Research Journal of Language and Literary Studies
Volume 3, Issue 2, 2023, p 145-165

Dynamics of Counter-Hegemony against Ethno-Cultural Coercion in Atia Abawi's *The Secret Sky*

Farkhanda Shahid Khan[1]

Abstract

This research is a contribution to a growing critical debate on the ethnocultural contest, and exercise of hegemonic coercive powers to constitute class stratification and marginalization of the weak. Since hegemony is the dominant class's manipulation of social standards, principles, and perceptions, even then, it is not governmental control, but rather, domination over the ruled by their consent incorporated in them through "false consciousness". *The Secret Sky* (2014) demonstrates cultural clashes in a community of diverse ethnicity – Pashtun and Hazara, where one dominant tribe through its hegemonic ideology imposes its values upon the others, thus suppressing and marginalizing their culture/s. The paper's objective is to highlight the transformative efforts of the *others*, who resist, and undo the conservative power structures by constructing the Counter-Hegemonic Project and renewing the culture to save society from stagnation. This qualitative research uses Marx's idea of class stratification, and social division into the bourgeois and proletariat, with Gramsci's notion of Cultural Hegemony, and the Counter-Hegemonic Project, as a lens for textual analysis. The research concludes that conservative hegemonic power acts as a fence against intercultural mixing to leave society monolithic and oppressive, while, resistance under the actual dynamics of intellectuals brings evolution and moral leadership.

Key Words: Hegemony, Culture, Counter Hegemonic Project, Bourgeoisie, Proletariat

[1] Doctoral Fellow, School of Literatures, Languages & Cultures - University of Edinburgh, Lecturer in English Literature, Government College University Faisalabad Pakistan. Email: farkhandashahidkhan@gcuf.edu.pk

Introduction

Every society has diverse ethnic groups, which are dichotomized and segregated on the bases of economic status, and gender orientation. In the same stream, hegemonic control, and exploitation of the poor by the elite class is a centuries-old phenomenon, which has its roots in the same financial strength. Atia, a foreign news correspondent and a novelist delves into the same issues with great mastery and innovative skills. She was born in West Germany and brought up in the U.S. Her parents are Afghan; therefore, she is fluent in Dari and Farsi. She surrendered her dream of writing fiction by writing *The Secret Sky*, set in Afghanistan and based on her experiences during her stay there as a foreign news correspondent. *The Secret Sky* (2014) presents the power of Pashtuns over Hazara culture, religious and social views, and customs as two groups are racially and customarily dissimilar (Dunn, 2011). The writer shows her in-depth study of the extent of the dominant group's inflexibility and control, where they deter towards killing instead of intercultural marriages and mixing, as the text explains that "their desire to get married sets a series of horrible events in motion" (Abawi, 2014).

The Secret Sky (2014) shows the clash of culture with the changing ideologies of the teens, Fatima, a Shia Hazara, and a poor peasant's daughter; Samiullah, a Sunni Pashtun, and the son of a landlord, who was thought to follow the line of his forefathers and his tribe. The two divided factions of the same society get further apart due to their historicity. This narrative unweaves itself by depicting the culture of Afghanistan, where beauty and ferocity are entwined and shown through the leading characters of Fatima and Sami. They battle against the norms of their families, social powers in the form of religion, Jirga culture, and various religious sets busy in radical Islamization. Their fight shows these characters as revolutionary struggling to give a new height of egalitarianism to their existing rotten culture.

Rashid, the foil in the novel represents an imprudent youth whose morality is juxtaposed with resentment, jealousy, and hatred, so, he exploits the circumstances to put these characters in an irresistible and

unsafe zone of danger. This novel unveils Fatima's agonies throughout the novel, e.g., when she talks to Sami, her mother calls her "a whore" (Abawi, 2014), and, Rashid openly accuses Samiullah of "running around with that peasant *whore* in the woods" (Abawi, 2014). Further, the mother attacks her again by pulling her hair, and by dragging her toward the kitchen. She "kicks her in the stomach and then pours blistering water over her arms" (Abawi, 2014, P. 34). This aching treatment is given to save the tradition and customs of one cultural and ethnic group in Afghanistan.

By contextualizing this detail, the paper argues, that the tribal culture of Afghanistan is antagonistically hegemonic, contributing to shaping a disjointed society under the conservative group of Pashtuns, but other side of the argument furnishes a picture of societal struggle with the formation of *new alliances* (minimum in number), in the words of Gramsci – organic intellectuals to bring transformation in the form of cultural mixing, harmony and, consequently, a progressive society through their dynamic efforts. Thus, *The Secret Sky* represents a dispute between two cultures, ethnic conflicts, and an exercise of hegemonic supremacy, based on coercion, and political cum cultural agendas constructed under economic affluence. The objective of the research is to unveil the downgrading of the poor and repressed groups under the surveillance of the principal ethnic group. The research further reveals that the action of these characters develops an uncertain boundary against cultural overlapping and hence, society is left with incessant struggle with the same fledgling situations, which, in this novel, is changed with the endeavors of the revolutionary section of society.

This study is significant as it highlights a momentous issue of ethnocultural coercion, which acts as an obstruction against the universal prose of humanity, globalization, and multiculturalism. Moreover, it indicates the occupation of literature to display salvation for the quiet section of Afghanistan – through diverse mediums – as Raymond William says, *institutions of civil society*, such as, (social media) by bringing the issue in writing, raising voices in rallies, condemning the act

of coercive unit of society, seeking the help of electronic media or NGOs, and by highlighting the issue on inter/national level. Furthermore, this research portrays the role and implication of economy by controlling the others, poor, and downtrodden people of a particular society, and, subsequently, brings awareness to common readers about the distresses of the subjugated component of the social order under hegemonic leadership.

Review of the literature

This part of the research has been done to view the existing gap in the field of research by critically analyzing the already explored dimensions, considering which, the researcher has set her dimension to carry out the current research. This step establishes the validity of my selected domain and provides the opportunity to add to the existing scholarship in literary research.

Quealy, while doing research explored the text as a bildungsroman, where Fatima, the main character of Abawi's narrative is working for freedom. It is the same childhood freedom, which she has practiced, and, now, in her one-step ahead phase of life, she is recalling the same freedom to practice her will, to fulfill her wish of getting married according to her choice. She puts the text as an ongoing endeavor of Sami and Fatima, whose interests are, though the same, yet, their families' status quo is poles apart. She has also reviewed the novel as a fairy tale of romance in Afghan tradition and sets the tale analogous to Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003), the novel which unveils though alarming yet magical Afghan culture (Quealy, 2014).

Jillian Heise (2014) is of the view that Abawi's attitude is realistic yet painful, and leaves the readers in a position of discomfort and anger owing to utter injustices being done to most of the characters of this young adult historical romance, while, contrary to this reviewer another reviewer wrote it a mighty tale of not only love but hope also – hope that both of the mainstream characters have, and practice by staying together, and later, with their efforts, both they marry to stay together. She also

establishes the worth of the text by calling it a must-read, and a heartrending text, which no one would put down without meeting the last page while having no interval (Paiges, 2020).

Heise (2014), who got the novel from Jill Sontopolo, the editor of the novel, elaborates while quoting, that the sentence "A tale of love, honor, and betrayal from foreign correspondent Atia Abawi" was a clear sign of an essential read. The point of view of both genders makes the story an intrigue. She beautifully concludes that it is neither the book of love, nor of war, but the story of humans and how to be human by showing both sides of the coin, charm, and viciousness in contemporary Afghanistan, where a kind of civil war occurs to bade goodbye to ruthless culture and to evolve it in a modern way, where, people who love each other, live together.

As the least number of research has been conducted on this novel, so, the literature review has been developed with the help of reviews and from the thematic stance of the novel. For this purpose, the novel has critically and closely been read to note down the writer's concerns and her critical look to view the tradition of her forefathers. First, I have noted down the religious corruption through religious mullahs with the sheer assistance of the Taliban. In this society, Religion has been molded to be suitable for the leading layer of people and to intimidate the poor alongside. Double suppression of the female characters is also a common concern of the narrative. They are poor on one hand and an oppressed gender on the other hand. They are living in a world where reverence and honor belong to men. It is a world where women are abused and tortured by their families. Moreover, it is a society where an innocent baby girl was murdered by the religious gang of mullah Latif with the excuse that "she does not grow to repeat the same mistake of love marriage as her sister, Fatima has done". (Abawi, 2014)

Moreover, Atia also covers a popular subject matter of young adults' disaffection, alienation, and loss of family. she has shown the decrepit culture where women are without any identity (Daphne, 2014). Sami and Fatima experience the same among their families and they long for the

families' unity, but tribal norms are becoming the hurdle, against which, this couple rebels, and feels a sense of isolation from their respective families. While reading the text, it has been noted that on the way to Kabul, they stop at several spots, though the intention is to take rest, yet they miss families desperately. Sami recollects the time when his cousin, now his enemy, was his dearest friend, and, correspondingly, Fatima, contemplates her friend, her sister, who was a shelter for her. (Abawi, 2014). Hence, this novel has been interpreted by most reviewers as a story of love and manifestation of Afghan ethnicities, yet it also explains several aspects discussed in this literature review. So, this review gathers substantial data to put the already researched domains with a critical look and, meanwhile, allows me to do work in my established domain of Marxism.

Research Methodology

This qualitative research uses Marx's perception of class division, society's stratification into bourgeois and proletariat, and Antonio Gramsci's impression of "Cultural Hegemony", and "Counter-Hegemonic Project", as a lens for textual analysis of the novel.

Marx propounded the concept of bourgeois (capitalist class) and proletariat (working class) on the bases of the economy and social status. He highlights that "man's social being determines his social consciousness and the economic interests of the influential class determine how all classes recognize their existence" (William, 2000). It means all forms of culture exist as a 'superstructure' to the basic economic structure of the society. Marx, with the view of changing the world, struggles to change the fate of the proletariat, the working class. He also highlights that change is possible only with the resistance and revolution of the working class – an idea that was denounced by a critic like Paul Ransom and Gramsci, who proposed an alternative view for modern societies in the form of counter-hegemony and that "the socialist forces gain control through cultural and ideological means, instead of the only political and economic contest" (William, 2000).

Hegemony is the power of un-common sense or the ability of one class to control other classes to see the world under their ascending agenda. It is also taken as the combination of political coercion and ideological consent infused in them through "false consciousness". It is the preeminence of class not only in the realm of money but through all political, ideological, and social spheres as well (Frey, 1993). For Gramsci, the state was the chief instrument of coercive force, while, consent is achieved by the institutions of civil society, e.g., the family, trade union, and the churches. Hence, the bigger part of hegemony is achieved through ideological control of civil society (Eagleton, 1991, P. 56).

Ideological supremacy is developed and practiced by the intellectuals of society in the form of *a counter-hegemonic project*. In this way, Gramsci goes further to Marx, who (Marx) explained that the whole scheme of working-class revolt is constructed around the sheer effort and struggle, which regulates whether humanity moves towards progression or descends – in the case of backward it leads towards stagnation and regression. Gramsci elaborates that intellectuals' dynamic struggle makes society possible to move forward, revolutionize, and find progress. Lenin also supposed that "revolution should be instigated by a small, dedicated group of the intelligentsia" (Eagleton 1991, P. 34). He scrutinizes further that the state emerges and develops when hegemony fails, and intellectuals play a dynamic role in this success. He divides intellectuals into two groups – traditional and organic and makes clear that it is a free choice of intellectuals to be with the hegemonic group or against it. When intellectual moves against, he is an organic intellectual, whereas, against those who work with or in favor of hegemony – a traditional intellectual. An organic intellectual is the bearer of proletarian consciousness, stands in favor of equal rights, and fair treatment of the working class, and is against the exploitation of the bourgeois (Smith, 2013). In this way, hegemony involves the interest of the subordinate class and economic leadership.

Dominio (coercion) and dirlzione (consensus) are the two constitutive elements (a state needs the first when its hegemonic power does not work, while, a consensual regulation does work when folks willingly submit to the worldview of the overriding set (hegemonic leadership). These elements develop power relations between social forces to lead and to be led unless there emerge organic crises by organic intellectuals through introducing organic ideology (Gramsci, 1935). These organic crises threaten the hegemonic position and system, which is overthrown by organic ideology, a common world view, in which the ultimate class exercises moral, political, and intellectual headship by winning in civil society through "dynamic ideological struggle". This struggle brings transformation in the previous ideological landscape into a new organic form (Rosanne, 2015). In the same terrain, Marxist philosophy describes the subjugation of a weak section of a community by the governing class, which deploys the culture of that society –the morals, traditions, and beliefs in such a way that their interpretation becomes central that is forced and acknowledged as universally accepted ideology (Stoddart, 2007).

Gramsci's idea of Organic Intellectuals that are the ultimate source of change in society draws attention to Raymond William's notion of culture and ideology. Culture is a social phenomenon that helps to shape and define the lives, customs, and other manifestations of human intellect in a particular society or as William puts it, "the whole way of life" (Williams, 1961), While, ideology is the form in which consciousness of dominant class is transferred and expressed, as William has defined as "a mistaken interpretation of how the world is" or a system of deceptive beliefs-false consciousness-which can be distinguished from scientific knowledge (Williams, 2000). William is of the view that culture needs transformation; it is never stagnant and never can be the same (Williams, 2001), and this idea of Williams is reciprocally supported by Gramsci's Organic Intellectuals, who struggle to bring organic change to society through their dynamic ideological struggle. A close reading of the text

makes it clear that these theoretical approaches are a rich part of the textual world.

Analysis and Discussion

Men-controlled hegemony comes in the worst situation when it mingles up with economic hegemony to take control over the rights of the frail and the women especially. Abawi, in her novel, narrates the tragic incidents that happened to Fatima and Sami, while living in Afghan tribes. Fatima is a member of the poor Hazara, and Sami belongs to the rich Pashtun tribe, which in the light of Marx's societal division are Proletariat and Bourgeois, respectively. Fatima's mother intends to marry Fatima to an old, already-married man, who has children as well. Ostensibly, her mother's decision signifies the tradition of that country to marry their daughters at a very young age, but in the given fact, this decision specifies ethnocultural positions in Afghanistan, where weak or economically downcast suffers. Her mother intensifies her step toward marriage when she gets to know the love affair between Fatima, her daughter, and Sami.

The researcher notes the working of "Cultural Hegemony" at the very beginning of the novel, where kids of the inferior class are not permitted to play and intermingle with the children of high class/tribe. Further, it has been noted that they cannot get an education in the same school where Pashtun children are admitted. It is the right of the elite only to get an education, so, the Hazara tribe's children are deprived of this basic right. Male chauvinism is prevalent as has been noted; women can play domestic duties only in the Purdah system of four walls. They act as mothers, daughters, and wives only. It is a culture, where men restrict their wives from getting an education as textual reference shows, "When we get married, do you think our husbands will have us sitting around reading books? Or do you think they will have us cleaning, cooking, and taking care of their family?" Fatima thinks "I know she is right "They will probably be jealous that we can read (Abawi, 2014, P. 13).

Furthermore, the writer manifests the hegemony of the privileged Taliban, which they are putting into practice over women. Fatima speaks, this terrifies me more. She utters these words when she looks at the gang on motorbikes patrolling in the city, not for people's safety but to spread terror in them. They (Taliban) are the only ones who use motorbikes in the village, he (Sami) is right. They are from the group of mullah Latif – the criminals…. treacherous. "And if they catch us, they could jail us; murder us in the name of religion" (Abawi, 2014, P.30). She also substantiates that Afghans misappropriate religion. They take it as a tool to manipulate their women. These callous mullahs mishandle it to the ultimate murder, which religion prohibits, and even declares murder as a sin. Then, they do catharsis of themselves by explaining that people commit blasphemy; because they act against religion. That's why, Fatima remarks, "if they catch us, they will use God and religion as their excuse to do anything they want including our killing" (P. 31).

Additionally, in this male-dominant and religious culture, a woman is a personal possession, an object, or a commodity, against which, men in power mishandle religion and suppress them (True, 2012). She further speaks, "They will take us for adultery. They could jail us, Murder us" (Abawi, 2014, P. 310). These men use religion as a power ladder to exercise their control over the women, and even this culture is with a history of stoning with eventual death for the couple in love. Moreover, these mullahs work out as "religious hegemony" in that society when they think that they are the epitome of true followers and practitioners of religion. The writer marvelously juxtaposes the true interpretation of religion- acceptance, peace, love, and serving humanity, which is under the surface of men's interpretation of religion to have their control and supremacy over the rest of the people. It is a kind of political Islam that these orthodox people are using to resist brotherhood and peace and diffuse just violence in the people. These are the people whom others, who are moderate in religion, and true followers of it, like Sami and Fatima distrust.

However, the landlord tribe is not practicing power/hegemony among people but has made it a part of their discourse, and their routine activities patently exhibit the hegemony in work. It is noted in the text, that while they went fishing, they talked to (the fishes) them, "these fishes are like villagers. We have to show them who is boss" (Abawi, 2014, P. 50). Through the boss ship, they intend to run the Afghan world with the rules and instructions stated by them. Mockingly, they are attacking that couple with the analogy of fishes, "We can chase some of the human fishes here with a gun!" (Abawi, 2014, P. 33).

It is the policy that all the institutions—religion, education, social standards (tradition, norms, and customs, etc.) use to further upsurge the one in authority, as Marx states and Smith puts in historical background, "the history of hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle" (Nicholos, 2004). Marx additionally expounds that the human mind is customized by monetary standards, including its feelings, thinking, philosophical theories, religion, and relations. So is with the minds of mullahs, who are running the society what Charles Bressler calls according to "their sweet will" (Bressler, 1994, P 121). Mullah Latif's religious group is asserting guidelines for people's social life to the extent that Fatima speaks, "They would have justified it by saying we were unmarried and alone" (Abawi, 2014, P.36).

Adding further, it is "False Consciousness", which helps in internalizing these mullahs' ideology in people and the same has happened to Fatima's mother. In the discussion regarding Sami, she goes manic and speaks to her daughter, "o, wicked girl, have you met him. O, wicked girl, you are forbidden from seeing him. You are not a child anymore, and I would not allow ruining our name" (Abawi, 2014, P.38). It is the consolidation of force and consent that Gramsci calls, 'coexist always' (Bates, 1975, P. 353). It is the mullah's coercion on one side, and deliberate acceptance of those norms and rules on the other side that these mullahs are imparting to people through religious corruption. It also makes clear how ideas strengthen or weaken the existing structure of society, only when they do not have their place in power. It can be said that it is ideology working as

hegemonic power or through consent that women of Afghanistan have internalized, that girls cannot talk about or meet boys, and if they do so, they are bad, working to ruin the fame of the family. In this way, a woman is a muted entity, an isolated other with lifeless ideological views.

In fact, it is a happily agreed ideology that girls will stay contented if they marry in the same tribe, whereas, love marriage is a curse. Fatima's mother solidifies her plea, "they are our people; they are not barbaric like other groups" (Abawi, 2014, p. 47). She thinks the marginalized Hazara tribe is loving and non-violent toward Fatima, the idea that comes to her mind on the bases of origin and background. She is without generous exposure to the outer world to know that people are not as innocent as she considers. Fatima's father, who is more exposed to the outer world adds that the Hazara people are also barbaric. He, due to his organic thinking can be added to the "organic intellectuals", who are dedicated to fetching cultural change. He is committed to acting as her daughter wants, but is destitute before Pashtuns, and, more than Pashtuns, the religious gangs, who are carrying dichotomy and frustration in people leading towards anguish in the society. Their practices are making these gaps wider. Fatima's mother has taken their ideology as her own through "false consciousness", which is ultimately bringing confusion and chaos to her family (Bressler, 1994, p. 116). This control over the poor through "false consciousness" is much better than coercive control. Fatima's father is of the view that city life is terrifying. He witnesses further, "I have seen them sold, raped, and killed the girls." "So many people are abandoning their land and heading towards major cities – it will bring more sin by mixing foreign invaders and unbelievers" (Abawi, 2014, P. 198). Abawi puts the cry of society in the voice of her character, Muhammad, so that humanity stops these frightening practices which dichotomize people to continue such evil customs.

Though norms and customs are part and parcel of any society, yet, they are cleverly used by the superior class to control the poor. As they control all the resources, the poor are kept away from any insight, so that

they remain illiterate and poor under their brutal control and listen to their decisions as, "A Hazara girl could never marry a Pashtun boy" (Abawi, 2014, P.43). In this way, this influential group takes education as the power to use it negatively to rule over the weak group. By so doing, the writer has shown the working of these ruthless practices in Fatima's life, who is not allowed to show her liking or her feelings, and get a formal education and religious insight. She only knows those religious clichés talked about by mullahs, but she has a powerful conscience to dichotomize between wrong and right and she contests her right of getting married as per her own will and to break the rigid customs, which are making society backward and stagnant. Her character demonstrates the trait of a female lead in literature: a youngster with persona, life, and a dream.

Contrarily, the writer displays the second side in front of the readers to highlight the elite practices of never marrying their daughters if the match is not suitable. It is against their status quo and ego to marry them to someone of low value. To them, power is the scale to measure suitability for marriage. Abawi concludes this issue in her manuscript through Ismail's sister. "Ismail's sister never married because there was never a good enough suitor" (Abawi, 2014, P.55).

One more antagonistic figure in the text is Rashid, Sami's cousin, whose egotistic mind stands against the poor. Sami, due to his continuous disrespect gets contentious with Rashid, whom he addresses to accept the people of Hazara. They have the same self-esteem, as others have, and yes, if you ignore them due to poverty, then it is due to the decision of king Abdurrahman Khan, who intended to see his Pashtun people dominant in Afghanistan. So, it should not make any difference if they are poor. Sami is of the view that people should be evaluated on the bases of respect, love, and values that they manifest to others, and must not be on the bases of power, which makes people corrupt. He is with the pure values of humanity, while, snubbing class and ethnic differences. He makes clear to Rashid that "Fatima is a beautiful piece of art made by Allah for Sami" (Abawi, 2014, P.64).

Contrary to Rashid, the personality of Mullah Sarwar whom Abawi mentions as compassionate, practicing religion in the right dimension. William's idea of two dimensions of a culture in which one includes directions and meanings (those practices which are common in society) and, the second, includes new meanings and observations that are accepted and tested is valid to elaborate the textual stance for religious practices, where mullah Sarwar can be put among the second category. He does not follow religious customs blindly but transforms them according to time and need. William calls this group creative too. Fatima and Sami are also part of the creative culture. They reject the customary Pashtun dominance and want to reform the society by eradicating class and racial division which brings conflict and tensions only. They are battling for a better culture by adding new dimensions as William remarks, "culture has a growing society, yet it is made and remade in every individual mind" (William, 2000, P. 33); same is done by the characters of Mullah Sarwar, Fatima, and Sami. They are determined to introduce a new version of a culture that is having male-controlled views and prejudice against peripheral tribes of the society.

This culture has also influenced both these characters, but Sami realizes soon and speaks for Fatima, "I want to protect her and keep her safe and make her happy, as textual line shows, "Because of her, I enjoy waking up every day and even the thought of seeing her again fills me with happiness" (Abawi, 2014, p. 69). In a society that is conventional and conformist, this one person is trying to rebuild the culture. Class consciousness has become part of Pashtun minds, so, they call Fatima's father a peasant, repeatedly. When Kaka Ismail, Sami's father asks Zoya and Rashid to serve Muhammad, Fatima's father, Rashid speaks instantly and spitefully, that he should serve a peasant. These people are not able to receive his courtesy. Though the system of class consciousness is centuries old since it has not been gone in contemporary times also (Davies, 2006). This malicious practice, Marx calls "core reason for the manipulation of the poor" (Abawi, 2014), and needs the poor to rebel,

and William explicates the performance of creative people in society for transformation as a solution to get rid of these factions.

Furthermore, the text explicates that religious extremists like madrassa owners are bringing division and trouble to society, as, it is noted, that Fatima and Sami's affiliation is a hot topic for them. These religious scholars with limited knowledge are becoming the source of increasing social distance among people and to ruin their years-old friendships. However, Fatima's father, Muhammed is with a broader vision and reacts against her wife's ideology. Sami respects him to a great extent and intends to follow him. He utters, "You and my father have been examples of the kind of man that I one day want to become" (Abawi, 2014, P.79). He explicates to them his feelings for Fatima as pure and of respect. There is no lust. "I wish, you realize". His father shouts at once, this cannot happen, as his ego wakes up. "You are Khan's son! You will marry a girl we feel for you should marry. Not the daughter of a farmer…… a Hazara girl!" (2014). His father, Ismail, does not stop but shouts more and gets on his son, you disrespected and upset her father by asking this. You affronted me too. You have injured our feelings since you know that it is impossible (emphasis added in Abawi, 2014).

The people of East- Asian Afghanistan have internalized that elite boys use tactics as snare to catch and then ruin girls. They do not intend to marry them. Mothers are the heroes to put this ideology in the minds of their daughters to terrify them and keep them at distance, though it is pure love. Fatima's mother also is with the same ideology to which she replies, "Sami is not like that" (Abawi, 2014, P. 176). This perception is part of their society and hinders the development of society and relationships.

The culture of the village and city in this country is different. When Sami and Karim's dadi (grandmother) adds that the couple in love was happily married in my times, to which, Karim answers, you were living in a city and the city's atmosphere allows, as it is easy there to keep respect and shame intact. It cannot be managed in the village, where it is disgrace to the tribe. Contrarily, unaware of all the accounts, Ftima asks her mother

about the disposition of the marriage proposal, who insults her back by calling her a whore in the name of honor and slaps her too. "I would not have given birth to this disgusting whore, and, she calls for her death and bad wishes. Khak da saret" (May dirt face your head) (Abawi, 2014, P. 45). She uses outrageous diction for her, like, "filthy slut" (P. 53), and "you have ruined your sister Afo's life too" (P. 55).

Ideologies of both tribes aside, the third set (Sami, Fatima, and Mullah Sarwar), what Gramsci says, "Organic Intellectuals" is struggling to convey the culture and values of humanity. "We are all God's servants and no one is better than the other that in the eyes of God" (Abawi, 2014, P. 99). They want to throw away the old ideologies to love all instead of disgrace and disrespect. Fatima bows down once to this troublesome scenario and decides to marry somewhere else, to which Sami opines "it will be more troublesome, and that those people will keep punishing you". Fatima responds, "my mother will always hate me; forgiveness has never been a natural emotion for her" (P. 103). Hence, this leading female figure is a character that suffers, modifies, and develops with time.

The writer elucidates Mullah Latif's office, which again shows the application of hegemony since a person from a lower tribe is serving here as an attendant, which clarifies this culture's norm to assign the job according to class and gender. This attendant is further insulted, hated, and exploited as well. When this person, Umar serves tea to Rashid, he remarks, "It is disgusting for me that my tea glass will be touched by his hands" (Abawi, 2014). There is an extended list of contrast formed by these Pashtuns to debar this bond between Sami and Fatima; it is intolerable, it is cynical to marry, a Hazara with a Pashtun, a Shia with a Sunni, a peasant with a landlord, and, moreover, the accent is also a part of this illogicality.

Furthermore, the debate goes as; it is Satan's preference for and denial of God's consent; it is dangerous to our society and culture. Their stagnant culture shows no hope for change. It is fairly obvious to say that one extremist group is extinguishing the traditions and culture of that Afghan

society by developing division and bringing orthodox ideologies, which do not have any connection with religion. The verse from poetry, which Fatima always read, is also titled, "This is love: to fly to secret sky", and that is what she is doing, she utters. She is flying to the secret sky to meet Sami" (2014, P. 310). One more ethnic predisposition is the core issue of Afghan culture, due to which they cannot go out but with the people of their tribe, and they cannot travel out with their tribal members together, due to being unmarried, and Sami and Fatima cannot marry due to dissimilar ethnicities.

Sorrowfully, society is with an evil practice of humiliating the poor. The text depicts Mullah Latif practicing this evil when he insults Fatima's father and asks Rashid to take off whore/Fatima's scarf for a public lynching. Her act of love is, what this mullah calls, an "insult to the village" (Abawi, 2014, P. 311), and declares execution for her; however, the boy, Sami does not observe any punishment, since, he is the honor and pride of the tribe. It shows that laws and rules and their execution vary from class to class, so, Sami is excused from this public insult and hanging. He is not part of this mullah's court. The reason behind this dishonesty of the mullah is the ongoing cultural practice of diffusing power by the high class, which allows the mullah to do this while considering it his religious power through his "false consciousness". Religion gets important in that society due to its social significance, otherwise, its role for political purposes has never been appreciated. Religion acts as a tool for Fatima's execution against her act of love, but there is a social purpose behind it, keeping the Pashtun elite away from mixing with the poor and apprehending the poor about their place in society.

Furthermore, it is explicit in the text that the poor are disgraced as non-humans and Latif plays with humanity and exercises his religious power by killing Fatima's sister, Afia. It is taken as the decision of the "national institution" Jirga because this marriage was not serving their social interest, so, they went ruthless, and even life became worthless for them, and, adding more, religion was politicized for the execution of this

decision. These episodes exhibit that powerful tribes rule not by force, or coercion only, but they create such subjects as happily submit to their will and agree to be ruled (Loomba, 1998).

However, Mullah Sarwar knows the role of tradition, culture, and religion clearly, and his character is important in the sense that he is contributing to bringing society in streamline. He declares, "Our culture and tradition are not our religion" (Abawi, 2014, p.145). He enlightens the couple in love about their free will as above all other decisions. Love is future strength. It is a talent, a gift. He not only joins them in matrimony but also hides them. Rashid, who acts as a toxic foil reaches them, whom Mullah tries to tell the true religion, but he gets furious, and this radical man insults him back because he (mullah) is from an inferior section of society. He shouts as well, "Who you are to tell me about Islam"? (P. 258). Mullah continues telling, and in reaction, Rashid threats him by exercising his hegemonic strength, "if you do not tell us where they (Fatima and Sami) are, I cannot guarantee your safety or your family's" (2014). Mullah is still relaxed and keeps on telling Rashid. He points out his drawbacks as well to unveil his conservative practices.

Furthermore, Mullah Sarwar is an "organic intellectual", who enlightens Rashid on the right path by accentuating that it is not fury or rage, but darkness, which is compelling you for all these wrongdoings. He further utters, "You do not want to know the reality, but your ideas have learned to exercise hegemony that is rooted inside you from your tribe from the very beginning" (P. 258). Mullah guides him that his actions will ruin the family. So, it is better to be cool and allow the couple to live in harmony. In this way, Mullah wants to avoid traditional hegemonic practices that bring distortion and conflict in society. He wants to construct a culture towards modern values with amity and hopeful evolution. He is a true religious scholar who is not in accord with the Pashtun agenda and is murdered at the hands of that brutal power. He and Afia are killed on the same day. Their hegemonic practices of killing and then ruling are the worst.

Nevertheless, Police, another ideological state institution rule through law over that poor faction of society living in Afghanistan. They gaze at women when they go to their homes, and they exercise their power in such an insolent way and harsh tone that it brings detestation in public. Law is a manipulative tool for them. They also go to search for the couple and grasp them. They treat them as if they have caught some scoundrels, and, further speaking, they're the police, not their enemy (Abawi, 2014). Opposite to all these practices, what is momentous to add is the transformation of Rashid through Mullah Sarwar's teachings. He turns good to the couple and does an effort to save them while regretting his past deeds and asking for pardon. Finally, he helps and guides them to reach Kabul to visit the *Human Rights Organization* office for a cordial life ahead together.

Conclusion

It has been concluded that Afghan society is patriarchal and runs under the tribal system. Moreover, it has been divided into diverse factions, and the elite rule through its hegemonic strength to accomplish their choices, and the downtrodden people pay dreadful costs in the shape of killings and executions of their blood relations. Abawi through her powerful narrative has shown the execution of elite practices through the power dynamics and on the bases of racial segregation, which are evident markers in Marx's thoughts as well. It has also been highlighted that men are also not free from alienation and discrimination, but they face it from an elite tribe, as Muhammad faces disrespect by Kaka Ismail, and, then by the Taliban, and, later on, by Mullahs. It can be fairly put, that economic strength in society brings ill-treatment and abuse to the poor without any gender difference. This division also helps the elite to accomplish their agendas to rule easily through the consent of the poor people about their ideologies, which they have transfused into them through "false consciousness". Moreover, all the institutions in power are the ultimate power of the elite, so they manipulate them and use them as tools to serve their social agendas. It has also been concluded that the

role of intellectuals is important because they are with a vision of modernity and are revolutionary. They want their society to meet global standards, and hence, serve to fulfill Raymond William's marker of culture, how it is rebuilt, and remade to bring innovation. With the help of such members of society, it never stays conservative or underdeveloped. The group of three Fatima, Sami, and mullah Sarwar has accomplished this task by serving the community, enlightening them, and bringing transformation in them. Hence, it has been precisely concluded that economic, and hegemonic power works repressively, which is only dissipated with the role of society's organic intellectuals.

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