

Justine Moritz, a subaltern in Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus

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ABSTRACT: *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley represents series of critical issues like disability, gender, inequality, masculinity, and among those issues and concerns, the representation of the “subaltern,” especially of the “female gendered subaltern,” is particularly significant because it plays a decisive role in examining the social context of the novel. In contemporary literary criticism, postcolonial theory is one of the most gripping schools of thought. The subaltern, as a theoretical concept in literary criticism, stays under the umbrella of Postcolonial theory. “Subaltern,” a term was first familiarized by Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist and political activist, refers to people represented as being of inferior status or rank; subordinate of rank, power, authority and action. This essay, the result of my study on the novel and the subaltern, argues that Justine Moritz is a subaltern and her representation in the novel, voice and silence, alienation, resistance and death are integral components of her subalternity. It considers the illustration of Justine Moritz as a character, the treatment she gets as a member of the community and as an individual, her social mobility, her being trapped in an oppressive system, her being abused by the creature, her psycho-alienation and her struggle and resistance to establish her own agency as a subaltern. It will review the concept of “subaltern” given by such critics and thinkers as Antonio Gramsci, Ranajit Guha, and Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak. Then, it will interpret close reading with a special focus on the character of Justine Moritz to find out her positionality and relevance to “subalternity,” with reference to the establishment of her individual subaltern agency through her death. However, analysis in this essay will examine how hegemony and supremacy of the dominant class plays constructive role, and will also include examples of subaltern resistance against the hegemonic power structure though this act of resistance leads to death and destruction. The methodology of this essay is analytical and substantial help from secondary sources will be taken.

KEYWORDS: Frankenstein, Gramsci, Hegemony, Justine, Representation, Spivak, Subaltern.

INTRODUCTION

This essay attempts to interpret Justine Moritz as a subaltern Individual with reference to subaltern aspects in Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus by Mary Shelley. The discussion is based on contemporary subaltern literary theory. Likewise, the emphasis is put on the notions of “subalternity,” “representation,” “hegemony,” “oppression,” “resistance” and “agency” as

supporting ideas. It argues that Justine Moritz is a subaltern in *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*.

The concept of Subaltern: Subaltern as research concept first introduced to rewrite Indian history out of the dominant framework.

Over the course of time “Subaltern” has become a very influential theory and critical approach in various academic disciplines including literary criticism and literature.

Representation

-Representation of Subaltern in literature is analogous to the representation of Subaltern in history.

-Representation of Justine Moritz is framed with dominant elite consciousness.

-Subaltern alienation of Justine makes her “other”:

-Her own behaviour

-Her extreme confusion of manner

-Hegemony

-Justine Moritz is Trapped in the discourse of the hegemony.

-Legal Procedure is a significant tool of hegemony.

-As Gramsci states “only permanent victory breaks their subordination” (Gramsci, 207), Justine displaces hegemony through her death and presents her subaltern agency.

O-ppression, resistance and agency

-She has to face Structural and hegemonic oppression. Through the confession of lie she upholds her resistance and establishes her subaltern agency.

-Ranjit Guha mentions the death of Chandra in his essay “Chandra’s Death” and

G.C. Spivak mentions the death of Bhuvanewari in her famous essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” A comparative study of Chandra, Bhuvanewari and Justine Moritz shows the establishment of subaltern agency.

Conclusion

In *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley, with a microscopic and elite conscious representation, Justine Moritz is a subaltern. She finally avoids all hegemony, disowns existing social, political and judicial establishment and sustains her subaltern agency through her death.

ESSAY

Justine Moritz, a subaltern in Frankenstein

In Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus by Mary Shelley, characters provoke in-depth discussion because of their unique experiences of suffering, torture and trauma. This project monopolises Justine Moritz as a “subaltern” character for close investigation. At the same time, for comprehensive study and comparison, it will exercise privilege to refer to characters from other text which fall under the subaltern group. However, wide-ranging discussion and analysis of the essay will be confined to subaltern and subalternity. The argument is centred on subaltern aspects in the novel with reference to Justine Moritz and contemporary subaltern literary theory likewise the emphasis is placed on the notions of “subalternity,” “representation,” “hegemony,” “oppression,” “resistance” and “agency” as supporting ideas. It argues that Justine Moritz is a subaltern in Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus.

In a society or state, we perceive some voices and again we do not perceive some other voices. This being perceived and not perceived of the voices is highly significant from power perspective. Political space of the state is led to the emergence through this projection of voices. If one is not allowed to raise voice in the spaces of the state or society, he cannot stay with his autonomous existence. He becomes absent in politics and this absence makes him more and more voiceless. It is not that they cannot speak rather they are not allowed to speak so that others can hear. When a group of people are forced not to raise their voices, their voices are muted and they become absent in spite of being present, they are subaltern. Subaltern people may be comprised of marginalized communities, religious groups, gender and races. Overall events of a state such as administration, culture, knowledge, politics are shaped and displayed on the giant screen of hegemony of the dominant class. Accordingly, the subaltern voices, we encounter in literature are the voices of disown the establishment of the existing society, state including all institutions. So, it happens with Justine Moritz in

Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus by Mary Shelley.

The term “subaltern” denotes people ‘of inferior rank’ or of lower-class in social hierarchy. Italian Marxist and activist Antonio Gramsci used the term for the first time, “The concept of the subaltern “...” has been derived from Gramsci; a Marxist who applied it to ‘non elite’ or subordinate groups” (Senevirante,5). Gramsci used the term “subaltern” in different perspectives. For instance, in order to explain the role of intellectuals in a society or state, Gramsci writes, “The intellectuals are the dominant group’s ‘deputies’ exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government” (Gramsci, 145). In defining subaltern classes Gramsci writes, “The subaltern classes, by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a state:” (202). In order to explain the characteristics of the history of subaltern classes Gramsci writes “The history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic” (206). In an introductory essay of subaltern studies, Ranajit Guha, pioneer of Subaltern Studies Group defines the subaltern, “simply as those who were not among the elite, specifically, as the ‘demographic difference between the total Indian population’ and the dominant indigenous and foreign elite.” (Ray,36)

Initially “subaltern” as a research project was first introduced into the work of Subaltern Study Group, a creative drive for rewriting Indian history out of the dominant frame work. The widespread phenomenon of the elite ruling classes such as state, politics, power, war and regime are generally realized in the historiography produced under the control and supervision of the elite. So, it seems most bizarre to expect that elite historiography includes the life and history of the dispossessed, deprived and marginalised people. Just like their history, the subaltern classes are also absent in the running state affairs. They own no representation tools to make them able to represent themselves. This realization effectuated a circle of Indian historians named ‘Subaltern Studies Group’(SSG) to shoulder the responsibility of ‘representing’ those subalterns in their discursive practices of historiography and the production of knowledge. One of the founding members of SSG, Dipesh Chakrabarty writes, “subaltern studies may have opened a new area of academic and political investigation” (Chakrabarty,23). However, G.C Spivak, an India-born postcolonial critic poses a serious question concerning the ‘representation’ of the subaltern by critics, historians, intellectuals and creative writers in her widely-known essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Her reply is ‘No.’ That does not mean that they do not have their voice. The implication is: as listeners and audience if we are prepared to listen to them and their ‘small’ stories. Moreover, Spivak also warns critics and writers of an awkward situation, that is, the unstable positionality of the “subaltern.” She writes, “The same class or element which was dominant in one area ... could be among the dominated in another” (Spivak,79). Spivak recognizes the victimization and marginalization of the subalterns and their dis-privileged status in social context. But then she goes on to the female gendered subaltern, discovers their double victimization due to their ‘female’ gender identity. She writes ‘If in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow’ (Spivak 83).

Over the course of time “Subaltern” has been formulated as an increasingly influential theory and critical approach in various academic disciplines including literary criticism and literature. Though in the early part, subaltern studies have been started as an approach to rewrite south Asian historiography, now it is an integral part of post-colonial studies. In the academic field it tends to create utopian possibilities as Priyamvada Gopal states: “As such the subaltern ... is a real and imagined means of coming to an understanding of human commonalities that have been excised by the marginalizing sweep of large historical process and systems.” (Gopal,152). In Africa, Latin America, South Asia and around the globe writers fortified with the idea of “Subaltern”, in order to unmute the muted voice of marginalized people started writing on subaltern perspective.

Whether in literature or critical approach, representation of Subaltern is analogous to its representation in history. Discussing the literary subaltern, Priyamvada Gopal specifies the absence of “voice-consciousness” of subaltern and suggests that life of subaltern slave can found in the fragments of history. She writes, “The slave is almost a paradigmatic subaltern-one whose ‘voice-consciousness’ is absent and whose life must be read out of the fragments available to the historian - writer” (Gopal, 150). Any historical representation is subjective in the contexts of class, ideology, and power. And when comes the context of representation, it is

impossible for a historian to be objective. G. C. Spivak discussing on the woman Gendered subaltern, indicates the subjectivity. She writes: “Representation has not withered away.” (Spivak, 104). Historical representation is always subjected to historical scepticism as power is a decisive factor in writing history. We may have an intriguing example of representation in the essay Chandra’s Death by Ranajit Guha. In this essay Guha writes, “That struggle is nothing less than a contest between two kinds of politics. Each of this has its aim to try to appropriate the event of Chandra’s death as a discursive site – on behalf of the state in one case and on behalf of the community in other” (Guha, 40).

Moreover, there are also other factors such as class, ideology and tastes of historiographer to influence a historiographic project. In describing the role of intellectuals, Gramsci compares that the role of urban intellectuals is like the role of subaltern officers in the army. In prison note book he writes: “Their function can be compared to that of subaltern officers in the army. They have no autonomous initiative in elaborating plans for construction” (Gramsci,148). In every historical moment, historiography is firmly ruled by the then ruling class and audiences get accustomed to have big events of kings, queens and other elites in the history and as intellectuals, historians are the victims of historical hegemony. Guha also succeeds to discover this hegemony as he writes, “Historical scholarship has developed a tradition that tends to ignore the small drama and fine detail of social existence, especially at its lower depths.” (Guha,36).

Consequently, the attributes of literature, like historiography, are not free from subjectivity. How deeply power structure is connected to literary representation, famous literary critic Terry Eagleton illustrates it with an example. In his “Introduction: What is Literature” he writes: “I am free to vote Labour or Conservative, but if I try to act on the belief that this choice itself merely masks a deeper prejudice -the prejudice that the meaning of democracy is confined to putting a cross on a ballot paper every few years -then in certain unusual circumstances I might end up in prison” (Eagleton). Again, Spivak warns about the elite response as she writes: “What must the elite do to watch out for the continuing construction of the subaltern?” (Spivak,90). So, whether in history or in literature we can never expect the subaltern representation with whole subaltern consciousness. That’s why, Guha suggests, “bending closer to the ground in order to pick up the traces of a subaltern life” (Guha, 36).

Therefore, in the novel, representation of Justine Moritz is framed with elite consciousness. “The lower orders, being neither so poor nor so despised, their manners are more refined and moral.” (Shelley, 66) - these words not only indicate Justine’s subaltern positionality but also indicate what the elite expect from the subaltern. The novel is proffering a very filtered and represented view of the subalternity. In this regard, Spivak’s notions about subaltern-representation is noteworthy. She writes, “There is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself; the intellectual’s solution is not to abstain from representation” (Spivak 80). So presumably, the portrayal of Justine Moritz is subaltern and her portrayal is done by the elite with elite outlook, ideology and culture. So, this literary optimization of subaltern is not far from the representation of subaltern in elite historiography. In his prison notebook Antonio Gramsci describes such representation as “fragmented” and “episodic”. He

writes: “The history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic” (Gramsci, 206). As far as the representation is concerned, Justine is more subaltern than any other female figures in the novel, has a minor position, receives less attention but bears big burden. As an individual of her community, she is a victim of class oppression. Then her low status and gender identity as a ‘female’ make her prone to another stage of victimization.

“Do you remember on what occasion Justine Moritz entered our family? Probably you do not; I will relate her history, therefore in a few words” (Shelley, 66). In the novel, this is the inauguration of Justine Moritz as a character represented with fragments and a very short description in a letter. This short intro very clearly denotes Justine as someone other. This other one never belongs to the elite class of Frankenstein, that’s why comes the questions of ‘entrance’ (66) which is very sharply subjected to ‘exit’. In absence of her voiced consciousness, within this very short and fragmented description, we come to know about her life and class position. Such type of representation proves that her positionality is subaltern. These words ‘Probably you do not’ (66) exactly describes the entrance of Justine Moritz in Frankenstein family is not so important to remember. On the contrary, though her entrance is not eventful and expecting one, she has to bear big burden of Frankenstein family.

As female subaltern she is a potential victim of class oppression and poverty. Though education is a potential mover for upward social mobility, she is deprived of childhood education. She is forced by her subaltern positionality and oppressive social structure to take the work of a servant. As a child, she has been subject to her mother’s rough behaviour “her mother could not endure her, “...” treated her very ill” (Shelley, 66). This has impacted her life in the long run making her traumatized in her personal mood. So, in this respect, Justine as a female subaltern is subjected to dual victimization: gender and class which ends up with a life-long disaster and a wretched existence.

Furthermore, Justine’s subaltern alienation escalates her wretchedness and makes her other. Socio-political establishment and economic condition cause the sources of individual alienation in the society. When present establishments and economic arrangements fail to address individual’s need as a human being, individual started to feel alienated. German social psychologist and psychoanalyst Erich Fromm defines “alienation” as “By alienation is meant a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien” (Fromm,117).

He describes that “alienation” is the result of capitalism. He writes, “The foregoing discussion of the process of abstractification leads to the central issue of the effects of Capitalism on personality: the phenomenon of alienation” (Fromm,117). Losing all her family members, actually Justine loses herself due to amputating from the roots essential for a human life. “Endeavoured to imitate her phraseology and manners” (Shelley, 67) makes her rootlessness and efforts to get a root more evident. Gradual structural oppression such as poverty, being treated ill by her mother, death of her brothers and sister snatches away the colourful illusions of life from her. Lack of upward social mobility makes her more hopeless. Taking the work of a servant in Frankenstein family certainly denotes the downward social mobility. Oppressive social system makes her deeply traumatized with a sense of incompleteness, makes her detached from establishment and brings about her “alienation” and this “alienation” and

detachment also denotes her subalternity. An alienated individual though lives in the society becomes detached from the society, naturally does not response to society with self-awareness. As Fromm states, “The alienated person is out of touch with himself as he is out of touch with any other person” (Fromm, 117). Her alienation makes her “other” in the eyes of other and more victimised as her alienated behaviour gives birth to more confusion of her guilt. “Her own behaviour has been so confused, as to add to the evidence of facts a weight” (Shelley, 80) or “On being charged with the fact, the poor girl confirmed the suspicion in a great measure by her extreme confusion of manner” (Shelley, 80)

- provide the perfect illustration of her alienated behaviour. Answering the question “What is the effect of alienation on mental health?” (Fromm, 185) Fromm writes, “Another result of alienation is the prevalence of a feeling of guilt” (198).

Gramsci identifies the “state” as the combination of dictatorship and hegemony. He writes, “In politics the error occurs as a result of an inaccurate understanding of what the State (in its integral meaning: dictatorship + hegemony) really is” (Gramsci, 497). Dominant class controls and rules other classes, maintains and manifests class supremacy in two ways: domination and hegemony. State and its all apparatus including civil and military bureaucracy are nothing but a complex mechanism to maintain domination and hegemony in favour of dominant class. Karl Marx ascertains this long-submerged truth of the state. He writes, “The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie” (Marx, 62). Domination is done directly in the name of law, order and security issues but hegemony is more complex, indirect and reciprocal. In every moment, the dominant class has to manufacture and organise the consent of subordinate classes in favour of the power and dominant class using the gadgets of hegemony. This continuous process of manufacturing and organization of consent is “hegemony”. So, hegemony is not in a single form, not in one way rather it is multifaced and travels in multiple way. In Gramsci’s word, “though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity” (Gramsci, 373). Every apparatus of the state, educational and cultural institutions, religion and its institutions, media, intellectuals, legal and judicial institutions, economic arrangements, all faithfully perform the role of the instrument of hegemony.

In this context, as a member of the subaltern class, Justine Moritz is Trapped in the discourse of the hegemony. She is the victim of partiality and ill treatment of her mother. Her mother accuses her for the death of her brother and sisters. So, Justine is the worst sufferer, subaltern within the subaltern. Again, her mother thinks that the deaths of her children are, “judgement from heaven to chastise her partiality” (Shelley, 67). This is another form of victimization of Justine, socially constructed and a component of hegemony which at the end succeeds to inject a guilt feeling into her. Religion plays a hegemonic role in this regard as it is narrated in the text, “I believe her confessor confirmed the idea which she had conceived” (Shelley, 67). Here the confessor’s role is hegemonic as he makes it to think that the cause of the children’s death is not poverty, malnutrition, lack of treatment and other socio-economic factors rather it is a heavenly judgement. One example from Gramsci may help us profoundly to understand

hegemonic role of religion. Gramsci writes, “Benedetto Croce, for example, is a kind of lay pope and an extremely efficient instrument of hegemony—even if at times he may find himself in disagreement with one government or another, etc” (Gramsci,210). Elizabeth’s idea of Genevan society, “A servant in Geneva does not mean the same thing as a servant in France and England” (Shelley, 66) and Mr.

Frankenstein’s assurance of impartiality, “I shall prevent the slightest shadow of partiality” (82) are hegemonic.

Like other bureaus of state, judicial system is also a sophisticated instrument of hegemony. Gramsci describes Judiciary as the “more sensitive hegemonic apparatus” (Gramsci, 507). He writes that “Naturally all three powers are also organs of political hegemony, but in different degrees: 1. Legislature; 2, Judiciary; 3. Executive” (Gramsci, 507). Dominated classes are the victims of hegemonic oppression of judicial system. In his famous poem *The Judges*, Pablo Neruda reveals the close relation between the elite and the judicial system and mentions the victimization of the poor. He writes:

Your blood asks, how were the wealthy and the law interwoven? With what Sulphurous iron fabric? How did the

Poor keep falling into the tribunals? (Neruda)

Mr. Frankenstein’s firm assurance of impartiality, “I shall prevent the slightest shadow of partiality” (Shelley, 82) depicts that the elite controls the court. As a poor, as a member of the subaltern class, Justine is victimized of the hegemonic oppression of elite controlled judicial system. Neither the court nor the public consider Justine’s enormous sacrifice for Frankenstein family. They are unwilling to accept that a subaltern girl’s character may possess such aspects: “the most amiable and benevolent of human creatures” “a most affectionate mother” “perfect innocence” (86). Due to her subalternity all the brightness of her character is replaced with “blackest ingratitude” (86). Victor’s perception about judgement, “I perceived that the popular voice and the countenances of the judges had already condemned my unhappy victim” (86) and Justine’s hopelessness “yet I see no room for hope” (85) prove that Justine’s crime and punishment are predetermined on the basis of her social positionality and the trial is not true-justice rather it is an exercise of elite hegemony. The so-called justice, at the end is conclusively proved as “mockery” (Shelley,83).

Against such exercise of hegemony, collectively or individually Subaltern resists and no other way except resistance is left to establish subaltern agency. Though in the novel, due to its elite narrative, collective subaltern is missing, Individual subaltern agency is demonstrated through the resistance of Justine Moritz. Her decoding of the establishment: “no room for hope” (85), “in an evil hour” (88) and “a sad and bitter world” (89) indicates that she not only displaces elite hegemony but also disowns the establishment. Explaining the emergences of subalternity Gyan Prakash writes, “Subalternity thus emerges in the paradoxes of the functioning power” (Prakash,1483) “defying the models of rationality and social action” (Prakash,1480). Justine

Moritz also makes her subaltern intervention and establishes her subaltern agency in the paradoxical situation of the judicial system.

“One by one, her brother and sister died” (Shelley,67). We may reacquire this as a statement to draft the social positionality and the structural oppression of subaltern class of Justine Moritz. It chronicles the child’s death rate of impoverished and marginalised people which is induced due to poverty, hunger, malnutrition and lack of upward social mobility. Throughout the journey of life, Justine has to face oppression of various fold: class, economic, social, legal and gender and these various oppressions are structural. Justine comes of a severe impoverished family. We detect no imprint of upward social mobility left for Moritz family. The last member of the family, Justine Moritz, a girl of fifteen has to mourn the untimely death of all members of her family. She is the hapless victim of the creature due to her subalternity and gender. Her victimization reminds that the marginalised subalterns have to bear the burden of civilization though they are not the ultimate beneficiary. Her victimization also resembles the displacement of the marginalised and indigenous subaltern people throughout the world from their habitat like birds, animals and other creatures due to bulk investment, mining and so-called infrastructure development works.

The creature’s execution of its learning of mischief upon Justine symbolises the subordination of man to machine, indicates the dehumanization of workers in capitalist mode of production. As a male part and as a shadow of Victor, the creature is also accustomed with the gender discriminatory culture. Its idea of woman is incubated with perverted masculinity and consumerism which constructs the woman as an object. The creature demands, “You must create a female for me” (Shelley,147) and again it pronounces the specification of features of future female product, “as deformed and horrible as myself” (Shelley,146) and it also determines the role of future female product, “would not deny herself to me” (Shelley,146). This demand, specification and determining the role of a female creature illustrate that the creature is a dominating male. Though it has no access to the society, it holds the male dominating cultural power of the society and the power, in comparison with the creature, Justine Moritz devolves and easily falls a victim to the art of “mischief” (145) of the creature. Spivak’s notion of the woman gender subaltern also crystalizes the oppression of Justine Moritz as a woman gendered subaltern. She writes, “the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (Spivak,83). The creature’s utterance “the crime had its source in her: be hers the punishment” (Shelley,145) is not simply the wording of the creature, it is the expression of masculinism against the female subaltern which is echoed in ‘Can the Subaltern Speak’ by Spivak as she writes “There is no virtue in global laundry lists with woman as a pious item” (Spivak,104).

On the contrary, against the structural oppression of the dominant classes, Justine mounts substantial resistance. Raka Ray states that in the hegemonic discourses subaltern subject loses its subjectivity. She writes “Subaltern subjects figure in to hegemonic discourses as objects even though they are apparently excluded as subjects” (Ray, 40). Therefore, in the elite conscious narratives, we meet subaltern response or resistance with the subaltern objectivity. As per Guha’s suggestion we should bend closer to the ground to trace Justine’s individual

resistance. Guha states “by bending closer to the ground in order to pick up the traces of a subaltern life in its passage through time” (Guha, 36). So, in the novel, against the organized structural oppression, Justine’s response and resistance is not subjective but she resists. Addressing the world as “sad and bitter” (Shelley,89) and the confession hour as “evil” (88), she demonstrates stiff resistance on her part. With such kind of addressing, she not only disowns the establishment but also displaces the hegemony.

Ranajit Guha, one of the pioneers of Subaltern Study Group mentions the death of Chandra in his essay “Chandra’s Death”. In this essay he describes the foreground of reclaiming a judicial document about the death of Chandra, a women gendered subaltern of Indian village for rewriting Indian history in subaltern perspective. In his essay, we undertake a critical study of the death case of Chandra who belonged to the lowest caste victimised of extreme poverty and caste pollution. She became pregnant due to an illicit love with Magaram Chasha who also belonged to the same caste and class and died during abortion.

The women: Chandra, her mother, her sister, her sister’s daughter and other were anxious and frightened of the result on an illicit love which is forbidden in the society. This footing of anxiety and frightening united them, they decided for abortion in spite of bhek(legislative enactment) and herbal medicines were administered and Chandra died during the abortion. Taking the decision of abortion is consequential and remarkable as no male is involved in taking this decision. Guha reimages it as women solidarity. He writes:

However, for the women, who had rallied in support of Chandra, the alternatives were by no means of equal value. In their judgement, abortion, with all its risks, was preferable to bhek. This was choice made by women entirely on their own in order to stop the engine of male authority from uprooting a woman from her place in the local society. (Guha,58)

Chandra’s death becomes a crime in the eyes of the establishment and consequently has brought tragic ends for her gendered comrades. But women solidarity in support of Chandra, their choice of abortion and at last Chandra’s death are flagrant examples of resistance and establishment of consciousness and agency of women gendered subaltern. Guha argues:

“Not an ‘open revolt’ armed with trumpet and banner, it is still a visible and loud

enough protest in a society where initiative and voice are given to man alone. For when a victim, however timid, comes to regard herself as an objective of injustice, she already steps in to the role of a critic of the system that victimizes her. And any action that follows from that critique contains the elements of a practice of resistance” (59).

G.C Spivak’s proposition is that, “there is no space from which the sexed subaltern subject can speak” (Spivak,103). In “Can the Subaltern Speak?” She mentions the death of Bhuvanewari Bhaduri, a young woman of sixteen or seventeen who hanged herself in her father’s apartment in North Calcutta in 1926. Bhuvanewari was involved in armed struggle for Indian Independence, entrusted with a political assassination and unable to do the task, she killed

herself. Spivak writes, “Bhuvanewari had known that her death would be diagnosed as the outcome of illegitimate passion. She had therefore waited for the onset of her menstruation” (103). With a close analysis of the death of Bhuvanewari, Spivak comes to the decision, which is in her words, “The subaltern as a female cannot be heard or read” (104). Spivak describes subaltern woman as “historically muted subject” (91). So, woman like Bhuvanewari who has courage and consciousness enough to join the Independence movement, has to kill herself to raise her voice and the space left for her to speak is death.

Now with a comparative study of Chandra, Bhuvanewari, and Justine, we may ascertain how a subaltern individual can substantiate own agency. Chandra and other women mount resistance which brings about death and other oppression for them. Guha writes, “In choosing abortion as an alternative to bhek, they defied the sentence of living death that had already been pronounced upon Chandra.” (Guha,60). Self-killing is a resistance of Bhuvanewari. In Spivak’s words, “Bhuvanewari Bhaduri’s suicide is an unemphatic, ad hoc subaltern rewriting of the social text” (Spivak, 104), “rewrote the social text of sati-suicide in an interventionist way” (103). Her waiting for the onset of menstruation is a resistance against the patriarchal culture of claiming a woman’s suicide as outcome of illicit love and illegitimate passion. Her suicide is also a resistance against the patriarchal culture of Sati- suicide, a widow immolation culture which denies the agency of woman. So, with self- killing, Bhuvanewari has made a cultural intervention and substantiated her subaltern agency.

Like Chandra and Bhuvanewari, Justine Moritz also protests. Her utterance, “I did confess; but I confessed a lie” (Shelley,88) is a stubborn resistance against the elite judicial system. Judicial court is observed as a sacred place and it is not expected to confess a lie in the court. Justine confessed a lie, and thus refuses the sacredness of the judicial system, denies its hegemonic role. When she recounts her time under judicial custody as ‘evil hour’ (88), we encounter an oppressive judicial system against the poor subaltern. When She says “my confessor has besieged me; he threatened and menaced, until I almost began to think that I was the monster that he said I was. He threatened and excommunication and hell fire in my last moments if I continued obdurate” (88), she not only narrates the suppression she has to endure under judicial custody but also unmasks the dehumanization of elite judicial system, religion as a hegemonic instrument and reveals the truth what the dominant classes tend to hide. Being a minor character, Justine Moritz opens up major cracks of the establishment, and thus establishes her long denied subaltern agency and subjectivity.

This essay is tempted to argue that Justine Moritz is a subaltern with examining the illustration of her and cognise her life in the light of subalternity in *Frankenstein*; or, the *Modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley. Her reduced and fragmented representation with elite consciousness, her victimization of hegemony, structural oppression and her alienation prove her subalternity, make her a subaltern in the novel. Finally, with her resistance, she succeeds to displace hegemony, disown the establishment and establishes her subaltern agency. Even more, in the comparative study with “Chandra” and “Bhuvanewari Bhaduri”, Justine Moritz shows remarkable resemblance of woman gendered subaltern and establishment of subaltern agency.

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