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Decolonial Feminism and Coalition-Building: The Voices of Household Maids in Rukhsana Ahmad's "A Day of Nuggo"

Aniqa Iqbal[1*], Salma Kalim[2], Fizza Rehman[3]

Abstract

This paper examines the literary representation of Christian household maids in Rukhsana Ahmad's A Day for Nuggo, shedding light on their struggles and acts of defiance within a deeply stratified society. Drawing on Maria Lugones' theoretical concepts of "coloniality of gender", "coalition-building", and Mafile'o et al.'s concept of "We Story," the study highlights pervasive inequities these women face both as household maids and as members of a marginalized community. It critiques the societal tendency to dehumanize or exalt them as superhumans based on their labor. The study uncovers different forms of resistance, such as "coalition-building", by this marginalized group to challenge oppressive constructs and imposed inferiority. By highlighting the importance of including the narratives of such communities in the scholarship of decoloniality and feminism, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of social issues by centering the marginal groups in such research and literary representations and critiques the (un)conscious oblivion of Pakistani literary writers to focus on these much-neglected representations.

Keywords: Coalition Building, Coloniality of Gender, Christian Community, Household Maids.

Introduction

Considering the context of Pakistani society, Pakistani Feminist literature in English has been observed as tending towards being subtler in representing female household maids. The underrepresentation of such communities in literary works leads to the singularity and universalization

[1] PhD Scholar, National University of Pakistan, Islamabad.
[2]Assistant Professor International Islamic University, Islamabad.
[3] Lecturer, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore.
[*]Corresponding author's E-mail: aniqaiansari@gmail.com
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of the feminist agenda, excluding these women from benefiting from these discourses. The scarcity of such representation is due to many factors, as Ayesha Shahid points out, that the writers usually come from a privileged background and do not indulge in household drudgery themselves. Instead, they prefer hiring maids on a full-time or part-time basis (Shahid, 2007). Due to this preference, female writers have been observed turning a blind eye towards representing them in their works. However, largely, these household maids are either depicted through a male lens, focusing more on maids' sexual exploitation, or their representations as pitiable victims, for instance, Daniyal Mueenuddin's "Saleema" or Ahmad Faraz's Urdu poem "Kaneez" (Mueenuddin, 2009; Faraz, n.d.). Stemming from this observation, this research aims to fill the gap by highlighting this void in Pakistani literature in English, where female domestic workers are hardly seen raising their voices. However, one such piece of literature, i.e., "A Day for Nuggo," emerges in Pakistani literature in English that intends to represent this stratum of society that not only enlightens the readers about their woes but also, in return, gives voice to this community in literary works (Ahmad, 2014). Considering the nature of the short story, the research employs Maria Lugones' decolonial feminism as an overarching framework, with concepts such as "coloniality of gender", "complex social construction", "coalition-building", and "women of color" (Lugones, 2007, 2008, 2010; Mendoza, 2016). Additionally, a decolonial approach of "we-story" contributes to debates on marginalized communities' issues that emphasize the importance of their subjective narratives to be included in the larger debates and scholarship (Mafile'o, 2016; Mafile'o et al., 2022). This framework highlights the reclaiming of agency of the Christian community and the household maids who challenge colonial and gendered power structures. The research underscores the potential of resistance and transformation in these peripheral communities while offering new insights into the intersection of decoloniality, gender, and class in Pakistani literature.

The research stems from observing a gap in the literary representation of household maids in Pakistani Literature in English from a non-sexist perspective. The existing representations of household maids are either depicted from the male author's viewpoint and focus more on their sexualized identity, such as in the case of Daniya Mueenuddin's short story "Saleema" and in Urdu literature, Ahmad Faraz's poem "Kaneez", or they are pitied because of their miserable social, economic, and existential circumstances (Mueenuddin, 2009; Faraz, n.d.). This lack of agency in their portrayal led me to realize the scarcity of such narratives where women would raise their voices to address their rights, much like in Kathryn Stockett's American novel, *The Help*. By exemplifying a short

story, "A Day for Nuggo" by Rukhsana Ahmad, the research aims to address this void within Pakistani literature in English and highlights the strength of the voices of these communities and how their inclusion in literary representations can bring a deeper and more diverse approach to society. Furthermore, it will explore how decolonial feminism can offer insights into the suppression of such communities and how they can reclaim their agency through coalition building.

Specifically, the research seeks to address the following questions:

1. How does "A Day for Nuggo" reflect a decolonial feminist perspective by representing the social and colonial gender dynamics that Christian maids encounter, and how they resist by forming coalitions and solidarity?

2. How can including the narratives of female household maids in Pakistani literature in English contribute to the current feminist and decolonial discourses to get a better understanding of social issues?

By answering these questions, this study foregrounds the voices of household maids and interrogates literary silences towards them. Ultimately, this research underscores the potential of literature that can envision and transform social realities rooted in equity and justice.

Rethinking Gender and Power: Lugones's Decolonial Feminist Critique

This literature review examines varying perspectives on decolonial feminism theory and constructs a nuanced perspective to scrutinize the primary text "A Day for Nuggo" by Rukhsana Ahmad. This debate begins with Maria Lugones's seminal work on decolonial feminism, particularly "coloniality of gender" (Lugones, 2008, p.745). To begin with, it is important to understand Quijano's "coloniality of power" to set the tone for the research, from which Lugones draws inspiration for the "coloniality of gender" (Quijano, 2000, p.533; Lugones, 2008, p.745). Coloniality of power primarily critiques the process of racialization that is integral to colonization (Mendoza, 2020, p.14). It assesses the ongoing power mechanism in the contemporary world that constructs particular kinds of thinking and dichotomies to assert and maintain the hegemony and superiority of the former colonizer. Quijano questions the "social classification of the world's population around the idea of race," which he believes is "a mental construction" based on "colonial domination"

(Quijano, 2000, p.533). He coined the term "epistemological reconstruction," which he believes is an act of liberating "the production of knowledge, reflection, and communication from the pitfalls of European rationality/modernity" (Quijano, 2007, p.177). Decolonial thinkers emphasize the need to understand the mechanisms of imposed racialization and gender-related dichotomies on the previously colonized communities, and by resisting this, decolonial philosophers urge the need to speak and present their subjective stance for registering it in the central Western epistemology.

Although the thought was very much there in Quijano's rendering of decoloniality, Lugones furthers this concept and criticizes Quijano's concept for being too limited to focus on gender. She largely relies on Quijano's notion of "coloniality of power", but she complicates it further by incorporating and expanding the meaning of gender (Lugones, 2010, p.745). She argues that gender and sex are historically built and, similar to Quijano's idea of racialization, were imposed on the marginalized communities to retain the hegemony of the dominants. She calls the coloniality of gender an "analysis of racialized, capitalist, gender oppression. (Lugones, 2010, p.747) The notion of gender is not only socially and historically built, rooted in hierarchical dichotomies and sexual differences, but is also reinforced and essentialized to obtain ulterior motives. She believes that "the intersection of gender/class/race (is the) central construct of the capitalist world system of power" (Lugones, 2010, p.746). Lugones critically analyses the experiences of non-White women and people whose intersubjectivity was not only erased but a new kind of categorization was imposed on them, as Mondoza opines that "European constructions of gender introduced internal hierarchies that broke down the solidarity between men and women destroying previous ties based on complementarity and reciprocity" (Mendoza, 2016, p.116). Thus, this division within the gender paved the way to achieve their capitalist goals that adulterated the camaraderie and solidarity within the colonized people. This absence of solidarity is largely felt by the decolonial thinkers; thus, they suggest building "coalition building" and "communal associations" to acknowledge, resist, and reconstruct their subjectivities and epistemologies. (Quijano, 2016, p.20; Mignolo, 2007, p.451)

Maria also sheds light on the eroticization of the colonized, which leads to the notion that they must be civilized because they are sexually wild people. "Colonized females were never understood as lacking because they were not man-like, and were turned into viragos." (Lugones, 2010,

p.744). Along with the eroticization, there was an element of a civilizing mission in the garb of Christianizing them: "The civilizing transformation justified the colonization of memory, and thus of people's senses of self, of intersubjective relation, of their relation to the spirit world, to land, to the very fabric of their conception of reality, identity, and social, ecological, and cosmological organization" (Lugones, 2010, p.745). Maria also talks about the dehumanization process, which played a central role in the colonial project. This process involved shaping the gender norms, mostly how women are seen in relation to the idea of sin and virtue. Christianity's mission was central to it; since they were barbaric, they were to be civilized through this mission. Along the way, their indigenous history and epistemologies were erased (Lugones, 2010, p.745).

Decolonial feminism critiques the outliving of the gender binary and its connection with civil society. As Lugones says, this categorisation is for keeping the governance and hegemony of the elite. This is the reason Lugones stresses the idea that only a critique of colonial and capitalist gender oppression is not sufficient, but rather to resist by transcending the "colonial difference" through coalition building and solidarity: "One does not resist the coloniality of gender alone. One resists it from within a way of understanding the world and living in it that is shared…, providing recognition. Communities rather than individuals enable the doing (Lugones, 2010, p.754). Maria Lugones emphasizes the need for coalition building that is important not only as a way to resist but as a means to reconstruct subjective identity and epistemology because in this way the "sense of responsibility is maximal" (Lugones, 2010, p.755).

Lugones's later work, "Methodological Notes Toward a Decolonial Feminism," further develops her earlier ideas, focusing on the intersubjectivity of "women of color", which constructs the foundation for an "existential, material, (and) social response to the idea of a universal 'woman'". By criticizing the notion of universal woman, she objects that a colonized woman is subjected to the sense of "inferiority to others' superiority" (Lugones, 2011, p.69). This is "inscribed not just in how she is perceived but also in the very complex construction of the social world" (Lugones, 2011, p.70). In this article, too, she emphasizes coalition-building as a critical method for mending the fractures in social constructions of identity and achieving a more subjective and intersubjective understanding of self. "Centering of the colonial further clarifies why coalitional solidarity among Women of Color requires that we both become fluent in each other's histories" (Lugones, 2011, p.72). Her call for decolonial feminism underscores the importance of

challenging these oppressive categories and emphasizes the need for coalition building to resist the imposed inferiority.

Criticism and Reviews of Decolonial Feminism

There are some rebuttals of decolonial feminism, mostly by Afro-American scholars, such as Selamawit D. Terrefe, who suggests that Lugones's decolonial feminist theory marginalizes Afro-American women by aiming at building a coalition of women of color from around the world that ultimately leads to undermining the importance of Black women. In "The Pornotrope of Decolonial Feminism," Terrefe engages with Hortense Spillers's concept of "pornotroping," which refers to the reduction of a person or group to mere flesh, objectified and sexualized. Terrefe contends that decolonial feminism, as articulated by Lugones, leads to the erasure of Black women by failing to center Black women's experiences as foundational to the critique of power structures. The exploitation of black women's bodies during slavery was not only physical but also psychological, and that continues to be a part of the contemporary world (Terrefe, 2020, pp.134-64). Similarly, Emma D. Velez is of the view that Lugones' "linguistic critique" of intersectionality undermines the spirit of decolonial feminism's call for coalition politics, especially between Latin American women and Black women. Briefly speaking, Lugones' "linguistic critique" talks about the language of "intersection" and "interlocking," which perpetuates the binaries of race, gender, sex, etc. (Velez, 2019). At the same time, this categorization further leads to the fragmented self-intact, which has been built on the colonial social construction. Velvez, on the other hand, argues that this linguistic critique is insufficient as it can undermine the coalition of women of colour at the larger level. She argues that a combination of both intersection and fused approaches is necessary to build a coalitional praxis of resistance.

K. Bailey Thomas also critiques Lugone's engagement with Kimberle Crenshaw's theory of "intersectionality" and argues that by indulging in this theory, she is unable to implement the very gist that her own proposed decolonial feminist methodology demands. The article directly cites Lugones' words from her essay "Radical Multiculturalism and Women of Color Feminisms," where she asserts that intersectionality is a "white bourgeois feminism colluding with the oppression of Women of Color" (Thomas, 2020, p.509). Thomas maintains that Lugones rejects the idea that intersectionality can be used as a tool to dissect the dominant hierarchical structure of the white perspective for the decolonial feminist approach. Although she states that her theory of decolonial feminism is for all women of colour, there is a possibility that she excludes Black women

from Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, which was primarily for Black women. By siding with Crenshaw's notion of intersectionality, Thomas argues that Maria's rejection of this theory leads to the erasure of Black women from her own framework. While Velez's article entirely rejects Maria's intersectionality by saying that it jeopardizes the theory's own call to build a coalition of the oppressed, this article furthers the debate by including Lugones' involvement with Crenshaw's theory and her misinterpretation that may lead to the erasure of Black women from her debate.

Tlostanova et. al. situate decolonial feminism in Sweden, which has a history of a colonial past in North America, the Caribbean, and Africa. They argue that Sweden must explore settler colonialism through a decolonial feminist lens by incorporating the experiences of the Sámi people, an Indigenous group within Sweden. They cite Indigenous feminists such as Karla Jessen Williamson and Rauna Kuokkanen who argue that, despite being a colonizer in the past, colonial gender binaries remain intact in contemporary Sweden, which directly harms indigenous women and marginalized groups (Tlostanova et. al., 2019, p.290). By advocating for the inclusion of Sámi epistemologies, they challenge conventional feminist knowledge production and underscore the importance of coalition-building in the face of various forms of oppression.

Tracie Mafile'o et. al., in "We Story: Decoloniality in Practice and Theory," advocate for a "story-saturated" approach to research methodologies. They argue that conventional Western research methods often distance and dehumanize the very people they are meant to benefit, particularly marginalized groups. The authors advocate for an approach that is decolonial and can ensure "story-saturated" processes. "Owning our stories" is the only way to get culturally relevant results. I found this reference quite useful in building an understanding of the research that is the very thought that the nexus of decolonial feminism seeks. The theory demands an inclusivity of the stories that are not heard. This is also very pertinent to the primary text of the research. Hence, the "story-saturated" approach is the term that is found in decolonial praxis theory. Also, Maria Lugones, by coining the term of decolonial feminism, borrowed the same interpretation, which she associated with feminism (Mafile'o et. al., 2016, p.547).

Finally, Ayesha Shahid's PhD dissertation, *Silent Voices, Untold Stories: Women Domestic Workers in Pakistan and Their Struggle for*

Empowerment, examines the working conditions and legal struggles of domestic workers in Pakistan. Shahid's research sheds light on the underrepresentation of domestic workers in Pakistani literature and the legal system. By exploring the voices of these workers, Shahid's work highlights the importance of bringing peripheral stories to the center, which is the central agenda of decolonial feminist theory. Her research provides a useful context for understanding the struggles of characters like Nuggo in the Pakistani societal context, further grounding the theoretical framework of this review in the lived experiences of domestic workers in Pakistan (Shahid, 2007).

Thus, this critical engagement has explored various dimensions of decolonial feminism, from Lugones's earliest to the latest works on the coloniality of gender, drawing on the expansions offered by scholars such as Velez, Terrefe, and Thomas. The review has also engaged with decolonial feminism in diverse contexts, from Sweden to Pakistan. These sources provide a deeper understanding of the text, its characters, and decolonial feminism in building a coalition to combat with living legacies of colonialism. Also, incorporating the "story-saturated" approach to include direct voices of marginalized people will further enrich the analysis of the primary text.

The Socio-Political Context of Christian Household Maids in Pakistan

The suppression of Christian household maids in Pakistan is rooted in the historical and socio-political factors. The low-caste converts during British rule predominantly practiced Christianity in Pakistan. Many of them were from Dalit backgrounds in Punjab who converted to Christianity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite religious conversion, they continued to remain socio-economically marginalized (Shakir; Webster). In contemporary Pakistan, Christians constitute around 1.5% of the population, yet they are associated with menial employment such as sanitation work and domestic labor (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2019, p.42). Domestic labor, in particular, intensifies such inequalities because it is mostly performed by female Christians. The discrimination that they face is rooted in religious prejudice and caste-based stigma, which gets reinforced by misleading fundamentalist discourses that regard them "impure" or "unclean" (Malik, 2002, p.37).

The arrangements in households are such that they are expected to use separate utensils, washrooms, or even sit on the floor instead of furniture (Robinson, 2013, p.84). Such exclusion is compounded by their precarious

situation, as domestic work remains unregulated under Pakistani labor law (International Labour Organization, 2010, p.15; Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2019, p.43). Moreover, the gendered dimensions of domestic labor intensify their subjugation, and they remain within the shackles of patriarchal structures while their religious minority status makes them targets of violence, including forced conversions and blasphemy accusations (Mahmood, 2021, p.92). These socio-political realities position Christian household maids within Maria Lugones' "coloniality of gender," where she talks about how gender oppression is inseparable from racialization and economic exploitation (Lugones, 2008, p.745).

Decolonial Feminist Framework: Coloniality of Gender, Coalition-Building, and "We-Story"

The theoretical framework employed for this research is based on Maria Logunes' decolonial feminist key concepts, such as "coloniality of gender", and "coalition building" (Lugones, 2008, 2010), while considering the importance of Mafile'o's notion of "we-story" in the context of the primary text (Mafile'o et al., 2022). The research argues that these decolonial feminist key concepts provide a critical framework to analyse the oppressive and marginalized system operating in Pakistani society that puts the people from the lower strata into such positions that they are constantly battling with existential, social, interrelation, and living challenges. By utilizing these concepts, the study contends that the decolonial feminist lens reveals the pervasive living legacies of colonialism and a way out through "coalition-building" (Lugones, 2010).

"Coloniality of gender" relies on the thought of liberating gender from the parasitic notions of intersubjectivity, which has the potential to undermine the experiences and voices of the marginalized and colonized women living under colonial legacies that further perpetuate violence and oppression within the socio-political spheres (Lugones, 2008). Taking this philosophy further, "women of color" focuses on the "complex social construction" of the self, which positions these women as inferior in social status (Lugones, 2010). However, decolonial feminism calls for rejecting these constructions and reconstructing epistemologies as such that they can enable women of color to reclaim their own narratives and resist the dominance of colonial knowledge systems. The analogy Logunes draws is of the "fractured locus" that leads to the misrepresentation or sans-representation of the marginalized gender in the society that can only be battled with either "coalition building" or "epistemic reconstruction"

((Lugones, 2010; Mignolo, 2007). Additionally, this section intends to bring the arguments of those who have demonstrated the edges and limitations of decolonial feminism to the discussion and analysis of the text (Terrefe, 2020; Thomas, 2020; Velez, 2019). Their critiques will be woven into the text to offer a comprehensive analysis as well as the strengths and challenges of bringing decolonial feminism theory within the boundary of Rukhsana Ahmad's "A Day of Nuggo" (Ahmad, 2014).

Coloniality of Gender and Class: Exploitation of Female Household Maids

A close analysis of the short story opens multiple horizons of how the female household maids in our society are treated, especially when it comes to asking for basic human rights, such as demanding a day off. These "Begums" or "Bajis" (local way of addressing their female employers) hire them as part-time or full-time maids, neglect their basic needs, and treat them as creatures that are either "super-humans", "lacking humanity", or "animals… (who are) uncontrollably sexual and wild" beings. At the same time, they consider themselves as "civilized… (and) fully human" (Lugones, 2008, p.744). This stark contrast between what they think about these people and what they think of themselves is reflected in their practices, behaviours, and communication, which becomes a tool to maintain hegemony to suppress these peripheral people.

This power dynamic is illustrated through the story of Nuggo, a household maid working for Sughra Begum in Lahore. She lives in the villa's servant quarters and, despite an immense workload following the birth of her son, she is expected to work 24/7 for her employer. Meanwhile, her co-worker, Raagni, an employee of the Lahore Municipal Authority, raises concerns about this exploitative setup and encourages Nuugo to ask for a day off. As the narrative unfolds, the Trade Union stages a protest to demand a day off on Sunday instead of Friday, as most of them are churchgoers. The story concludes with the Trade Union's success in achieving its goal. However, Nuugo withdraws from her request, caving in because of the dual pressure from her husband and the facility of residing in Sughra Begum's house.

This tension between employers' privilege and workers' vulnerability is further reinforced by the attitudes of other elite women in the narrative. Sughra Begum's daughter, Raabia's presupposition is much the same about Nuggo, as the latter gives birth to two sons in two years, and the former lectures her on the "value of birth control and the hazards of overpopulating the world" (Ahmad, 2014, p.178). These sorts of practices

have become normative behaviour, where they easily classify these female maids as not among them and have characteristics that are not easily found in their kind of people. Moreover, terms of endearment for these maids are limited to their ability to work with energy and manpower. Likewise, colonized women are also considered "viragos," which means a strong, mannish woman who can do household chores with strength and energy. Sughra Begum's admiration for Nuggo, saying that she "must consist(s) of some superhuman element because she stood steady after delivering the child and started washing sheets that are "white as milk" (Ahmad, 2014, pp.174, 175), reflects upon how Nuggo is being praised based on her ability to work and she becomes Sughra Begum's "virago". Similarly, Raagni's character becomes "a rare breed" because she "acquire(s) tremendous influence amongst the local groups" and despite of her minimal education, her "vast reserves of information about matters" (Ahmad. 2014, p.180) illustrates not only diversity of perspectives in her character but also how such beings are considered "viragos". My research has explored that through these behaviors, they not only justify their violence and exploitation but also retain their hegemony and superiority over such suppressed communities. Such attitudes proliferate social and racial hierarchies and gender dichotomies where one stratum of the society enjoys the upper hand, and the other is subjugated and put into such employments that are physically challenging and laborious (such as street sweepers, household maids), thus the space becomes a place of "colonial difference", which as Lugones describes is a place where this sort of "coloniality of gender" is enacted (Mignolo, 2018, p.ix; Lugones, 2008, p.743). Nuggo, who is the central victim of this "colonial difference", is psychologically not ready to accept whether their demands can be accepted. Her uncertainty towards raising a call for her rights and asking Raagni if she thinks it is "possible for us poor people to change things?" speaks of the societal tendency to consider her identity as a "Subaltern" who is unable to put forth her voice (Ahmad, 2014, p.181; Spivak, 1988, p.271). This research raises a critique of perspectives that consider these household maids as either superhuman or viragos, yet at the same time, they present themselves as civilized and fully human. What I believe is that this mentality gives air to such decisions where considering their basic human rights becomes either an impossible task or an act of high virtue, rendering the employers as benevolent humans.

The functionality of coloniality of gender can be seen from another dimension, that is, the capitalistic streaks in the production of gender, which are based on the division of labour. This dehumanization process involves not only physical violence but also the erasure of knowledge,

practices, and social systems coming from these marginalized communities. Though Lugones gives an example of such an aspect through the colonizer's "Christianizing mission" for civilizing the masses, the text implicitly projects such capitalistic tendencies through the imposition on Municipal Authority for fewer working hours on Friday for the trade wallahs (Lugones, 2011, p.75): "Most of the sweepers in the city were Christians, and the union wallahs all felt that their day off should be Sunday, not Friday, since they were all churchgoers" (Ahmad, 2014, p.181). The Authority's initial rejection of their plea for declaring Sunday a day off becomes an embodiment of the hegemonic streaks of the civilizing mission that propagates its ideology onto the marginalized community. This discussion has delved deeper into the mechanics of social hierarchies that are operating in the form of coloniality of gender and class, and how these further lead to the imposition of oppressive constructs on the Christian community and household maids who are living on the margins.

Decolonial Resistance and Coalition Building: Empowering Marginalized Voices

After discussing in detail, the social hierarchies and their interplay with suppressive and repressive practices of the female employers (Begums and Bajis), and the Municipal Authority of Lahore towards the marginalized Christian community and Christian female household maids, the research intends to unravel further that despite these social inequalities and gender colonial suppression, these marginalized people emerge as a strong force through resistance and "coalition building" and successfully raise a decolonial call for their rights, which get accepted and implemented (Quijano, 2016, p.20). This resistance does not aim at bringing up individual subjectivity but rather consciously acknowledging the "colonial difference" and bringing up other subjectivities through coalition and communal endeavors (Mignolo, 2018, p.ix). As Lugones rightly says, the main task of decolonial feminists starts from "seeing the colonial difference, emphatically resisting her epistemological habit of erasing it", and "begins to learn about other resisters at the colonial difference" (Lugones, 2010, p.752). This conscious acknowledgment of others' presence becomes the first step towards coalition building. Raagni has her own way of dealing with things, which is different from that of Nuggo and Samuel. But Nuggo admires her strong willpower, yet at the same time feels sorry for her not having any husband and child despite knowing the fact that her own family hates her; "Though she felt the greatest admiration for her, at times she also felt sorry for her. Raagni had no children and a

husband who was 'bad' with other women", which became the reason she left him (Ahmad, 2014, p.180). Contrastingly, Samuel, under the influence of Begum Sughra, is highly inclined towards a submissive attitude as he says, "apologise. Go and apologise, Nuggo. For goodness' sake, go. All day Samuel begged her" (Ahmad, 2014, p.186). Together, this multiplicity of perspectives and different natures bring diversity within the Christian community. Despite the difference of opinion, the sense of communal association is there as Nuugo's admiration towards Raagni's firm stance and for her being the driving force behind the whole campaign is one example. Likewise, Raagni acknowledges other people of her community, especially "the private-employed sweepers (who are) not benefitting from the new rule" (Ahmad, 2014, p.182) of taking a day off on Friday, and it troubles her "deeply that large numbers of their community were probably working seven days a week" (Ahmad, 2014, pp.181, 182). Such communal association and coalition building that the characters depict for each other is an integral step towards achieving bigger. Seeing it in the context of the story, being heard by the administrative authorities of Lahore and getting their plea accepted is the ultimate achievement they have gotten so far. All these efforts of resistance are enacted in the "fractured locus," where different histories of resistance to colonialism meet while maintaining the multiplicity of experiences and perspectives. So, the community together accepts each other's differences, and the story itself becomes a fractured locus where the reader can witness the emerging diversity of perspectives.

The character of Raagni is of utmost interest, as she raises a decolonial call asking Nuggo that she "must have a day off in the week" (Ahmad, 2014, p.180). Raising the voice of the marginalized community becomes an embodiment of decolonial praxis theory. The notion of coalition building that is pertinent to decolonial feminism is evident through the Christian community forming a trade union to raise their voices. As Raagni says, "if we stick together, we'll be strong" (Ahmad, 2014, p.180). The result of this coalition is that "the Municipal Board of Lahore caved in and to their sheer, unbelieving delight they found that they had won most of their demands. Chief amongst them was the demand for a holiday on Sunday" (Ahmad, 2014, p.182). There are other small glimpses that the text reveals of the coalition of the downtrodden who always "return to their crumbling and rotting jhuggis to salvage the remains, helping each other cheerfully," and this is the utopian place where "everyone knew everyone" (Ahmad, 2014, p.179). This resonates with Lugones' idealization that we all should be fluent in each other's history. Ahmad's depiction of this marginalized community in her short story becomes a decolonial feminist portrayal of resistance and highlights the importance of the diversity of perspectives

within Pakistani society. Consequently, it was the union's success that resulted in the Lahore Municipal Authority conceding to their demands. It becomes a symbol of the potential for diverse perspectives and their acknowledgment through coalition building that can bring meaningful change in society. Thus, such coalition-building is the kind of resistance that gives agency to these peripheral people to claim their viewpoint.

By indulging in this research, I also point out the deficiency of the representation of household maids in the Pakistani literature in English. Although feminist movements are quite active and agile in addressing the woes and pleas of Pakistani women, there seems to be a gap in the literal representation of such females, particularly in acknowledging their right to a day off. The same critique is raised on the feminist movements that fail to recognize the divergent feminist voices while focusing on "one woman, only one reality" (Lugones, 2010, p.756). Rukhsana Ahmad's short story is one of its kind that talks about the suppressed women directly getting affected by the women of the upper class who claim to be empowering marginalized women, for instance, Raabia's lecturing Nuggo on birth control. However, later in the text, the same Raabia reacts to Nuggo's demanding a day off as she complains to her mother that "they don't deserve all your kindness and generosity, the miserable whining ingrates" (Ahmad 185). I rather believe that Raabia is a prototype of most Pakistani women who hire these maids, especially for full-time jobs, and they are expected to work for them without getting any time off.

The most striking element of the narrative is the contrast between two different scenarios, i.e., the trade wallah's successful demand for a Sunday off from Lahore Municipal Authority, and Nuggo's failed request for a day off from her employer, Sughra Begum. The former's call is not only accepted but also celebrated, while the story ends with a lamenting note as Nuggo succumbs to the pressure of her employer, rejects the idea, and chooses to continue working. This contrast highlights the potential of "coalition building" and solidarity in bringing change. The "trade wallahs" under Raagni's leadership achieve success by building solidarity and communal associations, making their demands stronger. In contrast, Nuggo's reluctance to follow Raagni's instructions isolates her from the power of the coalition. This affirms that decoloniality can be achieved through collective action to maximize the sense of responsibility (Lugones, 2010, p.755; Ahmad, 2014).

Defying Colonial Gender Constructs and Reclaiming Identity

Another factor that makes the characters of this short story distinct is their resistance to the colonial social construction of gender. This resistance is a by-product of the coalition that "women of color" build to bring non-white women into the scholarship of feminism. "Woman of color" is a response to the idea of a universal woman, which potentially blurs the binary of race and gender (Lugones, 2011, p.69). Hence, it demands that despite having a fractured sense of self, women reject the imposed inferiority, which ultimately becomes a tool to attain a coalition of women. Raagni is labelled "evil black bitch" (Ahmad, 2014, p.187) by Samuel, still, she rejects this complex social construction when she says to Samuel that "poorest of the poor we might be but we are happier and more independent than most others" (Ahmad, 2014, p.187). This underscores her sense of self-worth that defies the dominant narratives. Even Samuel envies her "assuredness and swagger" because he remains under the immense influence of Sughra Begum and prefers to be submissive (Ahmad, 2014, p.187). Likewise, the social construction intervenes in considering Nuggo as a "very lucky" woman, for being a mother of two sons, highlighting the building perception of the self; "Tell you the truth, I think Nuggo's very lucky, too; it's always tricky when it's like that. But Bibiji, what a girl!" (Ahmad, 2014, p.175). Along with all these details, the text highlights intersubjectivity within Nuggo's character that she is dark-skinned, Christian, a housemaid, an obedient wife, and a nurturing mother. The same goes with Raagni, but with the addition that she is a divorcee and childless. This intersubjectivity reinforces the multiplicity of selves within their characters and stands in sharp contrast to the concept of the universal woman. This discussion sheds light on how these characters are dehumanized and judged by society, but most importantly, how they reject such imposed inferiority. By rejecting this social construction, they aim to bring to the fore the intersubjectivity of their self, which becomes a way forward towards coalition building among women of colour.

Unveiling Neglected Narratives: 'We-Story' Approach in Literary Representation

For me, the most appealing aspect of working on this research was unravelling the actual stories told by the characters themselves, which amounts to the true spirit of decoloniality. Mafile'o, Tracie, et al. also stress the importance of the "we-story" approach that aims to bring the

diverse subjective narratives of the people (2016). They debunk the Western-based research methodologies, which rely on empirical evidence, as they say that relying on such objective and universal results distances the subjective narratives of people from their own lived experiences. "A Day for Nuggo" however, becomes a decolonial practice that Ahmad constructs, such characters who are putting forth their narratives, and the plot ends by enlightening the reader about the actual experiences, grievances, and priorities of the marginalized Christian community living in Lahore, Pakistan. Nuggo's life is not told about her, but through her, such as her struggles as a domestic worker and also as a mother. After giving birth to her son, she resumes work almost immediately: "Two hours after the baby came she was up washing clothes" (Ahmad, 2014, p.176). Rukhsana Ahmad does not use these details to invoke pity, but to expose the normalized inhuman treatment these women have to face, whose labour is invisibilized under the guise of loyalty or gratitude.

The "we-story" framework reveals how collective narratives emerge from shared oppression and resistance (Mafile'o et al., 2016). The character of Raagni and her strong voice as an activist add another dimension to this subjective collectivism. Raagni tells Nuggo, "'Surely you must have a day off in the week'" (Ahmad, 2014, p.180). This question unravels employers like Sughra Begum, who view domestic workers as "superhuman" while justifying their own superiority through "kindness" and "generosity" (Ahmad, 2014, p.176). Even the strike of the trade union to demand Sunday as a day off for Christian workers is a reassertion of their cultural and religious identity. "Chief amongst them was the demand for a holiday on Sunday for all practising Christians" (Ahmad, 2014, p.182). This collective action mirrors the "we-story" strategy, where individual demands are voiced through communal unity.

Moreover, the story reveals how deeply entrenched social hierarchies are. Nuggo hesitates to speak up and is unable to decide whether to go for Raagni's call or her husband, Samuel's fear of offending Sughra Begum. "She hadn't really considered herself at all," the narrator notes, "but the arguments on either side seemed both convincing and sound to her" (Ahmad, 2014, p.183). This internal conflict embodies the heart of decolonial storytelling. It not only represents one scenario, but also reveals the layers of dependence and shame in the character of Nuggo. Also, when Raabia scolds Nuggo while her baby cries, she abruptly says, "'I'm going now, Raabia Bibi… I won't be working on Sundays anymore'" (Ahmad, 2014, p.185). It is a sentence that reclaims her selfhood, though momentarily. Raabia responds with disdain: "'What a nerve after all

you've done for them'" (Ahmad, 2014, p.185). This very reaction validates the need for alternative narratives that center the marginalized. However, the most important aspect of the short story is its refusal to consider empowerment as equivalent to Nuggo's triumph. When she faces the fear of evacuating the servant quarter, Nuggo concedes: "'All right then, Sarwari. Tell her, I'll return to work tomorrow'" (Ahmad, 2014, p.188). Rukhsana Ahmad's conclusion of this short story does not imply Nuggo's defeat, but rather reflects the harsh material constraints under which such people face an existential crisis. Most importantly, the brief moment of resistance that Nuggo shows becomes the ultimate necessity as per the decolonial call. Thus, Ahmad's narrative becomes a necessary rupture in mainstream Pakistani feminist writing. By centering characters like Nuggo and Raagni, Ahmad resists both epistemic erasure and narrative elitism.

Also, I would like to draw this point to the critique on mainstream Pakistani feminist literary writers, who are unconsciously oblivious to these much-neglected representations and put a lot of focus on the diasporic writing critique, which is, for the majority of the people living in Pakistan is irrelevant. Pertinent to this point, I found one of the finest critiques made by Ayesha Shahid in her dissertation, where she maintains that the dearth of representations of household maids in Pakistani literature is because these writers and researchers "have enjoyed the services of domestic workers but have turned a blind eye to their problems" (Shahid, 2007). Thus, Ahmad's endeavor to write this story becomes an embodiment of the "we-story" that provides ample space for the representation of the Christian community, especially the female housemaids.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research highlights the dehumanization and marginalization of household maids and the Christian community in "A Day for Nuggo" (Ahmad, 2014). It critiques the societal tendency to consider them either superhuman or lacking humanity, and most of the time, they are praised based on the kind of work they do. While critically analyzing them through the concepts of "coloniality of gender" and "women of color," the study has unravelled different ways through which these marginalized groups have resisted oppressive constructs and challenged the imposed inferiority (Lugones, 2008, 2010). The story itself becomes a "fractured locus" that symbolizes the strength of coalition-building among the Christian community that promotes diversity of perspectives (Lugones, 2010). Finally, the story becomes a platform where

often-ignored voices are embodied through the approach of "we-story" (Mafile'o, 2016). This not only affirms the importance of their subjective narratives being heard but also the outcome of this into a meaningful social change through communal association.

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