"Rainbow Alliance": A Subaltern Study of Selected Pakistani Fiction in English

Sonia Irum
Munazza Yaqoob

Abstract

This paper attempts to address how marginalized communities as represented through the stories of main characters in the selected texts experience exclusion and marginalization through oppression. This oppression makes them confused about their social and cultural identities and keeps them as subalterns – at the periphery. The Pakistani writers of fiction in English have endeavoured to give space to the marginalized communities in Pakistan by a conscious privileging of the subaltern voices which are often silenced in the texts. They seem to reject the categories of discrimination and form a "rainbow alliance" to give voice to various kinds of marginalized groups in Pakistani society which makes us understand and acknowledge the subalterns as autonomous people. In the light of the theories of Subaltern School and Postcolonialism this paper interprets the selected texts i.e. Bina Shah's Slum Child, Uzma Aslam Khan's Trespassing, Mohsin Hamid's Moth Smoke and Mohammed Hanif's Our Lady of Alice Bhatti as representation of subalterns in Pakistan.

1. From Postcoloniality to Subalternism

The discipline of Post-colonial studies approaches literature in ways that intersect with other fields and subfields such as subaltern studies, diaspora studies, feminism, critical race theory, multiculturalism, ecocriticism, indigenous and transnational studies and globalism, etc. It has transformed literary studies in the past three decades by providing flexible line of action to engage with the literary production of empire, colonial and anti-colonial discourse, and the literature of current and former colonies in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, the Americas, and Pacific Islands. Postcolonial theorists and the subaltern school emphasize on making space for multiple voices and it is extensively acknowledged within the discourse that this space must first be made within academia (Prakash, 1994; hooks, 1990; Spivak, 1995). The post-colonial critics and theorists of the subaltern studies have worked to make the stories of those on periphery live. They have also put their efforts to dislodge dominant modes of representation and challenge the hegemonic forces of representation.

Subaltern Studies School (1982) has produced a wide range of literature on marginalized communities. They started with challenging the colonial interpretations of the Indian history which denied the role of the common people--working-class community. The school struggled to bring subordinates from background to front (Prakash, 1994, p. 1475). The subaltern methodology locates more pluralistic and native versions of resistance and struggle. In doing so, the subalternism both in its theory and methodology is more aligned and akin to the Post-Modernist

and Post-Structuralist theses of deconstruction. It equally calls into consideration the role and nature of the social justice movements which attempt to restore and retrieve the subjectivity of those lying in the periphery, subjugated by and within the dominant discourses. It suggests the use and application of a diverse and heterogeneous methodological framework which could encompass the "peoples' history from a very broad range of perspectives" (O'Hanlon, 1998, p. 194). Hence the salient features of subaltern methodology are filling the gaps, making absent into present, (re)filling the emptiness with subaltern consciousness which has always been denied in narratives by the powerful groups (p.196). It insists on a blend and combination of various groups having the experience of marginalization on the basis of class, colour, creed, caste, gender or ethnicity and emphasizes the need to initiate a collective political struggle by them, with a simultaneous acknowledgment that there may be difference in their priority, and strategy to combat against oppression and hegemony in any specific form within the context of their own subjective and collective experiences. This is what the authors have referred to as a "rainbow alliance shared among a range of oppositional voices" in order to create a wide and versatile arena of political struggle and resistance (O'Hanlon & Washbrook, 1991, p. 150). These postcolonial theorists motivate to give marginalized and subaltern groups a right to raise voice against their oppression and exploitation and be heard. Referring to Ashis Nandi and Partha Chatterjee, Patai and Corral (2005) make argument to allow the marginalized community to "chart its own future" (p. 576). Gayatri Spivak (1995) in this regard states how representations, especially of marginalized groups from developing countries, are intimately linked to positioning of socioeconomic, gendered, cultural, geographical, historical and institutional identities (p. 271-313).

The small ethnicities and cultures are viewed as insignificant existences or non-entities and any distinctive identity on the bases of race, class, gender and religion is viewed as quantifying to nothing. The separate entity of the indigenous people, peasants, farmers and other marginalized groups are largely made to lose in the broader and general category of dominant culture and society. This denies the separate agency and subjectivity of the subaltern groups and they become passive. The passivity is historically conditioned in the subaltern groups so that they can never come to terms with their own silence and shadowy subjectivity, and which in turn manifests in their submission to the broader and general categories made by the mainstream historiographical accounts (Said, 1979; Spivak, 1995; Foucault, 1972).

2. Subalternity and Pakistani Fiction

Subalternity can thus be denoted as "a position of relative dependence towards another, hegemonic position, describing a difference in power, income, education and/or health. This can be found on the national and global level, as not just individuals but also whole countries can be seen as being in a subaltern position with respect to a hegemon" ("The Cosmopolitan Subaltern", 2008). In the light of the above mentioned statement the deep engagement of the Pakistani authors with the contemporary issues of social (in)justice is an effort towards "listening to the voice of subaltern with empathy and compassion and to locate these voices into multiple sources and sites" (O'Hanlon & Washbrook, 1991, p. 141-2). These authors have penetrated into an "area of darkness which the dominant modes of historical discourse have failed to penetrate" (O'Hanlon,

1998, p. 195) and they have brought into light this area of darkness. These authors have responded to the "hidden stories" of the marginalized, victimized and silenced communities (O'Hanlon & Washbrook, 1991, p. 144). They have shown how characters are resisting and challenging power structures and how they are suffering the experience of othering and marginality in multiple forms. These writers have consciously kept into consideration the diversity and heterogeneity of these subaltern groups (Prakash, 1994, p. 1480) to bring a "sense of wholeness" (hooks, 1990, p. 341). In this way Pakistani novels have brought some of the most crucial issues in the past few decades and formed a *rainbow alliance* with a band of different colours, cultures and traditions to give representation to these marginalized communities.

This paper will explore this spectrum of subalternity as reflected in the selected texts to show that "subordinated people do not experience their circumstances passively", but most of the time are caught in a vicious circle to "negotiate their positions in society" (Bahl, 2000, p. 87). All these stories open with dim, dark and gloomy pictures and most of the characters remain dark, ugly and marginalized. This makes the readers realize the multiple ways of exploitation done to the minority and less privileged groups in our society. Therefore, the work of these authors is an effort to amplify the "small echoes of protest" (hooks, 1990, p. 343) of marginalized groups so that they can be acknowledged as mainstream. Through their works they are providing a platform for the distinct voices to be heard.

Gora Kabristan as a Symbol of Silence and Subalternity in Bina Shah's *Slum Child*

Subaltern dilemma is seen in Bina Shah's *Slum Child* (2010) which is the story of a nine-year old Punjabi Christian girl, Laila Massih, an unfortunate girl who experiences the death of her beloved sister Jumana, emotional collapse of her mother Zainab, abandoning of her father, and physical threats from her uncle. When her step father decides to sell her to his friend to pay of his debts she runs away and takes refuge in one of the houses her mother works as a maid. She keeps escaping; from school, from her own home, from the family Ansaris which shelters her. She is caught in the vicious circle of oppressions, most important of which is marginalization. Her subordinate social position presents a bewildering picture in the novel. Laila's struggle is of restoring and retrieving the subjectivities of the subalterns. She tries to rise above all the odds that society has imposed on her, economical, patriarchal, emotional, ethnic divisions. Throughout the story she tries to maintain the balance between her own beliefs and teachings of her Muslim teacher Apa, between Christianity and Islam. She is distressed when her faith basis is considered imperfect while she sees the Muslim religious fundamentalism classes of the society. That is why Laila is unable to share the joys of Muslim Eid as Muslims never shared in their happiness at Easter or Christmas which makes her feel "strange and small" (p. 21). For her such differences are like an "ocean between our world and theirs" (p. 21).

She starts her story from her life in "Issa Colony,...one of the largest slums in Karachi" (p. 6), a "wasteland" (p. 54), a "sleepy, struggling and vulnerable" place (p. 131) where the life is cruel as she thinks (p. 23). In slums there are desperate people driven to suicide (p. 132) not because of the "terrible conditions" in which they are forced to live – but because of the "loss of hope" as dominant communities and powerful groups have blocked their paths and closed doors in their

faces, they find their lives devoid of faith and purpose" (p. 133). They are considered "inferior", "*karanta*" (p. 29) "lowest of the low" (p. 52) "outcast, unwanted, unloved" (p. 53), "unlucky ones with no savings, no security" (p. 104) living in dust and filth with "uncertain lives" (p. 63) as they have to "trade years of [their] lives just to sustain life for another heartbeat" and this all seems "utterly unjust" to her (p. 104). Jobs available for them are serving as teaboys, mechanics, housemaids, beggars etc. in which they have to face "indignities" (p. 7-8).

Laila is brought up at the "site of deprivation" (hooks, 1990, p. 341). A strong sense of deprivation and being underclass is felt when Laila tells that there is no place for them to go after they leave their one-room slum school as "[t]here are no jobs magically waiting for us; no nice offices for us to go to, no smart clothes for us to wear" (p. 24). They are deprived and "always feeling slightly hungry – and not always for food" but many other basic necessities of life (p. 19). Laila feels there is a "vast difference" between their worlds (p. 74), an unbridgeable gap between have and have-nots when she meets Madam Ansari who lives in the luxurious housing society; Defence. Ansari's big house makes her feel "as small and as insignificant as a cockroach" (p. 79), "a stain" which can be mopped up from the floor by the rich as "powerful sponge" (p. 161). She is utterly sad to think that children of the Ansari's can never be her friends as her world does not work this way; they have "so much" and she has "almost nothing – not in terms of money or clothes, but in terms of knowledge in their heads" because they have money and can travel and they have seen the world. She wants them to "share at least a little of these things" with her (p. 174) but she is dissatisfied with the vast gulf between their worlds (p. 82) and feels ashamed of herself just for "still existing" (p. 85). But no matter how beautiful Defence appears to be, to her it is "still strange and hazardous" territory" (p. 143) which intensifies her being insignificant in the world though people like her who are the servants of these upper class Muslims practically look after their houses and provide them comfort but nobody acknowledges and it goes unrewarded.

She faces humiliation at the Gora Kabristan as the naughty Muslim boys spit at her feet and call her mad and grin to say, "Christians – they're all like that" and for Laila they appear devils (p. 111). Muslim community think of them as the species of mistrust just because they are Christians (p. 60) and that is why she wants to slap Ansari's daughter Maryam who accuses her of immoral behaviour. She wants to shout out to them that she is a "good girl" and knows what people say about Christians – that they are "fast...loose...open [their] legs for anyone and everyone, and sometime for free" but she is "as virgin as Maryam" is (p. 213).

It is confusing for her to think that she is an outsider to the world she inhabits. For her she lives "within the world outside" but she along with her community are "not allowed" to be the part of outside world so she sees her world as "disenfranchised" but struggles to attain "permanence" (p. 7). She observes women of her slum coming back from jobs as "defeated armies, crushed but determined to rise again even in the midst of their sorrows" (p. 103). It is painful for her to see her people continuously "disintegrate" (p. 122) and suffer "dislocation" (p. 123). Therefore, even being at the margin Laila tries to "negotiate and enact [her] agencies" to legitimize her voice and participate in the dominant culture (Dutta, 2011, p. ix-x) as at one point in the story she wants to tell Ansaris that being a slum child doesn't mean she is "stupid and illiterate" but she is caught

into cleaning the debris of those who call themselves civilized (Shah, 2011, p. 167). Her community people are not allowed to express their Christian belief for that brings trouble (p. 19-20) since they have no power to fight for their religious rights. Her struggles are directed to learn a "vital skill" to "fit in" by being "nondescript" and underclass in a Muslim area (p. 19) which frustrates her. Cruel and unjust attitude of the dominant Muslim community in Karachi makes her feel that her people are "like the mosquitoes" that are born in "pools of stagnant rainwater, hatched from sprinklings of larvae that floated on the scummy surface". They are like "insects" that teem, buzz and flow from "one pile of rotting garbage to another" (p. 51).
Laila has come across with people of different ethnicity which never disturbs her as she gladly accepts them as part of her life. She meets with Najeeb Pathan from Mardan, Haroon Makrani from Lyari, Hindu Rekha and many others. But sadly she experiences the society as divided on the basis of ethnicity, religion, cast, financial status etc. in a negative way which makes it all chaotic for her; she lives in Karachi where Shias are "gunned down in their mosques" and Sunnis are "bombed in retaliation" and its not called a war like in Iraq but a normal routine (p. 173).

A multitude of colours and cultures is seen in the Ansari house as each one of the workers at the house has come from different places: Ghulam Rasool, watchman from a village in Sindh, cook Farid from Bangladesh, Pathan driver Ismail from the North, maid Saleema from Punjab. Even the Ansaris are Urdu-speaking as their parents migrated from India after Partition. Their children Maryam, Jehan and Sasha are born here but they also half-belong to Canada (p. 246). This setting of the house represents that despite different backgrounds, differences and races things can go smoothly with little tolerance and respect. However, Laila faces hard times in breaking the barriers of differences. She being Christian is the victim of persecution from Muslims around her (p. 174). None of the Muslim servants wants to touch the dog that Ansaris have bought as a lick from its tongue would defile them and they will have to wash themselves again to pray so it all falls upon Laila to feed, clean and bathe it every day. She is not even allowed to touch the water pipe by the orthodox Muslim Gardner Asim and he flinches when she calls her "*brother*" (p. 192). Instead he gives her a leaked plastic bucket saying, "Wash will do you good, too, girl. Everyone knows that Christians stink" and leaves with a "disdainful look" at both the dog and her (p. 193). She is repeatedly made to live in "segregated world" (hooks, 1990, p. 342) but she finds a little space for her identity in the end by becoming close to Ansari children with her love and compassion. She thinks, "Were we not all human before the slum had touched us; all" (Shah, 2011, p. 151).

Speaking from the Margins: Uzma Aslam Khan's *Trespassing*

Salaamat in Khan's *Trespassing* (2004) is also seen "[s]peaking from margins. Speaking in resistance" (hooks, 1990, p. 343). *Trespassing* is a story of Salaamat who is oppressed to identify himself with the land of his roots. He is a warm-hearted boy who belongs to fishermen community in the village of the coast of Sindh. He is disturbed when he comes to know that "the foreign trawlers have stolen their sea. They trespass" (Khan. 2004, p. 2). He is deeply saddened over the loss of his traditional indigenous occupation of fishing and moves to city to earn livelihood because other human beings from industrial business have trespassed his sea boundary. Salaamat is "afraid" of these people from the corporate world; these industrialists for him are intruders and

destroyers of his rooted life (p. 2). He feels miserable to see that he along with his mother has to work for "those who displaced them" (p. 131-32). The industrialists profit on Salaamat's land by exploiting him and his indigenous community. It hurts Salaamat to see his village "pushed to the periphery (p. 131-32). Hence, *Trespassing* seems to represent the intrusion of industrial world over indigenous world of Sindh. As a consequence of his resistance to this infringement he is "bashed", "beaten" (p. 121), he "vomits", "swoons" and is "blind with pain" (p. 3). The narrative supports the local indigenous human community and the story becomes trespassing of the capitalists into the indigenous cultures. Salaamat's companion at the shore Hamid Bhai of Mohana also mourns the loss of their rooted land when he tells Salaamat how his people populated the river for thousands of years, "but now were forced to find other means" (p. 401). People "weep now" because of pollution and stagnant filth in the water due to industrial interference (p. 401-02). The memories of his lost land always haunt him after he comes to city. His ear transmits "echo of a fading sea" (p. 121). He feels severe pain to recall his rooted land. His association with the land is his indigenous identity but when he reaches Karachi he feels loss of self-identity due to loss of place. Beauty, freshness and purity of the sea life is again missed when he smells "no salt in the air, only smoke and gasses that made his chest burn" (p. 126). Everything appears alien to him and fear of being oppressed makes him duck into his den (p. 139), avoid speech, socialize with no one (p. 127). He earnestly tries to regain his lost land and traditions which makes him is psychologically and physically sick. He is disturbed and sad and therefore resolves never to belong to anyone as he feels faithlessness and emptiness in life (p. 400-01). The dehumanized, unhealthy and corrupt atmosphere of the city and his lost link with the indigenous life makes him grieved and hopeless. He suffers marginalization when people in Karachi call him "foreigner", a "machera" (low cast), "black", "ajnabi" (p. 128), "alien", a fish with "rotten smell" (p. 129). It disillusions him when everything about him "his looks, accent, language" is "mocked and shredded" by the people (p. 129). Enraged, he thinks, "How dare they call *him* the outsider when it was *his* people who were the original inhabitants of Karachi? (p. 131-32). The narrative shows him as "an insider, but still on the fringe" (249). Hence Karachi city becomes a land of "ajnabis" (strangers) for Salaamat (p. 243). He starts seeing all others living in urban areas of Karachi as alien to his land of Sindh (p. 135). It tortures him to be "dragged into worlds that [are] not his" (p. 233) and life becomes disordered, nothing seems at right place (p. 255). The loss of roots disintegrates him. He becomes a gangster, a killer (p. 389), corrupt in dealings (404), wild (p. 377), and cognitively distorted (p. 256, 384, 392), addict (p. 232), and sexually pervert (p. 362-63) because of his disoriented identity and being an outcast. Salaamat's story is a "pain of crossing into, or inhabiting, of finding oneself in alien territory" (Nadarajah, 2005, p. 71) and so he also acquires subaltern identity in the society dominated by capitalists.

The Insider Subaltern: Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke*

Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* (2000) is set in a divided Lahore of rich and poor. It is a story of Darashikoh Shehzad, also called Daru, an account manager who is fired from his banking job. He is marginalized as a working-class common man by the rich group of the society. *Moth Smoke* is about the existence of elite class and marginalization of working class through the economic boundaries created by the dominant groups of the society to keep these working class subaltern groups at the periphery. Daru gets caught up in the socioeconomic factors of the modern city and

is shadowed by the rich, powerful and privileged class and the whole country suffers the "wastefulness of a privileged few" (p. 106). He points out to the rich community as "[t]hey're rich enough not to work unless they feel like it, so they think the rest of us are idiot for settling for jobs we don't love" (p. 44). Desperate, Darashikoh falls to drug addiction and illicit relationships with Mumtaz, his best friend's wife. He keeps falling like a moth throughout the narrative as he is dejected of the differences around. Difference between Ozi, his rich best friend and Daru highlights the difference between a man with money and connections and a middle class, jobless man. Ozi calls him a "social misfit" who looks at him with a "puppy-dog affection" (p. 188) as he feels satisfied to think that Daru depends upon his favours. The money-oriented division is highlighted in the story when readers come to know that Ozi gets foreign education because of his elite status while Daru who is smarter is unable to make his way being a middle class citizen. He goes to eight banks, "eight c.v.'s, seven flat-out rejections" (p. 52) because "[i]t's all about connections" (p. 40) and the eighth interviewer tells him to "know some really big fish" (p. 53). A degree in marketing, foreign education tag and resourceful connections make an individual secure a respectable job in Lahore. Good opportunities are not available to Daru being a middle class man. Therefore, rich people around turn him out into a social outcast. He loses his identity by the elite groups. He is sick of people who "impose feudal hierarchy" on him and tell him that they can have him "thrown on the street" (p. 21). At Ozi's house he feels uncomfortable when his rich friends don't bother to pay any attention at him. "They have", he thinks, "sized me up, figured out I'm a small fish" (p. 77). He hates being looked down upon by rich and he thinks, "These rich slobs love to treat badly anyone they think depends on them, and if selling them dope makes them think I depend on them, I just won't do it" (p. 144). For Claudia Perner (2011), Daru "shares the violent anger of "the great uncooled" (p. 24) because he is denied "justice and dignity" (p. 25).

Darashikoh Shehzad feels "an insecurity, a disease that gnawe[s] at him day and night". He fears the "loss of social status" (Hamid, 2000, p. 109). From an attractive human being Daru starts descending to become a darker person with instability in unstable Pakistan. Poor Daru is later executed for the crime rich Ozi has committed. Suppressing the voice of poor makes him suffocated. He feels detached and alienated in a society ruled by rich groups of the society. His disconnection with the privileged brings him all the misfortunes. He starts moving to moral and spiritual deterioration. He indulges in drug addiction to dissociate himself from this corrupt society which marginalizes him. His drug-dealer friend Murad Badshah is also victim to corrupt and discriminatory circumstances of Pakistan and despite having degree in M.A English he is unable to find reasonable job due to lack of influence and connections. Daru feels insecure and struggles to pull himself out of the corrupt and degenerating economic rules. He smokes his life to his end. His life becomes the story of disintegration, a fractured and stratified Pakistani society where a Pajero costs more than Daru's house (p. 25). Greed of the rich impacts devastatingly the poor. At one point Ozi says, "You have to have money these days...you need a Pajero or a Land Cruiser...you have to go abroad...you need private security guards… People are pulling their pieces out of the pie, and the pie is getting smaller" (p. 184-85).

In the society immersed in poverty, bureaucratic corruption, political corruption and judicial corruption people like Daru are affected and marginalized by "extensive industrialism, burgeoning

commercialism and social-climbing" as pointed out in a review by Elaine Edgar (2013). Daru is sick of discriminatory attitude of the society and tells Murad, "Some men drink the blood of other men" (Hamid, 2000, p. 42). He is dejected and degenerated and turns frentic: "[M]y mouth is dry and I'm zoned on hairy [heroin], so I don't know how well I can talk. If they ask me what I'm looking for, I might shoot them. I think shooting something might calm me down. I feel hysterical" (p. 232).

Huge gap between haves and have-nots is highlighted when Daru's childhood is revealed where he is deprived of an achievement just because he could not afford a video game, "If I had an Atari at my house, I could have scored double what you did" (p. 189) and Ozi replies, "You might as well take mine, then. You'll never have one unless my family gives it to you" (p. 190). He is "humiliated" and "mocked" (192) from the very start of his life. For Ozi he is like a pet animal who is slave to its master and Ozi thinks he can shoot Daru like a "favourite dog gone rabid" (p. 193). It's a society where middle class community has no control over their destinies and are "at the mercy of the powerful" (p. 225). People are now "fed up with subsisting on the droppings of the rich" (p. 213) and want "basic dignity as a human being and the opportunity to prosper regardless of his status at birth" (p. 225).
He is victimized by the ruthlessly stratified society in which powerful groups possessing wealth subjugate and oppress the low status people and keep them at the margins for their benefit. Daru as a "fragile" middle-class subject becomes a "hard man with shadowed eyes, manacled, cuffed, dishevelled.... A man capable of anything and afraid of nothing." He is afraid of nothing because "he has nothing left to lose" (Mendel, 2003). At the end it turns out to be story of his innocence (Hamid, 2000, p. 245) and he is left with "unfed, unslept body, bending weak legs, bringing [him] to the earth, leaving [him] on [his] knees" (p. 239), his life is "falling apart" (p. 241) and his "existence" he feels is "an agony" (239). His disability to have connections relegates him to a subaltern status.

Lady(ing) of Alice Bhatti in Mohammad Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*

Alice Bhatti of Mohammad Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) is also subjected to extreme subalternization by confirming to almost all the subaltern classes of the society i.e. woman, nurse, Christian, poor etc. and therefore, she experiences ethnic, religious, and gender violence. She is a Catholic nurse in Sacred Heart Hospital for All Ailments, Karachi. Profession of Nursing is an important part of health care system as nurses take care of families and individuals but in a patriarchal society this profession is vulnerable to subalternity and oppression. As a nurse she is treated like "garbage bins in uniform" in the operation theatre (p. 175). Alice Bhatti is harassed by senior doctors, patients and relatives of the patients. Gender oppression and religious fundamentalism also marginalize her so she marries a Musla "hoping to rise above the stench that is her daily bread" (p. 92) but sister Hina Alvi who hides her Christianity for her safety from Muslims tells Alice on her marriage that a "married Muslim nurse is not much better than a single Christian nurse. You just become a slave multiplied by two" (p.132).

Alice coming from poorest social strata suffers depravity. She has a malnourished body as in her house "starvation is passed off as fasting...every last week of the month dinner is bread soaked in

water...milk is taken without sugar and tea without milk...meat is had when someone gets married or dies...dhal and rice is a Sunday special and every fourth Sunday of the month is compulsory Lent" (p. 93). She is warm-hearted and loved by the patients of the psychiatric ward but sometimes for Alice "life is preceded by a ritual humiliation.....Too many humiliations" (p. 55). People humiliate her by thinking her as their personal maid on duty (p. 58). She puts her life in danger when she injures a man who tries to abuse her but the law institution of the country also discriminates and she is "punished for resisting an armed assault" (p. 77). Alice has to submit to a hegemon just because of her religion and low status as "law is the eternal whore for those who can pay for its upkeep" and she is sentenced to eighteen months in prison (p. 49). In Sunday book review Parul Sehgal (2012) writes, "Alice's body is a battleground under constant assault by "lewd gestures, whispered suggestions, uninvited hands on her bottom"" and she terribly suffers male oppression. Alice thinks it's a "nation of perverts" who call nurse a "*sister*" but then degrade the profession (Hanif, 2011, p. 55). She is told by Mr. Dulhousie that the Christians "need to do more. Get out more often, mingle, learn to live with people outside the Colony" (p. 94) but she observes that outside French colony "some people do not want to drink from the same glass that she has drunk from, others will not take a banana from the same bunch that she has taken a banana from", she has to live being an "untouchable". She only hopes for one privilege that same people who "wouldn't drink from a tap that she has touched" shouldn't be "touch[ing] her without her explicit permission" or "poking their elbows into her breast...rub against her" (p. 95).

Intolerant attitude of the society is highlighted when she is victimized for her religion too as her room that she shares with other three Christian girls at the nursing school is called "'the kafir den'" because they believe Pakistan only belongs to Musalman" (p. 172). She is called a "Yassoo slut" (p. 172). Christians like her are victimized for their low-caste origins, they are called "Choohras" which decreases their social status as sweepers, they are considered untouchable. "These Muslas," says Joseph Bhatti, father of Alice, "will make you clean their shit and then complain that you stink." (p. 1). These marginalized groups are made complacent objects of dominant power groups as in front of the Muslim interviewing panel she feels herself "frog...being too small for this world" (p. 6) where its believed that "all sweepers are Christians" (p. 8) and a "Christian Choohra reciting the Holy Quran" depresses Muslims and they're not sure if it's legal (p. 45). Her father Joseph Bhatti is also sick of the discriminatory behaviour of the Muslims and says: "We were here before the Christians came, before the Muslas came. Even before the Hindus came. I am not the son of this soil. I am the soil" (p. 49). He is called the "Choohra, an untouchable" (p. 50). Once Dr Pereira in his community work days tries to get him off the opium, he says, "If I am going to be called bhangi all my life, I might as well have some bhang". Later he launches rants against him exposing their hypocrisy and double standards, "Look at him lecturing us; we are the children of this land, we have lived here for thousands of years and they are just Goan kachra that drifted here on the waves of the Arabian Sea. Now they'll teach us how to be Yassoo's children when they are embarrassed by the fact that we are supposed to be brothers in faith. They'll teach us good manners. What are they? Our nannies? You know what they think? They think we are shit-cleaners. Yes, we are shit-cleaners, but what are they? Shit" (p. 50).

The marginalization is extreme when Alice's comes to know that her father used to eat in Choohra dishes in rich Dr. Preiera's house where he worked and he was avoided for the fear of spreading

leprosy. He tells, "[t[hey hovered around me at a distance thinking that if I touched something it would get contaminated" (p. 51). He tells that people "cross over to avoid my shadow" but actually they are scared of getting "contaminated by their own refuse" (p. 51). He again says, "Choohras were here before everything. Choohras were here before the Sacred was built, brefore Yassoo was resurrected, before Muslas came on their horses, even before Hindus decided they were too exalted to clean up their own shit. And when all of this is finished, Choohras will still be here" (p. 52). Hence the story has a humanist approach to recognize the differences and explore the spaces in the margins which can lead to "a much better understanding of the empowerment of individuals, groups and relationships and this, in turn, can lead to the transformation of existing and over-arching systems, policies and procedures in which the individuals, groups and interconnected networks are embedded" (Nadarajah, 2005, p. 72).

3. Conclusion

What unites all these novels is their response towards the marginalized, weaker and unprivileged groups of the society. These writers represent characters' quest for cultural roots and identity. They seem opposed to the division of caste because it is based on degradation of human beings. They seem in search of unity, rationality and self-awareness. Representation of these marginalized groups can serve as a vehicle for circulation and dissemination of their voice and rights. These fictional representations of subaltern groups may get embodied in institutions and inform policies and practices in Pakistan in a positive way. They respond to the need for comprehensive representation of these subaltern groups. Drawing on contemporary issues ranging from globalization to the social justice movements, their work can encourage reformists, activists, and scholars to question the limits of the space of theses marginalized groups in order to develop a fairer system at the local, national, and global levels.

References

Bahl, V. (2000). Situating and Rethinking Subaltern Studies for Writing Working Class History. Dirlik, A., Bahl, V., and Gran, P. (Eds.). *History after the Three Worlds: Post-Eurocentric Historiographies*. Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. 85-115.

Dutta, M. (2011). *Communicating Social Change: Structure, Culture, and Agency.* New York: Routledge.

Edgar, E (2013, July 19). Book Review: 'Moth Smoke'. [Review of the book *Moth Smoke*, by M. Hamid]. *Between the Lines.* Retrieved from http://betweenthelines.in/2013/07/book-review-moth-smoke-by-mohsin-hamid/

Ferguson, R. (1990). 'Introduction: Invisible Centre'. Ferguson, R., Grever, M., Minh-ha, T., West, C. (Eds.). *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Hamid, M. (2000). *Moth Smoke*. India: Penguin Books.

Hanif, M. (2011). *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*. India: Random House India.

Hooks, B. (1990). Marginality as Site of Resistance. Ferguson, R., Grever, M., Minh-ha, T., West, C. (Eds.). *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Khan, U. (2004). *Trespassing*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Mendel, E. (2003). Invisible Borders: Mohsin Hamid's Moth Smoke. [Review of the book *Moth Smoke*]. *MM THE MILLIONS EST* 2003. Retrieved from http://www.themillions.com/2012/11/invisible-borders-mohsin-hamids-moth-smoke.html

Nadarajah, Y. (2005). Community and Spaces for Engagement. *Local-Global: Identity, Security, Community* (1), 64-78.

O'Hanlon, R. (1988). Recovering the Subject Subaltern Studies and Histories of Resistance in Colonial South Asia. *Modern Asian Studies* (22) 1, 189-224.

O'Hanlon, R., Washbrook, D. (1991). After Orientalism: Culture, Criticism, and Politics in the Third World. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34(1), 144-167.

Patai, D., Corral, W.H. (Eds.). (2005). *Theory's Empire: An Anthology of Dissent*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Perner, C. (2011). Tracing the Fundamentalist in Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. *ariel: a review of international english literature* (41) 3-4, 23-31.

Prakash, G. (1994). "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism". *The American Historical Review* (99) 5, 1475-1490.

Said, E. (1979). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.

Sehgal, P. (2012, June 15). Interpreter of Maladies: 'Our Lady of Alice Bhatti' [Review of the book *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*]. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/17/books/review/our-lady-of-alice-bhatti-by-mohammed-hanif.html?r=0

Shah, B. (2010) *Slum Child*. Chinnai: TRANQUEBAR PRESS.

Spivak, G. (1995). Can the Subaltern Speak?. Ashcroft, B, Griffiths, G, Tiffin, H. (Eds.) *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. New York, NY: Routledge. The Cosmoplolitan Subaltern: Marginalized Literature and Culture in the Globalizing World. (2008). *8th Annual Students Conference*, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Retrieved from http://www2.hu-berlin.de/amerika/asc/cosmopolitan/cs_intro.html