



RESEARCH PAPER

Hegemony and Resistance in Aysha Baqir's *Beyond the Fields*: A Gramscian Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The research paper examines the themes of cultural hegemony and counter-hegemonic resistance in Aysha Baqir's *Beyond the Fields* (2019). Drawing upon Antonio Gramsci's theoretical concepts of hegemony and counter-hegemony, the study analyzes the text to understand how it positions its characters as agents or victims of cultural hegemony in a patriarchal society. The research is qualitative in nature and explores the complex and multilayered dynamics of hegemony in the novel's postcolonial Pakistani society. The findings reveal that economy and culture play essential roles in the emotional, sexual, and social subjugation and dehumanization of the proletariat, especially women. However, Gramsci's counter-hegemonic intellectuals like Zara and Umar give a sense of hope by revealing, challenging and subverting the hegemonic patriarchal structures. This study of hegemony in the recent Anglophone Pakistani novels like *Beyond the Fields* (2019) offers a foundation for future researchers to explore hegemonic power structures and counter-hegemonic resistance in fiction and society.

KEYWORDS

Gender Dynamics, Hegemony, Patriarchal Oppression, Power Relations, Counter-hegemonic Resistance

Introduction

The study of cultural hegemony in Anglophone Pakistani literature has gained profound attention in the last few decades. Scholars have examined the establishment, implementation, and negation of Hegemony in multiple contexts. In his work *Pakistan: A Modern History* (1998), Ian Talbot recapitulates the historical development of hegemony in Pakistan and its impact in present times. In this work, Talbot links hegemonic control with colonial rule. He argues that local elites played a significant role in maintaining British dominance in the country. They used both coercion and consent to gain control over the natives. However, this control did not end after independence. In fact, after independence, Pakistan's ruling elite continued to wield power by shaping the national identity. In order to maintain their control over marginalized groups, the ruling elite of Pakistan uses different tools of cultural hegemony, including religion, education, and media. With the help of different cultural institutions, they control people's minds to preserve inequality and suppress counter-narratives. Other notable contributions include Mohammad and Conway's *Political Culture, Hegemony, and Inequality Before the Law* (2005), which examines how the Pakistan government uses the disguise of religion to maintain its hegemonic control in society, Ayesha Jalal's *Self and Sovereignty* (2002), which describes the effect of colonial legacies on the national consciousness of South Asians, and Saifullah's *Gramsci*,

Hegemony and Civil Society in Pakistan (2018), which depicts the role of civil institutions in developing hegemonic power relations in Pakistan.

Moreover, scholars have explored the concept of hegemony within a political context and studied the influence of cultural institutions in the construction and rejection of the hegemonic dominance of the ruling elite in Pakistan. Religious, educational and political institutions play a significant role in shaping and maintaining hegemonic structures, as seen in Ullah's *Male Hegemony through Education: Construction of Gendered Identity* (2012), Zaman's *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (2010), Toor's *The State of Islam: Culture and Cold War Politics in Pakistan* (2011) and Mohmand's work *Crafty Oligarchs, Savvy Voters: Democracy Under inequality in Rural Pakistan* (2019). These works not only explore the emergence of hegemony but also identify different ways in which it operates in modern societies. These works are very significant for understanding the experience of subalterns in Pakistan. The present study is important because it helps expose different means through which hegemony is constructed, challenged, and redefined in the context of post-colonial Pakistan. Although different scholars have already explored the presence of hegemony in Pakistani literature, nobody has studied the hegemonic structures in *Beyond the Fields* (2019) from the perspective of Gramsci's theory of hegemony. Over the years, various scholars from different disciplines and societies have adopted Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony to gain a significant understanding of the nature of power within societies. Ahmed (2023), Maryani (2022), Haque (2020), and Adani (2024) have particularly used Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and resistance in their works to evaluate how hegemonic structures work in the Pakistani context. The mechanism of hegemony and the counter-hegemonic resistance to it have been part of the intellectual debate. Gramsci's theory is widely explored in Anglophone Pakistani literature, but nobody has realized its potential to illuminate the complexities of hegemony in Baqir's *Beyond the Fields* (2019). This omission provides a rich area for exploring Gramsci's notions' role in uncovering the complex layers of cultural hegemony in *Beyond the Fields* (2019). The current research aims to explore the influence of cultural spheres on the construction and maintenance of hegemony in patriarchal society. Specifically, it focuses on Baqir's novel to examine the construction of cultural hegemony and its counter-hegemonic resistance within the postcolonial Pakistani context.

Literature Review

Aysha Baqir is an Anglophone Pakistani English Novelist whose work *Beyond the Fields* (2019) significantly contributes to Anglophone Pakistani literature. It provides a deep understanding of the cultural, social, economic, and political struggles marginalized individuals face in rural Pakistan. Set against the backdrop of patriarchy and rural poverty, the story revolves around the life of two central characters: Tara, a rape victim in a patriarchal society, and Zara, a resistant woman. The story unfolds after Zara's twin sister, Tara, is raped, which brings to the surface the harsh realities of a patriarchal society that is bound to follow established cultural norms. Through the depiction of Tara's traumatic experience and Zara's struggle to protect her, Baqir highlights the dynamics of hegemonic societies in which individuals lack agency and societal norms prioritize an individual's honour and reputation over justice. *Beyond the Fields* (2019) critically examines the intersection of hegemony and resistance in Pakistani society. Through this work, Baqir sheds light on the difficulties of rural life, the systemic oppression of marginalized individuals, and the requisite for modification in cultural spheres. With rich descriptions of village life and the agonizing journeys of its characters, the novel accentuates both the injustices proletariats face and their unshakeable spirit in the face of the overwhelming adversity.

Thematically, *Beyond the Fields* (2019) explores power relations between powerholders and the populace. The story depicts the spread of hegemonic control through cultural spheres in society and explores the role of individual resistance against that control. Baqir's narrative examines the constructions of hegemony in Pakistani contexts and discloses how patriarchal relations affect these constructions. In its postcolonial context, *Beyond the Fields* (2019) offers a profound investigation of the linkage between power and culture. It examines the impact of cultural hegemony on Pakistani society and provides a fertile ground for a potent debate on hegemony, patriarchy, culture, and resistance in postcolonial studies.

Researchers have discussed the concepts of female oppression, intersectionality, and female marginalization through language in Baqir's *Beyond the Fields* (2019). Nasir, in his work "Resilience and Agency: A Feminist Analysis of *Beyond the Fields* by Ayesha Baqir" (2023), identifies the central themes of resilience and agency in the novel, while Shakoor (2023) examines the role of linguistic elements in the objectification of women for maintaining patriarchal dominance in the novel. Other studies on the novel have investigated the role of language in revealing sexism in rural mindsets (Kanwal, 2022) and the impact of gender and class on rural women (Chaudhary, 2024). These researchers have examined the novel from varying perspectives. However, the present study is different because it studies the novel under the influence of Gramsci's notion of hegemony and counter-hegemonic resistance. Gramsci's ideas not only help to understand the nature of the relationship between subalterns and hegemons but also highlight the nature of intellectual struggles in hegemonic society. By thoroughly studying the characters, especially Zara, through this lens, this study enhances the understanding of the interaction between hegemony and culture in Baqir's novel and individuals' efforts to set themselves free from the hegemonic influence of the dominant classes.

Material and Methods

The present study qualitatively analyses the text of Baqir's *Beyond the Fields* (2019) to probe the presence of hegemony and its resistance in the novel. This approach employs a close reading of the text, focusing on the depiction of subalterns, their dealings, and the social expectations that shape their lives. Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony provides an important framework for comprehending the role of hegemony and resistance. This methodology and theoretical framework are used to unveil the diverse ways in which *Beyond the Fields* (2019) represents the complexities of hegemonic structures in postcolonial Pakistan.

The word "hegemony" originates from the ancient Greek word "Hegemonia," which means "leadership" or "supremacy." Hegemony means the dominance of a ruling class achieved not just by force but also by cultural leadership and by gaining the consent of the governed (Gramsci, 1971, p. 57). Gramsci's theory of hegemony says that power is in the hands of those who control the ideas and values that shape our world. Hegemony is the combination "of force and of consent" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 124). Hegemons maintain their power not by direct coercion but indirectly by controlling the minds and thoughts of people. They persuade other classes to accept their worldview as natural or born out of "common sense" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 322). They use politics, culture, and intellectual apparatuses to mould collective beliefs and ideas according to their wishes. However, where there is power, there is resistance. In Gramsci's opinion, cultural hegemony is not unbeatable or unchangeable. Alternative ideas always exist in society. The ideology is always resisted, countered, subverted, and displaced. Gramsci calls this process as counter-hegemony.

According to Gramsci, cultural institutions like schools, media, religion, and intellectuals play essential roles in maintaining and challenging hegemonic control. However, Gramsci gives special attention to intellectuals. According to Gramsci, intellectuals have a special link with hegemonic control. Gramsci identified two types of intellectuals based on social function: traditional and organic. Traditional Intellectuals are established professionals like academics or artists. In contrast, organic intellectuals are the intellectuals who represent and advocate for the interests of a particular class. In Gramsci's opinion, both traditional and organic intellectuals play effective roles in changing society. However, "organic intellectuals" are more important than traditional intellectuals because "these organic intellectuals are distinguished less by their profession, which may be any job characteristic of their class, than by their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 3).

Gramsci's ideas are effective in unveiling the hegemonic structure of Pakistani society. They help in understanding the hegemonic structures of patriarchal societies. They contribute to understanding the complicated relationship between subalterns and dominant patriarchal structures. The present study uses Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony to explore the presence of hegemony and its counter-hegemonic resistance by intellectuals in *Beyond the Fields* (2019). It examines how Baqir depicts the hegemonic control of the dominant class and the subaltern negation of that control in the novel. This study investigates the fundamental aspects of the novel, such as Zara's intricate engagement with society and her alliance with her brother Umar against the hegemonic control of patriarchy, to understand the novel's portrayal of hegemony and its resistance within a post-colonial context.

Results and Discussion

Zara: The Subaltern Intellectual

Beyond the Fields (2019), represents cultural hegemony and counter-hegemonic resistance in the South Asian context. In her novel, Baqir not only exposes the apparatus of hegemony but also examines intellectuals' role in hegemonic control. For instance, Zara, the resilient central character in the novel symbolizes the intricate relationship between patriarchy, hegemony, and its defiance. Through Zara's journey from a rural village in Pakistan to Lahore, Baqir explores how marginalized individuals in hegemonic societies face multiple forms of oppression on social, economic, cultural, political, and religious grounds. Baqir also explores the role of subaltern intellectuals, like Zara, in counter-hegemonic resistances.

Zara's story is rooted in the trauma of her sister Tara, who was raped and left to die in the fields. This event sets the foundation for her later defiance of patriarchal and cultural hegemony. Zara and Tara live in a society deeply rooted in patriarchal structures. Their life in their village shows the oppressed existence of being marginalized in a patriarchal society. In hegemonic societies, marginalized individuals face different forms of religious, political, and cultural exploitation. They endure a constant struggle against hegemonic structures of power. They are bound to follow traditional gender roles and expectations. Their lives are an unending battle against the hegemonic supremacy of customs and traditions. Their customs and traditions deprive them of their fundamental education rights, of getting their share in property, and the freedom to do something alone. However, they can do nothing against this because hegemonic powers normalize these exploitations in society in such a way that they become invisible and leave them trapped in a cycle of subjugation.

Zara is aware of this systemic oppression around her, and she desires to challenge the structure that has failed her sister. Behind the disguise of obedience, Zara carries a deep hatred towards the hegemonic system that has separated her from her sister, Tara, and forced them to live a life of subjugation. Zara shows her resentment towards this system in different instances throughout the story. As she reflects on her mother's insistence on her marriage, she questions, "Were our lives a race from our parent's house to our husbands' house? Done and over, even before we had started to run, understood what we were capable of, or what we wanted from life?" (Baqir, 2019, p. 98).

Driven by this inner agitation, Zara engages in different acts of resistance throughout the story. She stands against the whole society and brings Tara back home. She refuses to carry the burden of her culture on her shoulders. She refuses to obey her religion mindlessly and asks for a fair interpretation of the religious injunctions, "Amma had taught me prayers, but not what they mean?" (Baqir, 2019, p. 57) She refuses to follow her elders' traditions and takes responsibility for her family's honour. She questions the males of her society: "Why don't they look for honour within themselves?" (Baqir, 2019, p. 265) She shows to a male-dominated society that women have their identity and agency which cannot be wrested from them. She fights for her education and rejects the established system according to which girls place is home. Her journey highlights the struggle for 'autonomy and agency' within a system designed to maintain control over women's bodies and choices. She counter-resists the hegemonic control of powerful and proves to other marginalized individuals that "It is not our fate to be lumped or dumped. We have to fight for our rights" (Baqir, 2019, p. 183).

Antonio Gramsci's notion of "organic intellectual" is essential for apprehending Zara's role in the story. Gramsci (1971) argues that organic intellectuals represent and advocate for the interests of a specific social class (p. 3). They come from a particular class and work for the interest of that specific class. They are essential in introducing new ideologies and conveying their class's desires and experiences before the world. Zara is a subaltern in the story who resists the hegemonic control of the dominant class. She could be seen as an organic intellectual because she challenges cultural hegemony through her strong will and knowledge. As Gramsci asserts, social change requires 'collective effort,' Zara bonds with other characters, including Omer, Saleem, Gloria Saima Appi, etc., to create a counter-hegemonic alliance to overthrow the dominant order. The joint effort of these characters in the story highlights the power of solidarity in times of crisis.

In conclusion, Zara's journey and her struggle against patriarchal hegemony highlight the importance of subaltern intellectuals in hegemonic societies and the power of their resistance in overthrowing the existing system of dehumanization and exploitation. Cultural hegemony is not absolute. Individuals and communities can challenge the hegemony of dominant groups. Individuals can change the hegemonic structures that limit their power and pave the way for a more just and equitable society. Through Zara's story, Baqir depicts the struggles and objections that subalterns face in hegemonic systems and also highlights the need for strong will and the formation of a strong alliance with other individuals to escape these exploitations successfully.

Omer: Navigating Competing Hegemonies

Omer in Aysha Baqir's *Beyond the Fields* (2019) is a crucial helper in Zara's journey. Through the character of Omer, Baqir highlights the tensions between conventional hegemonic values and modern ideals of equity and inclusivity. As a modern educated man, Omer finds himself tangled between competing hegemonies. In the story, he finds himself caught between the traditional teachings of discrimination and the modern

education. Through the character of Omer, Baqir discusses the role of multiple ideologies in the lives of individuals and the intellectual's role in preserving and resisting overwhelming power structures. His role as an educated patriarchal man is significant in exploring contesting hegemonies. Although Omer is a modern, educated man who follows the ideals of democracy and equity, he still lives in a male-dominated society, and his connection with his patriarchal roots is very deep. He has comprehensive knowledge of his cultural heritage, and he is aware of all injustices that occur in his male-dominant hegemonic society. He reflects on his helplessness in his sister's rape: "We're nothing! We lost Tara because we're nothing. I couldn't do anything to help her" (Baqir, 2019, p. 148). This passage shows that he wants to help his sister, but he is helpless in front of dominant patriarchal values. He is caught between the dynamism of his modern education and the frigidity of his patriarchal heritage.

Throughout the novel, Umer finds himself entangled between traditional patriarchal values and the modern values of proportionality and neutrality. Umer's dealing with his sisters represents the nature of this struggle. For instance, when his father decides to marry Tara with his friend, Omer opposes his decision. "Why did he want to marry Tara? Why didn't he hire a maid?....He needed a maid, not a wife" (Baqir, 2019, p. 125). These lines from the novel highlight the contrast between modern notions of equity and justice and traditional gender norms. Omer's character both embraces and opposes the dominant forms of hegemonic control. His status as a male in a patriarchal society grants him power and influence within the household. He is the protector and guardian of his sisters. He enjoys all the privileges that a man enjoys in a patriarchal society. However, Omer also shows his dissatisfaction with patriarchal norms, particularly in the case of his sisters. Unlike Abba and other males in the village, who seek to dominate and control women, Omer wants to give respect and equal status to women. His admiration of Zara's knowledge and learning skills shows this intent. When the whole village rallies against women's education, Omer encourages Zara to study. "I know you can do it. I'm proud of you" (Baqir, 2019, p. 51). He uses his position to uplift others rather than dominate them. He uses his knowledge and authority to support Zara's struggle against patriarchal oppression. Throughout the story, he provides Zara with both moral and emotional support. "I'll go along with what you think is best" (Baqir, 2019, p. 238). Omer does not want to control or dominate his sisters. His relationship with his sisters is based on love and shared understanding.

Omer in the novel perfectly represents Gramsci's "traditional intellectual" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 7). As a traditional intellectual, Omer, throughout the story, has a complicated relationship with dominant power structures. In Gramsci's view, "traditional intellectuals are always present," and they symbolize "uninterrupted historical continuity" even when the most complex and revolutionary changes occur in political and social spheres (Gramsci, 1971, p. 7). Omer is a perfect representation of Gramsci's 'traditional intellectual.' Furthermore, Gramsci asserts that it is upon 'traditional intellectuals' whether they support the dominant power structures or use their capabilities to challenge the control of hegemony to support the subalterns. In the novel, Omer's character is aware of the patriarchal evils that are part of his society. An intellectual, he is completely aware of the exploitation in his society. Therefore, he uses his position to change the community by resisting dominant oppression.

To conclude, Omer's character is very helpful in understanding how intellectuals deal with competing hegemonic. Omer's qualities as 'traditional intellectual' are visible in his tangled relationship with the hegemonic patriarchy and his struggles to adjust modern ideals in the traditional system. His experience throughout the novel highlights his

capacity for self-criticism and the efficacy of intellectuals in destroying oppressive power structures in the hegemonic world.

Patriarchal Hegemony in the Novel

In *Beyond the Fields* (2019), through the intersection of hegemony and patriarchy, Baqir explores the preservation and transmission of dominant hegemonic norms and their impact on marginalized individuals, especially women. In the novel, Abba and other villagers' actions and behaviours construct and preserve dominant hegemonic norms. Abba's final actions and influence over family decisions show that individuals in positions of authority maintain control over others. Abba's hegemonic control is visible in Zara's words about Abba: "We never asked Abba where he went or what he did" (Baqir, 2019, p. 111). Abba's relationships with his wife and daughter are characterized by direct domination and oppression in disguise. Although Abba recognizes the injustice with his daughter Tara, he refuses to acknowledge that he made a mistake by marrying her to the wrong man. He prefers to follow the patriarchal belief that a husband holds absolute control over his wife after marriage. He asserts: "I married her to Kamran in front of my eyes.... she's his wife, and he can do as he pleases with her. It has nothing to do with us" (Baqir, 2019, p. 250).

Similarly, the villagers in the novel represent a conventional form of patriarchal hegemony. They strictly hold the belief that men are superior to women because women are "biologically inferior" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 71). They believe that marriage and domesticity define a woman's life. They confine women's lives around marriage and their homes. They teach their women, "Once you're married, you have to keep your husband and in-laws happy and give them no reason to complain. It would help if you did what they said with a smile and without questions. That's your duty and responsibility" (Baqir, 2019, p. 77). This statement underscores the mechanism of the maintenance of hegemony women within a patriarchal society.

Hegemonic control is visible not only in family relations but also in economic relations. The hegemonic structure of the patriarchal system is visible in the villagers' discussions about land ownership and property distribution: "Unmarried girls didn't own land or property in our village. Sons inherited all of it. They carried the family name. Abba's land would go to Omer" (Baqir, 2019, p. 39). This fact highlights hegemonic control over resources. This economic inequality reflects more considerable power differences within society in which certain groups maintain dominance over others through control over financial resources. Those groups which are 'specialised in savings,' and have economic stability enjoy more freedom. (Gramsci, 1971, p.11) Although males exploit their women through this, no women raise their voices against this. According to Gramsci, they inhabit the world of 'Social Utopia' and as Zara explains that in this world "unmarried girls didn't own land or property in our village...Our dowry was for our in-laws. There was nothing for us" (Baqir, 2019, p. 39).

In this novel, government and law also aid patriarchy. The story in this work is set in 1980s Pakistan. It is when the whole country is under the control of Martial Law. The entire nation reels in General Zia-ul-Haq's iron fist. A shadow of fear and oppression hangs heavy everywhere. The Hudood Ordinance, a legal system established under Zia's rule, spreads the climate of fear and discrimination. The marginalized groups, especially Women, face the impact of its cruelty. The law considers the testimony of two women equal to that of one man. It means that crimes against women became very difficult to prove and lead to accusations against the victims themselves. It is visible in the story of a helpless

father whose daughter is picked by landlord thugs and raped, but he cannot get justice for his daughter and bring her culprits to the justice because of the fear of new laws.

In this novel, Baqir criticizes the hypocrisy of the so-called religious pillars of the society, where innocent people, especially women, are subjected to marginalization. Religion favours hegemonic control in society by teaching only those ideas and values which support this control. Gramsci conceptualizes religion as part of the ideological apparatus that maintains. The dominant classes use religion to suppress any rebellion against their monarchy by framing it as a sin against divine will. In the story, religious figures like Moulvi Saab exploit religious practices for control. When Abba asks for his advice about finding Tara's culprit, he proposes an oath-taking ceremony at the mosque. However, it was not to see the criminals but to maintain the status quo and avoid involving the police. Moreover, the story shows how religious texts like the Quran are used selectively. While the Quran mentions the veil (Parda), it also emphasizes individual responsibility. Nevertheless, villagers twist this to place undue blame for anything wrong that occurred on women like Tara.

Thus, the fundamental concern of *Beyond the Fields* (2019) is the impact of patriarchal hegemonic norms on women. Through this work, Baqir shows how patriarchal structures maintain power imbalances and control over marginalized groups, especially women. Women are helpless in a patriarchal society, and it is not very easy for them to fight against traditional gender roles and familial obligations. Although different female characters, including Zara and Amma, deny following patriarchal norms, their acts of resistance are insufficient in the face of large hegemonic apparatuses.

Subalterns' Resistance

The novel not only enacts the pervasive influence of dominant power structures but also presents instances of individuals' dissent in complying with dominant ideologies. In various instances in the novel, the characters promote Gramsci's idea of counter-hegemonic resistance by defying dominant ideologies. These instances of resistance offer a glimmer of hope and the possibility for reform. Throughout the narrative, different characters, including both male and female, enact several instances of resistance against hegemonic control. Characters like Omer and Khalid Chacha oppose traditional gender roles through their actions. Throughout the story, Omer continuously worries about his sister's well-being. Omer acts as his sister's friend and partner. He supports Zara in her pursuit of education. He helps Zara find Tara by providing logical support in their plan and carefully ensuring their actions are not based only on emotions. He provides Zara with practical support and a critical perspective on her actions. Omer's concern for his sisters' emotional state and his willingness to engage in dialogue demonstrate his role as a supportive brother in a patriarchal male-dominant system.

Similarly, Khalid Chacha's support for justice for Tara disturbs the dominant ideology of Abba's life. Khalid Chacha challenges the patriarchal norms that view women as commodities. Chacha questions Abba's decision to sell Tara, "Don't deceive yourself. Her husband was a dangerous man. A monster. She was living in hell" (Baqir, 2019, p. 251). His actions not only offer Amma emotional support but also challenge the dominant patriarchal norms, which play an essential role in controlling the family affairs.

However, the role of women in contesting hegemonic structures emerges as a phenomenal form of resistance in the novel. Zara, the protagonist of the story, carries a flame of resistance against the patriarchal structure. She is a potent challenge to the patriarchal Pakistan. Her desire for education and a life beyond the walls of societal

expectations is a direct challenge to the traditional gender roles that seek to limit her dreams. She shows her resistance against the established system in various forms, from the symbolic act of removing the burka to her secret search for knowledge with the help of her brother. Zara's important reading sessions with her brother represent a small act of opposition against the societal norms that limit girls' right to get an education. Her resistance against hiding the secret of Tara and her rape and gifting her bracelets to Chiragh is also an act of resistance against society.

Zara breaks the cycle of shame and self-blame and encourages Tara to regain her power and reject societal beliefs, trying to control her life. Zara challenges the victim-blaming norm of society and fights for Tara's freedom. She favours the empowerment of the survivors of sexual assault. "It's not our fate to be lumped or dumped. We have to fight for our rights" (Baqir, 2019, p. 183). Zara also rejects the blind following of religion by questioning the concept of sacrifice. "We had to sacrifice. But why always the poor goat? Couldn't we sacrifice what was important to us?" (Baqir, 2019, p. 71). Although these actions seem small, they still play an essential role in moving the base of the hegemonic structure. These actions show the power of individual freedom in shaking the base of the established system. Zara challenges the traditional system through her ideas and actions. Zara's wish for 'free will' and refusal to follow the appointed path for her represents a permanent human desire for self-control. As she asserts: "They would blame me no matter what I said. But I had to speak. I couldn't let them think I couldn't talk. I had things to say for myself and other girls. One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind" (Baqir, 2019, p. 91).

Besides Zara, other female characters, including Gloria, Saima Appi and Gita, play indispensable roles in hegemonic resistance. Despite being a member of a higher social class, Gloria recognizes the injustices faced by Tara and Kamran's victims. She uses her knowledge and resources to help Zara in her plan. Gloria's support encourages Zara to face dangerous situations courageously and challenge the power structure that wealthy individuals like Kamran maintained. In the same way, Gita engages in various forms of counter-hegemonic actions that directly challenge the dominant power structures. Gita enables Zara to get Tara out through her excellent planning within the brothel. She facilitates Zara's entry into the brothel under disguise and ensures her safety by creating different diversions.

In addition, Saima Appi's ability to survive the torture imposed on her by her patriarchal family and her fight for 'self-freedom' shows her potential to bring change within this rigid structure of tradition. Saima Appi's understanding of Zara and Tara's situation and willingness to provide help show her position as a trusted figure within the community. Similarly, Amma's character offers a many-sided perspective on resistance. She rejects patriarchal norms and asks for Tara's return. Her challenge to Abba's authority directly challenges the existing power dynamics. "You can say what you like. But I won't be back unless Tara comes back with us" (Baqir, 2019, p. 252). Additionally, Amma's disbelief towards the superstitious practices represented by Bari Masi's potions signifies a rejection of blind acceptance of tradition.

Ultimately, the story leaves hope for change through characters like Zara, Omar, Khalid Chacha, Gita and Gloria. The story suggests that destroying a deeply rooted system like patriarchy requires collective expression of dissatisfaction and dissent. It requires a chorus of voices rising against the status quo. The story's description of the influential role of subalterns in challenging the dominant power structure gives its reader a strong message that social change requires an individual's strong will to challenge the established

system. This story is a call for action. It encourages readers to discover the invisible webs of inequality fused throughout society and work for their destruction.

Conclusion

Aysha Baqir's *Beyond the Fields* (2019) is a compelling portrayal of cultural hegemony and counter-hegemonic resistance in the South Asian context. Guided by Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, this paper probes the role of ideological and cultural organizations in the prorogation of power imbalance in the novel. It inquires how marginalized individuals survive under the constant supervision of hegemons. Through the experiences of different characters like Zara and Umar, the novel depicts the control of dominant power structures on marginalized individuals and the role of subalterns in counter-resisting these hegemonic structures. In the novel, subaltern opposition to patriarchal control gives the hope of a better future for them. Zara and Umar's position in the novel as subaltern and traditional intellectuals points out the importance of intellectuals in perpetuating and challenging dominant hegemonic ideologies. *Beyond the Fields* (2019) is a significant literary work because it exposes both the issues of patriarchal societies and comprehensive means of resistance. Through its story, the novel depicts the control of hegemons on subalterns in the post-colonial context of Pakistan and demands immediate social and political change. Furthermore, there is a greater possibility for future researchers to contribute to scholarly discussion on novel by exploring it from different angles and approaches. *Beyond the Fields* (2019), as a literary work, explores the diversity of human experience and allows self-observation and innovative modification. Baqir encourages her readers to think about the nature of the ongoing struggle for autonomy and identity within the broader context of postcolonial patriarchal Pakistan. She inspires them to think about multiple forms of resistance and harmony before hegemonic structures. Thus, it is an enduring contribution and a potent reminder of the significance of collective consciousness in the fight for social justice and human dignity.

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