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Representation of Patriarchal Consciousness in Nadia Hashimi’s novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*

Abstract

The research intends to study patriarchal consciousness in Afghan patriarchal society in Nadia Hashimi’s novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* under the perspective of patriarchy and feminist consciousness. The study highlights how Afghan women are subordinated, marginalized and exploited in the name of customs and traditions. They are deprived of basic human rights and confined in the four walls of the house. The research highlights gender discrimination which is strictly observed in the form of *bacha posh* tradition and the feelings of humiliation and remorse on the birth of daughters in the selected text. The pathetic condition ultimately leads women to the consciousness of their rights. They challenge the status quo and break their shells in order to thwart patriarchy. In addition to it, the study depicts private and public patriarchy in Afghan society i.e. women are suppressed and exploited not only in their houses but also at the institutional level. Hashimi’s works are part of academic curriculum in the world so the other researchers will be familiar with the culture of war-torn country Afghanistan specifically the *bacha posh* tradition. Furthermore, the research shows that Afghan women are well familiar with their rights and not passive like other South Asian countries. They are in constant struggle to change their *naseeb* (destiny). The current research focuses women and patriarchy with the insight of Gerda Lerner’s two works *The Creation of Patriarchy* (1986) and *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness* (1993) as a theoretical framework.

Keywords: Patriarchy, consciousness, bacha posh, subordination, gender discrimination

Background of the Study

“There is some kiss we want
with our whole lives,
the touch of Spirit on the body.
Seawater begs the pearl
to break its shell” (qtd. in Hashimi).

The title of the novel has been selected by Hashmi from 13th century poet Jalaluddin Rumi’s poem “Some Kiss We Want”. It has symbolic significance. It clearly connotes the theme of the story. The word pearl in the title of the novel symbolizes Rahima, the protagonist of the novel who breaks her shell and rebels the tyrannical patriarchal Afghan culture. She follows the example set by her grand-grand-mother Shekiba and tries to escape her *naseeb* (destiny). She too is determined to challenge the status quo and tries to change her *naseeb* in order to improve her future.

Kamla Bhasin defines patriarchy, “The word ‘patriarchy’ literally means the rule of the father or the ‘*patriarch*’, and originally it was used to describe a specific type of ‘male-dominated family’, “Patriarchy is a system in which women experience discrimination, subordination, violence, exploitation and oppression by men”. To be more general it indicates male domination, power relation on the basis of which men dominate women and to formulate a system in which women are kept subservient to men (Bhasin).

Walby defines “patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (Walby). She clarifies this concept of ‘patriarchy’ as a system which helps us to reject the conception of biological determinism or “the notion that every individual man is always in a dominant position and every woman in a subordinate one” (qtd.in Sultana 2).

Patriarchy refers to phallogocentric hegemony in both private and public arenas. Feminists mostly use the term ‘patriarchy’ to explain the power relationship between women and men. Resultantly, all the authority and the power within family, society and state remain in the hands of men. Patriarchy is the major factor making women devoid of their legal rights and opportunities. Patriarchal values hamper women mobility and restrict their freedom. The term ‘patriarchy’ signifies the secondary position of women, their limited access to decision making process and material resources. The feelings of discrimination, subalternity, powerlessness and experience of limited self-confidence

and self-esteem collectively contribute to the suppression and subservience of women. Contemporary feminist theorist Simon De Beauvoir says that men fundamentally regard women different from men and resultantly women are given the status of the second and lower sex and in this way have a subordinate status in society. Kate Millet in her theory of subordination of women says that women are inferior sex under patriarchal hegemony. (Qtd.in Sultana 3).

The concept consciousness means awareness and it is linked to "feminist consciousness". The word has been derived from and parallels the concept "class consciousness" as a means of defining the awareness of a group of its own oppression and of its struggle against that oppression”(Lerner 284). The awareness of women that they belong to a subservient group. The consciousness that all the miseries inflicted upon them are the result of their lower position in society and this condition is not natural rather a socially constructed (Lerner 14).

Nadia Hashmi is an Afghan-American novelist and pediatrician. She was born on 12 December, 1977 in New York, America and was raised in well-known cities i.e. New York and New Jersey. Her parents were born in Afghanistan and left in the early 1970s, before the Soviet invasion. They intended to return to Afghanistan after a few years but the country became unsafe as a result of the foreign aggression. They remained in New York and became entrepreneurs. Hashimi is the writer of five best-selling novels, viz. *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* (2014), *When The Moon is Low* (2015), *A House Without Windows* (2016), *One Half from the East*(2016) and *The Sky at Our Feet* (2018). Gender discrimination, violence, migration and exploitation of fair sex are major themes of her novels. The main trait of these novels is to portray the tragic picture of the problems faced by Afghan women living under patriarchal society. She focused Afghanistan’s most neglected section of society whose voice remained unheard for centuries. She has depicted Afghan society in her novels on the basis of her experiences based on her visit to Afghanistan, media reports and stories of her parents related to their birth place Afghanistan (Collins).

The Pearl that Broke its Shell is Hashimi’s renowned, well-read and debut novel. The story circulates around two female protagonists Rahima and Shekiba. It reveals an exhaustive analysis of women living in traditional Afghan patriarchal society. Russian invasion and Taliban rule badly crushed the rights and freedom granted to women. Women were dehumanized and they became succumbed to emotional and

physical harassment. They were not allowed to walk in the streets without male *mahrem*. Hashimi has tried to portray such a gruesome picture. The story gives us picture that how culture and society treat a woman. Gender inequality, women subordination, suppression, powerlessness and exploitation are the issues reflected in the selected text (Summra, Taseer 02).

Research Questions

- i. How Afghan women are subordinated, segregated, victimized and exploited in patriarchal ideology in the name of traditions and customs in Hashimi’s novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*?
- ii. How female protagonists challenge status quo and seek escape from patriarchy in Hashimi’s novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*?

Review of the Literature

According to R. Antony Vincily Hashimi’s novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* explores the status of a woman in a culture where her value is based on her ability to produce sons and serve her household. The book reveals themes of womanhood and destiny. Women’s status in culture and society differs from culture to culture. In some of the societies, the status of women has improved gradually. On the other hand, there are some societies where it has not been changed. In some of the countries like Afghanistan, women have to struggle even for their existence. A lot of writers have picked up their pen to write the pathetic plight of women. Nadia Hashimi is one of them (Vincily 43).

Shilpi Somaya Gowda comments about Hashimi’s novel as, "A fascinating look at the unspoken lives of Afghani women, separated by generations and miles, yet achingly similar. This is a story to transport you and make you think" (Godwa).

The Pearl That Broke Its Shell is a typical Afghan novel throwing light on the precarious and vulnerable life of Afghan women. They are still working for the improvement of their lot. Khalid Hosseini, an Afghan American novelist, too has described the novel in the following words: “Nadia Hashimi has written, first and foremost, a tender and beautiful family story. Her always engaging multigenerational tale is a portrait of Afghanistan in all of its perplexing, enigmatic glory, and a mirror into the still ongoing struggles of Afghan women” (Hosseini).

The novel questions women’s passive attitude towards their matrimonial life. It deals with the issue that how a girl is married to a

man without asking her consent and how she is humiliated and mistreated by her husband and in-laws if she has a physical defect. “It also asks whether it is an Afghan woman's fate to be swept along by the tides of her life into any situation or destiny is something that can be changed if only a woman might be brave enough to change her *naseeb*, or destiny. Hashimi weaves together two equally engrossing stories in her epic, spellbinding debut”(Booklist-starred review).

A patriarchal victim passively accepts his subordinate role as natural. Women silence, a display of purdah and modesty strengthen male domination over female desire and body. Hashmi explains the culture and traditions of Afghanistan in the selected text. All the customs and traditions of Afghanistan are formulated by men to fulfill their choices. They often violate and break their traditional values but if the same is done by a woman she has to face worst circumstances. Both Rahima and Shekiba had to suffer the agonies inflicted upon them by traditions and social norms. For the protagonist Rahima, “Tradition had not lost their importance between Bibi Shekiba’s time and now.” Women are not allowed to choose their husband. They are forced to marry out of their personal choice. They are forced to premature marriages and polygamy. The selected text shows that most of the Afghan men have more than one marriage. (Summra, Taseer 08).

Javeria Khurshid in her article comments that the novel *The Pearl that Broke its Shell* (2014) presents two stories with a difference of one hundred years. One plot has been set in the early 20th century. It tells Shekiba’s story who becomes orphan in result of an epidemic. She tries to exist by herself without the help of her uncles and aunts. She becomes a pariah after she met an accident which made her face disfigured. She is stripped off from her property rights. She suffers at the hands of her uncles and aunts and then she is handed over to king Habibullah. She works as male guard in the palace called *Harem* to keep an eye on king’s concubines after transforming herself by adopting male getup. Finally, she is married to Aga Baraan and gives birth to a son. The second plot takes place at Kabul in 2007. It was time when Taliban were not in full swing but they still have influence on women lives. She had drug addicted father and cannot attend school with her sisters frequently. They are hardly permitted to leave the house. For going out, there is only one option to avail i.e. becoming a *bacha posh*. It is cultural product still followed in certain areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Families can select one of the daughters to make her live like a boy after dressing her

like boys. In this way, she can go out to perform certain jobs like attending school, going to market and escorting her sister to public places (Khurshid).

Mary Carole Mecauley in *The Baltimor Sun* says that during Taliban rule, the lives of Afghan women were so constricted that they even could not walk unescorted in the street. In these circumstances, some girls enjoyed unprecedented liberty by posing as boys. An old tradition bacha posh still exist in the society today. These girls wear male clothes, have male names, mix up in the boys and can enjoy privileges which are reserved for boys. The most important thing is that they do it with the willingness of their families and with the consent of the entire community—at least until they reach an age of adolescence. At this time, they have to change back to their biological gender. That gender-inclining, cross dressing custom and tradition is at the heart of the novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* (Mecauley).

The current study fills the gap by analyzing the status of Afghan women with the lense of patriarchy. The research reveals that it is the patriarchy which is the root cause of most of the evils of Afghan girls. They are not passive victims like other women in South Asian countries. They are familiar with their rights and are constantly busy in changing their *naseeb* (destiny). They rebel the prevailing social system in order to bring change in their lives.

Methodology

Theoretical Framework

“The word *patriarchy* has been derived from the combination of two Greek words —*patēr* (father) and *archē* (rule)” (William 209). It means the word patriarchy means the rule of father or a man in male dominated society. There are two types of patriarchy i.e public and private. The situation in which the rule of the patriarch is limited to wife, children and family, is called public patriarchy. On the other hand, when the circle of authority is prevailed away from the house to society in general at institutional level, it is called public patriarchy. Gerda Lerner defines the latter in these words, “Patriarchy in its wider definition means the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and that women are deprived of access to such power” (Lerner 239).

According to Lerner patriarchy maintains its hold through certain strategies as:

Gender indoctrination; educational deprivation; the denial to women of their knowledge to history; the dividing of women, one from the other, by defining “respectability” and “deviance” according to women’s sexual activities; by restraints and outright coercion; by discrimination in access to economic resources and political power; and by awarding class privileges to conforming women. (Lerner 217)

Walby differentiates between two types of patriarchy i.e. private and public. Private patriarchy drives women out from the social circle of society where a patriarch gets the benefit of the services of the individual woman in the private circle of the home. Public patriarchy operates at institutional level and it subordinates women in all spheres of social life and here the appropriation of women is collective (228).

There is no proper evidence in the history since when patriarchy was created. Some feminists believe that men have dominated and oppressed women since time immemorial. It means that most of our information about patriarchy relies upon archeological evidences. However, two opposite and conflicting viewpoints have developed namely the traditionalist and the feminist anthropologist views on whether matriarchy ever existed before patriarchy.

Feminists have drawn a historical evidence to prove that women in the past and still in the present are living in a phallogocentric and misogynist world; women continue their spiritual struggle of liberating themselves from this pathetic condition of patriarchy. (Lerner 5). In her magnificent work *The Creation of Patriarchy* she states, “Nowhere in history is evidence to be found of an overthrow of power from female to male. Patriarchy was not an event, but developed over a period of nearly 2500 years at different times and places, from China, Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, Mesoamerica, Africa, Europe and Malaysia (54), and was formed by both men and women”. (212) There is not a single society known where women- as- a- group have decision- making power over men or control marriage exchanges” (Lerner 30).

Reinforcing this view she further states, “In a patriarchal society, men are viewed as naturally superior, stronger and more rational whereas women are viewed as naturally weaker, intellectually and rationally inferior, emotionally unstable and incapable of being involved in politics”. Man by nature is powerful and rational. The superiority of man is elaborated by her in these words:

Men were designed by God to be dominant. Men, being more rational, explain and regulate the world and have control over a woman's sexuality and her reproductive functions. Women sustain daily life and are responsible for the continuation of the human race and have no rights over men. Only men can act as a go-between with God and humans; women can only mediate with God through men. (Lerner 4)

Exposing the powers of patriarch Lerner says,

The father had the power of life and death over his children. He had the power to commit infanticide by exposure or abandonment. He could give his daughters in marriage in exchange for receiving a bride price even during their childhood....a man could pledge his wives, his concubines and their children as pawns for his debt; if he failed to pay back the debt, these pledges would be turned into debt slaves. (89)

Feminist Consciousness

The concept "feminist consciousness" is derived from and parallels the concept "class consciousness" as a means of defining the awareness of a group of its own oppression and of its struggle against that oppression (Lerner 284). Gerda Learner defines feminist consciousness in her work *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness* in following words:

The awareness of women that they belong to a subordinate group; that they have suffered wrongs as a group; that their condition of subordination is not natural, but is societally determined; that they must join with other women to remedy these wrongs; and finally, that they must and can provide an alternate vision of societal organization in which women as well as men will enjoy autonomy and self-determination. (14)

Lerner even says “this consciousness emerged in women under strict patriarchal hegemony in thought, values, institutions and resources” (14). She further throws light on women's struggle for getting free from the clutches of patriarchy:

Women thought their way out of patriarchy; stubbornly and persistently, like drops of water wearing out solid rock, they challenged patriarchal definitions, prescriptions and explanations. They insisted on their capacity for education and, when that argument

seemed to have been won, they insisted on their right to education. (220)

Lerner says the process of raising consciousness is not an easy task. Women will have to work hard in order to change their lot.

Because of the way women have been structured into patriarchal institutions, because of their long history of educational deprivation and of their economic dependence on males, women have had to overcome many obstacles before this process of coming into consciousness could be achieved. (274)

Textual Analysis

This section of the study analyzes the text of Nadia Hashmi's novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* to explore the condition of Afghan women who are living in strict patriarchal society in Hashmi's novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*. The patriarchal culture in Afghanistan is deep rooted in domestic as well as institutional level in the selected text. Men are the sole powerful and women are weak and powerless creature. They have no say in their domestic as well as external affairs. The text highlights how women have been subordinated, marginalized, victimized, coerced and exploited under the name of centuries old traditions and customs under male hegemony. It also sheds light how men are powerful in all the institutions of society and women are just puppets in the hands of men in the selected text. The research pinpoints how feminist consciousness is created and how women revolt against the shackles of patriarchy in order to change their *naseeb* (destiny) in male dominated society. The selected text also reveals that how gender discrimination is observed under certain customs like bacha posh and how female gender is considered inferior to male. Owing to gender bias, begetting male children is desired by all characters in the selected text.

Gender Bias and Women Subordination

Rahima, the protagonist is Arif's daughter. She has four sisters Parwin, Rohila, Shaila and Sitara. Raisa is Rahima's mother. Arif is a patriarch in his house. He is utterly disappointed for having girls in his house instead of boys. He strongly dislikes his daughters just because of their female sex. In the beginning of the novel, the girls are chased by a boy who tears Parwin's shirt with his bicycle. When he came to know this, he says: "If I had a son this would not be happening! Goddamn it! Why do we have a house full of girls! Not one, not two--but five of them! He would yell" (5). The text reveals gender bias. Rahima lays bare this point by saying, "But with one daughter after another, Madar-jan did

not become the wife that Padar-*jan* expected. Even more sorely disappointed was my grandmother, who had respectably borne five sons and only one daughter” (25). It is serious concern for Raisa to give birth daughters instead of sons. When Rahima’s youngest sister Sitara was born she says about her mother, “Disappointed and fearful, she named our youngest sister Sitara and dreaded the day that Padar-*jan* would come home to find out she had brought yet another girl into his home”(27)

He is often seen speaking ill of his daughters. Rahima says, “But it was getting harder and harder to remember a time when Padar-*Jan* was not angry and loud” (5). He is against the education of girls. This is why he dislikes his daughters and wife going out of the house even for school or bazar. Time and again he has stopped them from going to school. He is searching excuse for making his daughters sit in the house. This is clear from this dialogue spoken by Rahima, “We know if Madar-*jan* told our father, he would keep us home instead of sending us to school. It had happened before” (3). Similarly he neither brings eatables for his family members nor did he allow to his wife to go to market. Rahima states about her mother, “But if she went to the bazar by herself, he went into an even worse rage” (8).

The text shows that if a woman is begetting female children, she is rebuked by the husband and her in-laws. The husband is advised by others to have another wife. Arif’s mother urges him to get another wife in these words, “*Bachem*, it’s high time. You’ve given her plenty of opportunity to give you a son and she’s failed. Now, let’s bring a second wife for you so that you can finally expand this family” (117)

In Afghan patriarchal society, female sex is devoid of basic rights, love and affection of his parents. She has to face this gender bias not only in her parents’ house but in her in-laws’ house too. When Rahima goes to her in-laws, she observes this phenomenon minutely. Abdul Khaliq always has a soft corner for his sons but he never allows his daughters to come close to him. Rahima says, “Abdul Khaliq kept his daughters at arm’s length but his sons stayed at his side” (221). In this regard she further says, “He was proud to have boys. He smiled for them and for little else” (221).

It is the male getup which is the symbol of confidence in Afghan patriarchal society. Rahima exposes herself when she is transformed from a bacha posh to woman again and married to Abdul Khaliq. She says:

I’d been so self-assured when I was a *bacha posh*. Walking around with the boys, I feared nothing. If they had dared me to wrestle a grown man to the ground, I would have done it. I thought I could do anything...and now I trembled before my husband, before my mother-in-law. I had changed. I had lost my confidence. The dress I wore felt like a costume, something that disguised the confident, headstrong boy I was supposed to be. I felt ridiculous, like someone pretending to be something he was not. (320-21)

Shekiba’s clan too liked boys in their family. This is the reason that both her brothers Tariq and Munis were respected and loved in the clan because they were the boys and they were the heirs of the honor and respect of the both family and the clan. Shekiba says, “The boys were well liked by their grandparents and valued as male heirs. Ismail’s mother, Bobo Shahgul, often said the two boys were the only good thing to come from Shafiq” (15). Shekiba and her younger sister Aqila did not realize that how little their father’s family cared for them.

When Shekiba was toddler, she met an accident in kitchen and half of her face was burnt with hot oil which was lying on the stove. It was a great tragedy for the mother. Her mother expected some helpful advice from her mother-in-law. But when Bobo Shahgul came to see the little kid, she instead of feeling sorry for the happening, thanked God that it was girl not a boy. She said, “...thanks that it hadn’t been one of the boys” (16). Similarly when Shekiba’s family is perished in an epidemic, her uncles and aunts are not worried about the deaths of their near one rather they are more bothered about Shekiba who is a girl and has escaped the epidemic. As the narrator of the story says, “Shekiba was the last survivor— the one who should not have survived” (39). If she had been a boy, there would not have been such a comment about her.

A woman who has begotten more sons as compared to daughters is considered praiseworthy. It is said about Shekiba’ grandmother Bobo Shahgul, “ She had earned the right to walk with her head high since she had given her husband six sons and two daughters” (40). The above quote shows that bearing daughters is a shameful act in patriarchal societies.

King Habibullah too observes gender discrimination and bias. He had a lot of concubines despite wives. He had kept those concubines in his harem where no man is allowed to enter. The concubines who had born sons were treated differently and had more favors from the king as

compared to those who had begotten daughters. It is told to Shekiba, “The nine women who had born him sons were treated better than the others” (380).

Arif as a patriarch and tyrant

Arif is a tyrant and all powerful in his house. Nothing can be said or done without his permission. His wife feels fear from him. Arif being a dictator and authoritative in his house does not consult his wife or daughters in any matter of the house. He considers himself perfect in all aspects of life. His opinion is considered as weighty and his position is regarded as dominant because he is a man. He thinks he is the father of his daughters, he can decide their future without their consultation and consent. This situation becomes visible when Arif gives his consent to marry her daughter Rahima as a fourth wife to a warlord Abdul Khaliq and two other daughters i.e. Parwin and Shaila to Abdul Khaliq’s cousins Abdul Sharif and Abdul Haider. The tyranny is that Rahima was too young to be married i.e thirteen years old. Raisa, his wife yells at this cruelty and says, “Arif what are you going to do? The girls are so young!” (122). He curtly and coldly responds to her, “It’s none of your business what I’m going to do! They’re my daughters and I’ll do what’s right for them. It’s not as if you’re capable of doing anything” (122). She further reminds his husband about her younger girl, “Arif, please, Rahima’s only thirteen!” (122). But he does not change his decision.

A patriarch is strong adherent to social conventions and traditions. The text exposes that when Abdul Khaliq came to Arif’s house for marriage proposal, Arif was determined and bound to marry his daughter to Abdul Khaliq but he wanted to consult his elders as a formality. Its irony that he didn’t consult his wife who had a right to decide the future of her daughters. Instead, he is going to consult his father and other family members. Arif says to Abdul Khaliq, “Well as tradition dictates that I should consult my family, as you have done. I cannot make such decisions without the presence of my father and our gray-haired family members” (122). When Raisa, Arif’s wife shows her intention to negate the proposals with the help of her sister Shaima, he says, “*Khanum*, if your insolent sister dares step foot in this house on that day, I swear to you I’ll cut her tongue out and send her hunched back rolling down the street! Madar-*jan* shuddered to hear him talk about Khala Shaima in that way” (123).

Abdul Khaliq as a patriarch

Abdul Khaliq a wealthy warlord is Rahima’s husband. He already has three wives before Rahima. He is autocratic in his nature. He never shared his thoughts to his wives. He sends his wives to his chamber for the purpose of procreation. He never shares his thoughts to his wives. There is strong communication gap between him and his wives. He wants his wives to be passive listeners.

When Rahima goes to his in-laws and observes the circumstances, she says, “My husband took from me what he wanted, did to me what he wanted and left the rest of my existence in his mother’s hands” (193). Her life becomes so miserable that she desires to be a *bacha posh* once again. He strictly rules his house with the orders of her mother who is the incarnation of his tyranny. Throwing light on the harsh nature of her husband she says, “But I was wife of Abdul Khaliq, a man who inspired fear in every corner of the province” (301).

He controls his house with an iron hand. His children and his wives are always afraid of his harsh disposition. He has a soft corner only for his sons and a very hard tone and apathy for his daughters and wives. Rahima clarifies this by saying, “He was proud to have boys. He smiled for them and for little else” (221). Not only Rahima but Khaliq’s other wives too are afraid of him. Rahima says, “We all knew Abdul Khaliq’s heavy hand” (244). When Rahima show her intention to go to Kabul with Badriya, she is afraid the reaction her husband would reveal after hearing this. She says to Badriya, “But I wonder what Abdul Khaliq would say. You know he does not like for us to be away from home” (257).

Abdul Khaliq is a martinet in his house. He is exploiter of his wives. He considers himself the only center of authority. After Americans control of Afghanistan, it becomes mandatory for parliament to have women seats. He appoints his eldest wife Badriya for the candidature of parliamentary elections. When she wins election, Abdul Khaliq uses her position for his own material interest. She is not allowed to cast vote according to her own consent and free will. At very session of the parliament, it is the diction of her husband she had to follow. There are some outside forces that have political influence even sitting outside the chamber of parliament. Rahima hints Badriya’s condition, “They could tell her reds and greens were decided by outside forces. She was part of the problem” (306). This pointed is clarified in the conversation between Rahima and Khala Shaima when Rahima thinks it

would be a change for the country to have women participation in the politics. At this, the latter says:

To hell it's a big change! It's a charade. There is a rule that a certain number of seats have to be filled by women. They made this rule part of the constitution because otherwise no one would give any woman the time of day. But he'll put one of his wives in and tell her exactly what to say, how to vote, who talk to. It's no difference that Abdul Khaliq taking the seat himself! (240)

The text highlights that Rahima wants a change in Afghan patriarchal system. She is in favor of women participation in society. She wants to get education and spread it to other women. When she learns how to use a computer, she desires to spread this technical knowledge to other girls. She says, “Imagine if I learned to use this machine. Imagine if I could work like this woman, Ms. Franklin. To know so much that I could teach it to others!” (312-13).

The text reveals that in spite of the male opposition and restrictions for women in patriarchal society women are still determined to get their rights and their voice to be listened. Woman parliamentarian Zamarud is one of such examples. She does not lose courage after she is badly injured in a bomb attack which was perpetrated by male parliamentarians who did not want her to talk about them and highlight their corruption and hypocrisy. Rahima too shows her desire to become as bold as Zamarud. When Shaima asks her niece Rahima that about Zamarud's return to the parliament, she says, “Zamarud was not one to be scared off so easily. I wished I could be more like her-so determined and brave” (320).

Everyone labels Zamarud that she is a lunatic to talk against men. But Khala Shaima and Rahima approves what Zamarud said or did. But its positive sign that she has not lost heart or determination. Rahima says, “She's taking risks and she just might be a total lunatic, but she's doing what she wants. And I bet she doesn't regret it. I bet she'll keep doing it. That's what people have to do something to get what they want or to be what they want” (321).

The text elucidates that gender has a pivotal importance in Afghan male dominated society. The concept of being a female in war turn Afghan society badly shakes the confidence of a woman. This is the reason Rahima wants to slip back in her old *bacha posh* clothes in which she considers herself more protected. At the end of chapter 45, she says:

I could just slip into my old clothes...how much more capable I would be. Zamarud might have disagreed but the clothes meant something different to me because I'd lived in them. The dress, the husband, the mother-in-law. I wished I could toss them all aside. (322)

Women are not allowed to have simple recreations like watching T.V etc. This is because men don't want women to be aware of their surroundings and the world in general. They want them to confine in the four walls of the house. One day when Rahima tried to switch on T.V her husband rebuked her and warned her never muster up courage to repeat it. Shaima responds to it in the following words:

Your husband is a lot of things but he's not a stupid man. He knows what he's doing. He doesn't want you to see what's going on in the rest of the country, what the other women are doing. These television stations now have so many programs, female singers, and female news reporters. Even men advocate on behalf of women. Can you imagine that?...he needs to keep you blindfolded". (352)

After living a miserable life in her in-laws, Rahima thinks an escape from the clutches of patriarchal society. She carefully listened Fakhria's stories of women taking shelter to Women Shelter House. All the women wanted to have a new chance to begin their life. This is what Rahima wants now. She had learnt a lot from the story of her grand-grand-mother Shekiba. As Shaima says to Rahima, "Everything you've endured in life should have taught you something, made you hungry for something" (419).

It was with the efforts of two women parliamentarians i.e. Hamid and Sufia that Rahima joins Women Shelter House. She says, "I would always think of them warmly and with deep gratitude, remembering how they and Ms. Franklin had formulated a plan to help me escape the *naseeb* that awaited me had I returned to my husband" (449).

Shekiba, another protagonist in the novel, also had to face tribulations in patriarchal society a century earlier but she was alive of her conditions and desired to change her circumstances. When her uncles try to strip off her property rights, she blatantly condemns this tyrannical act. She tries to regain her house and land from the occupation of her uncles. She says to herself, "I cannot go on like this forever. I must find a way to make a life for myself" (85). The above quote suggests that she is not a passive woman like others. She is aware of her rights and duties.

She is well aware and conscious of her current miserable state and she wants to change her fate in order to improve her condition.

When Shekiba is stripped off her property rights, she never surrenders before her uncles who are reluctant to give her share of her property. Like other women, she is not passive creature to compromise her fate. She moves to the local judge called *hakim*. She says, “Please, *sahib*, I have the deed to my father’s land and I am his only surviving child. I want to claim my inheritance. That land should belong to me and my uncles are taking it without right” (128). After hearing these words, the eyes of judge are widened because he never had heard a woman claiming her father’s property. It was totally a new and rebellious act for someone to demand something which is disapproved by the society.

Shekiba is of the view that if someone wants to improve his or her condition, it is necessary to take bold steps by leaving beaten tracks. She says, “But sometimes you have to act out of line, I suppose. Sometimes you have to take a chance if you want something badly enough” (435). She acted out of line while demanding her property rights. Although in her times, this act was considered untraditional and a social taboo.

Conclusion

The research concludes that subjugation, gender bias, victimization, humiliation, violence, suppression, subalternity and exploitation are the problems faced by Afghan women in Hashimi’s novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*. The pathetic condition of women in the selected text is the result of Afghan patriarchal system. This system gives unlimited powers to a patriarch. It is this system which strangles women’s liberty and basic human rights. This system is based on centuries old traditions and customs. It has become a fundamental element of Afghan culture. The selected text shows that woman participation in Afghan patriarchal society is limited to domestic chores, maintain house, bearing and rearing children. Women are not given social, economic and political rights. They are devoid of education, health and recreational activities. Afghan women are conscious of their poor condition but they feel powerless in the prevalent patriarchal system. The protagonists of the selected text leave the traditional path and challenge the status quo. It is a positive sign for Afghan girls to struggle for the change of their condition. The representation of patriarchal consciousness is a way to describe the doleful condition of

Afghan women and their struggle to escape from the clutches of this outdated and male-centered system.

Gender inequality or gender bias is the major characteristic of Afghan patriarchal society. Men are preferred in every walk of life. Birth of daughters is considered a shameful act and a grave slur on the face of mothers. On the other hand, birth of a son is regarded as a symbol of honor, respect, pride and existence. Power and authority are linked with gender in Afghan culture. To be a girl in Afghan society means powerlessness and fragility while to be a man means vitality and authority. It is the gender which decides superior or inferior position of a human being. It is the men who hold sway in all the spheres of life. A woman has subordinate position in society because of her gender. As Simon De Beauvoir, reinforces this view by saying, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”. The unequal position of men and women gives birth to women violence in society. Women are beaten, humiliated, coerced and tortured physically and emotionally in the selected text.

Patriarchy is found operating both in public and private spheres of life in Afghan society in the selected text. Men hold power not only in the domestic affairs of life but in public spheres too. Men are sovereigns in the decision making process of their houses and do not consult the women. They impose their decisions on the family members irrespective of their consent. They are equally authoritative in all the institutions of society. Not only men are powerful in domestic circles but also in institutions of society. All the institutions are under male control. Though women are allowed to take part in politics yet the real power is in the hands of men. Women are just puppets in the hands of men who control their (women’s) power in favor of them. Women are not free in casting vote in parliament. They are coerced and intimidated if they go against the male interests.

The strict patriarchal system gives birth to feminist consciousness in the selected text. Women living under such a distressing state think about their condition and try to escape their *naseeb* (destiny). They give up beaten track and struggle to change their destiny. The consciousness of their rights motivates them to question the status quo. They leave traditions aside and break their shells in order to improve their future.

Recommendations:

In 21st century, men and woman are part and parcel to each other. Women constitute more than half of world’s population. It is

not possible to ignore this major chunk of population and make them negligent and devoid of all the basic rights and privileges.

Afghan women should be given all the due rights which they deserve. Patriarchy is purely a mindset and it is dire need to change it because it reinforces gender difference and brings about the deplorable state of women. Patriarchal system should be reformed by educating the masses. The more educated the masses are, the lesser they will be traditional. Education broadens the visions and makes us liberal in our outlook. Women should be treated with respect and honor. Love, respect and mutual harmony are the key components for the happy matrimonial life. The concept of superior or inferior position in society can be minimized by giving respect to each gender. Similarly, women should be participated in economic development of the country. Instead of cursing a newly born female child, it is praiseworthy to consider her abilities and utilize her potential for the good of the society. Constant ongoing civil war in Afghanistan is also the cause of gender inequality. Men are considered superior because they can fight for the honor of the clan. Gender equality will remain a dream unless the country has centralized government and war mentality is not abolished. Afghanistan is a poor and war-torn country; rapid progress is not possible without women participation in social and economic development of the country. Gender roles and dogmas about women are the main problems facing Afghan society in the selected text. It is imperative to reconsider these roles in order to restore the position of women in the comity of nations.

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