



Debunking the Subaltern Voice: A Critical Analysis of Representative Colonial and Postcolonial Texts in Pakistani ESL Setting

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Abstract- Classifying texts as colonial and postcolonial is a common practice in English studies in Pakistan. A key outcome of this trend is the reading of colonial and postcolonial texts as binary opposites with clearly and narrowly defined ideological stances supporting the colonial masters and the voiceless subaltern. By using two key texts—used extensively in the Pakistani educational context—we attempt to debunk that myth that Colonial texts act to undermine the colonized, whereas the Postcolonial texts give voice to the suppressed colonized and expose the cruelty of the coloniser. The analysis shows that the perception is not entirely correct, the Colonial text exposes the colonizers' atrocities and snobbish attitude and the Postcolonial text presents the colonizers as good friends and kind superiors and therefore readers, and critics too, should be on their guard against being lulled into false generalities. The study is significant in that it underscores the importance of offering impartial and holistic view of reading texts in the educational settings with a view to encouraging learners to explore multiple meanings and interplay of ideologies.

Key Terms: Subaltern, Binary, Shamsie, Voice, Postcolonial

I. INTRODUCTION:

Since the introduction of institutionalized study of English in 1857 in the subcontinent (Gupta, 1995) various strategies have been employed to teach English including the study of literary texts. In Pakistan, literary texts have emerged as a significant component of acquiring language skills since these texts provide rich linguistic input, exemplify grammatical structures and offer new vocabulary (Rahayu, 2011). For ESL learners, literary texts are viewed as excellent resources as they blend communicative competency with social consciousness and engage students on an emotional level.

Postcolonial as a term is “exceedingly fuzzy” (Brians, 2006) because of the multiplicity of interpretations: it means literature after the end of colonization but then literature written during colonization is also regarded as Postcolonial e.g. *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. It connotes that Colonialism is over but Neo-Colonialism says otherwise (Nkrumah, 2012). An even more important fallacy is its Eurocentric approach towards culture and history (Dirlik, 1999) in that “it singles out the Colonial experience as the most important fact about the countries involved” (Brian, 2006). This Eurocentricism gives it a narrowly defined “orientation of Postcolonial scholars toward engaging in an ongoing critique of Colonialism” resulting in theorists, academicians and students seeing Colonial and Postcolonial as the opposite ends of the spectrum. This binary classification feels that “important signifiers for imperial values were laid down” in Colonial texts to “help sustain the Colonial vision, giving reinforcement to an already insular Colonial world” (Tetik). In this view Postcolonial literature repudiated the claims of Colonialism to show its true face. This stance of Postcolonial as the opposite of Colonial also exists when it comes to the representation of the ruling Europeans and the ruled natives of the colonies. These relations are constructed as binaries of master-slave, dominant-dominated, oppressor-suppressed, governor-governed, victor-victim, victimizer-victimised and superior-subaltern with Colonial discourse favouring the former and Postcolonial discourse favouring the latter in each of the pairings.

Our contention in writing this article is to study the representation of the superior-subaltern binary with the aim of analysing if the Colonial and Postcolonial discourses are biased in favouring one over the other and also if the assumption rather the general perception that Postcolonial discourse is the voice of the subaltern is plausibly valid or desirable.

Introduced by Antonio Gramsci as a term for the proletarian class that would evade the censorship of the Italian fascist regime subaltern is a low-ranked person at the receiving end of the hegemony created by the ruling elites (Louai, 2012). For the branch of Postcolonial studies that has come to be known as Subaltern Studies Group a subaltern is defined in terms of their difference from the elites

(Guha, 1982). For the present study a subaltern is a person from the ruled natives who despite their education or abilities remains a nonentity and is oppressed by the Colonial rulers, the foreign elites. We would like to make it clear that the subaltern is not an illiterate ignorant person condemned to the farthest edges of the society. Just as the army hierarchy places the subaltern above the menial foot soldiers and he is an officer of a lower sort similarly the study takes subalterns to mean educated ambitious people who are quite adept in the ways of the rulers who are above the laymen but at the same time not at the same level as the ruling elites.

In the absence of a clear or definite antonym for subaltern “superior” (Opposite Word) seems to be as good a choice as any. Superior for the context of the study refers to any member, male or female, of the ruling foreign elites.

Methodology

We have selected the novels *A Passage to India* by E. M. Forster and *Burnt Shadows* by Kamila Shamsie where the former belongs to the Colonial discourse and the latter to the Postcolonial discourse. Both the novels are prestigious, critically well-received works of literature and are at the top of reading lists around the world.

We will be focusing on the issue of the governor-governed, superior subaltern dimension of the characters and show how the characters and especially their relations are presented. The analysis will equip us to draw conclusions regarding the representation of the subaltern in Colonial and Postcolonial literature.

The study takes Aziz in *A Passage to India* and Sajjad in *Burnt Shadows* as the representatives of the subalterns. They are educated, westernized, liberal minded individuals who have a status of respect among the natives and who also interact with the ruling English: Aziz is a doctor at a government hospital run by the English while Sajjad is student of law working as an apprentice with James James. The members of the ruling elites James, Elizabeth, Ronny, Turton, Fielding and the English women constitute the superiors for the study.

The study attempts to see the representation between the superiors and their subalterns in the novels with a view to determining how the two entities are drawn. The study is an attempt to determine if the Colonial texts really subvert the subaltern and do not give any favourable representation to the subaltern thereby presenting him as a demon. The study is meant to find out if the Postcolonial literature is the opposite of the (perceived) Colonial literature in that it gives voice to the subaltern and brings out the flaws of the Colonial superior.

The focus of the study is different from the focus of the studies in what has come to be known as Subaltern Studies. While the focus of the writers of subaltern Studies is on the suppressed people after the colonizers have left e.g. Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things* focuses on the women and the Untouchables, Kenji's 'Misaki' and Karekinada talks about the suppression of the subaltern Burakumin at the hands of the mainstream society (Ishikawa) the focus of the present study is the superior-subaltern equation during the period of Colonial rule.

Burnt Shadows introduces us to a superior-subaltern relationship in the second part of the novel. Sajjad Ali Ashraf is an educated Indian who is aiming to enter the legal profession. He is a sort of apprentice to James. As Sajjad Ali walks up to the James's residence the reader can notice his ease and comfort. There is no apprehension in approaching the bungalow like the one the reader finds in *A Passage to India*. When Doctor Aziz gets close to Major Calendar's bungalow he is taken hostage by a severe anxiety as to what is the appropriate protocol for entering the house. He is reminded of the “case” (Forster, 1924) where an Indian was allegedly snubbed for daring to ride to the main house in a tonga and though he is not sure about the authenticity of the story he gets off the tonga just outside the veranda and walks up to the house. In contrast Sajjad is secure in his idea of his relationship with James and approaches the house as he would any Indian's house with “the confident air of a man of twenty-four who has never known failure” (Forster, 1924). The Postcolonial work that is supposedly the voice of the subaltern presents the superior as approachable and easy going while the Colonial work brings out the strain of the relationship because of the arrogance of the superiors and the high status they had awarded themselves.

However, some notion of following a vaguely defined but enforced protocol is evident in that both Aziz and Sajjad, the subalterns, are concerned with having the right appearance for their superiors. Aziz is just finishing his dinner when he gets the Civil Surgeon's summons. He still has the stain of paan on his teeth and the smell of beetle leaf on his breath. As he heads out his friend cautions him to wash his mouth before going to the English officer lest he is admonished. Aziz dismisses the idea due to his anger but a while later he cleans his teeth to make a decent appearance. In *Burnt Shadows* Sajjad pauses “by the Bentley to check his reflection in its window” and when all he sees is the car's interior he moves “undaunted to the bonnet” (Shamsie, 2009). It is very clear that although both the subalterns are following a protocol that forces them to keep a defined decent appearance but the subaltern in the

Postcolonial work is at ease because of his friendly relationship with his boss. The Colonial work shows the subaltern as the victim of the excesses of the superiors.

Before Sajjad enters the house it has been revealed that the relationship between him and James is quite friendly. It is friendly enough that James gives away expensive dresses to Sajjad who wears them with pride. At the start of the novel he is dressed in an expensive “beige cashmere jacket from Savile Row” (Shamsie, 2009) which shows that James values his relationship with Sajjad enough to dole out expensive gifts. The Postcolonial novel shows the superior as a benefactor. *A Passage to India* on the other hand shows the superior as a receiver and the subaltern as the giver. Aziz lies to Fielding to get him to take his gold collar stud, a gift, when Fielding drops his and then steps on it, breaking it. Aziz is a guest at the tea and has a point to prove that the subalterns can have propriety but he risks his image to help Fielding maintain decorum.

The relationship between James and Sajjad is a promising one right from the start. At first glance Sajjad is just a street urchin Konrad has picked up from the street (Shamsie, 2009) but within moments James is able to see the potential of the boy and see that he is no ordinary soul. Konrad’s estimate of the boy: “He speaks fine English—once you wrap your head around the accent” proves correct when James notices that young Sajjad’s “English was good enough to understand, and be offended by, ‘urchin’”. Also Sajjad immediately knows he has erred when he utters “priceless” instead of “invaluable” (Shamsie, 2009) and he corrects himself. It may be said that his decision to take the boy in is based on a desire to mentor the boy because he sees a promising protégé in the boy. Reminiscing, eight years later, about the decision and all that has happened after it James feels he made the right decision: “Who could have thought he’d one day see that declaration [of Sajjad being invaluable to James] as an understatement” (Shamsie, 2009). What is depicted is a relationship of mutual acceptance, understanding and growth. The subaltern is capable and the superior realizes his abilities and offers himself as a guide. The superior here is not a demonic figure out to quell and potential ability in the subaltern.

James recognises not just the potential Sajjad has he also accepts Sajjad as a person, something that the representative of the colonizers in *A Passage to India*, Ronny, refuses to do. Ronny under the influence of the English hierarchy feels that “the only link he could be conscious of with an Indian was the official” (Forster, 1924) and this official link is of course that of superior-subaltern.

The attitude of the English ladies towards the Indian subordinates is pretty much the same in the two novels. Forster spends large sections of the novel characterizing different typical attitudes the English hold toward the Indians whom they control. Forster’s satire is harsh on the Englishwomen, whom the author depicts as overwhelmingly racist, self-righteous, and viciously condescending to the native population (Tayyab). Elizabeth Burton is angry with her husband for giving his clothes, albeit discarded ones, to Sajjad. She is suspicious of Sajjad’s intentions. She feels that this has given Sajjad so much liberty that he has “started looking at everything [James wear[s] as if it’s his property” (Shamsie, 2009). Sajjad is visibly upset when James spills some ink on his shirt because he feels as if it had been his clothes that had been ruined. The bias in the women’s thinking becomes apparent when James dismisses Elizabeth’s suspicions. For him the more interesting aspect of the gaze is that it may stand as a “metaphor for the end of Empire” (Shamsie, 2009).

There is clear evidence in *Burnt Shadows* that the English ladies’ suspicion of the Indians stems from biased interpretations of events, occurrences and attitudes and James knows Elizabeth will interpret Sajjad’s nonchalant attitude in jumping off the balcony to go into the garden feet below as showing off and mocking her husband’s poor landing that caused him a debilitating injury. James knows that Sajjad’s jumping into the garden is just “carelessness” (Shamsie, 2009). He sees it as a mark of the familiarity they have achieved over the last eight years. For Elizabeth it may be crude at best but for James it is a substantiation of their friendship. Also it may be seen that Sajjad is so comfortable with James that he runs around as he pleases. Imagining Aziz jumping off the terrace in the presence of a superior is impossible. The lenience of the superior in the Postcolonial work is allowing the subaltern to act the way he chooses to.

Elizabeth’s name calling points to the haughty attitude the English ladies have, in both the works, towards their subalterns. Elizabeth calls Sajjad a “peacock”. Also as in *A Passage to India* this haughty attitude is due to a misunderstanding of Sajjad’s intentions. She imagines that he is admiring the slimness of his torso whereas Sajjad is in fact admiring the softness of the fabric, the gift from James.

When James gives Sajjad a raise, Elizabeth is “profoundly annoyed” at Sajjad for accepting it for she believes that it is “not just dishonest but impudent” (Shamsie, 2009) of Sajjad to have accepted the raise when he does not really work. He just talks to James and plays chess with him. What Elizabeth does not realise is that if Sajjad does not work on legal documents it is her husband’s fault for not getting him to work on those. James and Sajjad “do nothing all day but play chess all day” because James the superior in the equation chooses to do so and even Elizabeth knows this: “You just choose to pretend your leg isn’t

healed well enough for you to go to it." (57). Sajjad wants to work. In his reveries he says to James: "Isn't it time for us to get back to the law offices, James Burton?" (Shamsie, 2009). So, it is Elizabeth's prejudice that is making her pin the blame on Sajjad. Also evident is the superior's desire to spend time with the subaltern in trivial but fun pursuits. This does not create the impression of a hard task master that is associated with the superiors as a supposed characteristic of Postcolonial works.

There is a hint of sexual tension between Sajjad and Elizabeth that cannot even be imagined between any two English and Indian characters even Aziz and Adela. It seems that Elizabeth is slightly attracted towards Sajjad because of his youth and exotic handsomeness. When he is checking his appearance in the reflection of the bonnet she averts her eyes immediately. She finds his lips "so embarrassingly pink and fleshy" (Shamsie, 2009). This embarrassment assumes significant proportions when seen in relation to her failing relationship with James. The "furious passion" (35) of their early married life is over and now they have drifted apart to only maintain a semblance of marriage.

When Hiroko musters the courage to accuse Elizabeth of holding a grudge against Sajjad, Elizabeth admits: "It's certainly true that I'm jealous of Sajjad. I'm jealous of the fact that everyone I love loves him more than me, and I resent the fact that I'm the only person in the world whose love he's never been interested in." (Shamsie, 2009). It is not just an acknowledgment that she is fighting Sajjad for the love of her husband but also an acknowledgement of her mixed feelings of attraction for Sajjad. It is also an acknowledgment that the Postcolonial work is not making a typical superior-subaltern binary that is normally associated with it.

Elizabeth is not comfortable with the growing intimacy between Sajjad and Hiroko. This is partly because she does not trust the subalterns. As soon as she senses that Hiroko is falling in love with Sajjad she broaches the topic of Sajjad's impending marriage to make Hiroko stop pursuing any dreams of marrying Sajjad. She says to Hiroko: "No good would have come out of it...You and Sajjad. How you felt about each other. It was impossible. His world is so alien to yours." (Shamsie, 2009). Elizabeth is trying to run the lives of her subalterns. Sajjad is an apprentice to her husband so she can control his life while Hiroko occupies an uncertain status in the social hierarchy. A former enemy, a Jap, an almost relative and a lonely woman living with the James has no voice and Elizabeth treats her no different than she does Sajjad. She takes her to Mussoorie just to get her away from Sajjad's influence. Hiroko has no choice because even though she is not Indian she is like the other subalterns, powerless.

Elizabeth finds Sajjad's company annoying even when he is accompanying her for her sake. On the visit to the Qutb Minar Sajjad chooses to stay with Elizabeth to protect her as much from stray dogs as from the unruly Indians. But Elizabeth feels not just uncomfortable with Sajjad's presence but also because of unease between them. It must also be noticed that in this particular situation it is the Indian who has the upper hand. Sajjad has shown himself to be the better person for being polite about the need to protect Elizabeth. Also Sajjad's action connotes an admonishment of Elizabeth's "unwise and improper" (Shamsie, 2009) choice of staying behind. She puts herself in danger by staying behind and Sajjad decides to stay with her to protect her.

In *A Passage to India* Aziz walks Mrs. Moore to the mess because he feels the streets are not safe for her. "I think you ought not to walk at night alone, Mrs. Moore," says Aziz. "There are bad characters about and leopards may come across from the Marabar Hills" (Forster, 1924). The similarity of the essence of the two episodes in the two representative works shows that Colonial and Postcolonial literatures are not as different as they are assumed to be.

An exception among the ranks of the English ladies is Mrs. Moore. She is humane and uses her status of being a mother to snub Ronny for his arrogance towards India and the Indians. She tries to reason with Ronny to show him how childish his attitude of bossing the Indians and thinking them to be sort of low life form is. She tries to make him realize that all human beings are creatures of God and therefore need to be treated with respect. She does not succeed in changing Ronny's perceptions but she does show that the Colonial work criticizes the rulers for their conceit and self-righteousness something that the Postcolonial work fails to do.

One of the most poignant revelations of the superior-subaltern entities and their relationship in *A Passage to India* comes from the Bridge Party. The party was proclaimed by Mr. Turton, the Collector, to be "a party to bridge the gulf between East and West" (Forster, 1924) but actually it was just for show to please Adela. The reference to the game of cards, bridge, is pregnant with meaning. In a bridge game the players sit opposite each other and this is what happens in the party: the English and the Indians occupy opposite ends of the club lawn. In a bridge game all the cards and therefore all players are equal but one has the right to name the trump card, consequently that player assumes more importance than the other players (Pavlicek). This is what is found at the party where the English and the Indians are purportedly equal but the English have the upper hand because they call the shots as to what degree of contact with the Indians is to be made and also when the party is to come to an end at which point the Indians are

turned out of the club. So the game in *A Passage to India* is one which reveals the dominance of the English over the Indians.

The Postcolonial work *Burnt Shadows* shows the English and Indian characters involved in the game of chess. Chess is competitive but the black and white squares of the chess board are not translated into differences between the European whites and the Indian browns. James and Sajjad are chums playing a friendly sport to share “moments of camaraderie” (Shamsie, 2009). They are doing this to while away the time and one would be hard pressed to find any negative connotation to their game of chess, in fact James dismisses any claims that chess may be insidious as “rubbish” and asserts: Chess isn’t insidious” (Shamsie, 2009). In contrast to the mood at the bridge party in *A Passage to India* the mood here is light, playful and friendly thus negating the view that the Postcolonial works present the colonized people’s harsh view of the arrogance of the rulers. The Colonial work brings out the arrogance, pride, cruelty and bias of the ruling English but the Postcolonial work does not associate any of these qualities with the superiors.

The friendly mood of James is made evident when they always continue their game, from where they had left it, with a joke. It is not just the fact that they are joking with each other that shows the friendliness of their relationship it is the very joke that shows how close they are. Earlier on in their relationship Sajjad had been too conscious of the disparity of social status between them to contradict James and he would even let James have his turn if James had mistakenly imagined it to be his turn. But now James cracks the joke to make light of the past hesitations and also to signify that their relationship has moved past any consideration of race or sociopolitical status. This being said it is still the Englishman in charge. He decides when to be friendly and when to be rigid. Sajjad has to accept this as an “inevitable” (Shamsie, 2009) result of the superior-subaltern social scenario while James is blissfully unconscious of the power he exercises over the relationship.

In *A Passage to India* Ronny Heaslop cannot bring himself to even look at his Indian servants. When he orders his sals to bring around his horse he does so while looking at the moon. Mrs. Turton only knows as much of the natives’ language as she needs to order them. She just knows the imperative mood of the verb and none of the politer forms (Forster, 1924). E. M. Forster’s work shows the snobbish attitude the English masters have over their subordinates but Shamsie’s novel tells a different tale. James is not just friendly with Sajjad he is kind to the other servants as well. Not only is he not oblivious to their existence, like Ronny, he notices them minutely to get clues about the Indian society. When Konrad had brought Sajjad to James to get him to get Sajjad some job Conrad’s decision to keep the boy was in part informed by Lala Bukhsh’s acceptance of the boy. James’s reliance on Lala Bukhsh is so great that he counts on the Indian servant to “serve as divining rod for the hidden currents of social status among Indians” (Shamsie, 2009). This is in sheer contrast to the attitude of willful ignorance in *A Passage to India*. Here there is an Englishman interested in determining the structure of the Indian society but in *A Passage to India* the Englishmen are not even aware of the presence of anything that can be called a society. Aziz complains in Forster’s work that Major calendar thinks the Indians have no social life. One would have expected the Postcolonial work to bring out the poor treatment of the servants at the hands of the ruling English but it is the Colonial work which exposes them and brings out the hideous inhumanity of their approach.

In *A Passage to India* Ronny finds it difficult to accept his mother talking to an Indian. In *Burnt Shadows* Sajjad is privy even to the Burtons’ arguments. He is part of their lives and he knows every intricate detail of it. He is aware even of the increasingly frequent arguments the husband and wife have and that he hates it when they argue shows his strong love for the James. This is certainly not an emotion the oppressed is likely to feel for the oppressors unless the subaltern feels linked to the superior in a bond of love. Once again it is the Postcolonial work that is presenting the superiors as accessible for the subalterns. In *A Passage to India* even Fielding is outlawed from the English club for being friends with a subaltern.

An interesting insight into Sajjad-James relationship is afforded by a sarcastic comment by Altamash. He calls Sajjad “the little Englishman” (Shamsie, 2009). No Indian in *A Passage to India* could have uttered this title for another Indian because of the wide rift that existed between the two communities. Aziz is close to Fielding but even then such a comment would have been insulting to him.

The picnics in *A Passage to India* and to the Qutb Minar allow the characters to participate in relaxed kind of un-official settings. In *A Passage to India* Aziz takes the English ladies to a picnic to the Marabar Caves. Although this is a different setting the encounter is expected to be in the same light vein as their last encounter at Fielding’s tea party. The picnic affords no respite from the tension of the roles Chandrapore’s superior-subaltern hierarchy has assigned them. Aziz tries his best to impress the English ladies and even hires an elephant to evoke the grandeur of his Islamic past but the ladies know the picnic is a doomed initiative. Aziz is officious and ignorant. Sajjad in *Burnt Shadows* is as condescending as Aziz.

Not only does he choose to forego Hiroko, on whose wish they have come to the place, to stay with Elizabeth to protect her, he sprinkles water on the earth around Elizabeth like a lowly servant hired to please the *mem* sahib. Both the novels present the subaltern as a servile man willing to go to any length to please the superiors.

In *A Passage to India* Adela proclaims that she wants to see “the real India” (Forster, 1924) but it seems a flimsy attempt to make herself distinct from the other English ladies. That Adela listens to Aziz’s tales about India, particularly the Marabar caves is as much a comment on her ignorance and shallowness as it is on Aziz’s ignorance and his attempt to impress the ladies. Adela is unable to understand the spiritual experience at the caves and when she can’t make sense of this spiritual assault she terms it a physical assault and the subaltern’s close proximity means he can be blamed. Elizabeth and Sajjad present a different paradigm. Elizabeth and Sajjad have a “surprising intimacy” at the picnic. While *Burnt Shadows* presents the subaltern as informed: Sajjad knows his history and takes pride in telling it to the English, it also presents the English as far from naïve gullible tourists. Elizabeth is not Adela. She is not a weak woman who has come all the way to India for the pleasure of a man. In fact she is prepared to leave James because she feels the love of the early years of their marriage is no longer there.

The attitude of the male English bosses is also different in the two picnics. Forster’s Ronny is annoyed at the very idea of a picnic with the subaltern Aziz. He does not go to the picnic despite the fact that it is a chance for him to woo Adela. He mistrusts Aziz and sees socializing with Aziz below his dignity. James on the other hand takes the idea from Sajjad and himself leads the picnic to the Minar where he learns from Sajjad as keenly as the others. The Postcolonial work shows the superior as accommodating while the Colonial work reveals the superior for the prejudiced racist he is.

The early relationship between Henry James and Sajjad is alluded to in the start and later Henry is introduced as a character. The dimensions of the relationship show that Henry is trusted into Sajjad’s care as a child and he grows fond of the Indian subaltern. It is because of this strong bond that Henry comes to think of India as home. When the days of the Empire are coming to an end James decides to send Henry to a boarding school at England to wean the boy away from India. What it shows is liberal minded Englishmen who are at ease with trusting their only child with an Indian. Also the adult Henry goes through quite a hassle to come to Karachi to meet a grownup Sajjad. He shows his gratitude to Sajjad by looking after his son Raza and also by avenging Sajjad’s murder by killing a spy working on his side. This is in contrast to what happens to Hamidullah in *A Passage to India*. During his stay at England he lived with the Bannisters. He and their son, Hugh banister, became very attached as he was treated like family in England. But Hameedullah says that this sort of relationship is possible without India. The superior-subaltern equation in India cannot and does not let the relationship exist. This boy comes to India to work as a merchant at Cawnpore but now he is a “pukka” sahib in India and Hameedullah cannot even imagine going to meet him for the fear of being snubbed. The Colonial work gives voice to the subalterns and gives them the opportunity to vent their feelings against the English thus refuting the charge that Colonial works do not give the subaltern voice.

In the accusation of Sajjad James joins his wife. Elizabeth has not seen any misconduct on the part of Sajjad, she just assumes that he was assaulting Hiroko. James initially dumbfounded but then vows to punish Sajjad. The accusation creates a swift distinction of us and them. This distinction is also evident in *A Passage to India* when the entire English community sides with Adela just because she is English. They did not like her attitude but when she is alleged to be the victim of a native’s aggression all the English including the women stand by her. But Forster is here criticising the English for their racist attitude. “Because his skin is the wrong colour ... the moment an accusation is made about [Aziz], the Europeans immediately believe it on the slenderest of evidence’ (Thody, 1996).

After his mother’s death Sajjad comes to see Hiroko and he naturally has to meet James too. This time the exchange is slightly cold but it has none of the coldness of the Aziz-Fielding exchange in Temple in *A Passage to India*. After Aziz’s tantrum of wanting to sue Adela Aziz and Fielding’s relation cools and when they meet years later Aziz is in no mood to be friends. Fielding attempts to coerce some warm words out of Aziz but all he gets is skeptic avoidance. Forster shows the Englishman to be a better man and this is what we find in *Burnt Shadows* too: James comes across as magnanimous and warm. He extends the hand of friendship and clasps Sajjad’s shoulder to show that he had put the misunderstanding behind him but Sajjad is reluctant to return the warmth. Still James helps Sajjad flee the madness of partition to Turkey with Hiroko.

The Postcolonial work gives a good impression of the superior ruling class by showing them accepting big-heartedly when they are wrong. While James apologizes explicitly to Sajjad and also offers an explanation as to why he did not communicate with Sajjad Elizabeth too apologizes implicitly to Sajjad for misunderstanding him. She gives Sajjad “a look of unfettered apology”. Whether explicitly or implicitly the English apologise for their behaviour in *Burnt Shadows* but In *A Passage to India* the English do not

apologise. They are not even polite to the Indians. Mrs. Leslie and Mrs. Callendar takes Aziz's tonga without any acknowledgment of his gesture of politeness. Ronny commandeers the Nawab Bahadur's car without even a glance in the Nawab's direction. Even Adela does not apologise for the trouble she has caused Aziz. These instances reveal the notion of superiority the English had as the rulers of India and the Colonial work is not shying from showing these negative traits in the superior class.

In *A Passage to India* Major Callendar calls Aziz away from a dinner. Aziz has to obey the summons albeit unwillingly. He knows the power the Major has over him because of being his boss and he disrupts his evening "in order to show his power" (Forster, 1924). Aziz may be the better surgeon but Calendar is the superior office belonging to the dominant race in the situation and therefore Aziz has no choice but to obey. The novel exposes the weak position the subalterns found them in in India. It is this lack of power that the Indian characters were talking about when the summons arrive and from "being a topic of the Indian's conversation, the English ... suddenly become an intrusive power that manipulates their lives; their subaltern position is tangibly revealed" (Doll, 2012). That Major calendar is not home adds insult to injury. Later it is hinted that he needed Aziz at the hospital but when he was characteristically late the major excused himself from the play at the mess to handle the case himself. Still there is no excuse for not leaving a message for Aziz except that Major Calendar assumes that the subaltern is at his beck and call and needs no act of politeness.

Nowhere in *Burnt Shadows* could we find as bitter a denunciation of the English as Mrs. Callendar's vitriolic remark: "Why, the kindest thing one can do to a native is to let him die" (Forster, 1924). She is even willing to go to hell to be away from the natives. Forster presents the deep suspicion the Indians the English women host at a number of places in the novel. Mrs. Turton's reluctance in going over to the Indian side at the bridge party and her air of superiority is revealed in all its arrogant malice. She advises the newcomers, Adela and Mrs. Moore, not to forget that they belong to a superior governing class and must not condescend to the subalterns. "You're superior to them, anyway. Don't forget that. you're superior to everyone in India except one of two of the Ranis, and they're on an equality." (Forster, 1924)

Forster exposes the menial status back in England of the English who rule Chandrapore as if it were what they were born to do. The Turtons may be "little gods" (Forster, 1924) in India but back home they are ordinary citizens without any power. *Burnt Shadows* portrays the English as powerful throughout their lives and succeeding generations.

Forster shows both the good and the negative aspects of the English. He shows Ronny toeing the line of his superiors, the "little gods" (Forster, 1924) to be a Pakka sahib. He believes Turton blindly and does not even listen to his mother when what she is saying is sensible but contrary to what Turton says. Turton's weaknesses too are shown. He has a biased approach towards the Indians who he believes are not capable of nurturing any good quality. He knows something to the disadvantage of everyone.

Aziz's trial in *A Passage to India* brings out the superior-subaltern classification explicitly. The English side with Adela because she is English and the Indians side with Aziz only because of the colour of his skin. The trial shows that the subaltern is thought of as guilty before he has been found to be so and that the onus of proving innocence falls on the subalterns. Forster is quite objective here. He presents the case in such a way that brings out the ridiculousness of the situation. He exposes the English and the Indians for their jingoistic nationalism, for their subjectivity and he also praises the characters who try to stay above the communal divide. Forster presents Fielding as good not because he is an Englishman but because he is a better man. In *Burnt Shadows* the Burtons resolve the issue of the accusation against Sajjad quickly. James heads out to find Sajjad to take him to task but Elizabeth calls him back and within moments the suspicion is partly removed. Soon they inquire from Hiroko about the real circumstances and the situation is cleared up. Burton even apologises for his mistake. Thus the superiors are shown as rational and big hearted enough to make mistakes. Forster's work shows the English for cruel manipulator of laws. It shows the absurdity of the situation and the mountain they have made out of a mole hill.

Fielding's desire to have a good relationship with Aziz is strong and sincere. He does not look at Aziz or in fact the other Indians as subalterns. At the bridge party when all his countrymen retreat to the English side of the lawn he stays with the Indians and eats what they eat with them. Consequently, he is not a pukka sahib. Fielding's sincerity is contrasted with Aziz's superficiality. Aziz does not want to have to do anything with the English but when the English give him importance he wants to show off that he is as good as them.

Forster's *A Passage to India* has a strong political dimension to it. The exploitative aspect of the situation is brought forth and the writer makes it clear that the rulers are forcibly taking away what belongs to the natives. *Burnt Shadows* is comparatively silent on the issue of Colonial exploitation. James is shown as a person and a lawyer too but little is revealed about the political and economic dominance or

exploitation of the natives and their land. Forster shows Mrs. Lesley and Mrs. Callendar take Aziz's tonga leaving Aziz to crib: "She has just taken my tonga without my permission".

When Forster's characters think negatively of the Indians and portray them in negative light there is a reason for it. It will be unfair to label it as typical Colonial bias. Aziz's point of view that the Civil Surgeon disrupts him to show his power is offset by the revelation that Major Callendar was needed at the mess and the hospital at the same time and when Aziz could not make it he forsook the play to tend to the patient. Also what Aziz feels to be a slight when Fielding is surprised at his mention of the term postmodern is not actually a slight. It is just surprise as the spread of the notion not shock that a native knows it. These elements are likely to strike as Colonial arrogance but a close reading shows the truth and also indicates to the possibility that Colonial discourse may be misunderstood.

A Passage to India ends on the note of recognizing the limitations the superior-subaltern equation imposes on the relations between the two entities and it announces that friendship is not possible between the superiors and the subaltern. Fielding and Aziz's efforts to become friends fail. In this way the novel acknowledges the mindset the superiors have regarding their status and the notion of their relations with the subaltern. But *Burnt Shadows* shows the Burtons and Sajjad and Hiroko parting as strong friends thereby ignoring the chasm that exists between the two classes.

Conclusion

Burnt Shadows and *A Passage to India* reveal the many dimensions of the superior-subaltern equation in the context of colonization. Interestingly the two works do not seem to be radically different they talk about the same things. However, it is the novel of the Colonial literature which does justice to the subaltern. It gives voice to the subaltern, it exposes the superiors as manipulative, subversive, arrogant, it shows the flaws of the Colonial thinking. The representative of the Postcolonial literature for the study disappoints in its proclaimed stance of being the voice of the subaltern. It brushes showing the true face of the Colonial masters under the carpet. It shows the superiors as good, honest, friendly, helpful and portrays the relationship between the superiors and the subaltern that is favourable for the superiors.

It can be concluded that the distinction between the Colonial and Postcolonial discourse is not that clear cut and it will be massively incorrect to just assume that the Colonial discourse favours the Colonialists and the Postcolonial works favour the colonized. The Colonial works are perhaps more self-conscious of the atrocities the Colonialists committed than the Postcolonial literature. The lesson here is not to be too ready to assume particular stances when approaches discourses or literatures and to not to try to class literature neatly as such classification is neither possible nor advantageous for any worthwhile understanding. The Pakistani ESL context must mature to foster a broad understanding of texts and their ideologies and guard against piping the novice readers down narrow alleys of prejudice and broad generalizations.

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