subalterns is derived through Spivak's essay Can the Subaltern Speak? (1998). Subaltern is the word which is firstly used by Antonio Gramsci. Subaltern is the class of people who know their rights, who can raise their voices for themselves or others, who know what is right and what is wrong still they are not capable of taking stand for themselves. They don't raise their voices for their rights. They only accept to serve the dominant class. This domination is not only about class domination or on the basis of power or wealth; this domination is basically the domination on the mental state or mental health. Even a rich or powerful; person can also be a subaltern if he do not raise any voice for his rights.

Can the Subaltern Speak (1998) is an important essay which is addressed by Gayatri Spivak in detail. She talks about the rights of subaltern class basically the women. In the era of colonialism, the value of a woman is only of a machine which can fulfill physical needs of men, give birth to the children, and serve the

whole family and to rise up the children. In short, she is an unpaid servant only. For this reason, Spivak arouse her voice against all these dull and dumb conventions in her essay. She gave the example of a Hindu custom Sati. "In the case of a woman who took her own body at the moment of death to inscribe a certain kind of annulment of all the pre suppositions that underlie the regulative psychology that writes Sati" (Spivak, *The Spivak Reader*, p. 289).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The present research is working on qualitative methodology with a keen study of both the nominated works to probe the causes of becoming a subaltern. It also determines the social pressure on suppressors to act like marginalized on the basis of their power, gender and religion etc. There are two novels which are collected as a primary source of the research including *Nobody Killed Her* (2017) by Sabyn Javeri and *10 Minutes And 38 Seconds in This Strange World* (2019) by Elif Shafak. The primary focus of the research is to show how the people are becoming marginalized and they don't have their right to speak independently. Research investigates how these both writers have shown the marginalization in their works going on around them. These evidences are being analyzed under the concept of Gayatri Spivak *Can the Subaltern Speak?*

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Arundhati Roy has discussed subalterns on the basis of religion and caste system. She has shown the face of the society which is making the difference between different castes to an extreme point. Saha, (2018), has stated "Arundhati Roy felt disturbed with this caste system that is prevailing in the society. Though „The Indian Constitution“ of 1949 outlawed the caste system and discrimination based on social status, still there are certain social rules that must have to be obeyed-particularly in terms of who is allowed to interact with whom" (pg. 84). Arundhati Roy has explained briefly the caste systems through the communists and the elite class characters that are very much possessive about their social status like Baby Kochamma in *God of Small Things* (1997). She does not allow the girl Ammu to be a part of life of the common worker. She has done many attempts on that person to keep him away from their girl. It is her mind set to not accept the common worker as their equal. They have accepted their death but do not allow them to marry. All these systems are banished in 1949. But still there are some people or may be some mind sets which are not allowing them to accept all the castes. The castes, who have considered themselves as the superior one, does not allow the inferior or subaltern to walk openly in streets by saying that if those people have stepped in their footprints then it will be 'ashudh'. Those subalterns are not allowed to cover the upper part of their body.

Shruti (2020) has depicted that "Concentration of power among elites is favorable if elites act as dutiful agents for society as their principal". She depicts the Marxist approach as well as the marginalization of lower class in the work of Huxley's *Brave New World*. She has briefly explained the concept of marginalization in the term paper. Marginalization has not started with Spivak's work and *Brave new world* is an example of it as it is published almost 50years before the concept of Gayatri Spivak. It is obvious that where there are two parties, one will be dominated. It focuses on the powerlessness of the citizens

in the novel that how the government or the higher authorities are continuously suppressing them with their powers. Subaltern does not only means to be oppressed or of low rank but it also focuses on the way which may be the cause of being subaltern. In *Brave New World*, power is that mean. Government knew the rights of the citizens yet they do not care of them. No one is too much daring to say something for their rights and ultimately they became subaltern.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Spivak has given the idea of oppression of class on the lower one and Sabyn Javeri has given its depiction through her present novel. Any person, who does not has his common rights for living is considered as subaltern. Dhakal (2016) has given the introduction to the term as, “refers to any person or group of inferior rank and station whether in terms of race, class, caste, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion. Not only this it also refers to lower strata people of illiterate peasantry, non-elite cultural groups who are under-represented, under-taught, non- canonical and the subordinated group and they are always directly or indirectly influenced by ideologies of dominant class” (p. 111). Sabyn has also depicted the main character of the novel as a subaltern. She has chosen a worker who is a non-elite and nothing more than a maid at first but later on she becomes a shield to her elite mistress yet is dumped again and again when she don't want to use her. She is just an object to her. Her master uses her as a piece of hard iron who can protect her from every hot and cold. This case is just a depiction of many cases which occur in the society. Sometimes, it comes in the limelight but sometimes it is nothing more than a file in many others. “The suspect handed over the body of the victim to Nazir and later escaped in a car. The complainant said he found scars of hot iron and sharp-edged weapon on the body of his daughter” (Correspondent, 2021). A landlord has taken a girl in Pakistan for domestic chores on just 3000 per month salary. And right after 5 months, the girl is dead. The landlords don't even care of her. They handed over the body to father. This is such an inhuman behavior that a girl is killed yet those people who are in power doing not care about it. The landlord knows that he can do anything with his power. He or his family has murdered a child but no one is there to hear the Voice of the family of victim. This is subalternity in the present society. These are the things which makes boundary of subaltern. When elite treat them as a person of third world and don't even consider them human beings.

Javeri shows at every stage to the protagonist that she is nothing. Whenever she wants to say something to her lady boss even in her own favor she is stopped by her. Rani always shows her the right place for her and that is her identity. That is “nobody”. Nazo is “nobody”. She is not allowed to interfere in Rani's personal matters; no matter how much trustworthy she is, but still a “nobody” to her. The servants are becoming subalterns. “In postcolonial term, they are called subaltern – a class who is always subjugated by the powerful class” (Ghosh, 2022). They cannot even raise their voices against this antihuman behavior. If they rise, no one is here to help them.

Sabyn Javeri has probed the main reasons of being a subaltern in the society. She has shown the subalternity of women, men, wife, out of religion and all the aspects which have taken part in making a class subaltern. As Artt, (2018) has

explored the fact “the female body is expected to comply, and the male body is expected to act independently. The subalternity is all about the world” Females are more considered as subaltern. Javeri has shown it in varieties and proved that a subaltern is not necessary is about sex, it is about suppression of a class from the other one. All these things are the major causes that Javeri wants to highlight in the story. It shows the life of every character who is becoming a subaltern under the suppression of another one. Javeri has probed “but it hurts more that I had been discarded yet again like a used tissue. I was dirty secret that must be hidden, bought, bribed” (Javeri, 2017, p. 192). A life of minority or subaltern is not more than a tissue which is useful only when the master wants to. If he has used it then it is obvious that he will throw it. It becomes useless. Society uses the subalterns for their own sake. Sometimes they want benefit from them and sometimes they want to use them. Whatever the reason is, subalterns are always dumped by the will of the oppressor. It is their fate. Nazo also understands it time by time that she is a subaltern who is just used when there is a need of a goat to sacrifice. She has come in front when Rani is in danger. She has sexually involved with person for the sake of career of Rani. But, she also knows that Rani always shows her the limits. She treats her as a personal servant with whom she can do anything. She is like a secret to Rani which should never come in front of the world. She is marginalized and used according to the will of Rani. She is suppressed by her. She cannot raise her voice against all this as no one wants her to speak due to being a subaltern.

Majority in elites think that the poor class has no aim in their lives. All they care about is their tummy full of food. It is correct somehow but there are also many cases where the poor struggle for a healthy life style. Yet the nature of suppressing others does not allow elites to consider them as their equal. They marginalize them on the basis of their status, wealth, race, background and many other reasons. Javeri also thinks same about the elite. She has represented Rani as a woman who is making subalterns others overall. “I suppose it was too much to hope that a poor, hungry, low-class woman like you can dream of something beyond the stomach” (Javeri, 2017, p. 197). Nazo is a made but is continuously humiliated by Rani. This is because she is poor. She does not care about the feelings of Nazo and said whatever she wanted to. Nazo is her loyal but still she is suspected for the crime which she has not done. Hearing herself as poor, low class and hungry is such a shame. But Rani, being elite, thinks that she is okay with it. She does not give any respect to Nazo. If she thinks she has done that blackmailing, she could investigate that by herself before insulting Nazo. But she is dominant in relationship of Nazo and her. She marginalized her on the basis of her domination. Nazo is completely unaware of the whole scenario. She tries to show herself as innocent but Rani is not here to hear her. Being subaltern of Nazo is just due to her background. She lives in an environment where every other one is upper class. So, she should have to maintain her place. No one respects juniors there. They are subalterns.

Javeri has drawn the comparison of rights of elite and dominant classes. She has shown how elites are snatching the rights of poor. “At first they tried nicely. 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 a family. The principal’s PA begged me to give it up and when I didn’t, I started getting threats from unknown people.

They said if I let her study, they would dishonor her, kidnap...’ he broke down” (Javeri, 2017, p. 227). Being a professor of creative writing, she has nailed the main problems of common man which are caused by upper society. Merit is always higher than any relationship. But some of the elites have now made it a common thing that they just bribe the superiors of the seats and get their children enrolls. Javeri has shown this face of elites through the character of Balgodi. A girl becomes eligible of the engineering seat. Her father does not want her to become a subaltern. But that seat is grabbed by Balgodi for his nephew. He has power. So, he has dominated there and marginalizes that girl. When she takes a stand, she is threatening to death and rape. She is a citizen of the same country as Balgodi but still she is not able to get her basic right of education. All the superiors are suppressing her in the name of dignity and marriage. It is now a custom that people think the girls should marry but boys should study as they are the bread earners. But this is a direct way to suppress the women. Women can also earn but then if they do so, society bullies them in different ways like Javeri has portrayed in the text. It is a taboo in the society yet society lives in it. They marginalize women and snatch their basic rights of living ignoring that these are the things which the religion also focuses. But they only marginalize them in different ways.

Nobody Killed Her (2017) is a novel that shows the suppression of the woman all over. It shows different faces of a woman being suppressed. Almost every chapter gives the message that a woman is nothing without a man. A woman can do many things without a man but this is the society which has created such mind concept and do not allow her to do whatever she wants. “I hope you have learnt your lesson. You are nothing without me, understand, nothing? A woman without a man is like a fish out of water. What did you think, Rani? That you could leave me to rot in jail while you played leader-leader? The army and secret services chew you up and you would not even know. It is because of me that you are still in that chair, you understand?” (Javeri, 2017, p. 212). Javeri has pointed out many situations which occur to the women of the text showing them a “nobody”. Rani is a leader yet is suppressed by her husband. It shows the hegemony of a man in the society. He abuses him physically and mentally but she can’t raise her voice against him as he is a man. She knows all his corruption, misdoings and meanness but she is marginalized as she is a woman. It doesn’t matter how much a woman is earning, the only thing which matters is her sex. Asia is suffering with such type of subalternity for a long time. Many people also support their women but again society does not appreciate this thing of them. Rani has also tried to get rid of this hegemony and arrested her husband anonymously. Public come out with the argument that she cannot handle her husband. She has to take the step again and becomes a prisoner of her personal prison. Women are always dependent on men and they take advantage of this thing to make them suppress.

Shafak’s novel *10 Minutes and 38 Seconds in this Strange World* (2019) has set a milestone for the people who are supposed to be inferior in the society due to their works. The novel is full of taboos and myths which has invented by the society and is considered the codes of living. It is a story of prostitute who is not by birth but the society makes it. The novels tell the stories of different characters who have their own reasons to be a new person. This story is all about

self transformation of different characters. It draws a comparison between the past and present lives of the characters, the society has changed their lives towards the worst but they do not have anything to complain. They mould themselves in those characters for livings. It shows their struggles for a better living. It portrays the problems which has changed their lives. It is a story which gives the account that how different sexes are becoming subaltern in the hands of society. It deals with the death of the protagonist. Whole novel is the story which is in subconscious of a woman who is about to die.

There is a time when a person dies. He is dead for the world but his soul is not dead inside. Instead, he realizes what he has done in her life in those minutes. According to Shafak's protagonist, this time period of her is not more than 10 minutes and 38 seconds. She is reminding her whole life in these few minutes. She is also sensing the outside world but foot the world, she is already dead.

Colonial era has ruined the mental abilities of the colonized. It is the responsibility of a postcolonial writer to show the effects of colonialism in the society. They show the face of society with different lenses. Shafak is completing her responsibilities in a much better way. Shafak has shown every bitter reality of her society. "The bastards of Istanbul" is her famous novel which is even banned in turkey as she shows the evil face of turkey. In 10 Minutes and 38 Seconds in this Strange World (2019), she has targeted the society which has changed the life styles of the characters.

Prostitution is considered as a taboo in different societies especially in east. People use them but they also scold them. It is the dual face of the society. The protagonist of the novel is a prostitute. She belongs to a pious family but the happening of her life has made her among the top of prostitutes in Istanbul. Yet, she is a prostitute. So, she is an inferior being.

Poverty makes a person subaltern. When a person has no other choice except to accept the slavery, he accepts of being a subaltern. The mother of protagonist, Binnaz, is also a victim of subalternity. She belongs to a poor family including parents and siblings. She is married to a person who is not of their town but lives several hours away without her consent. She is not his only wife. But she is married to him for the sake of child. Her husband has no child from his first wife. So, with the pressure of elders of the family, he has married to girls who are almost 2 decades younger than him. She does not know where she is marrying. The only thing which she knows is she has no other place to go if she does not live with him. "Be thankful. When you came here you had nothing" (Shafak, 2019, p. 12). As she belongs to a poor family, she is told by her father that she has no more concern with them. They have married her in just age of 18. The in-laws are good but when a girl is 2nd wife of a man, it is always an uncertainty for her. She is told that her origin is now nothing. She is in a continuous threat that if the first wife or the husband throws her out, she has nothing as shelter. The first wife of her husband has threatened her in the very first. She is always told that she is nothing, she has nothing. She is being suppressed by the other lady in the house. She cannot speak for herself as she has no support. No one would hear her in case if she speaks against anything.

There is nothing beyond own children for a woman. Binnaz has to give her first child to other woman. Her husband has married her due to children. When she has given birth to her first baby girl, his first wife has convinced her husband and has the custody of child. She does not want to give her child. But, no one listened she even becomes a victim of mental illness due to this suppression. She is continuously suppressed by her family, husband and his first wife for all of her life. "These powerful men further keep all other institutions like culture, politics, and religion under their strong control. The women, in particular, are subjugated and placed in a subordinated position in such systems. Their mobility is restricted and their dependence upon their men is increased after monopolizing the social institutions" (Yaqoob, 2018, p. 2). The control of all the households of Binnaz is in hands of her husband. So, he drives the car of her life by his own. What to eat wear and do, all these things decides Haroon. He is a fashion designer who designs clothes for western. But he does not allow his women to walk bare headed outside. He marginalizes them of being women.

Many of the rural areas deal women as a piece of flesh for raising children. They believe that the only reason of a woman of creation is to raise child. In villages, people reproduce almost every year. The only work for women is to give birth and later on, when new baby arrives, the older one becomes the responsibility of oldest daughter. She has to raise them and mother has to give birth to a new one. Binnaz also belong to this type of family. She has nine more siblings and she is the eldest one. "Her father had not allowed her to walk the rutted road to town and back every day" (Shafak, 2019, p. 35). Education is the core need of a human being. It is a belief in many areas that a girl should do households while a boy should study. Same is the case here, the first reason is that Binnaz's father has a big family to feed that they do not have enough shoes that everyone can wear. Secondly, she has to take care of the younger siblings. So, she is an illiterate. She becomes marginalized on the basis of becoming an elder moreover a girl.

CONCLUSION:

The present study of Elif Shafak and Sabyn Javeri's fiction in the light of "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1998) concludes that both the writers have exposed the bitter realities of treatment of the suppressing class within their area. Though they have shown everything in a bitter manner but this is the way how the inferior class is being treated by superior one and are considered as "Nobody" whether it is the case of Rani, Nazo or Leila. They all are victims of being subaltern who don't have permission to raise their voices. They are here only for the assistance to others. Both writers has given these classes a strong voice which shows that how they are being suppressed and what should they do for themselves to be equal with others.

This study is qualitative in its nature which has achieved its objectives with the support of the selected texts. The researcher is able to address the problems and answer the questions in the light of the novels. The main focus of the researcher is upon the causes of being a subaltern. It covers all the social taboos happening in the society. It gives an account of elites, families and patriarchal society's role for making a person marginalized. It does not only talk about society making a man subaltern but also the family's contribution in it. It shows how

the people having more knowledge either of power, post or religion are suppressing the one who know lesser.

These writers have answered the question which Spivak has asked that is Can the Subaltern Speak? Yes, they definitely can speak. They have to speak if they want their rights in the world. They are an independent human being on earth. No one has the right to rule them. They have to choose the life for their own. If any other person is having the decision power of them then at least that decision should have the consent of the other person. It is the main right to live. If these characters of the selected texts raised voice despite of hiding from the realities then the ending of their lives must be changed. They have given the threads of their lives by themselves. So, everyone who thinks himself superior has ruled their life with all the powers.

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