

Qurat ul Ain Anwer<sup>1</sup>, Amna Zahid Chaudhary<sup>2</sup>**Abstract**

The present study aims to analyze the impact of gender and class on rural women. The study focuses on intersectional experiences of female characters. In *Beyond the Fields* (2019), Baqir reveals how multiple layers of oppression intersect and shape identities of female characters and how these females, Zara, Tara, and Amma, resist and navigate the situations. The purpose of this research is to investigate the various struggles, self-determination, and fortitude demonstrated by rural women in the novel. The present study is descriptive in nature. Close reading and text-based analysis methods are applied. It centers on rural women's experiences within various social and political contexts. The intersectional framework addresses important axes of social division, including race, class, gender, and disability, which interact and have an impact on one another. These social axes control the hierarchies of power in a given society, which can lead to prejudice and inequality. In literary studies, representation of women is no longer limited to European and American academic writings. The South Asian fiction writers also exhibit a feminist approach in their works, within the feminist paradigm. The study has been limited to the analysis of intersectional experiences of rural women in the text. For the analysis, intersectionality theory is used as the theoretical framework presented by Patricia Hill Collins. The findings of the present study show that rural women face intertwined oppressions of gender and class. Rural women's resistance changed their experiences. The novel provides an insight into the intersectional nature of rural women in a patriarchal society where gender and class play a vital role in shaping individual identity. This study will provide a deeper understanding of their experiences and their potential to ignite revolutionary societal change by investigating their intersecting realities.

**Keywords:** Intersectionality, Gender, Class, Feminism, Resistance and Navigation

**1. Introduction**

The present study illustrates Aysha Baqir's work *Beyond the Fields* (2019). It thoroughly describes how social and cultural roles, identities, and categories intertwine to produce multiple axes of oppression. Pakistani literature exhibits the Islamic culture and its civilization because a majority of the population is Muslim. So, Islamic values are dominant and strictly followed in Pakistan. The patriarchal family structure is depicted in Pakistani Literature. Feminism is not the only cause of oppression but different factors like race, class, and religion joined to shape identity of women in society. Baqir explores all these burning issues of literature in *Beyond the Fields* (2019). This book gives a detailed description of the different kind of oppressing systems, which shape the fate of rural women.

The qualitative method is being adopted for the present study. The present study finds out all the aspects of intersectionality. Baqir's work *Beyond the Fields* (2019) is being analyzed by keeping in view Patricia Hill Collins work Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory (2019) as a model framework.

Intersectionality has emerged as a crucial framework within social sciences, providing a nuanced understanding of how multiple dimensions of identity and systems of oppression intersect and shape individuals' experiences. Intersectionality theory challenges the traditional understanding of identity categories as separate and independent, instead emphasizing their interconnectedness and the unique experiences that arise at the intersections. By recognizing the intersecting nature of social identities and systems of power, intersectionality offers a powerful analytical tool to critically examine and address social inequalities. (Atewologun, 2018; Imran et al., 2021; Imran et al., 2022; Imran et al., 2024). The present study emphasizes how an intersectional approach adds depth and complexity to reader's understanding of female characters and societal forces shaping their life. This study also examine how various characters demonstrate resistance in various contexts, such as outright disobedience, passive resistance, or inner rebellion. This can demonstrate the resistance's versatility and capacity to adjust to different situations. Baqir provides all the aspects of intersectionality in her work which overlap and shape the experiences of rural women. The story centers on the lives of Tara and Zara, twin sisters. Despite their differences in nature, they are connected by a sisterly love. Tara is the more attractive, equitable, and submissive one who willingly submits to her mother's wishes and opinions. When her parents feel the time is right, she is prepared to tie the knot. Zara on the other hand, is the rebel who, despite the fact that girls are not educated in her village, insists on going to school. She was raised in a culture that shames women who pursue higher education. Aysha Baqir delineates the tale of Zara's tenacity and resolve, her faith in strength of women in an unjust society, and her belief that she is more than just the physical form she wears. After persuading her parents, she follows her sister to the city and enters hazardous world of prostitution in an attempt to bring her sister back. She completes her task with bravery. She fights and navigate circumstances.

The late 20th century marked the development of intersectionality theory, a framework for analyzing how different social categories like race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and ability intersect and interact to influence people's experiences and society structures. Intersectionality, a term first used in 1989 by a legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw, recognizes that people's lives are impacted by the junction of numerous social identities, challenging traditional, single-axis approaches to analyzing identity and discrimination. According to this notion each person experiences privilege and oppression differently as a result of the intricate interactions between a varieties of social circumstances. (Womankind Worldwide, 2019). In academic and activist circles, intersectionality has emerged a critical instrument for promoting inclusive and comprehensive approaches to social justice as well as more sophisticated understanding of social inequalities. Intersectionality help to establish solutions to address systemic inequalities at their intersections and contributes to a broader examination of power dynamics by acknowledging the richness of human identities and experiences. (North, 2019; Imran et al., 2023). Many feminists work on intersectionality but Patricia Hill Collins

<sup>1</sup> MS Scholar, Department of English, University of Sialkot, Pakistan, [qurat.anwer.786@gmail.com](mailto:qurat.anwer.786@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer, Department of English, University of Sialkot, Pakistan, [amnachaudhary47@gmail.com](mailto:amnachaudhary47@gmail.com)

work Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory (2019) is remarkable and considered the best work on intersectionality. Patricia Hill Collins' book Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory (2019) is used as a model framework for the present study.

Patricia Hill Collins is an American sociologist, author, and scholar focuses on issue of race, gender, and socioeconomic class. She is a famous university professor of sociology at the University of Maryland. Collins' contributions to Black feminist philosophy are most well-known, especially her book Black Feminist thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment (1990). She presents the idea of intersectionality in her groundbreaking work, arguing that social identities such as class, gender, and race are interrelated and cannot be comprehended separately. Global social justice movements, feminist theory, and critical race theory have all been greatly influenced by this concept. Black Sexual Politics: Race, Gender, and the Law in the New Millennium (2004), Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice (1998), and Intersectionality as a Critical Social Theory (2019) are just few of the books Collins has authored. Collins' contributions have received a lot of praise and recognition. She has won multiple awards, such as the American Book Award (2017), The Gloria Anzaldua Book Prize from the National Women's Studies Association, and the W.E.B. Du Bois Award for Distinguished Scholarship from the American Sociological Association (2000). She was elected as the 100th President of the United States in 2008.

Zara and Tara, two teenagers, grew up in a distant Pakistani village, surrounded by wheat and cotton fields, where they were raised by traditional parents. The twins don't exactly lead a picturesque country life; instead, they spend their days doing duties around the house while their mother keeps an eye on them. It's a world in which females are forced to wait for their forced change from obedient daughter to obedient wife, where only boys are permitted to receive an education, and where gossiping aunts take great pleasure in finding their teenage daughters the wealthiest suitors.

One day Tara is abducted from the fields and sexually assaulted.

*Beyond the Fields* (2019) is a potent piece of storytelling that vividly depicts the harsh realities of injustice and the social norms that dehumanize women. It is set in rural Pakistan in the 1980s. Readers must navigate a range of patriarchal problems bravely dealt by Baqir as Tara is forced into a marriage to repair her "honour" following the rape: poverty, child marriage, rape, sexual violence, and the role of women in a patriarchal society.

Through Zara's eyes, the reader is introduced to this world as she sets out on a mission to find and return home her twin sister. Zara isn't disposed to follow the customs and conventions that are thrust upon her by society, in contrast to the majority of other girls of her age. She has been smoking shisha when the adults aren't around, getting an education covertly behind her father's back, and getting into trouble if she questions the rules dictating her behavior. Zara's adventure brings her into the perils of an unfamiliar urban area as she realizes that her sister's forced marriage and rape aren't just the way it's meant to be. Here, she battles for the liberation of not only her sister but also all oppressed women worldwide.

Even though the book has several dramatic narratives, many of the little moments had poignancy as well, given the importance of the larger social issues covered? Similar to when Zara's brother finished his dinner as she was compelled to stop eating because it is customary for women to stop eating if the males at the table had finished. It's hard not to sympathize with Zara for feeling frustrated by the absurd restrictions that impede her every step, even if the novel is full of far worse injustices than an incomplete dinner. In an attempt to escape the chains that suffocate women who are born equal to men but are forced to feel inferior by social norms, *Beyond the Fields* (2019) highlights the struggle of women and their plea to stand with humanity.

### 1.1. Problem Statement

This research fills a knowledge gap about the intricate intersectional experiences of rural women as they are depicted in Ayesha Baqir's "*Beyond the Fields*." The intricate interactions between class and gender that have a significant impact on these women's lives are frequently overlooked by previous studies. The purpose of this research is to investigate the various struggles, self-determination, and fortitude demonstrated by rural women in the book. Through an exploration of their intersecting realities, this study aims to advance a more thorough comprehension of their experiences and their capacity to spark revolutionary societal change.

### 1.2. Research Objectives

The main objectives of the present study are:

- To examine how the intersection of gender and class shape experiences of rural women in *Beyond the Fields*.
- To explore the strategies employed by the female characters to resist and navigate intersecting systems of oppression.
- To identify contribution of novel *Beyond the Fields* in interpreting feminism through intersectionality lens.

### 1.3. Research Questions

- How do intersecting identities of gender and class shape experiences of rural women in *Beyond the Fields*?
- How do the female characters resist and navigate intersecting systems of oppression?
- How does novel contribute to readers' interpretation of feminism through an intersectionality lens?

### 1.4. Significance of the Study

The present research study holds significant importance as it sheds light on the complex realities faced by marginalized rural women within intersecting system of gender and class presented in Aysha Baqir's novel *Beyond the Fields* (2019). By delving into their experiences, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of the nuanced challenges and agency of rural women, challenges dominant narratives, expands feminist discourses, and provides insight for addressing social inequalities and advocating for social change. This study aims to amplify the voices of marginalized women and offers a valuable intersectional perspective to the fields of gender, class and feminist studies.

## 2. Literature Review

Pakistani literature has a wide range of literary genres and is closely associated with the legendary ethnic group of South Asia. Pakistan attained nationhood status in 1947. Due to the changed circumstances, British India acquired these ethnicities of Urdu and English literature. Over time, Pakistani literature was published in a variety of languages, including Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi, Urdu, English, Pushto, and Seraiki.

It was first associated with war and its aftermath, but it thrived in novel settings. Saadat Hassan Manto (1912–1955) wrote a variety of short stories, the most of them dealt with independence. He has authored sophisticated literature that addresses the issues facing a developing nation. However, the focus of contemporary Pakistani literature is the layperson and its complex class

structure. Numerous authors began translating Urdu works into English, while others began to copy English works. (Rehman, T.1991)

It shows how Pakistani English fiction, non-fiction, drama, and poetry industrialized and evolved with time, evolving into a distinctive work in the present day, through a review of Pakistani English writing from Pakistan's founding in 1947 to 2015. The writing of Pakistani residents and emigration writers demonstrates connections and contrasts. Three modern poets of today include Shahid Suhrawardy, Ahmed Ali, and Taufiq Rafat (Shamsie, M. 2017).

Foucault (2021) described the status of women in his article Portrayal of Power Dynamic in Bapsi Sidhwa's Novel "The Pakistani Bride" Specifically in the context of Pakistan, Foucault's analysis provides a critical lens through which to view the widespread oppression that women endure in patriarchal society. His analysis presents a clear picture of the various forms of violence and prejudice women face, highlighting the deeply ingrained cultural norms that support their subordination.

The harsh truth that Pakistani women endure an extensive range of injustices, from outright physical and psychological violence to emotional blackmail and manipulation, lies at the heart of Foucault's investigation. By placing these crimes within the larger context of patriarchal domination, Foucault highlights the structural injustices that condemn women to subservient positions and deny them agency and authority over their own lives. Unfortunately, Pakistan is one of those countries where women are oppressed publically and personally. Pakistani women are marginalized as victims of patriarchal culture and face many national and domestic problems and are expected to suppress their personalities to fit society and culture. He focused on the suffering and poverty of women. Suffering is closely linked to the female body, and control is exercised over it by men. He exposed the hypocrisy of male dominant society in Pakistan in general and unkind nature of her husband with their wives.

Rehman (2019) studied the novel *The Crow Eaters* (1978) by Bapsi Sidhwa from an intersectional feminist perspective in his work entitled *A Fundamental Feministic study of The Crow Eaters novel of Bapsi Sidhwa*. He portrayed the various issues of women's suffering, the humiliation of women by men, domestic violence, and the lack of gender education. Women are considered sexual objects and exploited in the patriarchal society. Women must bear the abuse, cruelty, and exploitation by their male members. The women in the novel are not rebelling against male patriarchy because of their ignorance. Political, social, and economic dependence is increasing for women because they are not striving for their rights. This study examined how Sidhwa portrays her female characters in the patriarchal society to explore the humiliation of women. The female characters of the novel like Putli, Rosy, Yasmin, and Jerano are all trapped in a dominant male society. Rehman (2019) highlighted several types of social humiliations that are both unfair and oppressive to women and examines the hypocrisy and double standards of a patriarchal masculine society.

Sumaiyya (2019) discussed intersectional feminism in her article entitled *A Woman Is No Man: An intimate portrait of oppression across three generations of Palestinians*. Etan Rum's novel, *A Woman Is No Man* (2019) illustrated the three generations of Palestinian-American women who are continuously judged by Arab culture. Sumaiyya (2019) explored that in Rum's novel women are depicting the living realities who use the detail of their gender against them, compelling them into roles and limiting their knowledge of the world even in their maternity, education, or the soothing act of reading their life path which is decided at their early age where women learn household chores, marry at a young age, brought up children, and be a responsible wife and mother at all the times. There is no space for her purposes. Gender dominance is the main cause of women's suffering. Sumaiyya (2019) highlighted that each female character in the novel is exploited and faces an oppressive attitude towards men's behaviour. The men in their society are raised to a higher position. She revealed the complicated gender dynamic created by the unhealthy imbalance between the genders.

Nasir (2019) analyzed cultural issues, identity issues, and gender inequality from a women's perspective in Nadeem Aslam's novel *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) in his work entitled *Cultural Analysis of Gendered Power-Play in Society as Portrayed in Nadeem Aslam's novel*. The study focused on Nadeem Aslam's novel as a way to show resistance to the culture of disrespect for women in the imaginary city of England's multi-cultural society. He discussed the main aspects of gendered authority and the use of power. Poor-class people are exploited and used for the benefit of the upper class. It has become clear that the status of women in the third world is tragic. Women are not only exploited by other people but also by their relationships. Feminists seek equality and social rights for women. In a patriarchal society, women have no right to say about domestic affairs. Young girls marry older man. They have no power to deny or discuss their problems with others. In a patriarchal society, women faced all kinds of violence, not by other people but by their family members as well. Honour - killing is a dangerous crime that must be eradicated, it is the duty of the people to remain alert and get rid of the conservative norm like honour killing. From the beginning of the world, men exploited women in society. Men abuse and exploit women for their benefit.

Tehseen (2018) highlighted the various social threats associated with women in his study entitled *Taking off the veil: A Discursive Feminist Perusal of American Brat*. She explored the depravity of women while living in a society with diverse streams. It is an attempt to expose the various threats of subordination of women portrayed under the framework of the normal process of this novel. This study investigated conflict in the development of personality in the novel *American Brat* (1993). It exposed the life of a Parsee woman who became the victim of two communities and faced the extraordinary resilience and perceived social and political problems that arose during all her metamorphosis interactions.

Kalantarian (2017) portrayed the oppressions of women by male supremacy in her study entitled *Women's Oppressed and Disfigured Life in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale*. The novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) by Margaret Atwood illustrated the oppression of women by a patriarchal society. She examined that in the history of mankind, the number of cases of women facing horrific oppression by the patriarchal empire is unlimited. In this study she examined how a particular dictatorship treated women as objects and how they abolished women's rights as human being.

Kalantarian (2017) exposed that violence against women has been one of the major problems which women faced in society. It is socially constructed for that they are only resource of reproduction. They are only valued if they produce boys. The oppression of women has been one of the major issues that women faced in society. It is socially designed for women to act only as a source of human life. She believed that sexuality is the main cause used for women's exploitation. She discarded heterosexuality as the term for a sexual relationship. This study aimed to explore how Atwood in *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) speculated feminist matters such as subordination, loss of identity of the woman in a male patriarchal society, and women's mistreatments in a society where the body of a woman is treated as an object. Kalantarian (2017) focused on women's issues such as gender inequality, and the drawbacks of patriarchy that cause women's exploitation.

Margaret (2017) discussed intersectional feminism in her article *The Status of Woman in the God of Small Things: A feminist Approach* in her own words. The novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997) by Arundhati Roy explored the sexual harassment of women depending on many things. Roy depicted women of contemporary Indian women. Ammu is depicted as a tragic character, a woman who suffers from her family, her motherhood, and society. In Ammu the novelist compassionately portrayed a woman, a feminist caught up in a struggle with her family, her hidden morality with society, and tragically with herself. Her broken marriage, her unwanted status in her parents' family, her love for her children, and her desires for women lead her to her early death. These are no small things. These are tyrannical power against which she tries to rebel and comes to a tragic end.

Ehsan (2015) focused on the life of a female in Pakistani society in his article *A Study of Violence against Women in Feudal Society with Special Reference to My Feudal Lord*. This study aimed to explore the violence and sexual harassment of women in a society depicted in the novel *My Feudal Lord* (1995) by Tehmina Durrani. He explored that in our society, women are considered inferior to men in our society all the rules and norms are made to facilitate men. In many countries, cultural norms are made in favour of men. Usually, it is seen that man considers his wife as property and deprives her of her rights.

Rachma (2015) discussed intersecting gender identity in her article entitled *Patriarchy in Society Reflected at Henrik Ibsen's A Doll's House (1879): A Feminist Approach*. She analyzed that in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879) women are under the control of male supremacy in society. Rachma (2015) illustrated how women are subordinated in their patriarchal society. The patriarchal domination in *A Doll's House* (1879) harms women because they do not play a vital role in the family and they are oppressed and marginalized. *A Doll's House* (1879) shows a single woman pleading for her rights. She examined that the position of women was really in a bad shape in the 19th century. In addition, the woman must be included in the decision-making process, both at home and in public.

Mulaika (2014) reviewed a novel *A Golden Web* (2010) written by Barbara Quick in his study entitled *Gender discrimination experienced by the main character of Barbara Quick's A Golden Web*. This study is about the resistance of the main character in the patriarchal perspective using the intersectional feminist approach. Mulaika (2014) found that the main character in the novel had some awareness about being discriminated. Firstly she refused the logic of a philosopher who degrades women and secondly proves women's ability to be equal to men. Based on the findings of this study Virgi Maralana described a woman's struggle with a view of women, which is women's freedom to choose a partner. It contained description of the patriarchal system built into European society.

Bijender (2013) examined gender differences in Manju Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughter* (1998) in his study entitled *A Feminist Study of Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughter*. He explored that patriarchal system holds the view that women are inferior to men and women should be under the control of men and they believed that women are the property of men. In South Asian countries, word *swami*, *shouhar*, *pati* and *malik* all refer to the owner and the king. In this the term patriarchy is not limited to the *swami*, *pati*, and *shouhar* but extends to the man with whom she shares her mental, emotional, and physical attributes.

Bijender (2013) focused on Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* (1998), where the central character Virmati dares to cross the path of her life. Only those women are considered sacred who follow the patriarchal norms. They are not allowed to select the life partner of their own choice. So, marriage became a problem for women as well. In the novel, women are considered inferior in society. Through this novel, the writer exposes the oppressive attitude of Punjab society. He argued that Manu Kapur gives glimpses of the struggle of women against bias. He maintained that the concept of women's liberation is still limited to patriarchal ideas, backgrounds, and ideologies. Today woman is free but she is everywhere bound in chains.

Ashfaq (2012) examined the feminine importance of Elizabeth Bennet, the protagonist of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) in his study entitled *Jane Austen's novels: A Narrative of ethical, social, and sexual power politics*. His study has a profound meaning based on the social reality of women and sexuality. It explored the heroine Elizabeth to study Austen's particular view of feminism in a patriarchal society. She not only examined marriage and life but also discussed all aspects of life and exposed the need for marriage.

Thornton and Zambrano (2009) are mentioned by one of the academics, Sirma Bilge, in her article entitled *Intersectionality undone*. She explains the term "intersectionality" as "a theory of praxis, an analytical and political tool developed by less powerful social actors," dealing with numerous forms of minoritization, (...) Bilge (410). Political, social, and cultural lives of people act on a variety of axes, and the power structure shapes or influences these structures. It can cause chaos in a specific set up.

Davis (2008) in one of her publications titled *Intersectionality as buzzword: A Sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful* describes the idea as the interaction of gender, race, and other factors dimensions of variation in social activities, institutional systems, and individual life cultural beliefs and the power-related results of these encounters. Despite its theoretical complexity, intersectionality is important in the study of feminist theory. The feminist theory's success with intersectionality can be attributed to, in Kathy Davis' words "(its) focus on a pervasive fundamental concern in feminist theory, its provision of novelty (...) for further critique and elaboration."

Volna (2005) analyzed the same notion in Anita Desai's novel *Fasting, Feasting* (1999) in her study *Anita Desai's fasting, feasting, and the condition of women*. She stated that the issue of oppression of women is a real issue that provokes a never-ending conversation. In patriarchal societies, men occupied high positions and women have low positions. Women are considered to be second-class citizens less than men, less courageous, less intelligent, less rational, and so on. The patriarchal system oppressed women socially, economically, and mentally. A similar situation exists in Desai's novel *Fasting, Feasting* (1999). The novel depicted different aspects of the home in a strong male society where major preference is given to the son and the girl's values are overlooked. The effect of the son's affection is seen in the distribution of food among family members of patriarchal families. She pointed out that women in rural areas have identified complex issues involved in the feminist mind and identity search in a patriarchal society. Women in the novel are considered male property.

### 3. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

Research methodology is the overarching plan for conducting a study, providing the necessary guidelines and practices for planning, executing, and assessing research. It ensures that data collection, analysis, and interpretation are carried out

systematically and rigorously, allowing for transparency, reliability, and replicability in research. A well-defined methodology is crucial for drawing meaningful conclusions and understanding the research problem comprehensively.

The present study employs a qualitative and interpretative research design, utilizing textual analysis to interpret the literary text "Beyond the Fields" (2019) from an intersectionality perspective. The deductive method evaluates this book, with the text serving as the primary source and secondary sources including books, articles, journals, and internet resources. Textual analysis, as described by Neuman (1992), is pivotal in extracting and interpreting various meanings from the text. This study also employs content analysis, a subset of textual analysis, to identify message features within the text. Guided by Patricia Hill Collins' "Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory" (2019), the research examines multiple oppressions faced by women in the novel, exploring factors of marginalization through the lens of intersectionality.

### 3.1. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework presents organized ideas and thoughts to explain and understand research problems, supporting the study with scholarly concepts, perspectives, and literature. This study analyzes "Beyond the Fields" (2019) through the lens of intersectionality, exploring the intersecting oppressions faced by women. Patricia Hill Collins' intersectionality theory, particularly from her book "Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory" (2019), serves as the foundation for this analysis. Collins' theory emphasizes the complex interplay of multiple social identities—such as race, gender, class, and sexual orientation—and how these intersections create unique experiences of privilege and oppression. This study seeks to understand these intricate dynamics and their impact on individuals' lives, using intersectionality to explore the nuanced experiences depicted in the novel.

## 4. Textual Analysis

This section is based on the analysis of the book *Beyond the Fields* (2019) by Baqir. This book is being analyzed through the lens of intersectionality, using Patricia Hill Collins' book on Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory (2019) as a framework to identify intersectional experiences of rural women. The analysis of present study reveals intersectional experiences that shaped identity of rural women. The first section reveals the intersecting experiences of rural women, based on gender and class portrayed by Aysha Baqir's work *Beyond the Fields* (2019). The second section highlights the resistance of female characters to navigate intersecting system of oppression. Third section finds out feminism through intersectional lens outlined in *Beyond the Fields* (2019).

### Section 1

This section of the present study presents the different intersecting experiences of rural women presented in Aysha Baqir's work *Beyond the Fields* (2019). Women are not oppressed only on the basis of gender inequality or patriarchy rather multiple factors intersect to shape the identity of women like class, religion, and color.

#### Zara

"Last year when Omer had passed had passed his exams...Amma had muttered I needed to learn to make softer chapattis (Baqir, 2029, p.52, 53)"

Considering the patriarchal nature of her village, Zara's has a big impact on her life. She is supposed to focus on household chores not on studies. The way Amma handled Omer and Zara clearly differed. Zara is informed that she must learn how to create softer chapattis, whereas Omer is rewarded for his success with his favourite dessert milky kheer. There appears to be a relationship between domestic roles and academic achievements when success is associated with a domestic skill, such as preparing chapattis, as opposed to being celebrated with desert. According to Amma Zara's duty is to serve others, her academic success is nothing as compared to Omer.

In this sample, Zara's experience is probably influenced by the way gender and class intersect. Zara experiences sexism since she is a woman, and this is shown in Amma's preference for her domestic abilities above her academic accomplishments. "Girls in our village didn't go to school (Baqir, 2019, p.54)."

This sample draws to the patriarchal customs that prevail in Zara's village, where boys are only allowed to attend school. It highlights the relationship between gender and class, implying that because girls are traditionally seen as being more useful household and agricultural work, their education is valued less and even discouraged.

"But does her Abba Know?" purred Majjo Phuppi. "She hasn't learnt much. Why bother him?" began Amma. (Baqir, 2019, p.62)

The patriarchal standards dominate in Zara's village, where women's education is frequently viewed as superfluous or even undesirable, are reflected in this question. Majjo phuppi seems to think that Zara's father, Abba, would disapprove of Zara's decision to pursue an education, based on her worry over telling him. Men are frequently viewed as the leaders of homes and have the last word when it comes to issues pertaining to women's education, which serves to further emphasize the confluence of gender and power. It is something which bring shame for a girl character. Under influence of these circumstances, Amma suggests it is not important enough to tell Abba. "If studying was in her destiny, she should have been a boy (Baqir, 2019, p.157)."

Zara's quest for education is significantly influenced by her gender. Girls are expected by society to put household duties ahead of their personal goals, and education is frequently considered a privilege that boys should have. She finds it difficult to pursue her educational objectives and obtain education because of this gender bias. She does not only face patriarchal oppression, even her mother does not support her. Amma believed that getting education is the right of boys only. She always used to restrict Zara to perform domestic duties, never allow her to roam freely outside the four walls of house after reaching age of puberty. When Master Saab tried to convince her, to let Zara get education, she denied forcefully saying education is not in girl's destiny. Zara's educational path is made more difficult by her social situation. She lacks the assets and contacts that often make it easier for a peasant girl to get a good education. Her class standing serves to highlight challenges she must overcome to get an education.

Under the intersectionality lens, class, gender, and education are all intersected in Zara's character. Being a woman in a patriarchal society and a peasant in a system with classes puts her in a difficult situation. Her battles highlight the complexity of oppression and the demand for an all-encompassing strategy to combat social injustices. Zara's narrative is a moving reminder that social institutions and personal hardships are intertwined rather than isolated. Her character questions the idea of single-

issue advocacies and advocate for a more complete framework for social change by stressing the intersections of gender, class, and education.

### **Tara**

*"You went out?" Amma's voice tightened with anger. "Haven't I told you and Tara a thousand time not to? What if someone sees you? Do you want to ruin our family name? And where is Tara? (Baqir, 2019, p.35)."*

Tara is a twin sister of Zara. They find comfort and happiness in each other's company, they are inseparable. This text sample highlights the tradition of twin's family. Their mother is a tough lady observing gender biased rules. She shows more concern about family name rather than girls wishes. She believed that girls should stay inside house.

Pokharel.S (2008) in his study Gender Discrimination: A Female Perspective described the perception of women in various aspects of discrimination in a patriarchal society. The result of the study showed that there is discrimination against women in various aspects. They experience discrimination even on domestic level regarding mobility and behavior. The same case with twins, they are not allowed to move with their own will. They are forced to walk on a way mapped for them.

Tara shows up as a moving representation of the complex realities that Pakistani rural women must deal with. Gender, class, and social standing are the threads that make up Tara's existence, and together they weave a complex story of marginalization. One day Tara and Zara decided to play hide and seek outside the house in fields. This innocent game turned into a nightmare later. Zara and Omer unable to locate Tara. *They raped her, said Abba, but she's alive. (Baqir, 2019, p.119)*

This sample of text shows Tara suffers the terrible trauma of being raped, shattering her innocence and causing their family to fall apart. A large number of the disputes in the book are sparked by this incident. Tara is shown humble and obedient than her lively sister. Even after being forced into a child marriage in order to uphold the family's honor she accepts her fate with ease. Tara is a poor woman in rural Pakistan who suffers from a variety of issues. She must live within the limitations of a patriarchal culture in which women's rights and possibilities are restricted. Her vulnerability is further increased by the fact that her family's financial struggles restrict her access to resources such as education and other necessities.

Patricia Hill Collins in her book Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory (2020) stated that a reconsideration of social inequity has been sparked by intersectionality. Prevalent theoretical frameworks in academia elucidated social disparities as distinct entities, such as class, race, gender, and sexuality-based, national, ability, and ethnic inequality. Social disparity was frequently caused by underlying factors unrelated to racial, class, or gender differences. By portraying inequality as unavoidable and natural, intersectionality challenges these ideas that normalize it. Rather, intersectionality emphasizes how power dynamics produce social inequality and the issues they cause in society.

### **Amma**

The novel *Beyond the Fields* (2019) presented Amma's character having the same family unit where a controlling spouse, named Abba, controlled the life of her wife and family. Being a Pakistani lady living in poverty in a rural area, is disadvantaged on several levels due to her social status and gender. She must live under the limitations of a patriarchal culture in which women's rights and possibilities are restricted. Her vulnerability is further increased by the fact that her family's financial struggles restrict her access to resources such as healthcare, education, and other necessities. *"He had snapped that the women in his family didn't work (Baqir, 2019, p.72)."*

This text highlights the patriarchal system and Abba's controlling nature. Amma thought to help Abba in financial terms. She wanted to start her vegetable business but Abba rejects that idea at once and became angry. When Amma's mother tried to explain thing to Abba, how his wife income can help in dowry of his daughters, financial condition and other things, he furiously denied all that by saying "his family had to learn to live with what he earned." (Baqir, 2019, p.72). The situation even got worst. According to Abba role of wife in sense of helping her husband is to obey him and please him. "And she might do a better job without her mother around. That had been the end of Amma's vegetable garden and Nani's visits." (Baqir, 2019, p.72). This shows how Amma is oppressed by patriarchy and gender roles, she is so much oppressed that even she was not allowed to visit her mother anymore.

The expectations that society and culture place on Amma influence her function as a mother. She is supposed to protect family customs, put her kid's welfare first, and keep the family honor intact. "Pranks and laughs won't take you far in your in-laws' house," said Amma. (Baqir, 2019, p.86). She cared about family name more than her daughters. Society put a pressure on her to do so. Collins in her work Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory (2020) stated, a study that solely looks at class, gender, or race without examining the interactions between these factors will be inadequate. To conclude this section, women of this novel faces considerable obstacles in their experiences as a result of the intersecting social identities of gender, class, trauma, and community pressure. These elements work together to stifle their voice, reduce their agency, and eventually keep them victim in a cycle of patriarchy.

### **Section 2**

This section presents the resistance of female characters, their power to navigate the situations. They are oppressed by multiple factors. When there is oppression there must be a resistance. Zara, Tara, and Amma show a unique type of resistance to change their present situation.

Patricia Hill Collins states right away that the goal of intersectionality is to achieve social justice. Intersectionality, like critical social theory as a whole, is a "knowledge project of resistance" (p.10) that seeks to reveal the ways in which structures, ideologies, and system disadvantage particular groups of people.

*"Intersectionality itself can be seen as a knowledge project of resistance...Particular knowledge projects are sites of intellectual resistance." (Collins, 2019, p.10)*

The statement identifies three crucial instruments that underprivileged groups employ to subvert prevailing knowledge frameworks and oppose epistemic injustice:

#### **4.1. Authority Testimonials**

The importance of firsthand experience as a source of truth is emphasized by this instrument. When dominant narratives downplay direct accounts of oppression and injustice, subordinated communities frequently have them. They question the privileged status of conventional authority figures and affirm the veracity of their own lived experiences by assuming testimonial authority.

## 4.2. Politics of Identity

Identity politics acknowledges the common experiences and viewpoints of people who are members of under-represented groups. They can question the universality of knowledge claims, which frequently serve the interests of the dominant group, by using this technique to speak as a collective experiences and viewpoints, they are able to provide distinct viewpoints and criticism of current knowledge structures.

## 4.3. Epistemology at Standpoint

This method makes the case that a person's social location affects their ability to learn and comprehend because they are marginalized subordinate groups might comprehend some parts of reality more clearly than those in positions of authority. Standpoint epistemology acknowledges that situated knowledge can offer insightful information and refute the claims of objectivity made by prevailing knowledge systems.

This section of analysis explores the depths of the experiences of the female characters and the powerful tactics of resistance they employ by using Patricia Hill Collins' Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory (2019) as a framework.

### Zara

*"I studied warriors. Now, I had to become one. (Baqir, 2019, p.11)*

Zara's agency is established by this remark. She actively seeks knowledge and models herself after people who challenge the current quo rather than waiting for to hand her what she deserves. Collins' emphasis on human narratives as reliable knowledge sources is consistent with this. She decided to bring Tara back at any cost. She decided that she had to fight.

*"Dream were like fireflies Nani said. They sparked and flashed in the dark. We had to grasp them, Catch them. Otherwise, they would fly away. And it would be dark again (Baqir, 2019, p.76)."*

Zara is inspired by Nani to cherish her own goals, despite how fleeting they may appear. Collins' conviction in the distinctive perspectives of marginalized voices, which are frequently ignored by dominant narratives, resonates with this. When Zara found herself in conflict about what to do, she remembered Nani's advice. She felt empowered. *"I wasn't Tara. I wasn't going to let Amma get away with it (Baqir, 2019, p.144)."*

This statement is a strong act of self-definition. Zara disapproves of the constraints placed on her by her mother's behavior as well as by society norms. She stands up for her own truth and refuses to let Tara's oppression define her. Her Amma forced her to get married, as it was the custom of that society to marry girls at an early age. There was no concept of girls' education, people used to marry them as soon as possible. Tara was an obedient girl, she accepted her parents' decision to get married. But Zara decided to be a rebel, a resister against prevailing norms of society.

Zara's inquiry highlights the harshness and hypocrisy in her own society. Collins' appeal for group action against overlapping kinds of oppression, even when they occur within marginalized groups themselves, is echoed in this. After the rape of Tara, when her parents fail to get justice for her, they decided to send her to the city as a servant. They were not able to speak about rape openly due to societal pressure. For the sake of family honor, they decided to remain quiet and send her away. Zara resist and asked her brother if talking about rape in order to get justice is shameful and why sending a girl into the shackles of slavery isn't shameful. She was against her parents' decision. She was worried about her twin sister, Tara. In city her parents got a proposal and without any investigation they accepted this for Tara. They return and tell everyone about that proposal and marriage but Zara does not satisfy with that, there was a constant urge in her heart to meet her twin Tara. One day the family come to know that Tara's husband run a brothel and got arrested that day Zara decided to bring her sister back. She planed how to go city and succeeded. There she faced many other oppressions and discriminations. Then she met Gloria who helped her to reach that brothel where Tara's husband kept her. *"I don't know what to think of you. Few would come so far. (Baqir, 2019, p.228)."*

In this sample Gloria warned her about consequences, but Zara remained persistent on her decision. She was amazed to see Zara's love for her sister and her strong determination. She had to accept that every one can't reach that level. Zara decided to navigate her fate as well as her sister's.

*"Qadir was left behind. I clung to the side railing with one hand and Tara with the other. The grey road blurred into hot tears" (Baqir, 2019, p.245).*

Zara's dual responsibilities of striving for her own freedom and staying at her sister's side are embodied in this sample text. Because of her complicated positionality, she is able to see the systemic basis of their oppression and look past personal concerns. She had succeeded in her plan. She brought Tara back from that dirty trap. This is how she resist and navigate the whole oppressive system. Tara was still in state of mind that she ruined her family name. "Honour can't be taken by force" (Baqir, 2019, p.247) this assertion questions the patriarchal interpretation of honour, which is frequently applied to stifle and oppress women. Zara reinterprets it, asserting autonomy and value outside of the limitations set by the custom. *"The fight wasn't over. I had won the few rounds, but not the match (Baqir, 2019, p.254)."*

This realization emphasizes how continuous the effort is. Zara has made some progress, but the wider oppressive system still exists. Collin's appeal for ongoing opposition and criticism from underrepresented perspectives is echoed by this.

Zara's narrative is a source of inspiration and evidence of the revolutionary power of intersectionality theory. By recognizing the interdependence of oppression and elevating the voices of the disadvantaged, she subverts prevailing narratives and establishes the foundation for collaborative efforts. She has succeeded in resisting oppressing system but it's a continuous fight. Collins highlights that resistance is an ongoing process.

### Amma

Amma is a fierce and flawed character in complex way. Although she could seem like a barrier to Zara's goals, examining her behaviour from intersectionality lens provides a more nuanced perspective of her reasons and the difficulties she encounters. She displays a hostility to Zara's education, an attitude of control, and a readiness to jeopardize Tara's future for family honor. These are example of internalized oppression. In spite of her flaws she showed great resistance power against her husband and navigate the oppressing system of patriarchy.

*"No more discussions and no more listening to others. We listen to our heart now. We take Tara home." (Baqir, 2019, p.269)*

It would be reasonable to see Amma's statement as a desperate attempt to regain agency in a system that consistently undercuts her. By putting an end to conversations and putting her own "heart" first, she is claiming her freedom to make decisions, even

if they conflict with outside influences. Collins' idea of oppressed communities finding agency within systems of oppression finds resonance in this. In addition, the statement displays a strong sense of protectiveness for Tara. It could be seen as a surrender to social pressures, but it could equally be seen as a calculated action to keep Tara safe from abuse. Amma saves her from the imminent danger of being left alone. This demonstrates the intricate nature of resistance within power dynamics, where subverting authority occasionally necessitates strategic maneuvering inside the framework. The character of Amma expose that the struggle against tyranny is intricate and varied. In addition to individual act of resistance, it calls for a thorough comprehension of the interconnected institutions that uphold injustice as well as the guts to confront them, even within our own communities.

*"At its heart, intersectionality is a set of ideas that is critical of the established social world (Collins, 2019, p.96)."*

### **Tara**

Zara's path of resistance against injustice strikes resonates with a strong force, but it wouldn't be complete if it didn't recognize Tara, her twin sister, who represents a different but no less effective kind of resistance: quiet revolt.

Tara's quietness is a roar that has been hushed by the pressure of social expectations and her fear of the unknown. It is not a nothingness. It describes her silent resistance to the path that has been assigned to her, her refusal to accept being used as an item and turned into a commodity. Tara's resistance, in contrast to Zara's outspoken objections, is internal and simmers quietly beneath the surface. Despite her outward passivity, Tara's observation of the injustices around her feeds Zara's fire. Zara's awakening is sparked by her vulnerability and the ongoing fear of being sold. Zara is forced to face the truth they both must live with when Tara's quiet turns into a mirror reflecting the system's cruelty. As Collins claims

*"For people penalized by colonialism, patriarchy, racism, nationalism, and similar systems of power, experiences with oppression are often the catalyst for critically analyzing these systems (Collins, 2019, p.12)."*

Tara's narrative calls into question the binary conception of resistance. It serves as a reminder that resistance need not always yell; in the face of injustice, it can simmer, watch, and silently oppose. It challenges to recognize the importance of silent witness, those who suffer injustice without rebelling publicly but whose very presence inspires others to work for change. This shows that resistance is a complex fabric of defiance, knitted together with both quiet and loud strands of defiance. She exposes, in her quiet courage, that even the most passive forms of resistance have the capacity to destroy the systems that stifle and mute.

*"Viewing intersectionality as a resistant knowledge project highlights the political dimensions of knowledge... intersecting system of power (Collins, 2019, p.96)."*

Rural women in the novel showed great resistance but it's important to note that their resistance isn't necessarily a showy triumphant gesture. They frequently weaken the repressive systems at the calm times, the subtly funny moments, and the times of group strength. They are survivors, strategists, and story tellers who leave a resilient legacy for future generations. They are not just victims.

### **Section 3**

The idea that several, interlocking oppressive structures shape women's lives has become a fundamental principle of feminist thought. This realization that oppression is best understood as being constituted by multiple, convergent, or interwoven systems rather than a single process or binary political relation stems from antiracist feminist critiques of the idea that women's oppression could be adequately explained by a gender-only analysis. This section reveals feminism in the novel *Beyond the Fields* (2019) by Baqir, through intersectionality lens presented by Patricia Hill Collins.

#### **4.4. Feminism through an Intersectionality Lens**

The examination of modern feminism through the lens of intersectionality reveals the institutionalized power dynamics that result in the multifaceted marginalization of women. A statement made by Beverly Lindsay that "linguistic and cultural difference exist between Vietnamese and Black American women, but both groups are the victims of race, sex, and class" is cited by Mohanty (2003) in one of her articles *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse*. Thus, the phenomenon of intersectionality reveals the range of situations and classifications that render these women powerless.

*"racism, sexism, class exploitation, and similar oppressions may mutually construct one another" (Collins, 2019, p.46)*

The experiences of South Asian underprivileged women also highlight particular privileged positions and power structures that are in charge of their marginalization and oppression. Women are placed under an organized system of power relations in every setting, which breeds oppression and struggle. The textual analysis of Ayesha Baqir's novel *Beyond the Fields* (2019) that follows is based on interrelated domains of power that are interpersonal, disciplinary, cultural, and structural. Feminist studies employ intersectionality as an analytical tool. This analysis will examine how the combination of gender, class, and cultural expectations changes the experiences of female characters and add to the intricate web of oppression.

#### **4.5. Intersectionality of Oppression**

*"But they said I wasn't 'white' enough. I made poor tea. And I didn't have much of a dowry (Baqir, 2019, p.10)."* This sample of text highlights the complex nature of Zara's identity by showing multiple oppressions she has to face. She is judged for not being "white enough", a complicated combination of color, ethnicity, and gender expectations in the community. According to the norms of society women are meant for domestic chores, their dowry and integrity set their worth in community. They have multiple layers of oppression which are intersecting to shape their identity. Collins highlighted this issue examining women troubles isn't an easy task; this cannot be done by just focusing on one aspect; there are multiple factors that intertwined and shape identity.

#### **4.6. Gender Inequality**

*"Unmarried girls didn't own land or property in our village. Sons inherited all of it. They carried the family name. Abba's land would go to Omer. Our dowry was for our in laws (Baqir, 2019, p.46)."*

These lines exposes gender inequalities of society. The fact that unmarried girls have no legal rights and sons inherit property highlights the unequal distribution of power and resources based on gender. Dowry is mentioned as something that belong to the in laws rather than the woman herself highlights how dependent women are on their families' finances and how patriarchy controls them. Women subjugated by in laws as well as parents. They cannot claim a right on anything nor lands neither dowry.

#### 4.7. Patriarchal Structure

*"I dared not ask. We never asked Abba where he went or what he did (Baqir, 2019, p.122)."* This text sample enriched to show the patriarchy at its peak. Zara claims that she never asked her Abba about his routine. She is not allowed to do so because she is a girl, and girls have no right to ask questions.

*"Once you married you have to keep your husband and in-laws happy and give them no reason to complain. You must do what they say, with a smile and without questions. That's your duty and responsibility (Baqir, 2019, p.86)."*

The remark that was quoted captures a conventional perspective on family and marriage dynamics, emphasizing how much of a burden it is for the wife to make her husband and in laws happy. The terminology employed implies a clear division of gender roles, with the wife supposed to blindly and cheerfully carry out her husband's and her extended family's wishes. The words "duty" and "responsibility" suggest that the woman has a moral obligation, which perpetuates gender-specific duties described by society. "Hell or no hell, she's his wife, and he can do as he pleases with her. It has nothing to do with us" (Baqir, 2019, p.268). This comment by Abba strengthens the concept of patriarchy.

Based on their marital experiences, girls are categorized into first, second, and third classes, which is reflection of a deeply ingrained patriarchal system that sets social standards and expectations. In this particular setting the first-class females represent the customary adherence to paternal authority in matchmaking, as they marry partners selected by their parents. This practice frequently upholds gender norms and the notion that woman's value is based on her capacity to live up to expectations from her family.

The unmarried second-class girls could be stigmatized by society for not following the traditional road of marriage. This emphasizes the idea that a woman's main function is frequently limited to marriage, and that individual who don't fit this mold are seen as less valuable in the patriarchal system

The third-class females who marry against the wishes of their parents upset the status order and demonstrate the opposition to paternal domination in relationships. Nevertheless, because the rebellion is mostly directed at paternal rather than social expectations, the story is still constructed within the framework of masculine authority even in this act of disobedience. All things considered, the division of women into various classes according to their marital status highlights the widespread impact of patriarchy in molding social institutions and customs.

#### 4.8. Restriction on Girl's Education

*"There's a reason we don't send our girls to school. They start to think for themselves Baqir, 2019, p.103)."* It represents an attitude that forbids girls from attending school out of concern that knowledge would enable them to think for themselves. By recognizing the connection between different social identities and oppressive structures, an examination of this point of view via the intersectional feminist lens reveals the complexity of the problem. This statement exhibits obvious gender bias, arguing that in order to preserve established power hierarchies, girls should not be allowed to attend school. The historical restriction on women's educational opportunities is engrained in cultural norms that oppose questioning preexisting gender roles. However, by taking other social identities into account at the same time, intersectional feminism encourages a closer look.

Access to schooling is significantly shaped by class dynamics. For girls from lower socioeconomic origins, financial limitations can provide additional obstacles, highlighting the interaction between gender and class issues. The viewpoint also implicates societal standards, suggesting a desire to restrict and regulate women's agency. The concept of cultural intersectionality highlights the importance of comprehending how gender norms and cultural circumstances interact to shape people's experiences.

Essentially, a deeper view of the statement is made possible by an intersectional feminist perspective, which emphasizes that the restriction of education to girls is not solely a gender-based problem. Rather, it is shaped by a complex web of interrelated elements like historical background, cultural norms, and socioeconomic condition. A comprehensive strategy that takes into account the interrelated systems of oppression influencing how people experience society as whole is required by intersectional feminism.

#### 4.9. Marriage as a Social Construct

*"Were our lives a race from our parents' house to our husbands' house? Done and over, even before we had started to run, understood what we were capable of, or what we wanted from life? (Baqir, 2019, p.109)."*

This statement emphasizes an outlook that mirrors cultural norms and traditional gender roles, implying that a woman's life is largely a predestined journey from her parents' home to her husband's home. Women are expected to marry and move into new households, without taking the time to discover their own interests, aptitudes, or aspirations. Examining and comprehending the intersections of multiple social identities including gender, racism, class, and more, as well as how they contribute to various forms of privilege and oppression, is the goal of intersectional feminism. This text sample reveals within the framework of intersectional feminism for maintaining a limited and restrictive understanding of woman's responsibilities because they fail to take into consideration the varied experiences and goals of women in various social groupings. *"It's best to marry them off before they start thinking too much (Baqir, 2019, p.108)."*

Intersectional feminism also stresses people's agency and autonomy, supporting women's freedom to conduct their life according to their own terms as opposed to fitting in with preconceived notions of what society expects of them. By implying that women's lives are defined by outside expectations rather than by their own choices, the statement supports the narrative that restricts women's agency. Women are not allowed to even think about themselves. Intersectional feminist analysis of these lines reveals upholding gender stereotypes and promote a more accepting and empowering viewpoint that respects and appreciates the many experiences and decisions made by women across a range of social identities. The fear of girls becoming independent emphasizes the threat that women's education and independence pose to patriarchal structures. It emphasizes how women's agency is restricted by society norms through their power over education.

#### 4.10. Silencing and Suppression

*"There was no space for the truth in my village. I had to tape and pack my thoughts and feelings tightly until there was no space to think and feel (Baqir, 2019, p.265)."* This sample exposes how women's voices and emotions are suppressed by showing graphic description of tightly taping and packing thoughts and sentiments. Zara's desire to fit in with society's expectations and absence of room for the truth point to a submissive and silent culture. Gender intersectionality with social norms becomes a stifling force that restricts personal expression and agency.

## 5. Findings and Discussion

### 5.1. Intersecting Identities of Class and Gender and Experiences of Rural Women in Beyond the Fields

Textual analysis of *Beyond the Fields* (2019) reveals that gender and class significantly shape the experiences of rural women. The novel centers on twin sisters and their family in a rural setting, where patriarchal traditions limit women's agency and control over their lives. They are expected to submit to male authority, prioritize household chores, and have limited access to social connections, jobs, and education. This restriction is compounded by their class, which limits their resources and financial independence, impacting their decisions regarding marriage and education. For instance, Zara and Tara are denied education and confined to domestic roles. Their mother, Amma, is also restricted by her husband, Abba, from pursuing business opportunities. Tara's experience of rape and subsequent silence exemplifies how intersecting identities of gender and class hinder women's quest for justice. The novel illuminates the multifaceted struggles of rural women under these overlapping identities.

### 5.2. Resistance and Navigation of Female Characters

Female characters in *Beyond the Fields* (2019) exhibit defiance and unity to navigate and resist oppressive systems. Zara, for instance, seeks justice for her sister, questions social norms, and pursues secret learning. Education empowers Zara, offering her a vision beyond her constraints. The relationships between female characters provide strength and support, forming bonds of empathy and resistance within a patriarchal society. Tara, despite being silenced by her trauma, acts as a catalyst for Zara's resistance. Amma embodies the silent sacrifices of women in a patriarchal culture, balancing her love for her daughters with societal pressures. She supports Tara against her husband's authority, symbolizing maternal bravery and resilience. The female characters' collective resistance highlights the potential for women to challenge and overcome oppressive systems, offering a beacon of hope for a more equitable future.

### 5.3. Intersectional Feminism

*Beyond the Fields* (2019) explores women's lives within interlocking systems of oppression, portraying a narrative of resistance and resilience. Zara defies social norms through rebellion and covert education, using education as a tool for empowerment and critical thinking. Solidarity among female characters provides emotional stability and hope. However, Zara faces compounded discrimination due to her lower social class, intensifying her marginalization. Tara's character illustrates the devastating effects of intersecting oppressive forces, while Amma's sacrifices reflect the inner strength of mothers navigating repressive structures. The novel celebrates the enduring strength of the human spirit and the transformative power of collective resistance, challenging the notion of a universal female experience and emphasizing the importance of addressing interwoven structures of injustice.

### 5.4. Discussion

Patricia Hill Collins' intersectionality theory, as outlined in *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* (2019), serves as the framework for analyzing *Beyond the Fields* (2019). The research examines how intersecting identities of gender and class oppress rural women in the novel, revealing that their experiences are shaped by multiple dimensions of oppression. The analysis highlights the struggles and resilience of rural women in Pakistan, illustrating Collins' concept of the matrix of domination through Zara's resistance and empowerment via education.

Zara's pursuit of education and justice exemplifies her agency and defiance against patriarchal constraints, reflecting Collins' theory. Education becomes a vital tool for Zara, enabling her to critically understand and challenge interconnected structures of inequality. The strong relationships among female characters foster a collective resistance that challenges repressive systems, echoing Collins' idea of "collective resistance."

The novel also underscores the complex and multifaceted nature of oppression, with Zara's dual marginalization as a lower-class woman increasing her vulnerability. Tara's traumatic experience further exemplifies the harsh impact of intersecting oppressive regimes. *Beyond the Fields* is more than a depiction of oppression; it is a testament to the human spirit's resilience and the transformative potential of collective resistance. It aligns with Collins' intersectionality paradigm, offering hope and emphasizing the importance of multifaceted resistance strategies in overcoming oppressive systems.

## 6. Conclusion

Aysha Baqir's work, *Beyond the Fields* (2019), is a timely exploration of the intersectional experiences of rural women, analyzed through the lens of Patricia Hill Collins' *Intersectionality as a Critical Social Theory* (2019). This study highlights how Baqir vividly portrays the compounded impact of gender and class on these women's lives, revealing a stark reality where men possess the freedom to speak while women are denied the right to demand their own. Respectability is reserved for women who conform to male supremacy, reducing their value to less than that of men's shoes, and subjecting them to brutal torture for men's satisfaction. In this patriarchal rural setting, men are authoritative, and societal norms perpetuate their dominance, often encouraging the beating of wives and reinforcing the notion that women exist solely to serve men. Baqir's narrative underscores how these social injustices shape the identities of her characters, intertwining multiple layers of oppression that profoundly affect rural women's lives. The book exposes the conservative belief that family honor hinges on women's chastity, with societal norms suppressing women's rights and enforcing forced marriages. Despite the oppressive environment, Baqir also highlights the resistance of female characters navigating these challenges, emphasizing intersectional feminism. This analysis underscores the critical need to further investigate female suffering and emancipation, suggesting that future research should focus on the liberation of women from patriarchy and consider perspectives such as women's education. This study is a call to broaden the scope of research to fully uncover and address the overlapping systems of oppression faced by rural women.

## References

- Atewologun, D. (2018, August 28). Intersectionality theory and practice. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Business and Management*.
- Baqir, A. (2019). *Beyond the fields*. [Publisher].
- Baqir, A. (2019). *Beyond The Fields*. Marshall Cavendish International (Asia) Private Limited.
- Bilge, S. (2013). Intersectionality undone: Saving intersectionality from feminist intersectionality studies. *Du Bois Review*, 10(2), 405-424.
- Collins, P. H. (2015). Intersectionality's definitional dilemmas. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 41, 1-20.

- Collins, P. H. (2019). *Intersectionality as critical social theory*. Duke University Press.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), 139-167.
- Davis, K. (2008). Intersectionality as buzzword: A sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful. *Feminist Theory*, 9(1), 67-85.
- Ehsan, M., & Kazim, S. (2015). A Study of and Violence against Women in Feudal Society with Special Reference to "My Feudal Lord" by 'Tehmina Durrani.' *An International Peer-Reviewed Journal*, 15. Retrieved from www.iiste.org.
- Hill Collins, P. (1999a). *Black feminist thought*. New York: Routledge.
- Hill Collins, P. (1999b). Moving beyond gender: Intersectionality and scientific knowledge.
- Imran, C. A. B., Shakir, M. K., & Qureshi, M. A. B. (2021). Regulatory Perspectives on AI in Autonomous Vehicles Global Approaches and Challenges. *The Asian Bulletin of Green Management and Circular Economy*, 1(1), 62-74.
- Imran, C. A. B., Shakir, M. K., & Qureshi, M. A. B. (2022). Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Enhancing Construction Safety and Productivity. *The Asian Bulletin of Big Data Management*, 2(1), 63-74.
- Imran, C. A. B., Shakir, M. K., Umer, M., Imran, Z., & Khalid, H. B. (2023). Construction Materials and Technologies: A Review of New Trends in Sustainable Development. *The Asian Bulletin of Green Management and Circular Economy*, 3(1), 10-21.
- Imran, C. A. B., Shakir, M. K., Umer, M., Imran, Z., Idrees, H. M. K. I., Ansari, Y., Imran, M., & Tariq, M A. (2024). Building the Future: Applications of Artificial Intelligence In Civil Engineering. *Metallurgical and Materials Engineering* 30 (4), 733-42.
- Kalantarian, S. (2017). Women's Oppressed and Disfigured Life in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 8(1), 66.
- Krippendorff, K. (1980). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage Publications.
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (2nd Ed.). Sage Publications.
- Mohanty, C. T. (2003). "Under western eyes" revisited: Feminist solidarity through Anti-capitalist struggles. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28(2), 499-535.
- Nasir. (2019). Historico – Cultural Analysis of Gendered Power-Play in Society as Portrayed in Nadeem Aslam's Novels. *Global Social Sciences Review (GSSR)*, IV(II), 118-123.
- Neuman, W. L. (1992). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Allyn & Bacon.
- North, A. (2019, May 20). The intersectionality wars. *Vox*.
- Shamsie, M. (2017). Hybrid Tapestries the Development of Pakistani Literature.
- Smythe, L., & Giddings, L. (2007). From experience to definition: Addressing the question "What is qualitative research?". *Nursing Praxis in New Zealand*, 23(1), 37-57.
- Volna, L. (2005). Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting and the Condition of Women*. *Womankind Worldwide*. (2019, November 24). Intersectionality 101: What is it and why is it important?