

LANGUAGE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

ISSN: 3026-7196

AI Power, Resistance, and Cultural Hegemony in The Golden Legend: A Foucauldian and Gramscian Analysis

Anam Javed* and **Daryoosh Hayati**

To cite this article. A. Javed and D. Hayati, "AI Power, Resistance, and Cultural Hegemony in The Golden Legend: A Foucauldian and Gramscian Analysis," *Lang. Technol. Soc. Media*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 279–303, 2026.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.70211/ltsm.3026-7196.422

To link to this article:

Published online: 12 June 2026

Submit an article to this journal

View crossmark data

Watch the video on YouTube

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://journal.wiseedu.co.id/index.php/ltsmjournal/about

OPEN ACCESS

Language, Technology, and Social Media Vol 4 No 2 (2026) https://doi.org/10.70211/ltsm.3026-7196.422

Check for updates

Research Article

AI Power, Resistance, and Cultural Hegemony in The Golden Legend: A Foucauldian and Gramscian Analysis

Anam Javed* and Daryoosh Hayati

Received: 22 March 2026	Revised: 18 April 2026	Accepted: 29 May 2026	Online: 12 June 2026

Abstract

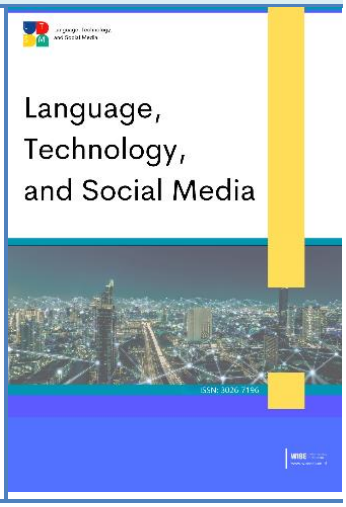
This study examines how power, resistance, and cultural hegemony are represented in Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend*, with particular attention to the discursive construction of religious minority identity, gendered vulnerability, and ideological belonging in a postcolonial society. The study responds to the need for a more integrated reading of the novel, since previous scholarship has generally examined religious intolerance, minority representation, gendered subjectivity, nationalism, or Foucauldian surveillance as relatively separate concerns. Using a qualitative, interpretive, and non-empirical textual approach, the study applies Foucault's concepts of disciplinary power, subjectification, discourse, and resistance, complemented by Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony. The analysis was conducted through close reading, deductive thematic coding, and critical discourse interpretation of selected narrative passages, character interactions, and representations of institutional authority. The findings show that power in the novel operates through religious authority, military pressure, patriarchal norms, communal surveillance, legal fear, and ideological consent. Marginalized characters internalize fear through silence, concealment, and self-regulation, yet they also resist through moral defiance, ethical refusal, compassion, memory, and identity reconstruction. The study concludes that *The Golden Legend* is not merely a narrative of oppression but a literary representation of how language, ideology, and identity become central sites where domination is produced, normalized, contested, and transformed. This study contributes an integrated Foucauldian-Gramscian framework for analyzing discourse, power, and resistance in postcolonial literary texts.

Keywords: Cultural Hegemony; Discourse; Foucauldian Analysis; Postcolonial Literature; Resistance.

Publisher's Note:

WISE Pendidikan Indonesia stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Copyright:
©
2026 by the author(s).
License WISE Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandar Lampung, Indonesia.
This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



INTRODUCTION

Power has long been a central concept in explaining how social order is produced, maintained, contested, and internalized. It operates not only through formal political authority but also through language, ideology, social norms, institutions, and cultural representation. Russell defines power as the capacity to produce intended effects [1], while classical sociological perspectives often associate power with domination, coercion, hierarchy, and institutional control [2], [3]. In traditional political and social structures, power was commonly understood as something possessed by sovereign rulers, ruling elites, patriarchal authorities, or state institutions and exercised over subordinate subjects through punishment, violence, fear, and obedience. However, contemporary cultural and literary studies demonstrate that power is rarely limited to visible domination. It is also embedded in everyday discourse, moral expectations, religious language, legal categories, social surveillance, and identity labels that determine who may speak, belong, resist, or be excluded. In this sense, literature becomes a significant cultural medium through which the invisible operations of power can be examined because literary texts represent how individuals experience authority not only as political pressure but also as psychological, linguistic, cultural, and ethical constraint.

Michel Foucault's theory of power provides a crucial lens for understanding these mechanisms. Foucault moves away from the traditional assumption that power is simply owned by a sovereign authority and imposed upon passive subjects. Instead, he argues that power is exercised through relations, institutions, knowledge systems, discourses, and everyday practices [4], [5], [6]. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault explains that modern power shifts from spectacular punishment to subtle disciplinary mechanisms such as surveillance, normalization, examination, and self-regulation [4]. In *The History of Sexuality*, he further emphasizes that power is not merely repressive but also productive because it produces knowledge, identities, truths, and subject positions [5]. This theoretical shift is central to the present study because *The Golden Legend* portrays a society in which individuals are not only threatened by visible violence but also disciplined through religious expectations, social scrutiny, legal fear, communal suspicion, and moral categorization. Characters regulate their speech, conceal their identities, and modify their behavior because they live under the possibility of being watched, judged, accused, or punished.

This issue is particularly relevant to Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend* [7], a novel that dramatizes the entanglement of religious extremism, military authority, patriarchal control, minority marginalization, and postcolonial anxiety in contemporary Pakistan. The novel does not merely portray oppression as an external force imposed by state or religious authorities; rather, it reveals how domination is reproduced through language, communal judgment, religious discourse, fear, silence, and internalized forms of obedience. The social world of the novel is shaped by boundaries between Muslims and Christians, men and women, citizens and minorities, conformity and deviance, truth and blasphemy, belonging and exclusion. These boundaries are not neutral because they are constructed through discursive practices that assign legitimacy, danger, moral value, and social visibility to particular identities. Therefore, *The Golden Legend* is not only a postcolonial literary narrative but also a discourse-rich cultural text that allows an analysis of how language, ideology, and social communication produce systems of control and resistance.

Foucault's concept of subjectification is especially useful for analyzing the psychological and social condition of marginalized characters in the novel. Subjectification refers to the process through which individuals become subjects within systems of knowledge and power. They are not merely oppressed from outside; they are formed through discourses that define what they are, what

they may become, and how they must behave. In *The Golden Legend*, Nargis's concealed Christian identity, Helen's vulnerability as a Christian woman, and Lily's exposure to religious violence illustrate how identities are produced and constrained by dominant discourses of religion, nationalism, gender, and morality. Nargis's hidden life reflects not only personal fear but also the disciplinary force of a society in which survival depends on concealing one's identity [7]. Her condition demonstrates how power enters the interior life of the subject, shaping memory, fear, self-presentation, silence, and moral agency. This supports Foucault's argument that power is not external to individuals but becomes embedded in their conduct, speech, attitudes, and everyday practices [6].

At the same time, Foucault's theory needs to be complemented by Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony because the domination represented in *The Golden Legend* does not function only through discipline and surveillance. It also operates through consent, ideology, and cultural normalization. Gramsci argues that ruling groups maintain domination not only by force but also by securing the consent of subordinated groups through institutions, beliefs, values, and common sense [8], [9]. In this framework, power becomes durable when people accept dominant values as natural, sacred, moral, or inevitable. This is clearly visible in the novel, where religious ideology, patriarchal expectations, and nationalist sentiment become instruments for legitimizing exclusion and violence. Religious discourse does not function merely as spiritual language; it becomes a social technology of classification that determines who is pure or impure, loyal or traitorous, protected or disposable. Thus, Gramsci's theory helps explain how the ideological order of the novel becomes hegemonic because domination is made to appear morally justified and socially necessary.

The integration of Foucault and Gramsci is important because each framework illuminates a different level of power. Foucault clarifies the micro-operations of power through surveillance, discipline, subjectification, discourse, and normalization [4], [5], [6] while Gramsci explains the macro-level production of ideological consent through culture, religion, institutions, and common sense [8], [9]. Together, these perspectives enable a more comprehensive analysis of how power in *The Golden Legend* operates simultaneously through coercion and consent, violence and belief, fear and moral persuasion, external pressure and internal self-regulation. Such an integrated approach also aligns with critical discourse studies, which examine how dominance, inequality, and resistance are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and challenged through text and talk [10]. Fairclough similarly argues that discourse is a form of social practice through which social relations, institutional authority, and ideological meanings are constructed [11]. Therefore, a Foucauldian and Gramscian reading of *The Golden Legend* can be strengthened by treating the novel as a discursive field where language does not merely describe power but actively represents, organizes, and contests it.

The relevance of critical discourse analysis is further strengthened by van Dijk's argument that domination is often reproduced through discourse by controlling knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, and social representations [10], [12]. In *The Golden Legend*, religious and political discourses produce a social grammar of exclusion: minorities are named as suspicious, women are positioned as vulnerable subjects of moral control, and dissenting voices are coded as threats to religious or national order. These discursive processes create symbolic violence, where exclusion becomes acceptable because it is framed as morality, security, faith, or social stability. The novel's depiction of religious authority, military pressure, and communal suspicion illustrates how

language can become an instrument of ideological control. Consequently, the present study does not examine power only as a political theme but as a discursive mechanism through which identity, belonging, and resistance are constructed.

Existing studies on *The Golden Legend* have already emphasized its engagement with religious intolerance, minority representation, political violence, patriarchal oppression, and postcolonial identity. Ahmad argues that the novel critiques religious intolerance and the marginalization of minority groups in Pakistan [13], [14]. Qureshi and Jabeen examine the relationship between ideology, female subjectivity, and religious power, showing how female characters negotiate patriarchal and political constraints [15], [16]. Shaheen analyzes the novel through a Foucauldian lens and highlights surveillance, discipline, and resistance as key mechanisms of power [17]. More recent scholarship also investigates how Aslam represents Pakistani Christians and religious coexistence, arguing that the novel complicates simplistic victimhood narratives by presenting more complex Muslim-Christian relations [18]. These studies provide important insights, yet they tend to focus either on Foucauldian discipline, religious intolerance, gendered marginalization, or minority experience separately. The present study builds upon these discussions but advances them by integrating Foucault's disciplinary power and subjectification with Gramsci's cultural hegemony to examine how coercive and consensual power operate together in the novel.

The gendered dimension of power is also crucial in this study because patriarchal control in *The Golden Legend* intersects with religious ideology and political authority. Female characters are not only affected by public violence but also by private surveillance, social shame, moral judgment, and restrictions on bodily and emotional autonomy. Lazar's feminist critical discourse perspective is relevant here because gendered power often works through discourse that normalizes unequal relations and presents them as culturally acceptable [19]. In the novel, women's identities are shaped by expectations of silence, obedience, modesty, concealment, and endurance. These expectations do not simply appear as personal choices; they are produced through intersecting systems of religion, patriarchy, and communal power. Therefore, the novel presents gender not as a secondary theme but as one of the primary sites through which disciplinary and hegemonic power are reproduced.

The issue of resistance is equally important. Foucault argues that where there is power, there is resistance [5], meaning that resistance is not external to power but emerges within the same network of relations. This principle helps interpret the acts of moral courage, identity reconstruction, silence, refusal, and survival found in *The Golden Legend*. Resistance in the novel is not always revolutionary or openly confrontational. It often appears as ethical refusal, hidden memory, emotional endurance, protection of others, preservation of dignity, and the refusal to accept imposed identities. Widder also emphasizes that resistance in Foucauldian thought should not be viewed as external opposition to power but as a relational practice emerging within the field of power itself [20]. From a Gramscian perspective, such acts may also be understood as counter-hegemonic practices because they challenge dominant meanings and open alternative ways of imagining community, faith, and belonging [8], [9]. As Shaheen notes, resistance in the novel often appears as endurance and the assertion of human dignity rather than direct rebellion [17]. This makes the novel an important text for understanding how marginalized individuals negotiate oppressive structures while remaining embedded within them.

Accordingly, this study investigates how power, resistance, and cultural hegemony are represented in *The Golden Legend* through a combined Foucauldian and Gramscian framework. The study argues that the novel portrays power as a multilayered phenomenon operating at international, national, institutional, communal, and individual levels. Military authority, religious discourse, patriarchal social structures, and communal surveillance collectively produce marginalized identities and regulate the boundaries of acceptable existence. However, the novel also shows that domination is never complete. Characters resist through moral defiance, identity negotiation, compassion, and the reconstruction of selfhood. By situating *The Golden Legend* within critical discourse, postcolonial literary criticism, and theories of power and hegemony, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how literary texts represent the relationship between language, ideology, identity, and resistance.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how power and resistance function in *The Golden Legend* through Foucault's concepts of disciplinary power, discourse, subjectification, and resistance, complemented by Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony. The study specifically analyzes how religious and political discourses shape marginalized identities, how hegemonic ideology legitimizes domination, and how characters negotiate or resist the social structures imposed upon them. In doing so, this research seeks to demonstrate that *The Golden Legend* is not merely a narrative of oppression but a complex literary representation of how power is produced, internalized, contested, and transformed through discourse, culture, and identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Postcolonial Representation, Religious Minority, and National Identity in The Golden Legend

Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend* has attracted scholarly attention because of its intense engagement with religious violence, minority marginalization, gendered vulnerability, and postcolonial identity in contemporary Pakistan. Existing studies generally position the novel as a literary response to the social fractures produced by religious nationalism, sectarian politics, and the unequal distribution of symbolic and institutional power. Ahmad argues that the novel exposes religious intolerance as a structural condition that shapes the experiences of minority communities rather than as an isolated social conflict [13], [14]. In this reading, Christian characters are not simply represented as victims of individual prejudice; they are placed within a wider social order in which law, religion, public opinion, and communal suspicion collectively determine the conditions of belonging. This perspective is important because it shows that marginalization in the novel is produced through institutionalized forms of exclusion, not only through episodic violence.

Qureshi and Jabeen further extend this discussion by examining how power, ideology, and female subjectivity intersect in Aslam's narrative [15], [16]. Their analysis suggests that the novel's female characters experience domination through multiple layers of control, including patriarchal authority, religious morality, public surveillance, and social shame. Such a reading demonstrates that the oppression represented in the novel cannot be reduced to religious identity alone because gender also becomes a crucial site where power is exercised and normalized. This is particularly visible in the way women are expected to remain silent, invisible, obedient, and morally accountable to the expectations of the community. In this regard, the novel dramatizes how postcolonial social order is maintained through both public institutions and private forms of discipline.

Clements provides another significant contribution by examining the fictive portrayal of Pakistani Christians in *The Golden Legend* [18]. Clements argues that Aslam's depiction of

Christian experience complicates simplified narratives of victimhood by presenting Muslim-Christian relations through tension, coexistence, intimacy, and moral ambiguity. This reading is valuable because it prevents the novel from being interpreted merely as a binary conflict between persecutors and victims. Instead, the narrative reveals a complex social field in which religious identity is shaped by fear, proximity, shared vulnerability, and contested belonging. The novel therefore becomes a literary space for examining how religious difference is narrated, politicized, and morally negotiated within a postcolonial nation-state.

More recent linguistic-oriented studies also show that the novel can be examined as a discourse-rich text. Batool, Ajmal, and Masum analyze the representation of hybrid identities in *The Golden Legend* through transitivity analysis and demonstrate how identity construction is shaped through linguistic choices, agency, and representation [21]. Their study is particularly relevant to the present research because it indicates that the novel's treatment of identity is not only thematic but also discursive. Identity is produced through patterns of action, description, attribution, and relational positioning in the narrative. Similarly, Shahzadi et al. analyze the concept of nationalism in *The Golden Legend* and argue that the novel represents nationalism as a contested ideological formation rather than a stable or neutral category [22]. This supports the view that national identity in the novel is constructed through inclusion and exclusion, determining who is recognized as a legitimate subject of the nation and who is positioned as a suspect, marginal, or disposable body.

Taken together, these studies show that *The Golden Legend* has been discussed through the lenses of religious intolerance, minority representation, gendered subjectivity, hybrid identity, and nationalism [13], [14], [15], [16], [18], [21], [22]. However, most of these works tend to emphasize particular dimensions of the novel separately. Studies on minority representation highlight religious exclusion, while studies on gender focus on patriarchal vulnerability, and studies on nationalism examine national belonging. Although these approaches are valuable, they do not fully explain how these forms of domination are connected through broader mechanisms of disciplinary power and cultural hegemony. Therefore, a more integrated approach is needed to explain how religious discourse, nationalist ideology, patriarchal norms, and institutional authority work together to produce marginalized identities and regulate resistance in the novel.

Foucauldian Discourse, Discipline, and Subjectification in Literary Studies

Foucault's theory of power has become one of the most influential frameworks for analyzing how modern societies regulate individuals through discourse, knowledge, and institutional practice. Unlike traditional models of power that understand domination as something possessed by rulers or institutions, Foucault conceptualizes power as relational, diffuse, productive, and embedded in everyday social practices [4], [5], [6]. In *Discipline and Punish*, he explains that modern power no longer depends solely on spectacular punishment but operates through subtle disciplinary mechanisms such as surveillance, examination, normalization, and self-regulation [4]. This theoretical insight is important for literary analysis because novels often dramatize how characters internalize social expectations, regulate their behavior, and become subjects within systems of visibility and judgment.

In *The Golden Legend*, disciplinary power is visible through the ways characters modify their speech, conceal their identity, and monitor their conduct under the pressure of religious authority, social suspicion, and state violence. Shaheen's Foucauldian reading of the novel

emphasizes that surveillance and discipline construct obedient subjects in a society governed by fear and moral policing [17]. This interpretation is useful because it identifies the novel's social environment as a panoptic structure in which individuals are compelled to regulate themselves even when direct coercion is absent. In such a setting, fear becomes internalized, and the subject becomes both the target and the instrument of power. This confirms Foucault's argument that modern power is effective precisely because it does not always need to appear as visible force [4], [6].

Foucault's concept of subjectification also offers a strong basis for analyzing the formation of identity in the novel. Subjectification refers to the process through which individuals are made into subjects by dominant discourses, institutions, and systems of knowledge [5], [6]. The subject is not simply an autonomous individual who exists prior to power; rather, the subject is produced through the very discourses that define morality, identity, truth, belonging, and deviance. In *The Golden Legend*, characters such as Nargis, Helen, and Lily are shaped by religious and political discourses that determine how their identities can be seen, spoken, hidden, or punished. Their lives show how minority identity is not merely a personal category but a social position produced through surveillance, accusation, and ideological classification.

Critical discourse studies further strengthen this Foucauldian approach by explaining how power and ideology are reproduced through language. Van Dijk argues that discourse plays a central role in the reproduction of domination because it shapes knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, and social representations [10], [12]. Fairclough similarly views discourse as social practice, meaning that language does not simply reflect social reality but actively participates in constructing social relations and institutional authority [11]. These insights are highly relevant to *The Golden Legend* because the novel represents religious and political language as instruments that create moral boundaries between "us" and "them." Through sermons, accusations, legal categories, communal rumors, and everyday judgments, language becomes a mechanism that disciplines minority subjects and legitimizes exclusion.

The gendered dimension of disciplinary discourse also requires attention. Lazar argues that feminist critical discourse analysis must examine how gendered power relations are normalized through language and social practice [19]. In *The Golden Legend*, female characters are positioned within a social order that regulates their visibility, speech, movement, emotional expression, and moral legitimacy. Patriarchal power does not operate only through male authority; it is reproduced through communal expectations, religious interpretations, and the internalization of shame. Therefore, the novel demonstrates that subjectification is not gender-neutral. Women's identities are shaped by intersecting discourses of religion, morality, nationalism, and patriarchy. This makes the Foucauldian framework especially productive for examining how power produces gendered and religiously marked subjects in the novel.

Nevertheless, a purely Foucauldian reading may not be sufficient to explain the durability of domination in *The Golden Legend*. Foucault is particularly strong in analyzing micro-practices of surveillance, discipline, discourse, and subject formation [4], [5], [6] but the novel also requires an explanation of how dominant ideologies become socially accepted as moral truth or common sense. This is where Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony becomes essential. While Foucault helps explain how individuals are disciplined, Gramsci helps explain why communities may consent to, reproduce, or defend the ideological systems that marginalize others. Thus, the present study does not abandon Foucauldian analysis but extends it by placing disciplinary power within a broader hegemonic structure.

Cultural Hegemony, Counter-Hegemonic Resistance, and the Research Gap

Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony provides a necessary theoretical extension for understanding the ideological dimension of power in *The Golden Legend*. Gramsci argues that domination is maintained not only through coercion but also through consent, particularly when ruling values are accepted as natural, moral, religious, or common sense [8], [9] . This concept is highly relevant to the novel because Aslam portrays a society in which exclusion and violence are not always presented as arbitrary acts of domination. Instead, they are often justified through religious language, nationalist sentiment, communal morality, and public assumptions about purity, loyalty, and belonging. In this context, ideology becomes powerful because it shapes the moral imagination of society and determines which forms of violence are accepted as legitimate.

The religious and political environment of *The Golden Legend* illustrates how hegemony works through cultural normalization. Religious discourse becomes a hegemonic tool when it defines minority identities as suspicious, impure, or morally inferior. Nationalist ideology becomes hegemonic when it equates belonging with conformity to dominant religious and cultural norms. Patriarchal authority becomes hegemonic when women's silence, modesty, and obedience are represented as natural or virtuous. These processes demonstrate that domination in the novel is not sustained by force alone. It is sustained because dominant values are repeatedly circulated through institutions, communities, and everyday discourse until they appear inevitable. This corresponds to Gramsci's argument that hegemony succeeds when subordinate groups participate in the reproduction of the very beliefs that constrain them [8], [9].

At the same time, the novel also demonstrates that hegemony is never total. Foucault's claim that resistance exists wherever power operates is central to understanding the moral and political significance of the characters' actions [5]. Widder explains that resistance in Foucauldian thought should not be understood as external to power but as a relational practice that emerges within the same field of power [20]. This is evident in *The Golden Legend*, where resistance is rarely revolutionary in the conventional sense. Characters do not always overthrow institutions or openly defeat oppressive systems. Instead, they resist through ethical refusal, compassion, survival, memory, identity reconstruction, and the refusal to internalize imposed definitions of the self. Such acts may appear small, but they challenge the ideological legitimacy of the dominant order.

From a Gramscian perspective, these forms of resistance can be understood as counter-hegemonic practices. Counter-hegemony refers to efforts to challenge dominant meanings and create alternative moral, cultural, and political possibilities [8], [9]. In the novel, counter-hegemonic resistance appears when marginalized characters refuse to accept the dominant society's definition of who they are. It appears when they preserve dignity in the face of humiliation, protect others across religious boundaries, and imagine forms of coexistence beyond sectarian division. Such resistance is significant because it contests not only institutional power but also the symbolic order that makes domination appear legitimate. Therefore, resistance in *The Golden Legend* is both ethical and discursive: it challenges the language, values, and identity categories through which domination is reproduced.

Despite the growing body of scholarship on *The Golden Legend*, a clear research gap remains. Previous studies have productively explored religious intolerance, minority representation, female subjectivity, nationalism, and Foucauldian surveillance [13], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], [21], [22]. However, these studies have not sufficiently integrated Foucault's theory of disciplinary power and subjectification with Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony to explain the

simultaneous operation of coercion and consent in the novel. Existing Foucauldian studies tend to emphasize surveillance, fear, and discipline, while studies on religion, nationalism, or gender often focus on thematic representation rather than the interconnected mechanisms through which ideology becomes internalized and contested. As a result, the relationship between disciplinary power, hegemonic consent, identity formation, and counter-hegemonic resistance remains underexplored.

The present study addresses this gap by developing an integrated Foucauldian-Gramscian reading of *The Golden Legend*. This approach allows the analysis to move beyond a general discussion of oppression and toward a deeper explanation of how power works through discourse, ideology, institution, and subject formation. Foucault provides the conceptual tools to examine surveillance, normalization, disciplinary practice, and subjectification [4], [5], [6], while Gramsci explains how religious and cultural ideologies secure consent and make domination appear natural [8], [9]. By combining these frameworks, the study argues that *The Golden Legend* represents power as a multilayered structure operating through both external coercion and internalized belief. It also argues that resistance in the novel is not merely an act of rebellion but a process of moral defiance, identity reconstruction, and counter-hegemonic meaning-making. In this way, the study contributes to postcolonial literary criticism, critical discourse studies, and the analysis of language, ideology, and identity in literary representation.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative, interpretive, and non-empirical research design to examine the representation of power, resistance, subjectification, and cultural hegemony in Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend* [7]. The study is categorized as qualitative because it focuses on meaning-making, textual interpretation, discourse, and symbolic representation rather than numerical measurement. It is interpretive because the analysis seeks to understand how literary language constructs social realities, identity positions, ideological domination, and forms of resistance within the narrative. It is also non-empirical in the sense that it does not collect field-based data from human participants, surveys, interviews, or observations. Instead, the primary data are derived from a literary text and analyzed through a theoretically guided textual and discourse-oriented approach.

The study was grounded in a deductive analytical logic. The concepts of disciplinary power, surveillance, subjectification, discourse, and resistance were derived from Foucault's theoretical framework [4], [5], [6], while the concepts of cultural hegemony, consent, domination, and counter-hegemonic struggle were derived from Gramsci's theory [8], [9]. These concepts were used as analytical categories to examine how religious, political, patriarchal, and communal structures operate in the novel. The study also drew on critical discourse perspectives, particularly the view that discourse is not merely a linguistic structure but a social practice that reproduces, legitimizes, and challenges power relations [10], [11], [12]. Therefore, the method combined close textual reading, document analysis, thematic coding, and critical discourse interpretation.

Corpus and Data Source

The primary corpus of this study was Nadeem Aslam's novel *The Golden Legend* [7]. The novel was selected purposively because it directly represents religious minority experience, military intimidation, patriarchal social control, religious discourse, nationalist ideology, and moral

resistance in a postcolonial Pakistani context. The selection of the novel was based on three considerations. First, the novel provides a dense representation of institutional and ideological power through religion, state authority, law, public morality, and communal surveillance. Second, it offers complex characterizations of marginalized subjects, particularly Christian minorities and women, whose identities are shaped by fear, concealment, moral judgment, and social exclusion. Third, previous scholarship has identified the novel as an important literary text for discussing religious intolerance, minority representation, gendered subjectivity, hybrid identity, and nationalism [13], [14], [15], [16], [18], [21], [22].

The textual data consisted of narrative passages, character interactions, descriptions of social institutions, representations of religious and political discourse, and moments of resistance that were relevant to the research objectives. The study did not treat the entire novel as undifferentiated textual material. Instead, it focused on passages that explicitly or implicitly represented mechanisms of power, ideological consent, identity formation, marginalization, and resistance. Secondary sources, including theoretical works by Foucault and Gramsci, critical discourse studies, and previous scholarly analyses of *The Golden Legend*, were used to support interpretation and situate the analysis within existing academic debates [4], [5], [6], [8], [9], [10], [11], [12], [13], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], [19], [20], [21], [22].

Analytical Framework and Coding Categories

The analysis was conducted through a theoretically informed coding framework. Since the study used a deductive approach, the initial coding categories were derived from Foucault's and Gramsci's concepts. Foucault's framework was used to identify how power operates through discipline, surveillance, normalization, discourse, subjectification, and resistance [4], [5], [6]. Gramsci's framework was used to identify how domination is maintained through ideology, consent, common sense, cultural normalization, and counter-hegemonic struggle [8], [9]. Critical discourse studies were used to examine how language and representation construct social boundaries, produce identities, and legitimize exclusion [10], [11], [12]. The following coding matrix guided the analysis.

Table 1. Analytical Coding Framework

Analytical focus	Foucauldian indicators	Gramscian indicators	Textual signals examined	Analytical purpose
Institutional power	Discipline, surveillance, punishment, normalization [4], [6]	Coercion, institutional domination, ideological leadership [8], [9]	Military pressure, religious authority, law, public accusation, communal policing	To identify how formal and informal institutions regulate individual and collective behavior
Subjectification	Identity formation, self-regulation, internalized discipline [5], [6]	Consent, internalized common sense, moral conformity [8], [9]	Concealment of identity, fear, silence, shame, self-monitoring	To examine how marginalized characters become subjects within dominant systems of power
Religious discourse	Truth production, moral categorization,	Religious ideology, hegemonic	Sermons, accusations, blasphemy	To analyze how religion functions as a discursive and

Analytical focus	Foucauldian indicators	Gramscian indicators	Textual signals examined	Analytical purpose
	discourse of authority [5], [6]	morality, consent to domination [8], [9]	discourse, purity/impurity distinctions	ideological mechanism of control
Gendered domination	Bodily regulation, moral surveillance, gendered subjectification [4], [5], [19]	Patriarchal hegemony, cultural normalization of female obedience [8], [9]	Female silence, invisibility, modesty, vulnerability, restriction	To explore how women's identities are shaped by patriarchal and religious power
Resistance	Refusal, ethical agency, counter-conduct, resistance within power [5], [20]	Counter-hegemony, alternative meanings, moral opposition [8], [9]	Moral defiance, compassion, memory, refusal, identity reconstruction	To explain how characters challenge domination without necessarily escaping power structures

Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis was conducted in several stages. First, the novel was read repeatedly to obtain a holistic understanding of its plot, characterization, ideological conflicts, and symbolic structure. During this stage, preliminary notes were made on scenes involving religious authority, minority marginalization, gendered vulnerability, military pressure, social fear, and moral resistance. Second, relevant textual passages were identified and organized according to the study's research questions. These passages included narrative descriptions, dialogues, symbolic images, and moments of conflict that represented power, identity, ideology, and resistance.

Third, the selected passages were coded deductively based on the analytical categories presented in Table 1. The coding process followed a thematic orientation because it aimed to identify recurring patterns of meaning across the text [24]. However, the coding was not purely descriptive. Each code was interpreted through Foucauldian, Gramscian, and critical discourse perspectives to examine how textual representation produced meanings about domination, subject formation, ideological consent, and resistance. Fourth, related codes were grouped into broader analytical themes. These themes were then refined by comparing the coded passages with the theoretical framework and the research objectives. The final themes were organized around institutional and social power, internalized fear and subjectification, religious discourse as hegemonic authority, gendered regulation, and resistance through moral defiance and identity reconstruction.

Fifth, the interpretation was developed through close reading and critical discourse analysis. Close reading was used to examine textual details, characterization, narrative voice, symbolic language, and ideological tensions within the novel. Document analysis was used because the study treated the novel as a cultural document that represents social meanings, institutional relations, and ideological formations [23]. Critical discourse analysis was used to interpret how language constructs boundaries between majority and minority, moral and deviant, legitimate and illegitimate, visible and invisible subjects [10], [11], [12]. In this stage, the analysis moved from textual description to theoretical interpretation by explaining how specific narrative moments

demonstrate disciplinary power, hegemonic consent, subjectification, and counter-hegemonic resistance. The analytical process can be summarized as follows.

Table 2. Stages of Data Analysis

Stage	Analytical activity	Purpose
Stage 1	Repeated reading of The Golden Legend	To develop holistic familiarity with the narrative, characters, conflicts, and ideological structure
Stage 2	Identification of relevant textual passages	To select textual evidence related to power, resistance, subjectification, hegemony, religion, gender, and minority experience
Stage 3	Deductive coding using Foucauldian and Gramscian categories	To classify textual evidence according to discipline, surveillance, discourse, consent, hegemony, and resistance
Stage 4	Thematic grouping and refinement	To develop coherent analytical themes aligned with the research questions and objectives
Stage 5	Critical interpretation through close reading and discourse analysis	To explain how the novel represents domination, identity formation, ideological consent, and counter-hegemonic resistance
Stage 6	Cross-checking with theory and prior studies	To strengthen interpretive coherence and situate findings within existing scholarship

Trustworthiness and Analytical Rigor

To strengthen the credibility and rigor of the analysis, several strategies were applied. First, theoretical coherence was maintained by ensuring that each interpretation was directly connected to the selected Foucauldian and Gramscian concepts. The study did not use theory merely as background; instead, the concepts of disciplinary power, subjectification, discourse, hegemony, consent, and resistance functioned as analytical tools throughout the coding and interpretation process [4], [5], [6], [8], [9]. Second, textual grounding was applied by linking each major claim to specific textual evidence from the novel. This ensured that the interpretation remained anchored in the primary corpus rather than relying on unsupported generalization.

Third, analytical consistency was strengthened through repeated reading, coding comparison, and theme refinement. The researcher revisited the selected passages several times to confirm whether the assigned codes were appropriate and whether the emerging themes accurately represented the textual evidence. Fourth, interpretive dependability was supported by maintaining an analytical trail consisting of selected passages, codes, theoretical categories, and thematic interpretations. This process follows the principle that qualitative analysis should demonstrate transparency, coherence, and systematic movement from data to interpretation [25], [26]. Fifth, confirmability was supported by comparing the study's interpretations with previous research on *The Golden Legend*, particularly studies on religious intolerance, female subjectivity, surveillance, minority representation, hybrid identity, and nationalism [13], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], [21], [22]. This comparison helped clarify where the present study confirms existing findings and where it offers a more integrated Foucauldian-Gramscian contribution.

Ethical Considerations and Methodological Boundaries

Because this study was based entirely on a published literary text and secondary scholarly sources, it did not involve human participants, personal data, interviews, surveys, or field observation. Therefore, formal participant consent was not required. Nevertheless, the study followed academic ethical standards by properly acknowledging all primary and secondary sources, avoiding excessive quotation, and using textual evidence only for analytical purposes. The interpretation was conducted with attention to cultural sensitivity because the novel deals with religion, minority communities, gender, and postcolonial violence. The analysis does not aim to generalize about all Pakistani society, Muslim communities, Christian minorities, or postcolonial contexts. Instead, it examines how these issues are represented within the specific literary world of *The Golden Legend*.

The study also has methodological boundaries. Since it analyzes a single novel, the findings are limited to the textual, ideological, and representational dynamics of *The Golden Legend*. The study does not claim empirical generalizability. Its contribution lies in theoretical and interpretive depth rather than statistical representation. In addition, because the study is guided by Foucault's and Gramsci's frameworks, other possible readings, such as trauma theory, affect theory, feminist theology, or comparative postcolonial analysis, are not the primary focus. These boundaries do not weaken the study; rather, they clarify its analytical scope and provide directions for future research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Power and Marginalization through Institutional and Social Structures

The analysis shows that *The Golden Legend* represents power as a multilayered structure that operates through religious institutions, military authority, patriarchal norms, legal discourse, and communal surveillance. Power in the novel is not presented only as direct physical violence. It is also represented as a network of social expectations, public suspicion, ideological pressure, and moral regulation that determines how individuals and communities are positioned within society. This finding corresponds to the Foucauldian view that power is exercised through institutions, discourses, and everyday practices rather than being possessed only by a single sovereign authority [4], [5], [6]. In the novel, marginalized characters experience domination not only because of who they are but also because of how dominant institutions define, categorize, and regulate their identities.

Religious minorities, particularly Christian characters, are positioned within a social structure that constantly marks them as vulnerable, suspicious, and socially inferior. Their minority status is not merely a demographic condition but a discursively produced identity shaped through religious language, legal fear, public accusation, and communal judgment. The novel presents religious authority as a key mechanism through which social belonging is regulated. Religious discourse establishes boundaries between purity and impurity, loyalty and betrayal, faith and deviance, and majority and minority. These boundaries function as disciplinary categories because they make minority characters aware that their lives, speech, movements, and relationships are constantly exposed to judgment. This demonstrates that marginalization in the novel is sustained not only by explicit violence but also by the symbolic and institutional production of difference.

The role of state and military power further intensifies this condition. Military authority in the novel represents a form of institutional pressure that can intrude into private life, manipulate public truth, and enforce obedience through fear. The presence of military power is not limited to

formal political control; it also produces psychological pressure by making individuals feel that resistance may lead to punishment, exposure, or social destruction. This reflects Foucault's idea that modern power works by shaping the field of possible actions available to individuals [4], [6]. Characters in the novel are therefore forced to calculate their words, conceal their histories, and manage their public identity in order to survive. Power becomes effective because individuals begin to anticipate its consequences even before direct punishment occurs.

Patriarchal structures also function as important mechanisms of marginalization. Female characters are subjected to expectations of modesty, silence, dependence, and social invisibility. These gendered expectations are not separated from religious and political power; rather, they intersect with them. Women's bodies, voices, emotions, and public presence become sites of regulation. The novel shows that patriarchal control is not only exercised by male individuals but also reproduced by social norms, moral discourse, and community expectations. This finding aligns with the view that gendered power is often normalized through discourse and social practice [19]. In this context, female marginalization is not accidental but structurally embedded in the social world represented by the novel.

The finding also reveals that marginalization is sustained through cultural hegemony. Gramsci's concept of hegemony explains how domination becomes stable when the values of dominant groups are accepted as natural, moral, or inevitable [8], [9]. In *The Golden Legend*, violence against minorities and control over women are often represented as socially justified because they are embedded in religious, nationalist, and patriarchal narratives. The dominant order does not rely solely on coercion; it also secures compliance by making social hierarchy appear normal. Minority characters are pressured not only by external force but also by hegemonic common sense that frames their fear, silence, and concealment as necessary strategies for survival.

Thus, the first finding indicates that power and marginalization in *The Golden Legend* operate through interconnected institutional and social structures. Religious authority, military pressure, patriarchal regulation, communal suspicion, and legal discourse collectively create a social field in which marginalized identities are produced, disciplined, and controlled. The novel therefore represents power as both coercive and ideological: coercive because it threatens punishment and violence, and ideological because it shapes the meanings through which domination becomes acceptable.

Internalization of Fear and Self-Regulation among Minority Groups

The second finding shows that fear in *The Golden Legend* is not only an emotional response to danger but also a disciplinary mechanism that produces self-regulation. Minority characters internalize the possibility of accusation, exposure, rejection, and violence. As a result, they learn to regulate their speech, conceal their identity, limit their visibility, and avoid actions that may attract public suspicion. This reflects Foucault's idea of disciplinary power, in which individuals become self-monitoring subjects because they are placed within systems of surveillance and normalization [4], [6]. In the novel, surveillance does not always require a visible observer. The possibility of being watched, judged, reported, or punished is sufficient to shape conduct.

Nargis's concealed identity illustrates this process clearly. Her life is shaped by the necessity of hiding her Christian past and maintaining a socially acceptable identity. This concealment is not simply a personal secret; it is a survival strategy produced by a hostile social environment. The act of concealment reveals that identity in the novel is not freely expressed but carefully managed under

conditions of danger. Nargis's fear demonstrates how disciplinary power enters the private self and reorganizes memory, speech, emotion, and self-presentation. She becomes a subject who must constantly negotiate between inner truth and public safety. This condition reflects Foucault's concept of subjectification, in which individuals are formed through the power relations that define their social existence [5], [6].

The same mechanism is visible in the experiences of other minority characters. Christian identity in the novel is represented as something that must be hidden, softened, or strategically performed in order to avoid social punishment. Minority characters do not only fear state or religious authority; they also fear neighbors, public opinion, rumors, and collective anger. The community itself becomes a disciplinary space. This indicates that the novel represents surveillance as socially distributed. Power is not located only in formal institutions but is reproduced through everyday interactions and communal expectations. As a result, minority characters internalize the gaze of the dominant community and regulate themselves accordingly.

This internalization of fear also shows how hegemony works at the level of subjectivity. Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony helps explain why marginalized characters may participate in their own concealment or silence [8], [9]. Their silence does not mean acceptance in a simple sense. Rather, it shows how hegemonic conditions make resistance risky and survival dependent on partial compliance. Fear becomes hegemonic when marginalized subjects come to believe that visibility itself is dangerous. The dominant order succeeds not only because it has the capacity to punish but because it produces a social environment in which the oppressed must discipline themselves to remain alive.

The finding further demonstrates that self-regulation is not identical to passivity. Silence, concealment, and controlled speech may appear as signs of submission, but in the novel they also function as survival practices. Minority characters use self-regulation to navigate an unequal social order. They do not always confront power openly because open confrontation may lead to violence. Instead, they negotiate danger through cautious speech, hidden memory, and strategic invisibility. This creates a complex representation of agency. The characters are constrained by power, but they are not entirely without agency. Their self-regulation shows both the success of domination and the fragile strategies through which marginalized subjects continue to survive.

Therefore, the second finding reveals that *The Golden Legend* portrays fear as a deeply internalized form of discipline. Fear shapes how characters speak, remember, move, believe, and relate to others. It transforms external domination into self-regulation and turns social surveillance into an internal condition of subjectivity. This finding strengthens the argument that power in the novel operates not only through visible oppression but also through psychological discipline, ideological control, and the internal management of identity.

Resistance through Moral Defiance and Identity Reconstruction

The third finding indicates that resistance in *The Golden Legend* emerges from within the same structures of power that produce marginalization. Resistance is not represented primarily as organized revolution or direct political confrontation. Instead, it appears through moral defiance, ethical refusal, compassion, memory, identity reconstruction, and the preservation of dignity. This finding is consistent with Foucault's view that resistance is not external to power but exists wherever power operates [5], [20]. In the novel, characters resist not by escaping power completely but by refusing to let dominant institutions fully define their moral worth, identity, and humanity.

Nargis's resistance is particularly significant because it develops from concealment and fear into moral agency. Her life is shaped by secrecy, but the novel does not reduce her to victimhood. She resists by refusing to surrender her ethical judgment to the institutions that seek to control her. Her resistance lies in her ability to preserve memory, recognize injustice, and make moral choices despite social pressure. This form of resistance is subtle but powerful because it challenges the assumption that marginalized subjects are completely determined by domination. Through Nargis, the novel shows that subjectivity is not only produced by power but can also become a site of ethical struggle.

Helen's resistance is also important because it is expressed through identity reconstruction and imaginative possibility. As a Christian woman, she is subjected to intersecting forms of religious and gendered vulnerability. However, the novel presents her not only as an object of oppression but also as a figure who carries alternative possibilities of belonging and coexistence. Her resistance is connected to the refusal to accept imposed boundaries between communities, religions, and identities. This form of resistance can be understood as counter-hegemonic because it challenges the dominant meanings that separate people into fixed categories of purity, danger, loyalty, and exclusion [8], [9].

Resistance in the novel is also expressed through acts of compassion that cross religious and social boundaries. Compassion becomes politically meaningful because it disrupts the hegemonic logic of separation. In a society where dominant discourse constructs minorities as suspicious and difference as danger, acts of care become forms of resistance. They create alternative ethical relations that challenge the social grammar of exclusion. This demonstrates that resistance in the novel is not always loud or confrontational. It may appear through the preservation of humanity in a social order that attempts to dehumanize marginalized subjects.

The analysis also shows that resistance involves reclaiming identity from dominant definitions. Minority characters are repeatedly positioned by society as inferior, dangerous, or disposable. However, the novel allows them to reconstruct their identities through memory, moral decision, and relational solidarity. Identity reconstruction becomes an act of resistance because it contests the hegemonic categories imposed by religious and political discourse. In Foucauldian terms, this indicates that subjectification is never complete; the subject formed by power can also reinterpret, negotiate, and challenge the conditions of that formation [5], [6]. In Gramscian terms, such acts represent counter-hegemonic meaning-making because they oppose dominant common sense and open space for alternative values [8], [9].

Thus, the third finding demonstrates that resistance in *The Golden Legend* is best understood as moral, relational, and discursive. It does not always dismantle oppressive structures, but it interrupts their totalizing claims. The characters' acts of defiance, compassion, memory, and identity reconstruction show that domination is never absolute. Power may discipline bodies and regulate speech, but it cannot fully erase ethical agency or the desire for dignity. The novel therefore represents resistance as a slow and fragile process through which marginalized characters reclaim selfhood within oppressive conditions.

Discursive Construction of Identity, Language, and Ideological Belonging

The fourth finding reveals that *The Golden Legend* constructs power not only through institutions and events but also through language. The novel represents discourse as a central mechanism through which identity, belonging, exclusion, and resistance are produced. Religious terms, legal

categories, accusations, public rumors, communal labels, and moral judgments function as linguistic tools that classify individuals and determine their social legitimacy. This finding strengthens the discourse-oriented dimension of the analysis because it shows that power in the novel is not only represented thematically but also organized through language and symbolic communication.

The novel repeatedly shows that identity is shaped by how people are named, described, accused, and remembered. Minority characters are not marginalized only because of their religious identity; they are marginalized because dominant discourse attaches meanings of suspicion, impurity, disloyalty, and danger to that identity. Such discursive labeling produces social consequences. Once a person or group is named as deviant or threatening, exclusion becomes easier to justify. This process reflects critical discourse perspectives which argue that discourse contributes to the reproduction of domination by shaping knowledge, ideology, and social representation [10], [11], [12]. In the world of the novel, language becomes a mechanism through which violence is prepared before it is enacted.

Religious discourse is particularly powerful because it claims moral authority. In the novel, religious language does not merely express belief; it defines truth, regulates behavior, and authorizes judgment. It determines who belongs to the moral community and who can be excluded from it. The discursive force of religion is visible in the way accusations and moral labels circulate through society. These labels do not remain abstract. They affect the lives of characters by shaping public opinion, intensifying fear, and legitimizing punishment. This demonstrates that religious discourse functions as a hegemonic instrument because it transforms social hierarchy into moral necessity [8], [9].

Legal and nationalist discourses also contribute to the construction of ideological belonging. The novel presents belonging as something regulated by dominant definitions of nation, faith, loyalty, and citizenship. Those who do not fit these definitions are placed outside the imagined moral community. This supports the view that nationalism in *The Golden Legend* is not a neutral category but a contested ideological formation [22]. The nation is represented as a discursive space where some identities are recognized and others are made vulnerable. Through this process, language produces the boundary between legitimate citizens and marginalized subjects.

The finding also shows that silence is an important part of the novel's discourse of power. Silence is not merely absence of speech; it is produced by fear, surveillance, and hegemonic pressure. Characters remain silent because speaking may expose them to danger. However, silence also carries meaning. It reveals the unequal distribution of voice in society and shows how marginalized subjects are forced to negotiate between expression and survival. At the same time, the novel transforms silence into a site of resistance when characters preserve hidden truths, memories, and identities despite pressure to erase them. Thus, silence functions both as a symptom of domination and as a fragile form of agency.

This discursive finding is important because it connects the novel's literary representation to broader issues of language, ideology, and identity. The analysis shows that *The Golden Legend* does not simply narrate violence; it reveals how violence becomes possible through language that classifies, excludes, and dehumanizes. It also shows how resistance begins when characters refuse to accept the identities imposed upon them by dominant discourse. Therefore, the novel's treatment of language is central to its representation of power. Identity is constructed through discourse, domination is legitimized through discourse, and resistance emerges through the reworking of

discourse. This finding confirms that the novel can be read as a complex literary representation of how language mediates power, belonging, and social struggle.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that *The Golden Legend* represents power as a multilayered and relational phenomenon operating through institutional authority, religious discourse, patriarchal regulation, communal surveillance, and internalized fear. This finding extends Foucault's argument that power is not merely possessed by sovereign institutions but is exercised through social relations, discursive formations, everyday practices, and mechanisms of normalization [4], [5], [6]. In the novel, domination is not confined to visible acts of violence; it is also embedded in the ways characters learn to speak cautiously, hide their identities, control their emotions, and regulate their social visibility. This supports Shaheen's Foucauldian reading of Aslam's fiction, which emphasizes surveillance and discipline as mechanisms that produce obedient subjects [17]. However, the present study goes further by showing that surveillance in the novel is not only institutional but also communal, moral, linguistic, and psychological. The characters do not merely fear the state, military, or religious authorities; they also fear neighbors, rumors, social judgment, and the possibility that their identity may become publicly exposed. Therefore, the novel represents power as a social atmosphere that disciplines individuals before direct punishment occurs.

The finding on institutional and social marginalization corresponds with previous studies that identify *The Golden Legend* as a critique of religious intolerance and minority exclusion. Ahmad argues that the novel exposes the structural vulnerability of religious minorities in Pakistan and shows how intolerance is normalized through social and political conditions [13], [14]. Similarly, Clements notes that Aslam's portrayal of Pakistani Christians complicates simple narratives of victimhood by presenting minority experience through tension, coexistence, intimacy, and contested belonging [18]. The present study confirms these arguments but adds that minority marginalization in the novel is not only a thematic concern; it is produced through interconnected mechanisms of disciplinary and hegemonic power. Religious authority, legal fear, nationalist ideology, patriarchal expectation, and public suspicion work together to create a social field in which minority characters are made visible as vulnerable subjects while simultaneously being forced into silence and concealment. This means that marginalization is both externally imposed and internally managed.

The representation of marginality in the novel also resonates with postcolonial theories of ambivalent identity and colonial inheritance. Bhabha's concept of ambivalence is useful here because identities represented in postcolonial texts are rarely stable, pure, or uncontested; rather, they are produced within unequal relations of visibility, displacement, imitation, and negotiation [27]. In *The Golden Legend*, Christian minority identity is constructed within a social order that demands concealment and conformity while simultaneously marking difference as dangerous. This makes the characters' identities ambivalent: they must belong and not belong at the same time. The present finding therefore extends previous readings of the novel by showing that minority identity is not merely represented as oppressed but as discursively negotiated within a hostile field of religious nationalism, communal suspicion, and postcolonial anxiety.

The analysis of internalized fear and self-regulation strengthens this argument. In the novel, fear is not simply a reaction to danger but a mechanism of subject formation. Minority characters

internalize the possibility of accusation, punishment, exclusion, and violence until self-monitoring becomes part of their everyday existence. This finding supports Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, especially the idea that modern power becomes effective when individuals regulate themselves under conditions of surveillance and normalization [4], [6]. It also resonates with van Dijk's view that domination is reproduced through discourse when social representations, attitudes, and ideologies shape how groups understand themselves and others [10], [12]. In *The Golden Legend*, Christian identity is not only socially marginalized but discursively constructed as risky, suspicious, or morally unstable. As a result, minority characters manage their identity through silence, concealment, and strategic invisibility. This suggests that domination becomes most effective when external pressure is transformed into internal discipline.

The study also confirms Gramsci's argument that domination is sustained not only through coercion but also through consent and cultural normalization [8], [9]. In the novel, dominant religious and patriarchal values are repeatedly presented as moral truth, communal obligation, or national loyalty. This process makes hierarchy appear natural and renders exclusion socially acceptable. The present findings therefore complement earlier studies by Qureshi and Jabeen, who show that female subjectivity in *The Golden Legend* is shaped by ideological and patriarchal power [15], [16]. However, the present study expands their argument by demonstrating that gendered domination is inseparable from religious hegemony, nationalist discourse, and communal surveillance. Women in the novel are not only controlled by patriarchal expectations but also by the broader ideological order that regulates what is considered moral, visible, respectable, or dangerous. This confirms Lazar's argument that gendered power is often normalized through discourse and social practice [19].

The gendered dimension of the findings can also be strengthened through intersectional theory. Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality explains how overlapping structures of gender, race, class, and identity can produce distinctive forms of vulnerability that cannot be understood through a single category of oppression [28]. Mohanty similarly warns against universalizing women's experiences without considering colonial history, culture, religion, and power relations [29]. Yuval-Davis further emphasizes that intersectionality requires attention to multiple social divisions and the different levels at which they operate, including institutional, intersubjective, and representational levels [30]. Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall argue that intersectionality is not merely about overlapping identities but about analyzing how power operates across structures, categories, and institutional arrangements [31]. Connell and Messerschmidt's concept of hegemonic masculinity is also relevant because it explains how masculine authority becomes normalized through cultural practices, social institutions, and gender hierarchy [32]. These perspectives support the present study's claim that female characters in *The Golden Legend* are not oppressed only because they are women, nor only because of religious identity. Their vulnerability emerges from the intersection of gender, religion, minority status, national belonging, patriarchal morality, and communal surveillance.

The finding on resistance indicates that Aslam's novel does not represent marginalized characters merely as passive victims. Resistance appears through moral defiance, ethical refusal, compassion, hidden memory, identity reconstruction, and the preservation of dignity. This supports Foucault's claim that resistance exists wherever power operates [5], while also aligning with Widder's argument that resistance in Foucauldian thought emerges within the field of power rather than outside it [20]. The resistance represented in the novel is not always revolutionary or

institutionally organized. Instead, it is gradual, relational, and ethical. Characters resist by refusing to accept the moral categories imposed upon them, by protecting others across religious boundaries, and by preserving alternative visions of coexistence. This finding also resonates with Gramsci's notion of counter-hegemony because these acts challenge dominant meanings and create alternative moral possibilities within an oppressive social order [8], [9].

The discursive construction of identity is one of the most important findings of this study. The novel shows that power operates through language, naming, accusation, silence, and symbolic classification. Religious and political discourses determine who is recognized as pure or impure, loyal or disloyal, legitimate or illegitimate, visible or disposable. This finding is consistent with Fairclough's argument that discourse functions as social practice and participates in constructing social relations, institutional authority, and ideological meanings [11]. It also supports Batool, Ajmal, and Masum's linguistic analysis of hybrid identities in *The Golden Legend*, which shows that identity construction in the novel is shaped through linguistic representation and agency [21]. The present study extends this linguistic concern by arguing that discourse in the novel does not merely represent identity; it regulates identity. The words used to name, accuse, classify, or silence characters become instruments through which social hierarchy is reproduced.

This discursive interpretation is also strengthened by broader studies in critical discourse analysis. Baker et al. demonstrate that critical discourse analysis can reveal how marginalized groups are represented, categorized, and ideologically positioned in public discourse [33]. KhosraviNik similarly shows that discourse can construct minority and migrant groups through recurring patterns of othering, negative predication, and ideological boundary-making [34]. Although these studies examine media discourse rather than literary fiction, their insights are relevant because *The Golden Legend* also dramatizes how dominant discourse produces social boundaries between majority and minority, believer and outsider, moral subject and deviant subject. The novel's literary discourse therefore functions as a critical site for examining how language participates in exclusion, classification, and the legitimization of unequal power relations.

The finding also relates to Shahzadi et al.'s discussion of nationalism in *The Golden Legend*, which argues that the novel represents nationalism as a contested ideological formation [22]. The present study supports this view but adds that nationalism in the novel functions together with religious and legal discourse to define ideological belonging. Those who do not fit dominant definitions of faith, loyalty, and cultural conformity are positioned as marginal or threatening. In this context, the nation is not represented as an inclusive political community but as a discursive field where legitimacy is unevenly distributed. This strengthens the argument that power in the novel operates through symbolic boundaries as much as through physical force. Language creates the conditions under which exclusion becomes thinkable, acceptable, and eventually actionable.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrated Foucauldian-Gramscian reading of *The Golden Legend*. Previous studies have examined religious intolerance, minority representation, gendered subjectivity, Foucauldian surveillance, hybrid identity, and nationalism in the novel [13], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], [21], [22]. However, these studies generally treat these dimensions separately. The present study offers a more comprehensive framework by showing how disciplinary power and cultural hegemony operate together. Foucault explains how characters are disciplined through surveillance, normalization, discourse, and subjectification [4], [5], [6], while Gramsci explains how dominant religious, patriarchal, and nationalist ideologies become accepted as common sense [8], [9]. By bringing these frameworks together, this study shows that power in *The*

Golden Legend is simultaneously coercive and consensual, institutional and intimate, external and internal, linguistic and ideological.

Another contribution of this study is its emphasis on the relationship between language, identity, and power. Rather than treating *The Golden Legend* only as a postcolonial narrative of violence, this study reads the novel as a literary representation of discursive power. The analysis shows that religious discourse, legal language, nationalist rhetoric, communal accusation, and silence are central to the production of marginalized identities. This contributes to critical discourse-oriented literary studies by demonstrating how literary texts can reveal the social work performed by language. In the novel, language does not merely describe oppression; it produces the categories through which oppression is justified. At the same time, resistance also emerges through discourse when characters refuse imposed identities, preserve alternative memories, and create ethical meanings beyond dominant ideology.

The theoretical implication of this study is that the combination of Foucault and Gramsci provides a more adequate model for analyzing postcolonial literary representations of power. Foucault is useful for examining micro-practices of discipline, surveillance, subjectification, and resistance, while Gramsci is useful for explaining how domination becomes culturally accepted through ideology, consent, and common sense [4], [5], [6], [8], [9]. The integration of these perspectives allows the study to avoid reducing oppression either to external coercion or to internal belief alone. Instead, it demonstrates that domination is most effective when coercion and consent reinforce each other. This theoretical model can be applied to other postcolonial literary texts that represent the intersection of religion, nationalism, gender, minority identity, and institutional control.

The practical and social implication of the study is that literary analysis can contribute to a deeper understanding of how exclusion is normalized in society. *The Golden Legend* demonstrates that marginalization often begins before physical violence occurs. It begins through language that marks certain groups as suspicious, impure, immoral, or outside the boundaries of belonging. By exposing this process, the study encourages greater critical awareness of how discourse can legitimize social hierarchy and how silence can be produced by fear rather than consent. The study also highlights the importance of ethical resistance, especially forms of resistance that preserve dignity, compassion, and alternative possibilities of coexistence in oppressive conditions.

Overall, the discussion confirms that *The Golden Legend* offers a complex representation of power, resistance, and cultural hegemony. The novel demonstrates that domination operates through institutions, discourse, fear, ideology, and self-regulation, while resistance emerges through moral agency, identity reconstruction, and counter-hegemonic meaning-making. The study contributes to existing scholarship by showing that the novel's treatment of religious minority experience, gendered vulnerability, and postcolonial belonging is best understood through the combined operation of disciplinary power and cultural hegemony. In doing so, the study strengthens the argument that literary texts are important sites for examining how language, ideology, and identity shape social realities.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend* represents power as a complex, multilayered, and discursively mediated force that operates through religious authority, military pressure, patriarchal norms, communal surveillance, and ideological consent. By integrating

Foucault's concepts of disciplinary power, subjectification, discourse, and resistance with Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, the analysis demonstrates that domination in the novel is sustained not only through coercion and visible violence but also through normalized beliefs, moral classification, internalized fear, and the regulation of identity. The findings show that marginalized characters, particularly religious minorities and women, are shaped by intersecting structures of power that force them into silence, concealment, and self-regulation; however, the novel also reveals that power is never absolute. Resistance emerges through moral defiance, ethical refusal, compassion, memory, and identity reconstruction, indicating that marginalized subjects can challenge hegemonic meanings even within oppressive conditions. The study's main contribution lies in showing that *The Golden Legend* is not merely a postcolonial narrative of violence and minority suffering, but a literary representation of how language, ideology, and identity become central sites where power is produced, internalized, contested, and transformed.

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the analysis is limited to a single literary text, Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend*, which means that the findings cannot be generalized to all postcolonial novels, Pakistani literary works, or representations of religious minorities and gendered marginalization in broader social contexts. Second, the study employs a qualitative and interpretive textual approach, so the findings depend on theoretically guided close reading rather than empirical data, reader-response evidence, or comparative textual analysis. Third, the analytical scope is deliberately framed through Foucault's concepts of disciplinary power, subjectification, discourse, and resistance, together with Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony; therefore, other possible perspectives, such as trauma theory, affect theory, feminist theology, decolonial theory, or comparative minority studies, are not fully explored. Despite these limitations, the study offers a focused and coherent interpretation of how power, ideology, language, and identity operate in the novel, while also opening possibilities for future research involving comparative literary texts, broader postcolonial contexts, or interdisciplinary approaches to discourse, religion, gender, and resistance.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Corresponding Author

Anam Javed – Department of English, Mazoon College (Oman);
orcid.org/0009-0006-9725-5481
Email: anam.javed@mazcol.edu.om

Authors

Anam Javed – Department of English, Mazoon College (Oman);
orcid.org/0009-0006-9725-5481
Daryoosh Hayati – Department of English, Mazoon College (Oman);
orcid.org/0000-0002-6338-2443

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

A.J. conceptualized the study, designed the research framework, and conducted the primary textual analysis. A.J. also developed the theoretical approach and interpreted the findings through Foucauldian and Gramscian perspectives. D.H. contributed to the refinement of the literature review, assisted in data interpretation, and supported the organization and structuring of the manuscript. Both authors were involved in drafting, revising, and approving the final version of the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DECLARATION OF USE OF AI IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

The authors utilized ChatGPT for sentence rephrasing. The content was carefully reviewed and edited by the authors, who take full responsibility for the publication's content.

REFERENCES

[1] B. Russell, *Power: A New Social Analysis*. London, U.K.: Allen & Unwin, 1938. Online Available: https://archive.org/details/poweranewsociala022256mbp

[2] R. Bierstedt, "An analysis of social power," *American Sociological Review*, vol. 15, no. 6, pp. 730–738, Dec. 1950. https://doi.org/10.2307/2086605

[3] J. C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven, CT, USA: Yale University Press, 1985. Online Available: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1nq836

[4] M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York, NY, USA: Pantheon Books, 1977. Online Available: https://archive.org/details/disciplinepunish0000fouc

[5] M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*. New York, NY, USA: Pantheon Books, 1978. Online Available: https://books.google.com/books/about/The_History_of_Sexuality.html?id=0Mbc5eMjLpoC

[6] M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*. New York, NY, USA: Pantheon Books, 1980. Online Available: https://books.google.com/books/about/Power_Knowledge.html?id=Aqf309sk_EsC

[7] N. Aslam, *The Golden Legend*. London, U.K.: Faber & Faber, 2017. Online Available: https://archive.org/details/goldenlegend0000asla_f1f1

[8] A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith, Eds. and Trans. New York, NY, USA: International Publishers, 1971. Online Available: https://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/prison_notebooks/selections.htm

[9] C. Boggs, *Gramsci's Marxism*. London, U.K.: Pluto Press, 1976. Online Available: https://archive.org/details/gramscismarxism0000bogg

[10] T. A. van Dijk, "Principles of critical discourse analysis," *Discourse & Society*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 249–283, Apr. 1993. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006

[11] N. Fairclough, "Critical discourse analysis and the marketization of public discourse: The universities," *Discourse & Society*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 133–168, Apr. 1993. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002002

[12] T. A. van Dijk, "Discourse and manipulation," *Discourse & Society*, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 359–383, May 2006. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926506060250

[13] S. Ahmad, "Religious intolerance and minority representation in Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend*," *Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 45–58, 2019.
[14] A. Ahmad, "The politics of religious intolerance in Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend*," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 55, no. 4, pp. 489–503, 2019. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2019.1609057
[15] M. Qureshi and F. Jabeen, "Power, ideology, and marginalization in contemporary Pakistani fiction," *Pakistan Journal of Literary Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 77–92, 2020.
[16] M. N. Qureshi and S. Jabeen, "The poetics of resistance: Religious power and female subjectivity in Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend*," *International Journal of English Linguistics*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 220–230, 2020. https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v10n4p220
[17] B. Zahoor, M. Ilyas, and M. Ajmal, "A Foucauldian discourse analysis of Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend*," *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 241–251, Oct.–Dec. 2023. https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2023(7-IV)20
[18] M. Clements, "Beyond the 'recruitable' narrative? The fictive portrayal of Pakistani Christians in Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend*," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 58, no. 6, pp. 854–868, Sep. 2022. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2022.2117564
[19] M. M. Lazar, "Feminist critical discourse analysis: Articulating a feminist discourse praxis," *Critical Discourse Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 141–164, Jul. 2007. https://doi.org/10.1080/17405900701464816
[20] N. Widder, "Foucault and the art of resistance," *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 411–432, Jul. 2004. https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453704044023
[21] M. Batool, M. Ajmal, and R. Masum, "Representation of hybrid identities in Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend*: A transitivity analysis," *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 23–38, 2022. https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2022(6-II)03
[22] S. Shahzadi, M. Hanif, A. Ahmad, H. Ali, and M. Kousar, "Concept of nationalism employed in *The Golden Legend* by Nadeem Aslam," *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 1609–1615, Jun. 2021. https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2021.947
[23] G. A. Bowen, "Document analysis as a qualitative research method," *Qualitative Research Journal*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 27–40, Aug. 2009. https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027
[24] V. Braun and V. Clarke, "Using thematic analysis in psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 77–101, Jan. 2006. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
[25] L. S. Nowell, J. M. Norris, D. E. White, and N. J. Moules, "Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 1–13, Oct. 2017. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847
[26] S. Elo, M. Kääriäinen, O. Kanste, T. Pölkki, K. Utriainen, and H. Kyngäs, "Qualitative content analysis: A focus on trustworthiness," *SAGE Open*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 1–10, Jan.–Mar. 2014. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014522633
[27] H. K. Bhabha, "Of mimicry and man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse," *October*, vol. 28, pp. 125–133, Spring 1984. https://doi.org/10.2307/778467
[28] K. W. Crenshaw, "Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color," *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no. 6, pp. 1241–1299, Jul. 1991. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039
[29] C. T. Mohanty, "Under Western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses," *Feminist Review*, no. 30, pp. 61–88, Autumn 1988. https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.1988.42
[30] N. Yuval-Davis, "Intersectionality and feminist politics," *European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 193–209, Aug. 2006. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506806065752
[31] S. Cho, K. W. Crenshaw, and L. McCall, "Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 38, no. 4, pp. 785–810, Jun. 2013. https://doi.org/10.1086/669608

[32] R. W. Connell and J. W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept," *Gender & Society*, vol. 19, no. 6, pp. 829–859, Dec. 2005. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639
[33] P. Baker, C. Gabrielatos, M. KhosraviNik, M. Krzyżanowski, T. McEnery, and R. Wodak, "A useful methodological synergy? Combining critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics to examine discourses of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK press," *Discourse & Society*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 273–306, May 2008. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926508088962
[34] M. KhosraviNik, "The representation of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants in British newspapers during the Balkan conflict (1999) and the British general election (2005)," *Discourse & Society*, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 477–498, Jul. 2009. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926509104024