

WHEN THE SUBALTERN WRITES HERSELF: FEMINIST RESISTANCE AND RECLAIMED DESIRE IN FILM 'KAMLI'

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Abstract

The film *Kamli* (2022) presents a rich tapestry of female experience within restrictive paradigms of cultural patriarchy in Pakistan. This paper utilizes Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and Helene Cixous's "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976) as theoretical frameworks to analyze how *Kamli* (2022) challenges traditional constructs surrounding female sexuality, agency, and desire. Through a textual and dialogic analysis of the film's narrative and cinematic language, this study examines how the protagonist, Hina, emerges from a state of voicelessness to articulate her embodied subjectivity. The paper examines the linguistic repertoire of the film and also looks into the extralinguistic features as tools of resistance and emancipation within a sociocultural setting that suppresses women's voices and desires. The convergence of postcolonial critique and French feminist theory sheds light on the intersections of gender, voice, and subalternity in the contemporary Pakistani cinema.

Introduction

In *Kamli* (2022), Hina's body and desire become tools of resistance that challenge patriarchal control and subaltern silencing, as understood through dual frameworks of Helene Cixous' *écriture féminine* and Gayatri Spivak's subaltern theory. Cinema has long served as a reflective surface for sociocultural norms, and *Kamli* (2022) stands out as a poignant cinematic text that interrogates the intersections of female agency, sexuality, and societal oppression. The paper draws on two critical feminist frameworks. The first one is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak* (1988), a foundational text in postcolonial and feminist thought. Spivak critiques how colonial and patriarchal discourses silence the subaltern, particularly subaltern women, even within attempts to liberate them. Her concept of subalternity speaks to the structural conditions that prevent marginalized individuals from articulating their own experiences without mediation or distortion by dominant power structures. The second theoretical framework is Helene Cixous' seminal essay "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976), which advocates for *écriture féminine*, writing from the female body and experience, to reclaim women's voices. Cixous encourages women to write themselves into history, to speak through the body, and to assert desire as a mode of resistance against repression. By bringing together Cixous' focus on bodily and erotic expression with Spivak's insights into the structural silencing of subalterns, this paper examines how *Kamli* (2022) uses language, dialogue, gestures, silence, and visual metaphor to represent and challenge the gender constraint placed upon its protagonist. It positions Hina, both a subject of oppression and a symbol of defiance, navigating landscape shaped by cultural patriarchy and emotional exile.

Set in the rural mountainous outskirts of Pakistan, the film revolves around Hina, a woman suspended in time, awaiting her husband's return, who went out of Pakistan to earn and support his family. The plot revolves around Hina's numb and stagnant existence, which gradually transforms when she encounters Amaltas, a mysterious man whose presence awakens her sense of self and desire. She lives with her blind sister-in-law, Sakina, whose conservative moral authority functions as an agent of patriarchal order. Another key character is Zeenat, a painter and modern woman, who initially appears to represent liberation. However, Zeenat's behavior soon reveals a

contradictory dynamic. Hina's character is played by Saba Qamar and his sister-in-law's character is played by Sania Saeed. Zeenat's character is played by Nimra Bucha. As the narrative unfolds, Kamli peels back the layers of Hina's repression and longing, exposing a complex interplay of emotional, sexual, and intellectual yearning denied expression within patriarchal confines.

Literature Review

The conceptual grounding of this study draws primarily from two significant feminist thinkers: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Helene Cixous. Their theories offer a crucial dialectic on voice, silence, desire, and representation, particularly as they pertain to women situated within patriarchy and structures of power. Gayatri Spivak's foundational essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), critiques both cultural and elite feminist frameworks for their tendency to appropriate the voices of marginalized women. Her notion of the "Subaltern" refers to individuals who are structurally disempowered their ability to speak, both literally and politically, is rendered null by hegemonic systems of representation. Spivak mentions in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" that "the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (41). Furthermore, talking about the woman as a widow, she maintains in upcoming lines as "The regulative psychobiography of widow self-immolation will be pertinent in both cases" (41). A widow's self-immolation means that a widow's inner emotional state and the cultural and societal rules, such as expectations of purity and sacrifice, shape her decision to take such a tragic step. Spivak's famous provocation "The subaltern cannot speak" (40), is thus a warning against the epistemic violence that occurs when institutions or intellectuals presume to "give voice" to the oppressed without dismantling the systems that silence them. Sharpe and Spivak in their article, "A Conversation with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: Politics and the Imagination," comment on Spivak's essay as "one of the concerns of her recent work is to show the complicity of diasporic South Asians with a corporate globalization that maintains subaltern women in a position of subalternity" (610). Subhashini et al. (2025) in their article "Deconstructing Feminine Identity Using Spivak's Subaltern Lens" maintained that, according to Spivak, there are cultural differences between First World and Third World women. Tejero (2004) concluded the article "Telling (her)story: an overview of Subaltern Studies", by commenting that when women and other oppressed groups, start movements that challenges traditional systems like religion, family, and society, they are seen as a threat to these systems and the values they promote. Subaltern studies, especially when looking at gender, help us understand how power, culture and gender roles are all connected. These studies try to uncover and explain how these systems keep certain people in control while keeping others, especially women, in lower positions (95).

Another element of subaltern women is explored by Zembylas (2018), that the subaltern silences should also be felt instead of only being heard. He further argues that "the silences surrounding the subaltern woman's suicide cannot always be heard; rather, they must be felt through the visceral" (N.P). Maggio (2007), in his article, formulated two ways to raise the voice of the subaltern, the first one is to speak for them, the second one is if you cannot speak for them let them speak for themselves. And according to him, these two ways also silence subalterns further "because they ignore the positional relations of the dominant to the subaltern" (422). At another point, Maggio (2007) exemplifies the silences of subalterns: "Like a child being torn between two divorcing (or married) parents, the subaltern are silenced even when attempting to speak. The subaltern is always framed as a quisling or as a resistant. Its own voice is never heard (425). He further claims that "They can never speak because they are both being 'stood in for' and 'embodied'

by others in the dominant discourse" (422). Cherniavsky (2011) considers the role of intellectuals in the silence of subalterns.

The intellectual's responsibility is to the history of the subaltern's silencing, a silence that cannot be 'filled' without repeating the original act of erasure (by representing her who cannot represent herself). Hence the imperative to 'speak to' (rather than 'speak for') the subaltern - to address the conditions of her muting (which are also the conditions of possibility of the intellectual's discourse) (153).

Instead of pretending to represent the subaltern, the intellectual should speak to them, they should focus on exposing and understanding the reasons why these people were silenced in the first place. There should be infrastructure or institutions that listen to them. Spivak also sheds light on women's sexuality that the Third-World woman is not allowed to speak her sexuality, either by tradition, which often demands chastity, submission, or by modernity or development, which defines sexual freedom on western terms. Spivak writes in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1976)

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the "third-world woman" caught between tradition and modernization, culturalism and development. These considerations would revise every detail of judgments that seem valid for a history of sexuality in the West: "Such would be the property of repression, that which distinguishes it from the prohibitions maintained by simple penal law: repression functions well as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, affirmation of non-existence; and consequently states that of all this there is nothing to say, to see, to know (61).

Sexuality in this context is not openly explored or expressed. Instead, it becomes a site of erasure: women are talked about but never heard. They are bearers of traditions, controlled by their cultures. Kapur (2001) in her article talks on subaltern sexuality that in the sub-continent's culture, "The idea of sex and sexuality as a dangerous, corrupting force, to be carefully contained at all costs within the family and marriage was as Victorian as it was Indian (861).

Helene Cixous's essay "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976) emerges from a different yet complementary trajectory within feminist theory. Cixous advances the concept of *écriture féminine*, a mode of writing that emerges from the female body and feminine experience. She calls on women to write themselves, to express their emotions, desires, and contradictions in forms that disrupt patriarchal structures of language and thought. Cixous puts forward the idea that a woman is supposed to write by herself. Not just that she is supposed to get into writing about women but also that she should enable the women for writing. Women have been drifted away from this act of writing. Cixous (1976) claims "woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history-by her own movement" (p. 875). She urges women to put themselves in the text, to write their own experiences, desires and realities rather than being spoken for by patriarchal systems. Chakraborty (2013) explains Cixous's *écriture féminine* as feminine writing, strictly speaking, refers to a mode of expression, that foregrounds the representation of female body as a generative source of thought and creativity. It challenges the cultural foundations of language and discourse, offering a space where women can "unsilence" their voices, voices long repressed by patriarchal systems. By doing so, it enables women to express their unconscious, repressed, and often fragmented inner selves, or what Cixous calls, "the Other" (2897). Verma (1997) argues, "Neither sexuality nor the female body can be taken as fixed and universal. The nature and extent of variation in gender relations across time, cultures, and social divisions is difficult to establish (273). Feminist theorist like Judith Butler argue that gender and sexuality are performed, not inherent, while thinkers like Cixous and Spivak emphasize how the female body becomes a site of inscription, where multiple ideologies, including patriarchy and imperialism, attempt to control and define women. "The key ideas of *écriture féminine* are invoked by Melani Budianta in her call for women to 'appreciate their own bodies' and her claim that 'everyone has a right over their own body"

(Allen N.P). Further Allen (2007) states that in Indonesia, Cixous's écriture féminine is interpreted narrowly through the lens of women writing "with a focus on sexuality" (N.P).

Cixous also comments on the resistance of women from cultural patriarchy. She writes in "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976), "Now women return from afar, from always: from "without," from the heath where witches are kept alive; from below, from beyond "culture" (877). These spaces are outside the dominant cultural norms such as the heath, symbolizing wild, natural, or uncivilized, where witches (symbolically women with power and knowledge) have been confined, from "below culture", the margins or subaltern zones of society where women have historically existed, unacknowledged, and repressed. "In Cixous' works, contrary to these critics' beliefs, the body lies not outside culture but is always implicated within it, and that the body appears not prior to the text but is textually enmeshed (Aneja 25).

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative, interpretive textual analysis to examine the 2022 film *Kamli*, directed by Sarmad Khoosat, through the dual lenses of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Helene Cixous's concept of "écriture féminine". The methodological approach is grounded in feminist literary criticism, postcolonial theory, and visual discourse analysis, with a particular focus on how female subjectivity, sexuality, and resistance are constructed and expressed through both linguistic and non-linguistic features in the film.

The selection of these theoretical frameworks is both comparative and intersectional. Spivak's interrogation of how the subaltern woman is silenced, particularly through cultural patriarchy, moral, and representational systems forms one critical foundation. Cixous's call for women to "write the body" through sensual, non-linear, and emotional expressions of the self provides the counterpoint. These frameworks enable multi-dimensional reading of *Kamli* as a cultural text that situates its protagonist, Hina, within both symbolic and material regimes of control and resistance.

Discussion

The trajectory of Hina's character in *Kamli* (2022) can be read as a layered portrait of a woman navigating the liminal space between silence and expression, oppression and desire. Her evolution is best understood through the interplay between Spivak's notion of Subaltern and Cixous's theory of écriture féminine. By first considering Hina as a figure trapped in the structures of cultural and gendered subalternity and then tracing her movement toward bodily and emotional articulation, we observe a compelling feminist arc: from voicelessness to rebellion.

Hina as Subaltern:

Spivak's concept of Subaltern identifies a class of individuals so structurally oppressed by colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism that their voices are not simply unheard but actively erased through the very mechanisms of power that claim to represent them. Spivak writes that the subaltern woman is "the figure of the woman disappearing into the violent shuttling between tradition and modernization (61). Hina, especially in the initial segments of the film, embodies this theoretical framework. She is suspended between two cultural patriarchal systems: the absent husband who portrays traditional marriage and her blind sister-in-law, Sakina, who controls her sexual desires and her freedom.

From the start, Hina is spoken for or about, rather than spoken to or with. The moment when women come to the House on Saqlain's birthday, Hina's husband, and talks about Hina rather than to her with her illustrates precisely the dynamic of the Spivak, described by Cherniavsky (2011), "the imperative to 'speak to' (rather than 'speak for') the subaltern - to address the conditions of her muting (which are also the conditions of possibility of the intellectual's discourse) (152). In this society, these women are Spivak's intellectuals. Please look into yhe following example for the supporting argumentPlease look into yhe following example for the supporting argument

Woman 1: Ae Hina nu vekh te tan mere kaleje nu hath penda h. Edi sohni te jawan kuri, te muqaddar vekho

Woman 2: Koi mere khyal vich sat ath saal ho gaye ne ohnu gaye ne na ohnu gaye hoye. (Khoosat)

This conversation constructs Hina's entire being in terms of appearance, suffering, and absence, but never desire, consent, or voice. She is evaluated rather than engaged, spoken about as if she is a passive emblem of tragedy rather than an active, thinking subject. This aligns directly with Spivak's "violent shuttling" between structures like patriarchy and cultures that speak for her but never listen to her. Furthermore, her husband's long disappearance is treated with sacred reverence, as if his memory alone deserves more space than Hina's living voice. In a scene, Hina's friend's mother come to their house for the invitation of friend's marriage and ask Sakina to think about Hina's marriage too, as she is aging in the lasting wait. This scene is a clear portrayal of Spivak's cultural patriarchy and Cixous's women writing women.

Mother: Sakina, isk baary mein bh kuch soch.

Sakina: Kia? Kia sochun?

Mother: Dekh log kia kehty hein is farq nahi parta. Par rab ko bhi to jawab dena he na. Ya to Saqlain ne koi rabta rakha hota. Na koi kher, na khabar, aur tune isy bakri ki tarah killy se kyun bandh k rakha hua h? Kar de iska bhi koi faisla. Umar nikalti ja rahi hai iski. Tujhy to nazar nahi aata, par mein dekh rahi hoon. Rang roop bujhta ja raha hai iska.

Sakina: To kia karoon? Kia kehna chahty hai? Nikah pe nikah kara doon? Tum sab k kehny mein aa k gunah e Kabira karoon mein?

Mother: Agar tera bhai agly 20 saal tak bhi wapis nahi aata? To yh bichari isi tarah intezar karti rahi gi?

Sakina: Kyun nahi aaye ga mera bhai? Badduaein de rahi ho humko?

Mother: Wese Sakina, behis hony ki bh koi had hoti h.

Sakina: Bahaya aurat ka farz hota hai k who apny shohar ka intezar kary. Uski ghair mojoodgi mein uski aur apni sharm ki hifazat kary. (Khoosat)

In this example, friend's mother is acting as Cixous's woman and Sakina as Spivak's patriarchal figure. In this scene, a woman is silencing another woman, and a woman is speaking for another woman. Sakina believes that it's a wife's duty to wait for her husband. In his absence, she must guard both his and her honor. This is a cultural script. The idea that a woman's body must preserve not only her honor but also that of an absent man becomes a ritual of cultural performance, one where womanhood is equated with sacrifice, patience, silence, and moral containment. Mother says that it doesn't matter what people say, but you'll have to answer God, shows the repression of society and culture on women, not of religion. At this, Sakina becomes angry with her friend's mother and rejects the invitation and restrains Hina from going to the wedding. Hina requested Sakina, that she is her only friend, and Sakina replies: "To? (So?)" (Khoosat 2022). And Hina was silenced in reply. This shows how patriarchal figures control subaltern women. Spivak writes in her article "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

This view does not oblige me to ignore that, by implicitly defining the family and the mother tongue as the ground level where culture and convention seem nature's own way of organizing "her" own subversion, Marx himself rehearses an ancient subterfuge (34).

Spivak is warning us that culture and convention do not appear as imposed systems, but rather as natural truths, transmitted most effectively through the family unit and the mother tongue. This is the reaction of Hina to Sakina's "So?". This is how a subaltern woman shows her helplessness through nonlinguistic features, through facial expressions.

Zeenat comes to their house for Hina's hand in marriage for her husband. Sakina rejects the proposal, and in reaction, Sakina beats Hina. Hina asks Sakina that it's not her fault that Zeenat comes here for her hand. Sakina blames her for inviting shame and indulging in desire. Sakina like culture itself, punishes Hina not for her behavior but for the possibility of her desire. The rage is aimed that Hina still contains longing, a spark of life beyond waiting. This violence mirrors Spivak's example of Sati in Hindu culture.

To see this as proof of the feminism of classical Hinduism or of Indian culture as goddess-centered and therefore feminist is as ideologically contaminated by nativism or reverse ethnocentrism as it was imperialist to erase the image of the luminous fighting Mother Durga and invest the proper noun Sati with no significance other than the ritual burning of the helpless widow as sacrificial offering who can then be saved (62).

Spivak is critiquing the romanticization of Indian culture by claiming that just because there are powerful goddess, that doesn't mean the culture is inherently feminist. This belief is "ideologically contaminated", meaning it's not objective, it's shaped by nationalist and cultural pride, "nativism", which wants to portray culture as superior or self-sufficient.

Sakina: Tera koi qasoor nahi hai, qasoor to is jism ka hai, aur is jism ki paleet zarooraton ka hai, jin se majboor ho kar insaan gunah karta hai. Bhool jata hai, k yeh to mitti hai. Iska anjam to bas itna hai k isko keeron ne kha jana hai. Aa rahi thi, kai dinon se mujhy tere jism se napaki ki boo aa rahi thi.... Kyun nahi hua tujh se Saqlain ka intezar, kyun nahi hua tujh se. kyun nahi hui tujh se uski izzat ki hifazat jo woh tere aur mere hawaly kar k gya tha, jaiz halaal mankooha hai tu uski (Khoosat).

This is an example of moral policing of the female body. Sakina dissociates Hina's subjectivity from her body. This constructs female desire as inevitable sin, something to be repressed. Sakina enforces the cultural morality of sexual loyalty to an absent husband. This employs that a woman's body belongs to a man, even in absence. Like Satti's body, Hina's body is offered as sacrifice by others (Sakina). Both Satti's and Hina's bodies are denied entirely by culture, desire seen as "napaki", impurity, and both women are reduced to loyal widows. Both women for being ideal in the society, die and wait to uphold husband's honor.

Rebellion through Cixous: Body, Desire, and Writing the Self.

If Spivak gives us the language to understand Hina's silencing, it is Helene Cixous who offers the framework to interpret the rebellion. In "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976), Cixous argues that women must write their bodies, their pleasures, and their contradictions in the history. This writing is not limited to the literal act of producing text; it is an embodied gesture, a refusal to remain confined within patriarchal language and representation. Cixous (1976) claims in these words for women to write their sexuality. To write. An act which will not only "realize" the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal; it will tear her away from the superegoized structure in which she has always occupied the place reserved for the guilty (880).

In *Kamli* (2022), Hina doesn't literally write, but her imagination, fantasy, and sensual expression become forms of feminine authorship. Her creation of Amaltas becomes a kind of writing, a poetic, erotic reclaiming of what has been denied to her. Sakina used to tell her the story of Harmala, whose stepmother cursed her if she touched the water ever, it would destroy her, once Harmala slipped in a lake in a jungle behind her house, water began to engulf her, suddenly a savior reached there to rescue her and left her under a tree of Amaltas because Harmala could see his face. Hina slipped into the water, so much influenced by the story she created the figure to fulfil her sexual desires in the water and named her Amaltas. Women have been made afraid of or ashamed of their sexuality, seeing it through the lens of morality and guilt. Hina's imagined union with Amaltas breaks this censorship. In her mind and body, she accesses a form of desire unmediated by patriarchal judgement. This is not sex for punishment and ownership, it is desire as liberation, as connection to self. At her friend's wedding, when she sees her friend meeting her beloved, sexual desires again emerges within her and Hina leaves wedding to again meet Amaltas, this time embracing him completely.

Cixous emphasizes that the female body has been colonized, its functions, sensations, and meanings taken away or suppressed. Hina's encounter with Amaltas restore her sensuality, her breath, her skin, her longing. She reclaims her goods, the right to feel pleasure, to touch, to be touched, and to desire. "Tear her away from the superegoized structure...the place reserved for the guilty" (880). Hina's desire for Amaltas tears her away from this place of guilt. Amaltas is the figure through which her body writes back, against years of waiting, watching, and withering in silence. In the end when she comes to Amaltas for the escape from the village, she keeps on asking him to take her away, but he doesn't respond. At last, she bites his arm and realizes that he was just her imagination, not a real figure. Amaltas vanishes.

Hina's bite on Amaltas, a climactic moment, shatters the illusion of romantic salvation. It is not Amaltas who will liberate her, nor Saqlain, nor Zeenat. Her freedom does not lie in another's love, gaze or approval, but in her own act of reclamation. The bite doesn't mean to consume the other,

it results in awaken the self of Hina. It is here that she speaks not necessarily through words, but through a profound refusal to be reduced to silence, shame or spectacle. Furthermore, after beating Hina, when Sakina finds her coming from outside, she again questions her about where she is coming from.

Sakina: Kahan gayi thi bhabhi? Btaa. Kahan gayi thi?

Hina: Kahin nahi

Sakina: Batana chahty nahi, ya bta sakti nahi? Malik sahab k paas gayi thi na? Mein tujhy khul k btaun is fail ko kia kehty hein? Kisi k nikah mein ho r kisi na mahram se –

Hina: Bas! Chup! Konsa nikah? Kiska nikah? Yeh nikah nahi aik aziyat hai. Ik andha kunwan he jis mein gal rahi hn sarh rahi hn mein. Pichly 8 saalon se intezar ko aap nikah keh rahi hein, nahi karna mene intezar. Is andhere kunwe mein apke saath nahi marna mujhy. Agar Allah ne apki aankhon ki Roshni cheen li hai, to meri zindagi mein andhera kyun kar rahi hein? Aur khabardar! Ainda mujh pe hath uthaya to”

She goes inside the room and fetch out a box filled with the things of her husband Saqlain calling him just a memory and throws the box in the water. Hina's outburst is revolutionary. Her words tear apart the illusion of marriage-as-sacred. The andha kunwan, blind well, is a metaphor for her emotional, sexual, and existential suffocation. By throwing Saqlain's box in the water, she does an act for liberation. This is Hina's moment of writing herself, with her voice, her resistance, and her rejection of societal norms. “Every woman has known the torment of getting up to speak. Her heart racing, at times entirely lost for words, ground and language slipping away—that's how daring a feat, how great a transgression it is for a woman to speak (Cixous 880). After her continuous struggles for liberation, Sakina finally opens the box and gives a letter to Hina from it, which contains news of Saqlain's death. Sakina tells Hina that she is free now, she will marry her somewhere but before that, she has to complete the period of Iddat. Instead of offering emotional release, she reinscribes religious obligation as another form of enclosure. For this period, she locks Hina in a room and gives her food through the window. Hina continuously asks her to open the door and let her out, but she doesn't listen to her. She throws things on the ground present in the room to force Sakina to open the door, but Sakina remains calm. Then at last she, after several struggles Hina burns out the room.

Hina's act of burning the room is a writing through the body, a fiery protest against the erasure of female agency. The body, that was sealed, silenced, and disciplined now becomes the site of resistance. Her act is the final reclaiming of her “bodily territory”. The flame is her script. The burning of the room is not just destruction, it is rebirth. “Write your self. Your body must be heard” (Cixous 880).

Zeenat's character is a clear interpretation of Cixous's "women write women". Zeenat appears to be a modern, artistic woman. She claims to write women through her art. Helene Cixous famously demands that "Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing" (875). Zeenat paints Hina and other females' portraits; she gives visibility to them.

Zeenat, while identifying as an artist working with female subjects, ultimately writes Hina not with her, but through her. In photographing Hina's expressions, she is not helping Hina to speak, she is interpreting Hina's silence, filling in her own meanings. Furthermore at a point she asks Hina "Tumhari aankhon ki udaasi mujhy bohat achi lagti thi, kisi purani yaad ki tarah, lekin ab mein is cheap emotional appeal is bore ho chuki hoon. Niklo. Jahan bh phansi hui ho wahan se niklo, aur foran niklo" (Khoosat). This is a clear example of Cixous's "bring women to writing" (Cixous 875).

Hina's facial expression throughout *Kamli* (2022) serves as a powerful visual language that charts her transformation from a silenced subaltern to a woman in rebellion. In the first picture, her face is marked by a haunting stillness, eyes filled with tears, reflecting a body trained in submission and a voice denied articulation. Mirroring Spivak's subaltern, whose inner life is rendered unreadable by dominant structures. However, when her desire begins to stir and her sense of self surfaces, her expressions gradually shift. In moments of vulnerability and defiance, like in the second picture, her eyes begin to hold intensity, her mouth tightly closed, her expressions fused rage, grief, and awakening a complex articulation of resistance. Her face becomes a canvas of écriture féminine, emotional, sensual, and unapologetically alive.

Conclusion

Khoosat's *Kamli* (2022) emerges as a striking and subversive cinematic meditation on the conditions of female subjectivity in a culturally patriarchal society. Through the embodied experiment of its protagonist Hina, the film dissects the deeply rooted structures that silence, confine, and mediate women's desires, voices, and bodies through linguistic and non-linguistic features. The application of Spivak's Subaltern and Cixous's écriture féminine as critical frameworks has allowed this paper to trace the arc of Hina's transformation, from voiceless subaltern to a body that speaks through rebellion. It is not a story about a woman's longing; it is a narrative of resistance and authorship. It is about the oppressive weight of waiting, and the revolutionary power of stepping outside, of home, of roles, of guilt. Hina is revealed not merely as a victim of culture but as a subject who slowly dismantles the structure of her oppression through embodied imagination, sensory rebellion, and quiet defiance. In doing so, she asserts that women can write themselves, speak through silence, and be more than objects of someone else's story. They can, and must, become their own.

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