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CRUEL EXERCISE OF PATRIARCHY AGAINST A WOMAN: TRACING
THE ROOTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN NADIA HASHIMI'S *THE
PEARL THAT BROKE ITS SHELL* AND *A HOUSE WITHOUT WINDOWS*

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ÖZET

Günümüzün önde gelen Afgan-Amerikalı yazarlardan olan Nadia Hashimi, Afganistan'da yaşayan kadınların sorunlarına ilişkin eserleriyle öne çıkmaktadır. Hashimi, New York'da büyümüş olmasına rağmen romanlarında çok uzun zamandır acı çeken ve hayatlarının kontrolüne sahip olamayan Afgan kadınların yaşadığı fiziksel ve psikolojik sorunları ele almaktadır. Bu nedenle Hashimi'nin romanları, Afgan ataerkil toplumda erkekler tarafından ihmal edilen kadınların karşılaştığı sorunlara ve eşitsizliklere ayna tutarak bu konuda farkındalık yaratmayı hedeflemektedir. Bu çalışmada, Hashimi'nin kaleme aldığı *Kabuğunu Kıran İnci* (2014) ve *Penceresiz Ev* (2016) romanları ataerkillik ve aile içi şiddet bağlamında incelenecektir. *Kabuğunu Kıran İnci*'de Taliban kontrolünde yaşayan kadınların nesiller boyu süren zorluklarla başa çıkmaya çalışmaları ve cinsiyetçi toplumda hayatta kalmak için başvurdukları yöntemler ele alınacaktır. Chil Mahtab hapishanesinde geçen *Penceresiz Ev* eseri ise toplum içinde kadınların gerçekte hapis hayatı yaşamasalar bile bir nevi kendi evlerinde mahkûm olarak yaşamaya devam ettiklerini gözler önüne sermektedir. Bu hapishanede kalan kadınlar kendilerini dışarıdaki kadınlardan daha özgür hissetmektedirler çünkü hapishanede geçirdikleri süre içinde toplumsal cinsiyetçi baskıdan kurtulup kendi seslerini bularak toplumda yer edinirler. Bu nedenle bu çalışma, seçili romanlar üzerinden, Afgan kadınların aile içi şiddet, istismar ve yaşadıkları diğer sorunları ele almayı amaçlar ve kadınların maruz kaldığı şiddetin, istismarın ve baskının ne kadar sert ve yaygın olduğunu vurgular. Bu çalışmada aile hayatının karmaşıklığına, ataerkil sistemin etkilerine ve kadınların göstermiş olduğu direnişe vurgu yapan eserler üzerinden yaşanan sert gerçeklik ortaya çıkarılacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Nadia Hashimi, *Kabuğunu Kıran İnci*, *Penceresiz Ev*, Afgan Kadınlar, Ataerkillik, Aile İçi Şiddet, İstismar

ABSTRACT

Nadia Hashimi, a prominent contemporary Afghan American writer, distinguishes herself through her novels addressing the challenges faced by women in Afghanistan. Despite growing up in New York, Hashimi's novels delve into the physical and psychological problems experienced by Afghan women who have long suffered and lack control over their lives. Therefore, Hashimi's novels, mirroring the problems and inequalities faced by women neglected by male members of Afghan patriarchal society, aim to raise awareness of this issue. This study examines Hashimi's novels *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* (2014) and *A House Without Windows* (2016), in the context of patriarchy and domestic violence. *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* (2014) reflects the efforts of women living under the Taliban control and the strategies they employ to survive in this sexist society. *A House Without Windows* (2016), set in Chil Mahtab prison, reveals that women in this society continue to live as prisoners in their own houses, even if they are not arrested. Women residing in this prison feel more liberated than others since not only do they get rid of gendered oppression, but they also find a place in society, discovering their capabilities. Consequently, this study addresses domestic violence, abuse, and other challenges experienced by Afghan women through the lens of selected novels, and it also highlights how harsh and prevalent violence, abuse, and oppression are endured by women. This study reveals the complexities of family life, the effects of patriarchy, and the resistance of women through the selected novels.

Keywords: Nadia Hashimi, *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, *A House Without Windows*, Afghan Women, Patriarchy, Domestic Violence, Abuse

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INTRODUCTION

There are a lot of stereotypes regarding women in every field, and patriarchal thoughts make all stereotypes and prejudices against women accessible and normal in society. It can be figured out that patriarchy is one of the main causes of violence against women since the subordination of women and traditional roles imposed on them have roots in patriarchal thoughts, hence in this study violence against women should be analyzed in terms of power struggles and patriarchal thoughts. Since the dominant group is males in a patriarchal society, they generally use violence to maintain their control whenever they feel any kind of threat:

Men, either consciously or not have oppressed women, allowing them little or no voice in the political, social, or economic issues of their society. By not giving voice and value to women's opinions, responses, and writings, men have therefore suppressed the female, defined what it means to be feminine, and thereby devoiced, devalued, and trivialized what it means to be a woman. In effect, men have made women the 'nonsignificant other'. (Bressler, 1999, p. 347)

As it is seen from the quotation above, subordination as an act and experience limits women's desires and diminishes their confidence, faith, and determination (Bhasin, 2006, p. 4). To Bhasin, even when paid, the productivity of women wherever they are (both inside home and outside) is constrained, hence they waste their lives at home looking after their children, assisting other family members or doing a lot of everlasting monotonous work which is not considered professional work. As a result of this dedication and self-sacrifice at home, bell hooks claims in *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* that women "spoke less, took less initiative, and often when they spoke you could hardly hear what they were saying" (2000, p. 13). Being one of the earliest feminist writers, Mary Wollstonecraft criticizes these common stereotypes of women, who are portrayed as sensitive and dedicated all the time, and she asserts that women ought to be equal to men in every field with men (Wollstonecraft, 2016, p. 27). These clichés and prejudices constrain people from the nature that is frequently tied to their bodies, hence in society these cannot be simply

ignored, and many of them are widespread in society (Young, 1990, p. 133). Young states that the relationship between women and society, which is generally about daily chores and compulsory responsibilities, leads women to legitimize dependency. Accordingly, it is important to show that women are considered that they cannot achieve anything that men can do as they aren't regarded as talented as men, and they are thought that their nature is not suitable for work and jobs outside homes as well (Mill & Mill, 1966, pp. 56-57).

The main purpose of this study is to analyze patriarchy and women's inferior position, focusing on the roots of patriarchy, domestic and psychological violence, and sexual abuse against women through the selected novels written by Nadia Hashimi. This thesis consists of four chapters, and the first chapter titled "A System of Social Relations Privileging Males and Seniors over Women: Patriarchy" presents the definition of patriarchy, gendered hierarchy, and family as an important patriarchal site that oppresses women. This chapter illustrates women's subordination and agents that men are in charge in a patriarchal system as well.

The second chapter titled "Cruel Exercise of Patriarchy against Women: Domestic Violence" presents physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence and economic violence. Within patriarchal civilizations, women frequently experience various kinds of violence that harms physically, sexually, psychologically, and economically. This part aims to shed light on the complex ways in which patriarchy is expressed through the subjugation and mistreatment of women. Physical violence, expressed through acts of cruelty and force, is utilized as a means to establish and maintain power. Sexual violence sustains a culture characterized by the use of force and mistreatment, resulting in enduring harm to the individuals affected. Psychological violence subtly influences the mental and emotional aspects, creating an atmosphere of dread and domination. Concurrently, economic violence limits women's ability to control their finances, thereby maintaining their reliance and sustaining unequal power dynamics. This part provides a perspective through which one can comprehend how patriarchal institutions sustain different types of violence, necessitating a thorough analysis of the mechanisms that maintain inequality and

injustice.

The third chapter “Women in Afghanistan from Inequality to Empowerment” delves into historical roots of patriarchy in Afghanistan, power and control dynamics, mobbing against women, traditional gender roles and practices and bacha posh. It includes the patriarchal structures of Afghanistan in which this system weakens women’s position, by making women’s lives unbearable. The patriarchal system not only puts women in a subordinate status but also puts forward many ideas that make the daily lives of women complicated. Women, who should also take part in social life, are imprisoned at home, hence it is not possible for women to take part in activities outside freely. At the end of this chapter, the tradition called ‘bacha posh’ in which girls are disguised as boys so that they can freely be outside until puberty is presented. Although it is a common practice in various societies, the origin of it is still unknown. In cases where families lack male offspring, they attempt to identify strategies to safeguard their female children. Girls assume the role of a boy by concealing their true identity through the use of masculine attire and hairstyles. Normally, girls are not allowed to travel outdoors, therefore families determine which girl will assume the role of bacha posh. However, the final decision rests with the families. Bacha posh girls have the freedom to travel without restrictions, engage in shopping, accompany their sisters, and even earn money. Moreover, they lack to perform the responsibilities assigned to them as women.

The fourth chapter titled “Women Victims of Patriarchy and Gender-Based Violence in Nadia Hashimi’s *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* and *A House Without Windows*”. This part analyzes the two contemporary novels of Nadia Hashimi, who is an Afghan-American writer, called *The Pearl that Broke its Shell*¹ (2014) and *A House Without Windows*² (2016). These novels reflect domestic and psychological violence against Afghan women who are restricted at home with unbearable conditions because of their gender. People around the world are not aware of the real conditions that these

¹ The following references about *The Pearl that Broke its Shell* (2014) will only include year and page numbers.

² From now on only year and page numbers will be given for this novel called *A House Without Windows*² (2016).

women have, thus the selected novels reflect the real picture of women who are helpless, desperate and powerless in the Afghan patriarchal society. This study critically examines the position of Afghan women and reflect on their oppression, exploitation and subjugation. Afghanistan is among the countries in which women have an inferior position, thus women have a lot of inequalities and discrimination inside and outside the house as well as they experience psychological and physical violence. Through the novels, it can be clearly seen that women's roles are so limited as a result of their dependence on men since they are uneducated and do not have any income to make a life freely. They are not treated like human beings, and they are deprived of education and economic freedom as well. In the light of patriarchal systems, this study provides an opportunity to advance some basic ideas and beliefs, and it will also reveal some basic facts concerning women's condition in Afghanistan. This chapter reveals that these two novels include various types of violence that men use to control their status in Afghanistan. Men raised in patriarchal societies believe that women should depend on men and be at home to take care of the family members. In that sense, women face inequalities and injustice in nearly every field such as education, working place, health and social life. Throughout this study, the physical and psychological violence that women have been through, and their struggle to find a way to get some rights and survive will be analyzed.

In conclusion, patriarchal systems forces women to feel powerless and helpless, and in this thesis the effects of patriarchy and domestic violence against women will be illustrated through the selected novels of Nadia Hashimi, who is an Afghan-American writer. She has written novels about domestic and psychological violence against Afghan women, who are not allowed to go out freely or experience merciless practices of patriarchy. Therefore, the thesis delves into the major problems of women living in Afghanistan, and it explores women's struggle for surviving and the physical and psychological violence they endure. These selected novels depict the suffering of Afghan women within the patriarchal system and amplify their silenced voices.

CHAPTER ONE - A SYSTEM OF SOCIAL RELATIONS PRIVILIGING MALES AND SENIORS OVER WOMEN: PATRIARCHY

1.1 Defining Patriarchy

Patriarchy can be defined as a system in which power is controlled by the male (Meagher, 2011, p. 441). Therefore, this implies “the rule of father” or “civilization” in which the oldest man is the “head of the household”, or one in which men rule and take advantage of their position of authority ("Patriarchy, "). It can be also defined that this phenomenon “herrschaft,” signifying a relationship of dominance and subordination (Beechey, 1979, p. 68). Subordination in a group or organization indicates holding less authority or power than another person (Cobuild, 2010, p. 1559). In other words, the phrase “women’s subordination” suggests women’s secondary status, and it also reflects that women do not involve the participation in decision-making, as well as reflecting the patriarchal dominance that most countries force women to obey. Therefore, women’s subordination refers to women’s inferior status, their lack of “participation in decision- making, and control over women” (Sultana, 2010, p. 7). The term “patriarchy” was initially used to mark out a particular kind of “male-dominated family”. In a more detailed sense, it encompasses women, children, young boys, slaves and the ones who need protection. Bhasin provides a definition of patriarchy, suggesting that it can be used for “male domination, to the power connections through which men dominate women, and to characterize a system by which women are kept submissive in a number of ways” (2006, p. 3). This definition indicates that patriarchy encompasses more than just familial arrangements and comprehends power dynamics and institutional structures that reinforce male supremacy over females. It is not solely concerned with individual connections, but also encompasses broader societal systems that perpetuate and fortify gender disparities. When the word origin of the vocabulary is taken into consideration, the word ‘patriarch’ comes from Greek vocabulary “patriarkhes”, meaning “father or chief of a race” (Mahajan et al., p. 171). In the Greek language, “pater” means father, and “arkhe”, means domination, authority and sovereignty (Douglas, 2020). Levy regards patriarchy as “a form of social organization in which cultural and institutional belief

and pattern accept, support and reproduce the domination of women and younger men by older or more powerful men” (2007, p. 1). In accordance with this view, patriarchy includes various forms of cultural and institutional structures that cause gender-based hierarchies. Patriarchy encompasses “kinship systems in which men exchange women” (Sultana, 2010, p. 2). To Hunnicutt, patriarchy includes “social arrangements that privilege males, where men as a group dominate women as a group both structurally and ideological – hierarchical arrangements that manifest in varieties across history and social space” (2009, p. 5). In a similar vein, Chris Weedon, in her work, delves into the political consequences of fixed identities and ideas, and she intends to broaden the scope of patriarchal thoughts as well:

The term ‘patriarchal’ refers to power relations in which women’s interests are subordinated to the interests of men. These power relations take on many forms, from the sexual division of labor and the social organization of procreation to the internalized norms of femininity by which we live. Patriarchal power rests on social meaning given to biological sexual difference. (1993, p. 2)

At this point, Weedon’s concern for gender, racial, and social equality has always been evident in her works. She argues that patriarchal authority is structural, as it is rooted in institutions and social activities rather than personal actions. Male dominance, both in family and society, takes place in many places affecting all the people. In this sense, men in power often believe that this will always exist similar to natural laws as the inferior position of women has always been to the advantage of men and has made their work and responsibilities easier. Most importantly, in spite of the progress that women have made over the years in many nations, gender disparities continue to be the basis for social inequality: “The regulation of the sexual division of labor was achieved through the perpetuation of a hierarchical and male-dominant family structure, linked to a public world from which women were excluded” (Faragher, 1981, p. 550). Accordingly, everything is in the hands of the males in society as they are lawmakers, with the authority to decide and change things as they see appropriate. It becomes evident that the struggle for equality cannot be achieved

by women easily, but there are basic requirements to make changes possible in these places.

In history, it is clear that social relations and interactions of women are confined as they are thought as inferior, weak, or second class citizens (Lim, 1983, p. 77). Traditional patriarchal structures restrict the roles of women, make them confined at home to cook for family members, give birth and help family members restricting their mobilities. In contrast, men are active and outside so as to find some ways to hunt or gather food for family members (Lerner, 1986, p. 17). At this point, it is claimed that the advent of agriculture leads to men acquiring authority both inside and outside the home (Engels, 1972, p. 80). As trade and mobility increase with the development of agricultural tools, goods and the domestication of animals, men need to exert control over their properties and crops. That marks the beginning of property ownership. Consequently, men become the owner of the lands. In light of all these changes in society, women are forced to be helpful and subordinate with limited rights, and they need to give birth and raise children, so this is “the world historical defeat of the female sex” (Engels, 1972, p. 80). Men take control within the household; women are degraded and reduced to serve inside homes as they are expected to raise children, and this makes women passive and causes them to wait for male members for any decision regarding children or household. Women have “to be domesticated”, restricted, and have their “sexuality regulated and controlled” in order to preserve the father’s right (Sultana, 2010, p. 4). It is also argued that when private property first emerges in society, men search to secure their authority and wealth (Engels, 1972, pp. 79-80). Therefore, men prefer leaving their inheritance to their own offspring. The inheritance rights of women are abolished in order to guarantee inheritance over time. Additionally, during this time, the concepts of women’s monogamy and patriarchy are formed. Engels describes this labor division:

The man fights in the wars, goes hunting and fishing, procures the raw materials of food and the tools necessary for doing so. The woman looks after the house and the preparation of the food and clothing, cooks, weaves, sews. They are each master in their own sphere: the man in the forest, the

woman in the house. Each is owner of the instruments which he or she makes and uses. (1972, p. 80)

According to Engels, this period witnesses women's monogamy and the emergence of patriarchy. The male head is the primary authority figure in a patriarchal society, and he is supposed to ensure the family's financial stability and basic requirements. Men become hunters because of their physical strength and their capacities to hide their emotions easily since they can survive in hard conditions while searching food for the family members. As a result of this, they become the tribes' primary food producers, and they are more likely to be respected and esteemed than women. They are also supposed to be fighters thanks to the skills acquired via their hunting expertise. The defenseless female, whose body biologically makes her destined for maternity and nurturing, is 'naturally' protected and defended by "man-the-hunter", who is "superior in strength", aptitude, and the expertise gained "from using tools and weapons" (Lerner, 1986, p. 17). However, women at that time are not passive at all in reality since they engage in activities such as farming, doing medicine with herbs for ill people, helping pregnant women, making pottery or other kitchen wares. Gathering and hunting activities are carried out collaboratively. Although they are mostly involved in gathering activities during this time, women also take part in hunting, but the number of women who took part in these activities were relatively low due to the challenging living conditions. It is also claimed that women hold a more unique position than males in those civilizations, or at least, are treated equally with men, pointing to the high rate of maternal and child fatalities caused by the poor conditions. Mitchell notes that most of the figures found in excavations during that time belong to females as the significance of males to maintain the lineage has not yet been understood (1993, pp. 21-22)The role of the males in fertility would later be explored through the domestication of animals.

As nomadic tribes gradually settle and hunting becomes less common, gathering and wild grains become increasingly important in human lives. Women discover the principles of seed and grain reproduction. Subsequently, women commence to construct mills to grind grains and develop new methods to store seeds (Michel, 1993,

p. 20). As stated by Mitchell, one of the most important inventions during this period is the creation of the first pottery. Additionally, women achieve a way to spin and weave, and they try to discover new techniques to make life easier. The active participation of women in these inventions and novel activities likely strengthen their social standing during this age. The discovery of new energy sources (such as ox, water and wind power), the invention of more advanced techniques (including plows, watermills, windmills, and sailing ships), the advancement of new transportation methods, the understanding of the physical properties of mines, the chemical process that allows the copper ore to be obtained, the introduction of solar calendars, the invention of brick, and the development of architecture and applied mathematics are all characteristic of the Middle Neolithic age (Michel, 1993, p. 22). As being the person who is in charge of doing agricultural activities, men take place of women, thus women begin to cultivate small gardens instead of large fields.

However, to understand better the origins of patriarchy, it is important to turn back to early civilizations. In Mesopotamia, which is the first and most powerful civilization, women's rights are restricted, and under the rule of the Sumerians or Babylonians, women are considered inferior to men, and they have very limited roles in society. Men clearly dominate the early Sumerian city-states as being kings, warriors, farmers, lawmakers, and priests. Several codes of Hammurabi are associated with marriage and sexual matters, restricting the roles of women in society. These laws and regulations adjust the sexual conduct of wives, mistresses and slaves, which triggers gender inequality. In Ancient Greece, men are also considered as superior to women, leaving a highly limited place for women. As women are regarded as dependent beings, they have to be governed and safeguarded by guardians known as "kyriori" (Işıkıl, 2017, p. 394). A kyrios can be either a father or a husband, and his responsibility is not only protecting women but also acting as a mediator to arrange daily life and legal procedures on behalf of women. In Sparta, women have a chance to get a particular education because they need to be strong enough to give birth and raise their children as a soldier for being prepared for combats. These women are called "alpha", and until the age of 18, they are trained very strictly to pass the examination to be considered as 'alpha' women. Greek philosophers generally hold negative views

of women since they think that women are not trusted. Husbands avoid sharing their opinions with their wives as they believe that women do not have enough logical capacity to consult anything (Sümer, 2011, p. 17). Plato puts women in the same category as children and animals, regarding women as immature, unhealthy, and weak. To him, women may be deceived easily, and they have extreme feelings to make a correct judgment, and they are not trusted to ask their opinions regarding daily life as they cannot separate right from wrong.

Aristotle considers women as a group of people who are between slaves and freemen, claiming that they have to be ruled by men (Sparshott, 1985, p. 4). Aristotle portrays men more active than women, thus he thinks that women are passive. To him, women are also ‘mutilated males,’ or people without a soul. He discusses that biological inferiority of women extends to their intellectual capacities, including their ability to think and, consequently, makes decisions. Accordingly, men are born to exercise control over younger and weaker people, while women are born to be under control since men are inherently superior to women (Aristotle, 1999, p. 21). Aristotle also claims that women are lesser beings who are unable to engage in political activities due to their limitations in reason, and they may not be objective due to their deep emotional bonds to their families and children, which makes them unsuitable for the sake of the society. Aristotle states that a husband or a father has a legal right to reign over the household, but that authority is different from each other because the authority for his children is described as royal, while his control over his wife is classified as constitutional. People at that time believe that it is normal for men to have authority over younger or weaker individuals, as men are regarded as stronger and more suitable for positions of authority than women. Thus, it can be stated that men are more appropriate for positions of authority than women by nature (Aristotle, 1999, p. 105).

Additionally, in Roman Empire, it is clear that this empire is also male-dominated, and men are considered as the head of their families. Understandably, the term ‘family’ simply is:

Those who live in the same households. Johnson’s assumptions about

matrimony in this definition are clarified when he defines the householder as the master of the family and illustrates with a quotation from the King James Version of the Bible. Johnson defines household simply as a 'family living together', but illustrates his definition of family one literary citation from Thomas Sprat which describes 'the prosper household' as one in which 'a father...governed as a master. (Christensen, 1990, p. 42)

In this context, it can be understood that men were always considered to be the leaders of the family. As the smallest unit of the community, the family is controlled and directed by the father or the eldest male member. Women do not have important social roles outside their homes, and they rely upon men to live since they do not get any income or inheritance from their husbands or fathers. After Christianity, there are different limitations for women outside their homes because the idea of virginity becomes very popular. Gender roles are strictly constructed according to the Bible:

Women sought men who could support them instead of men they admired and loved, men sought women who would be good housekeeper mothers, or, if they desired prestige, they looked for a housekeeper-mother with a social distinction. Actually, the non-existence of family bounds frees both men and women. In both cases sex roles were severely limited. The man was the brute money-maker; or as the Christian mystic Thomas Lake Harris put it, man was the American civilizee; the producer. The woman was restricted to being the 'homemaker' and the 'social butterfly'. (Roemer, 1976, p. 126)

This implies that women focused on seeking men who could offer economic support and protect them rather than finding someone they liked. Basically, they have to find a husband as a result of economic reasons; however, men needed as they would take care of domestic duties and raising children. Historically, women were traditionally assigned the duty of the primary caretaker in the family, but men who had social position or prestige were inclined to seek a wife who possessed both good qualities physically. Consequently, it may be inferred that males placed significant value on social status, and they were also frequently restricted to the role of

breadwinner. This encouraged men to make food and money to look after their families.

Middle and upper-class women often prefer being at home, raising children and taking care of the household. In contrast, lower-class women frequently work outside doing some domestic underpaid jobs. Women have few legal and social rights; they do not have the right to vote, testify in courts or sue as well. They are extremely controlled and are not permitted to study at universities. For this reason, the status of women in society is almost the same as children:

The position of the child is in some respects similar to that of the woman. In the nineteenth century, both were expected to be submissive and obedient to their 'superiors'. The rights of women and children alike were generally unacknowledged or, at best, were less well-defined than those of men. (Eason, 1977, p. 26)

This part portrays that the social standing of children and women is nearly the same, hence it implies that they need taking orders. Patriarchal societies do not give importance on physically weaker people. In contemporary life, patriarchy can be understood via the unequal treatment and unequal distribution of services in life, including education, employment opportunities, career preferences, income and earnings. No matter what class women come from, they encounter subordination on a daily basis in the form of aggression, exploitation, abuse, and other negative behaviors both at home and in the workplace. From a very early age, girls learn complete submission and silence without questioning the decisions whether they are logical or not as they are not fully aware of their rights anymore.

Consequently, husbands have a dominant role in the household and decide everything, including financial ones, while wives are expected to prioritize domestic work and be financially reliant on their husbands (Duran, 2022, p. 1). Kate Millett as an important theorist discusses the subordination of women, and she considers that this discrimination is the result of social constructions rather than biological factors. Millet argues that for women to succeed in a patriarchal society, they must be conscious of

their conditions both at home and in public, develop their sense of individuality, seek equality with men, and achieve autonomy, and she thinks that the only way to achieve equality, dignity, and rights is through resistance (Millett, 2016, p. 270). The biological distinctions are very apparent among genders due to patriarchal ideology, which shows femininity and manhood in a clear way (Sultana, 2010, pp. 3-4). To Sultana, the words such as power, hierarchy, dominance, and competitiveness are associated with the patriarchal system. As stated by Lerner, women are either completely stripped of their rights, influence, and resources or rendered utterly helpless (1986, p. 49).



1.2 Gendered Hierarchy

The social standing of women has remained largely unchanged throughout history despite significant advancements in women's position after the 20th century. Women still face disparities in terms of their access to power and leadership positions as compared to men. Furthermore, gender relations vary based on the social and economic dynamics that occur within familial, occupational, and societal contexts, influencing the interactions between individuals of different genders significantly (Walby, 1990, p. 96). The fact that women have become the focal point of social oppression is not a new issue since women belong to oppressed group while men are oppressors for a long time: "The male-female distinction was the beginning of the role system, wherein some people give services for others. This primary distinction should properly be referred to as the Oppressor (male) —Oppressed (female) distinction, the first political distinction" (Crow, 2000, p. 88). Until relatively recently, the presence of women in prominent public leadership roles has been rare. Currently, women constitute a minority in these particular positions. However, women are trying to get a position in many fields which are traditionally arranged for men.

The phenomenon of political leadership serves as a prime example for this prevailing pattern, and for a significant number of women, achieving success within an organizational context necessitates the suppression or eradication of attitudes and actions that align with stereotypical feminine characteristics (Grant, 1988, p. 57). This is due to the perception that such traits are different from the prevailing definition of leadership positions. The construction of a woman's gender is influenced by the societal context in which she lives, with cultural conventions often transmitted across generations. The socialization process results in women adopting self-censorship and reinforces their subordinate position, emphasizing dependency on men (N'guessan, 2011, p. 186). The allocation of tasks, resources, and roles based on gender underscores male dominance (N'guessan, 2011, p. 187). Upon reaching adulthood, individuals of all genders conform to the societal norms and values, deeply rooted in traditional upbringing and education. The acts, attitudes, and thoughts exhibited by individuals contribute significantly to the formation of their social identity, providing

substantial evidence for this phenomenon. From the early stages of life until reaching maturity, individuals of both genders conform to society norms that are deeply constructed in traditional values and educational background:

It is not so much the specific kinds of work men and women do – they have always varied from time to time and place to place – but the simple fact that the sexes do different kinds of work, whatever it is, which is in and of itself important. The division of labor by sex means that the work group becomes also a sex group. The very nature of maleness and femaleness becomes embedded in the sexual division of labor. One's sex and one's work are part of one another. One's work defines one's gender. (Bernard, 1981, p. 3)

Due to the gender-based labor division, some kinds of jobs are considered suitable for a man, and this is not because of the performance, but it is related to the traditional beliefs. The relationship between sex and work is reinforced by the connection between maleness, femaleness, and the division of labor. The impact of an individual's social environment may be observed in every behavior and attitude they have. A distinguished American professor and theorist, Judith Butler, who is well known with works regarding gender, criticizes the socially determined characteristics of gender identity:

Gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. The effort of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered life. (1990, p. 191)

Butler shows the intricate relationship between acts, cultural expectations and the perception of gender identity. She highlights that gender identity undergoes constant change during life. What truly matters, according to Butler, is the repetition of gendered behaviors. Initially, the idea of gender was equated with sex. According to Nicholson, there was a prevailing belief that sex and gender were indistinguishable,

with gender representing the societal arrangement of sexual distinctions (1994, p. 79). Men generally seek to control women's ability to produce, reproduce, and restrict their intimate relations with men outside of marriage under a hierarchical and unequal system of power relations. This causes gender preconceptions of masculinity and femininity, strengthening the unfair power dynamics between men and women (Qayum & Ray, 2010, p. 15). Women are compelled to conform to their gender roles in line with patriarchy, as Giddens states:

Sociologists use the term sex to refer to the anatomical and physiological differences that define male and female bodies. Gender, by contrast, concerns the psychological, social and cultural differences that define male and female bodies. Gender is linked to socially constructed notions of masculinity and femininity; it is not necessarily a direct product of an individual's biological sex. (2009, p. 458)

Overall, femininity is imposed on women by men with specific tasks such as housework. For example, kitchen is the place where women spend time, whereas living rooms are booked for men. The separation of work, areas, tools, and responsibilities to each gender directly confirm that it is a policy that explains the presumed inevitable dominance of men. This situation is the result of the socialization of individuals, a process by which sexual roles are imparted and assigned to both males and females starting from adolescence (N'guessan, 2011, p. 187). Throughout adulthood, these individuals are expected to systematically adopt and utilize these roles as fundamental components of their socio-cultural beings. As adults, both men and women conform their behaviors to the societal norms and expectations that shape their upbringing and education. Their opinions, behaviors, and actions that are imposed upon them a social identity serve as an important evidence. Therefore, gender is a personal construction that is imposed by society gradually.

1.3 Family as an Important Patriarchal Site that Oppresses Women

The prevailing cultural expectations and conventions associated with the roles of men and women contribute to a distinct framework within families, and in this framework husbands typically take on the role of breadwinners who make money outside home, and in this society, wives deal with everything such as childcare and household management which are generally inside houses, hence men have the legal authority to rule over and control women and children (Holderread Heggen, 1993, p. 74). From this point, it is understood that binary gender roles cause women's inferior status and reinforce their passivity within both family and society.

Correspondingly, patriarchal teaching in various forms may only serve to support men who are "insecure, immature, and/or misogynistic" (Tracy, 2007, p. 22). Hence, it can be inferred that men affirm their beliefs related to male superiority since they use patriarchy as an excuse of rationalizing their dominance and physical violence. To that extent, maintaining authority and superiority in their relationships, particularly with intimate partners, is crucial for abusive males, and any attempts by their partners to have control over their own lives are perceived as threats (Tracy, 2007, p. 583). For that reason, women learn to be submissive and respectful for their future husbands from childhood as they witness their mother's fate when they do not obey the rules or neglect any task which needs to be done before their husbands come. These observations, linked with constant control, deter them from voicing objections as they know that their male family members or female elders have "prejudice and bias", thus that means they need to be careful while accomplishing tasks imposed on them (Kaufman & Kimmel, 2011, p. 132). As a well-known professor, critic and author, bell hooks points out that there are different forms of oppression and systems which help the patriarchy deeply:

We must understand that patriarchal domination shares an ideological foundation with racism and other forms of group oppression, and that there is no hope that it can be eradicated while these systems remain intact. This knowledge should consistently inform the direction of feminist theory and practice. (1989, p. 22)

It can be understood that the only way to improve women's conditions is to figure out the roots and effects of patriarchy through history, and this problem needs figuring out as it affects their lives in many ways. It is seen that males impose authority over women in their private life, often compelling them to engage in activities against their will. When they are not willing to do it or reject it, instances of violence and sexual assault may occur within familial contexts. Men are also the ones who predominantly regulate female fertility since women are often expected to give birth a significant number of children in order to fulfil the desires of men despite the fact that they can have some potential health problems associated with multiple pregnancies. All of the female members of families bear the burden of responsibilities of the house such as food, housing and parenting. The rights of women are not recognized, and their health is disregarded within the family setting.

Furthermore, it appears that boys are more likely to be encouraged to be cruel and dynamic in every field, whereas girls are encouraged to be submissive and modest. The traits associated with masculinity must be exhibited by boys from childhood, and these traits are highly appreciated whereas feminine traits tend to be devalued (Abi Rached et al., 2021, p. S138). Children closely observe their parents all the time, so they begin to behave the same as their parents, which leads them to conform to gender roles dictated by patriarchal norms without questioning.

Unfortunately, families lead to violence against women, including rape, discrimination, and especially abuse is prevalent in societies where traditions and patriarchal power structures are followed strictly. Consequently, these systems support and trigger such "violence against women" (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005, pp. 819-820). If a woman seeks to find a place in these societies, she ought to be submissive, and she should voluntarily leave control to men and permits her companion to make decisions. This may give the woman a feeling of assurance, affection, concern, and liberation from control, but this is not enough for men as they always want full submission from women.

CHAPTER TWO - CRUEL EXERCISE OF PATRIARCHY AGAINST WOMEN: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

2.1 Physical Violence

Physical abuse includes any kind of hitting like pinching, shoving or violent shaking (McCue, 2008, p. 8). According to the World Health Organization (WHO, March 9, 2021), about “one-third (30%) of women” who are “in a relationship have experienced physical or sexual abuse by their intimate partner”, and when the total number of women assassinations is analyzed, up to 38 of them are murdered by their current partners (WHO, March 9, 2021). The United Nations General Assembly states that it is any kind of “violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (United Nations, 1993). In terms of power relations, it can be stated that men can use violence when their control is threatened (Tracy, 2007, p. 8). Since the spouses see themselves as the owner of the women in their marriages, they use physical violence in any case of disagreement or failure to fulfill their orders.

Given these conditions, it is true that emotional connection, closeness or trust do not prevent violence as it “perpetrated by males who are, or have been in position of trust, intimacy or power for example a husband, boyfriend, father, or anyone in the position of power” (Leanage, 2010, p. 61). Other forms of femicide include dowry-related deaths, ‘honor’ crimes, and sexual violence (Bloom, 2008, p. 147). It can also be defined as “gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life” (UNICEF, 2000). To make patriarchy stronger within society, men use violence or abuse women in order to make them believe that they are inferior and weaker. In their quest to gain obedience and reliance, men think that domestic violence gives them a chance to dominate, manipulate and control. It is also a well-known fact that patriarchy paves the way for indirect violence in societies, thus men choose to use the patriarchal

system to dominate and suppress women, further confining their fundamental rights and liberty. In patriarchal societies, “different kinds of violence may be used to control and subjugate women, such violence by men may even be considered legitimate and women are always routinely experienced by male violence” (Sultana, 2010, p. 10). It also fosters or weakens “women’s economic, political, social, and psychological oppression” (Tyson, 2006, p. 322). In this context, as stated by Cynthia Ezell, a social theorist, patriarchy itself “is not responsible for an individual husband’s violent action toward his wife. It does, however, create an environment ripe for abuse” (1998, p. 39). She asserts that patriarchy, as a social construct, may not be the direct cause of domestic violence; however, the presence of patriarchy adds to the creation of a situation that is suitable for abusive behaviors. It therefore suggests that larger societal structures have an impact on the establishment and control of interpersonal interactions in families. It is demonstrated that abuse is not a single action, but it repeats, and its degree increases day by day (Leanage, 2010, pp. 53-55). It is known that prolonged exposure to violence can result in enduring consequences such as nervousness, frustration, and a feeling of helplessness. It is also stated that male violence produces a significant deal of anxiety and fear, so it can cause continuing physical and psychological effects (Plichta, 2004, p. 1314). When women find a way to leave the house, or they succeed to acquire a new life, they typically continue to have symptoms for a considerable amount of time as it is not easy to eradicate the traces of violence (Alokan, 2013, p. 103).

The US Office and Violence Against Women (OVW) states that violence can take many different forms, including physical abuse, sexual assault, emotional, economic, and psychological abuse, and it can affect anybody, regardless of ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender (The United States Department of Justice). It is important to focus on the consequences of violence as well since it “results in death, serious injury, and chronic medical and mental health issues for victims, their children, the perpetrators, and others” (Ganley, 1995, p. 15). According to Stark and Flitcraft, wife abuse serves as the primary triggering factor for child abuse, and they think that children whose mothers experience domestic violence are approximately two times as likely to be subjected to physical abuse compared to children whose

mothers do not experience such violence (1983, p. 147) since children tend to mimic their parents' behaviors, so boys learn to be fierce toward women from their fathers while girls learn silence from their mothers, but this violence is normal and something they must simply accept. Children who witness domestic violence may also feel helpless, and they may also have fear for their future (Groves, 1999, p. 123). Furthermore, children who experience or witness physical violence are more likely to have adverse effects since sometimes they cannot find a way to escape (Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999, p. 27). These children are more likely to experience signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Lehmann, 1995, p. 14). Flashbacks, invasive visions, an enhanced startle response, and nightmares are symptoms of PTSD. Infants who live in a hostile environment exhibit a heightened susceptibility to illness and experience disrupted sleep patterns while preschool-aged children may exhibit heightened sensitivity and encounter challenges in verbal communication (O'Hara, 1995, p. 139), and they are more likely to have psychological problems, cognitive impairments, and learning challenges. A child who experiences domestic abuse while growing up will experience developmental and psychological problems (Dodd, 2009, pp. 22-24). Teenagers also feel shame, and they can be addicted to some drugs to feel temporarily relaxed (Knapp, 1998, p. 358). They have difficulty in focusing on school subjects, thus they may have considerably lower scores than the children who do not witness any violence inside their houses (Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999, p. 27). Their problem-solving abilities may be severely damaged as well. Additionally, young people may have anxiety or other psychological problems or experience nightmares after having or witnessing domestic violence (Knapp, 1998, pp. 24-29). Their academic performance may suffer, and they may have problems such as headaches and stomachaches (Hornor, 2005, p. 208). They may have aggressive behaviors, diminished social skills, sadness, worries, tics, suicidal tendencies, low self-esteem, anxiety, disturbed sleep, bed-wetting or academic difficulties (Groves, 1999, p. 123).

As mentioned above, there are frequent occurrences of traumatic dreams, which involved auditory or visual perception of their former relationship. The majority of the women experience prolonged periods of sleep deprivation, which has a substantial influence on their overall health and well-being. However, these symptoms also cause

various physical health complications. The symptoms can be feelings of fatigue, body aches, migraines or headaches, elevated blood pressure, persistent exhaustion, digestive issues, and increased vulnerability to various ailments (Dillon et al., 2013, p. 8).

As a conclusion, patriarchy is known to cause violence against women and children. As an expression of the dominance of men over women and the consequence of patriarchal dominance over women in all spheres, gender-based violence occurs. Patriarchal families force women to think themselves as inferior, and this feeling does not allow to question power relations, so it helps them go on. There should be efficient methods of medical consultation for women who experience domestic violence. Individuals, organizations, or government and nonprofit organizations, including doctors, psychologists and people who specialize in women's health should support and help women who need help (Balci & Ayranci, 2005, p. 262). There must be some ways to prevent domestic violence as professionals have a lot to provide guidance and assistance to women who experience violence, hence they may offer them essential care. As physical violence perpetrated against women has numerous adverse consequences on their physical, sexual, and psychological well-being, women who experience domestic abuse should not remain silent about their suffering. Furthermore, these women frequently face obstacles in following their rights due to physical confinement, apprehension, and coercion since they tend to be in a state of constant concern over additional violations and abuse. They are often suppressed, and they do not want to convey what they think, and they find to begin relationships. As a means of preserving their lives and surviving, women's frequently main concern becomes their partners' needs and emotions, which can cause to neglect their own needs and their children's requirements.

2.2 Sexual Violence

In communities characterized by male dominance, power inequalities between men and women are controlled, resulting in some situations where men use sexual violence as a method of imposing authority, superiority, and fear upon weaker ones. The underlying hierarchical structure of patriarchy can foster a culture that tolerates or justifies such behaviors, hence complicating efforts to address and prevent sexual violence.

Female sexual slavery, in all its forms, is the mechanism for controlling women through the sex-is-power ethic, either directly through enslavement or indirectly using enslavement as a threat held over all other women. This is the generalized condition of sex colonization. Enslavement or potential slavery is rarely seen as such by either its aggressors' potential aggressors or by its victims/potential victims. That is the subtlety of long-term sex colonization. (Barry, 1979, p. 165)

According to the text, using sex as a weapon of power to suppress women is what is meant by female sexual slavery, whether it is done directly or in a threatening way. This form of control is commonly perceived as a widespread issue; however, it is frequently not acknowledged as such by either the perpetrators or the targets. The intricacy of this control stems from its enduring and intricate characteristics. Moreover, the adherence to patriarchal standards can potentially enhance the stigmatization or suppression of survivors, thus reinforcing a continuous pattern of abuse.

The perpetrators may be spouses, partners, parents, other family members, neighbors and men in positions of power or influence. In many cases, women do not suffer a single episode of violence, but experience repeated incidents over a course of years or even decades. Of all gender-based violence, sexual assault may be the most humiliating type of violence that a woman (or a man) can suffer. (Tavara, 2006, p. 396)

It is crucial to acknowledge that in these societies rape is “men’s basic weapon of force against woman” and it “has played a critical function. It is nothing more or less than a conscious process by which all men keep all women in a state of fear” (Brownmiller, 2005, p. 5). Sexual violence encompasses any form of non-consensual sexual activity or behavior in which one individual holds dominance and authority over another individual by using sexual methods (WHO, 9 March 2021).

Visual forms of harassment include leering, menacing staring and sexual gestures; verbal forms include whistles, use of innuendo and gossip, sexual joking, propositioning and explicitly threatening remarks; physical forms include unwanted proximity, touching, pinching, patting, deliberately brushing close, grabbing. Any incident of sexual harassment may contain visual, verbal and physical elements. (Kelly, 2013, p. 103)

On the other hand, the concept of sexual violence encompasses a wide range of behaviors, ranging from unwelcome sexual approaches, harassment and more violent forms such as sexual assault and rape. Sexual assault involves forcing or compelling a person, often women, into an unwanted sexual act through the use of force, coercion, or blackmail. It can be defined as any form of unwanted or unexpected physical autonomy, violation of personal boundaries, and fundamental human rights:

Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work. (Etienne G. Krug & Lozano, 2002, p. 149)

Sexual violence may take place in several circumstances, encompassing personal relationships, dating as well as marriage. For this reason, husbands or any family member or relative can also commit sexual violence.

Sexual violence is far more prevalent in daily life in most societies than is usually suspected. The social tolerance of violence and sexual coercion inside and outside marriage leads women to accept it as ‘normal’, and

prevents the denunciation of both physical and sexual abuse. (Tavara, 2006, p. 396)

It is not only violation of an individual's physical freedom, personal boundaries, but also against the fundamental human rights. The need of addressing and preventing sexual assault is paramount in fostering a society that is both secure and characterized by fairness as it is used as a tool of degradation and dehumanization (Walker, 2000, p. 34). The concept of coercion is related to pressure and force. Nancy Hartsock argues that "sexuality in our society is defined almost exclusively in masculine terms and, moreover, hostility and domination are central to the construction of masculine sexuality" (Hartsock, 1983, p. 7). In addition to the utilization of physical force, non-physical coercion may encompass tactics such as psychological intimidation, blackmail, or other forms of threats. These threats can also take several forms, including physical injuries, threats regarding the termination of employment and career opportunities.

Sexual violence can also happen when the victim is unable to permit because of drugs, hence she can be unconscious, or intellectually incapable of comprehending what is happening (Etienne G. Krug & Lozano, 2002, p. 149). It is "any situation in which one person uses verbal or physical means to obtain sexual activity against consent (including the administration of drugs or alcohol, with or without the other person's consent)" (Adams-Curtis & Forbes, 2004, p. 91). It leaves devastating effects on victims both physically and emotionally. Apparently, it is known that a lot of women who are subjected to psychological violence choose not to reveal it to authorities; however, if they have sexual or physical abuse that they cannot put up with, they report it to police (Mengo et al., 2021, p. 529). Nonetheless, many women are embarrassed to reveal sexual violence. The reasons for not informing authorities encompass various factors, including trustworthiness, uncertainties, fear from the perpetrator, feelings of guilt or shame, the fear of being held responsible, external influences such as a lack of trust in the authorities, the assumption that evidence may be inadequate, and a wish to shield the person who has attacked them.

According to researchers in medicine, there is a higher prevalence of certain

health issues among abused women compared to the ones who do not experience abuse, and any kind of violence can result in long-term physical pain, digestive problems, mental health issues, and eating disorder as well (Schornstein, 1997, p. 11). Moreover, there are permanent effects of sexual abuse, with survivors often finding it challenging to establish intimate relationships after leaving an abusive partner (Walker, 2016, p. 35). However, it is worth considering that this may be a result of upbringing according to masculinity are often encouraged from an early age to stick to conventional gender roles and the concept of male supremacy, hence this process of socialization might foster a perception of privilege and a deficiency in empathy towards women (West et al., 1978, p. 147).

As a conclusion, it is known that cultures where man and his masculine roles are more highly esteemed, the presence of additional perceived or actual power might inspire individuals to claim that violence or abuse is their right when they perceive any disobedience from females. Males may perceive a woman's refusal to engage in sexual activity as a direct challenge to their masculinity, which could lead to a crisis of masculine identity and contribute to sexual control and violence as a means of coping with this crisis. Sexual violence has detrimental effects not only on the person who suffer but also females around this person, and these effects cause traumas or trauma related diseases.

2.3 Psychological Violence

The situations such as stereotyping, humiliation, violations of human rights, mobbing or bullying can be regarded as the kinds of psychological violence. It can also be “a communication, either verbal or non-verbal, intended to cause psychological pain to another person, or perceived as having that intent” (Straus & Sweet, 1992, p. 347). Throughout various historical periods, domestic violence was tacitly accepted by both society and governments since this stemmed from the belief that individuals within a family were regarded as possessions of the household’s leader, granting that leader the authority to establish and enforce order (Frost, 1999, p. 590). Patriarchal societies place significant emphasis on the principles of control and domination primarily due to the belief that exerting control and dominance over women guarantees personal safety from any harm imposed on them. However, women do not experience the same violence or discrimination when compared with men, but rather, they have their own stories that cannot be compared. Audre Lorde, a notable American author, feminist, woman activist, and librarian states that: “[t]he oppression of women knows no ethnic nor racial boundaries, true, but that does not mean it is identical within those boundaries”. (Lorde, 2007, p. 70). Women have been suppressed and forced to remain silent on social, economic, and political matters in many cultures and socioeconomic classes, despite the majority of states, social institutions, and organizations stating women must have equal rights (Taş, 2021, p. 204). The abuser has complete control and authority over the victim, and this woman experiences helplessness, and this is the most prevalent dynamic in abusive relationship (Fulton, 2000, p. 24). The abuser makes an effort to control various aspects of the victim’s life, including her finances, expenditures, career choices, socioeconomic status and physical appearance:

Patriarchy encourages men to seek security, status, and other rewards through control; to fear other men’s ability to control and harm them; and to identify being in control as both their best defense against loss and humiliation and the surest route to what they need and desire. (Johnson, 2005, p. 53)

In order to create the required level of control over the victim, the abuser utilizes

a range of psychologically cruel tactics, which may include the following acts such as threats to give harm to the wife, children or wife's family, stalking or constant monitoring, and humiliating or mocking the victim either privately or in front of people. The person who has experienced this oppression may develop a perception that she has to accept the situation and live with it, leading to a dependency on the abuser and a belief that resistance is futile. Individuals who have experienced abuse often tend to deny or suppress the occurrence of violent incidents due to many factors. Recollecting these events necessitates reliving the experience and confronting associated feelings, fears, and concerns.

Moreover, victims of abuse may have the feeling of anxiety that is connected to their accounts of the abuse, including its severity and intensity, which will not be believed or taken seriously by others (McCauley et al., 1995, pp. 737-740). In some cases husbands or family members and relatives in husbands' sides pressure women to have children, and if a woman gives birth to a girl, she may be expected to have another child without sufficient recovery time that a woman needs to have after birth. The persistent desire for a male child may lead husbands to look for additional marriages if their wives do not give birth to sons. Women sometimes no longer bear the burden of pregnancies, and they suffer a lot. If they give birth to daughters, they often feel guilty, and may face blame or insults when they are unable to have children. However, no one blames the husband. In the absence of support from their husbands or their families, women may isolate themselves from society due to anxiety and fear. These circumstances detrimentally affect women both mentally and emotionally. It is also known that violence is the main reason for trauma-related prenatal consultations and the primary reason for maternal deaths during pregnancy (Harner, 2004, p. 313). Injuries on the body of a woman who has been exposed to physical violence can be seen anyone who is close to this woman, and this helps her to receive necessary formal or informal protective and preventive services; however, exposing to psychological violence does not create observable scars on the body, as in physical violence. Therefore, it is much more difficult to figure out and treat psychological violence.

As it is shown, psychological violence poses significant difficulties as well. It

is a recognized yet complex social problem that is often surrounded by uncertainty and stereotypes. Many women experience psychological or physical abuse in their private relationships or neighborhood, which causes a significant health problem. The complicated feature of psychological abuse makes mentioning difficult since victims may struggle with the complexities of their relationships, which further becomes a sensitive and stressful situation. To fully comprehend the obstacles that victims of domestic violence have while seeking assistance or legal recourse, it is crucial to recognize the extensive influence it has on their overall well-being. On the other hand, psychological violence is one of the most devastating factor that leads to instances of discrimination and marginalization, and this gives rise to bring about emotions characterized by diminished self-esteem and humiliation, and it ultimately results in exerting adverse effects on an individual's mental well-being (Kaur, 2023, p. c403). When examining the phenomenon of psychological violence, it can be considered as a criminal act, manifesting as a recurring issue of aggressive and manipulative behavior, including physical, sexual, and psychological forms of aggression. This act is typically committed by an individual who is involved in a close personal connection with the victim (Gillespie, 2004, p. 24). When a man thinks that any behavior of women is a threat to his authority in the society, he uses patriarchy to get what he wants easily.

2.4 Economic Violence

The values and features that women must have cannot easily be eradicated because in the society men “were aggressive, exploitive, materialistic, physical, unchaste, impious, and mobile; women were pious, pure, selfless, delicate, domestic, nurturing, passive, and conservative” (Melder, 1977, p. 7). It is important to emphasize that women are the ones who are required to abide by certain social responsibilities and expectations that are always important in the formation of society. Consequently, they are restricted by the notion that they are unsuitable for some occupations because of their gender:

Heads of state, corporate CEOs and board members, religious leaders, school principals, members of legislatures at all levels of government, senior law partners, tenured professors, generals and admirals, and even those identified as “head of household” all tend to be male under patriarchy. When a woman finds her way into such positions, people tend to be struck by the exception to the rule and wonder how she’ll measure up against a man in the same position. (Johnson, 2005, p. 5)

Clearly, with the help of patriarchy and so-called superiority, men generally hold the top position in working places although women have minor positions because when a woman has a top position in a company or is an authority over men, people question this position and wonder whether the woman will be successful. Many women in these positions feel the pressure to prove themselves as women leaders. When compared with men colleagues, no man feels the same pressure or challenge in any position:

Women are an oppressed class. Our oppression is total, affecting every facet of our lives. We are exploited as sex objects, breeders, domestic servants, and cheap labor...We identify the agents of our oppression as men. Male supremacy is the oldest, most basic form of domination. (Morgan, 1970, pp. 533-534)

As it is highlighted in the above paragraph, men exploit women in many ways, and benefit from patriarchal system using violence, and control. Given the benefits of

women's movements, it can be concluded that feminism helps to raise awareness about patriarchal thoughts, domestic and psychological violence, or reflect prejudices and discrimination which are vital issues that must be eradicated in society.

Insufficient or nonexistent pocket money, failure to meet the financial requirements of the woman, prohibition of employment opportunities, and restrictions in the working places are considered as economic violence. Gender disputes have long been a prominent topic of discourse in working places or leadership discussions, with a specific focus on the obstacles and constraints confronted by women due to their biological and socially constructed roles.

Behind the paid workforce is another form of work - unpaid domestic and care work. In all contemporary societies for which we have statistics, women do most of the cleaning, cooking and sewing, most of the work of looking after children, and almost all of the work of caring for babies. (If you don't think this is work, you haven't done it yet.) This work is often associated with a cultural definition of women as caring, gentle, self-sacrificing and industrious, i.e. as good mothers. (Connell, 2009, p. 3)

The statement highlights the existence of another classification of labor, apart from the official paid workforce, that includes domestic and parenting tasks. Contrary to paid employment, this form of work is sometimes uncompensated and typically involves maintenance of housing and the provision of care for family members. The paragraph highlights a gender imbalance regarding unpaid labor, suggesting that women have a greater burden in activities such as cleaning, cooking, sewing, childcare, and looking after family members. This tendency is consistently observed in patriarchal societies.

Despite some progress, women continue to be perceived as possessing lower leadership capabilities compared to males, resulting in their leadership being less preferred (Thompson, 2023, p. 18). Even the representation of women in leadership roles is increasing day by day, restrictions and concerns regarding women's leadership continue to prevail. As outlined by Riddick, there has been a persistent hindrance for

women in attaining and holding leadership roles throughout the past three decades (2022, pp. 17-18).

Hence, women persistently encounter several hindrances in their chase of leadership positions. When the problems of women are taken into account, it is clear that in the past women were lacking of official rights, including the right to vote, study at university, inherit the same as men, have the same amount of salary as men (Gamble, 2004, pp. 3-4). Despite this, the great majority of people including men and women wished for voting and, they did not have enough opportunity to access to both education and legal procedures such as divorce and inheritance. Gamble highlights the fact that employed women did not get equal payments and married women were depended on their husbands a lot, thereby marriage was one of the most important institution since women could protect their future (2004, p. 26). They thought that it was so unbearable for them to become economically independent if they were single. Everything that belonged to the wife and everything that she later acquired instantly became the husband's property, and women did not have any control over the properties at all. The most important task for a wife was to have children, but mothers had no parental rights, and it was solely the father's responsibility to raise, and educate their children after marriage. The children belonged to their fathers legally, and in cases of parental conflict or separation the father might forbid the mother from having any contact with the kids, but at that time divorce was nearly impossible (Gamble, 2004, p. 4). To Lamichhane, when women got married, they were forced to fulfil their duties to their husbands, thus it was impossible for them to have their own time to rest or to spend, and in addition, numerous women did not have any chance to get an education or have a job outside the house (2012, p. 93). it was also hard to mention the changes regarding the roles of men and women in society, but the characteristics of gender roles were nearly the same as in the past.

CHAPTER THREE - WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN FROM INEQUALITY TO EMPOWERMENT

3.1 Historical Roots of Patriarchy in Afghanistan

The conditions of Afghanistan have been turbulent for many years. The country has been governed by the Taliban, which is notorious for criminal acts against women and children. In addition to the communist Soviet soldiers and US-led multinational forces have also played a significant role. It is a well-known fact that “women’s rights have been misused by various parties throughout Afghanistan’s shifting political environment over the past 50 years, sometimes for political gain and sometimes for oppression” (Amnesty International UK, 2022). It cannot be denied that “Afghanistan is a patriarchal country in which males rule all important organizations” (Nasimi, 2014, p. 2). In these societies, girls know how to please their fathers and then, in marriages they have to please their husbands. As they are compelled to depend economically on their spouses, and they have less time to spend for leisure activities while doing the entire housework, they avoid thinking about their mental and physical health. The Taliban are now infamous for their violations of human rights. After years of turmoil, the organization finally came into existence in 1994. A significant number of its members had once served as Mujahideen militants and participated in training in Pakistan during the Afghan Civil War of the 1980s and 1990s. They reunited with the purpose of establishing an Islamic state in Afghanistan. The Taliban held governance over Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001.

Under the Taliban’s harsh management, women and girls confronted various forms of discrimination as they applied strict religious laws called Islamic Sharia law. Girls and women were prohibited from working, attending school, or studying. They were also forbidden from leaving the house without accompanied by men. They were also not allowed to get healthcare provided by men and they were prohibited from speaking in public or engaging in politics. Additionally, women were generally isolated from society and held in their homes. Residents of Kabul were ordered to cover the windows for the first and ground floors so that women inside the house could

not be spotted outside. A woman had little independence since she could only leave the house while putting on a full-body veil (burqa) and being escorted by a masculine family member. Women faced a lot of harsh penalties when they violated these discriminatory laws. Women could be slain when they were found guilty of adultery.

Historically, Afghan women used to have more freedom and rights. For instance, between 1880 and 1901, Afghan monarch Abdul Rahman Khan, introduced new law to advance women's rights. His wife, Bobo Jan, did not cover her face and represented her husband in meetings for peace. She even taught her maidservants some military drills and knew how to ride horses (Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan).

After the Anglo-Russian pact, which confirmed Afghanistan's independence, Emir Amanullah made a commitment to modernize Afghanistan in the 1920s. By yielding all Afghans equal rights and personal independence, he worked hard and made reforms to make the country developed. His reforms while governing comprehended a modern way of wearing that granted officials the freedom to wear western clothing and allowed women in Kabul to walk uncovered. Both the wearing of a veil or burqa as well as purdah, the screening or isolation of women to prevent interaction with strangers, were forbidden during his reign. Amanullah thought that women did not have to cover their hands, feet, or faces according to Quran. Queen Soraya, his wife, encouraged women to remove their veils and she also wore clothes which were not covering whole body. She had a passion for politics and participated in various difficult duties to negotiate politics between opposite parties (1986). Queen Soraya (1926) states that:

Do not think that our nation needs only men to serve it. Women should also take part as women did in the early years of Islam. The valuable services rendered by women are recounted throughout history. From their examples we learn that we must all contribute toward the development of our nation and that this cannot be done without being equipped with knowledge. So we should all attempt to acquire as much knowledge as possible in order that we may render our services to society in the manner of the women of early Islam. (Canadian Women for Women in

Afghanistan)

Queen Soraya asserts that women's participation in social life is vital, as true progress cannot be achieved without their involvement. The Queen highlights the early involvement of the first women who converted Islam, and she shows the examples of first Muslim women, aiming to demonstrate that Islam does not impose restrictions on women regarding working outside.

Masturat, also known as the 'covered ones,' was the first school for girls and opened its doors in 1921. Ministers, members councils, and other people from different organizations were among the distinguished graduates. Women got the right to choose the men that they would like to marry in 1923. Earlier than this, women were expected to get married after their first menstruation, a strict custom that the Taliban revived under their rule. Seraj al Banet, Amanuallah's sister, played a significant role in Afghanistan's early women's rights movement. Seraj al Banet (1923) was an important figure as she emphasized the necessity of education, and she considers that women also deserve to be equally educated, hence it is extremely important to read the stories of well-known women from all around the world in order to show that women are capable of achieving things as men (Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan).

In the 1940s and 1950s, women started working as teachers, physicians, and nurses between 1959 and 1965. By 1963, women could graduate from Kabul University's law school and medical school, and more of them participated in sports. By the 1960s, whether women cover their body or not, they could easily interact in metropolitan regions' streets, and they were also top administrators in society. Each year, more women enrolled at Kabul University and went overseas for their education. In 1965, the first two women senators were employed. Furthermore, fourteen women were hired as judges between 1966 and 1971. Although there were some advancements in many fields, Afghan women continued to have challenges due to patriarchal social structure. They were imprisoned like hostages by the persistence of misogyny, and they were subjected to have many limitations to protect family honor and their virtue, but men had full power and rights over women. There are not many countries remaining in the world where women have been as marginalized in society as they

have been in Afghanistan (Moghadam, 2002, p. 19). Reformers, nationalists, and modernizers struggled mightily in the 1920s to advance women's rights, create an educational system, and modernize the economy and society, but ulama and some traditionalists rejected those activities and tried to prevent every step (Moghadam, 2002, p. 20). Not only the state was weak but also the patriarchal traditions were very strong because the social relations and gender were deeply ingrained. Taken together, the patriarchal societal structure, the lack of a centralized, modernizing government, and the troubling attitudes of communities placed Afghan women in an awkward situation that was much worse than being treated as second-class citizens. Restrictive behavioral norms, gender isolation, and the connection between female virtue and family honor are examples of control and subordination that affect women. For example, for the sake of maintaining family honor, dignity, and power structure, sexually abused women and girls experienced severe suffering and they tried not to reveal it. They worried that their confessions could not only result in family disgrace, but also it could result in honor killings.

Additionally, bride price and marriage exchanges between families were similar to a component of the trading system and property relations, and a status symbol. Young married women wanted to have sons to gain respect and power in society. Bride price which is called *Kalym* demonstrates how severely women were treated as reproductive machines and bargaining chips in economic and political transactions when they were exchanged or as payment for blood in patriarchal settings. In the 1970s, some men would relocate to another location in search of cheap brides, while others sought higher prices for their daughters (Tapper, 1984). Tapper states that any household had to deal with the highest costs associated with marriage. Bride selection process, negotiated bride price, and the length of the engagement process are all related to the patriarchal image of women. It is figured out that women in Afghanistan stand for family and national honor (Dupree et al., 2022). Hence, it can be stated that "women not only carry the burden of symbolizing the honor of the family, but often are seen as embodying the national honor as well" (The World Bank, 2005, p. 6). Any divergence by women from what is considered to be honorable behavior as defined by a particular family or group is viewed as tarnishing the reputation of those in positions

of power and cannot, therefore, be accepted, thus women who are considered to break any rules are punished by Taliban authorities (Cruz, 2003). This mentality has supported overly protective institutions and practices, resembling the veil and isolation (Dupree et al., 2022). Most schools had to be closed since more than half of the instructors were urban women, who were skillful and educated, and they were not permitted to have a professional career unless under extremely restricted conditions such as hospitals and some 'humanitarian projects' (Drumbl, 2003, p. 355). However, a few months later female doctors did not get any permission to treat women and at the same time male doctors stopped examining women as well (Cruz, 2003). Due to the fact that women employees were sent home, public health continued to deteriorate. Being prohibited from going out in public and being made to stay at home meant that the poorly managed civil service was on the verge of collapse (Andrews, 2016).

Women in Afghanistan are constantly subjected to prejudice and violence because of their strong religious, conventional and tribal traditions, so they have insufficient freedom to resist cultural norms and customs that impose an obedient and inferior role. A report conducted by United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan reflects "the violence which scars the lives of a huge proportion of Afghan women and girls is rooted in Afghan culture, customs, attitudes and practices" (UNAMA, 2009, p. 8), so it can be understood that these traditions have affected the status of Afghan women since they helped to oppress women, restrict their outside activities and make them susceptible to assault. Today, Afghanistan exhibits a very low performance on the human development index, particularly in relation to social factors that specifically affect women. Women's relationships with unmarried males are restricted by strict tribal norms and traditional customs.

In rural Afghanistan, there exists a prevailing societal tradition that restricts women from engaging in activities beyond the border of their family in order to save their honor (referred to as 'gheirat') (Beath et al., 2013, p. 542). Additionally, the concept of purdah demands that women should not be visible in public and continue to live without taking attention. They need to cover their whole bodies not to be seen. It is important to clarify that the fundamental structure of governance in rural

Afghanistan is based on the indigenous jirga or shura. The participatory councils have a vital function in supervising the administration of local public goods and resolving conflicts. The persistence of this traditional system can be attributed to historical limitations on the central government's ability and resources, which have hindered its effectiveness in controlling and providing services in different parts of the country. (Boesen, 2004, p. 6). The jirga/shura primarily serves as a local mechanism for resolving conflicts, playing a crucial role in upholding the law and order in society. However, it is not specifically designed to address routine governance matters, but rather activated on an as-needed basis to address particular issues. The remarkable aspect of the local level jirga institution is of significant importance. While it could possibly be perceived as a democratic entity at the local level, it is vital to mention that living freely and equally there is limited, and this is exclusively for men. The customary 'governance' and conflict regulation system traditionally excludes women from participation, with very few exceptions, such as when they are authorized to act on behalf of the dead partner (Boesen, 2004, p. 6)

3.2 Power and Control Dynamics: Mobbing Against Women

Mobbing, also known as bullying or harassment at work, has been receiving a lot of attention from society. This phenomenon can be characterized as “nonphysical interpersonal aggression, which is defined as a situation where an individual persistently, and over a period of time, perceive him or herself to be on the receiving side of negative actions from one or several colleagues or managers” (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2008, p. 266). Mobbing:

involves hostile and unethical communication, which is directed in a systematic way by one or few individuals mainly towards one individual who due to mobbing is pushed into a helpless and a defenseless position and being held there by means of continuing mobbing activities. (Leymann, 1992, p. 168)

For these activities to be classified as mobbing, they must occur continually and persist over a considerable period of time. Mobbing often utilizes harassment as a tactic to attain social isolation and safeguard one’s social standing in an environment where authorities are absent or alert. Studies have shown that workplace bullying affects all employees, including both victims and bystanders, and surpasses conflicts between teammates a lot. In that sense, mobbing affects severely all employees when compared to the other stress factors associated with their jobs. Competition is prevalent throughout many social, ethnic, and racial communities since people continuously participate in the continual practice of evaluating and comparing themselves to others in order to determine their position within an organizational hierarchy.

Within the context of workplace mobbing, the presence of organizational turbulence and diverse pressures can build an environment that triggers mobbing, and in this place people who work there choose an employee and do unfavorable actions either orally or physically. Employers and managers may feel under pressure to preserve their jobs or reach performance goals, which might result in abusive tendencies as a result of increased competition among companies and organisations (Davenport et al., 2002, p. 62). It is extremely important to prevent workplace

harassment and create a healthy, supportive work environment. Within the realm of employment, a notable discrepancy may be observed between females and males. A number of factors, including income, social standing, and career prospects show this discrimination. However, because of structural exclusion, women frequently have lower rates of labor force participation. The phenomenon of gender-based work makes worse existing inequalities, resulting in a hierarchical structure where males predominantly occupy higher positions and power when compared to women:

Male dominance creates power differences between men and women. It means, for example, that men can claim larger shares of income and wealth. It means they can shape culture in ways that reflect and serve men's collective interests by, for example, controlling the content of films and television shows, or handling rape and sexual harassment cases in ways that put the victim rather than the defendant on trial. (Johnson, 2005, p. 6)

Male dominance in a community shows that men frequently possess greater authority over women. Men in positions of authority have the ability to exert influence and change the culture or tradition in a manner that aligns with their own interests. They use patriarchal thoughts to utilize this power and violence to limit the roles of women. Furthermore, patriarchy has a notable impact on workplace discrimination as well. Women are overwhelmingly subjected to mobbing compared to males, with men being the primary perpetrators.

Nonetheless, it is significant for highlighting that the concept of mobbing is generally considered to be not associated with any particular gender. (Topkaya Sevinç, 2011, p. 2). Despite the increasing presence of women in public life, particularly in the workforce, it is evident that patriarchy persists and continues to exert influence over women in private as well as public sectors. Workplace discrimination based on gender and sexist practices are deeply rooted in patriarchal structures, and these help to reinforce barriers that hinder women's progress in the workforce, contributing to have a secondary position in the business world.

It is also known that “gender is embedded in the work place, and that harassing behavior at work is often rooted in perceptions of gender differences and inferiority of the feminine and efforts to reinforce the masculinity of the group and the job” (McGinley, 2019, p. 7). Furthermore, gender is deep-rooted within organizations, and assumptions regarding gender have a significant role in shaping the organizational structure of work. When individuals enter the workplace, it is hard for them to leave behind their gender identities. While bullying targets individuals in every field without any gender discrimination, it is generally observed that workplaces exhibit recurring patterns associated with masculine leadership and management styles. This facilitates the comprehension of the potential correlation between sexual harassment and bullying:

While some aspects of bullying may cut across gender, we locate these common factors within the masculine discourses of management. This throws light on the possible interconnections between sexual harassment and bullying behavior. While sexual harassment is ‘overtly’ gendered, bullying also needs to be seen as a gendered activity although at a different, and perhaps more deep-seated, level. Bullying, therefore, needs to be put in a gendered context in order to further our understanding of this behavior. (Simpson & Cohen, 2004, p. 183)

Understandably, sexual harassment is explicitly tied to gender, whereas bullying can be seen as more subtly and deeply rooted in gender dynamics. In order to achieve an inclusive understanding of bullying, it is urgent to allow for the gender context in which it occurs:

To say that an organization, or any other analytic unit, is gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine. (Acker, 1990, p. 146)

It is significant to see that these authors propose a differentiation between sexual

assault and mobbing, asserting that sexual assault primarily targets individuals based on their gender, whereas mobbing tends to focus on work-related things. Sexual assault serves as a means for males to establish dominance economically and politically over women, as well as the power connected to males verifies their masculine identity and exerts their authority inside the workplace (Simpson & Cohen, 2004, p. 168). It is clear that mobbing, akin to sexual assault, functions as a mechanism for males to reinforce their masculine identity and assert control over women in the light of problems at work:

What other term can one use to describe a state in which people do not have rights over their own bodies, their own sexuality, marriage, reproduction or divorce, in which they may not receive education or practice a trade or profession, or move about freely in the world? Many women (both past and present) work laboriously all their lives without receiving any payment for their work. (French, 1985, p. 132)

Within this particular framework, the quote emphasizes that mobbing mostly affects women, wherein they face substantial constraints and limitations, and they do not receive fair payments for their work. This also highlights a more important problem about structural inequity and a deficiency of personal independence, frequently linked to gender-based subjugation.

Furthermore, since the Taliban's taking power in August, 2021, the rights of women have been worsening severely. Although there were some promises to improve women's rights regarding liberty, work and education, Afghan women are now being held inside homes. They are banned from public life as the Taliban has forbade women to move freely outside unless they are accompanied by a male family member. After the Taliban's rule, there is no woman minister or anyone who is in charge of women's affairs. The Taliban have been releasing prisoners who have been under custody due to the acts of domestic violence. Since 2023, the number of girls who are forced to get married have been increasing as well since families are afraid of the Taliban's fighters (Faiez, 2023). However, the Taliban declared that they banned the forced marriages. Since December, 2022, women have no longer been permitted to study or work after

sixth grade. In an interview, Roza Otunbayeva, who is a special representative of the UN secretary general and head of the UN political mission in Afghanistan reflects “Afghanistan under the Taliban remains the most repressive country in the world regarding women’s rights”, and she says “the Taliban claim to have united the country, but they have also severely divided it by gender” (Faiez, 2023). Otunbayeva demonstrates the current condition of women stating “half of the country’s potential doctors, scientists, journalists are shut away in their homes, their dreams crushed and their talents confiscated” (Faiez, 2023).



3.3 Traditional Gender Roles and Practices

Gender roles are established by the varied expectations imposed upon individuals, organizations, and communities. These expectations are influenced by individuals' biological sex and the prevailing cultural norms surrounding gender. Human beings are inherently social creatures, leading them to collectively develop shared perceptions of the world, and these perceptions often remain unquestioned until individuals encounter new cultures or social situations (Lorber & Moore, 2002, p. 4). Gender roles are established based on societal perceptions of distinctions between males and females. Simply stated, sex concerns with physical and biological features that differentiate males from females, whereas gender encompasses social and cultural duties, behaviors, and traits that societies connect to being male or female.

Gender roles refer to the societal or cultural expectations and behaviors that are seen suitable for people based on their perceived gender, therefore it is illustrated that "sex is a biological concept, determined on the basis of individuals' primary sex characteristics.

Men and women are, of course, different. But they are not as different as day and night, earth and sky, yin and yang, life and death. In fact, from the standpoint of nature, men and women are closer to each other than either is to anything else- for instance, mountains, kangaroos, or coconut palms. Far from being an expression of natural differences, exclusive gender identity is the suppression of natural similarities. (Rubin, 1975, pp. 179-180)

Gender, on the other hand, refers to the meanings, values, and characteristics that people ascribe to different sexes" (Blackstone, 2003, p. 335). The primary determinant of the gender hierarchy is the unquestioning acceptance and internalization of these roles by individuals of each gender. These structures have become so familiar that they appear to be inherent in the natural order. These roles are shaped by dynamic relationships between individuals and the society in which they reside, serving as guiding principles that dictate individuals about the socially accepted behaviors.

Gender is also a topic on which there is a great deal of prejudice, myth and outright falsehood. Many people believe that women and men are psychologically opposites, that men are more intelligent than women, that men are naturally violent, or that gender patterns never change. All these beliefs are factually wrong. Many people imagine masculinity, femininity and gender relations only in terms of their own local gender system. They miss the vast diversity of gender patterns across cultures and down history. (Connell, 2009, p. 7)

In some societies people accept these sayings “women are the weaker sex and need to be protected” or “big boys don’t cry” (Wienclaw, 2011, p. 15), and both men and women do their best to behave in line with society’s expectations that align with their gender. The conventional feminine role for women is to dedicate themselves to the care and support of their families by exclusively working inside at home rather than pursuing economic opportunities outside. The transmission of these gender roles is not solely attributed to parents and immediate social circles, but it also takes place through different methods, such as children’s toys. These toys often perpetuate gender stereotypes, with girls frequently playing with toys that are categorized as feminine, such as dolls and kitchen equipment, while boys engage with toys that are associated with masculinity, like construction sets, trucks or toy guns (Press, 2014, p. 35). It can be concluded that this early exposure to gender-specific toys contributes to the internalization of socially accepted gender roles. This is the progression that individuals acquire knowledge about the roles, norms, and societal expectations associated with certain social positions. As stated by Tyson, gender roles are clearly drawn by society, and these “cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive” (2006, p. 85). The prevailing influence of patriarchal ideologies serves as a major barrier to gender equality, since it contributes to the notion of women’s intrinsic inferiority to males. Critically, constructed gender roles have detrimental effects on women and men. When taken this situation into consideration, males who participate in activities which are traditionally associated with females tend to encounter criticism, while females who engage in activities and interests labelled as ‘for boys’ receive less criticism (Freeman,

2007, p. 358).

Afghanistan is a predominantly Muslim country, and traditional gender roles have been profoundly influenced by strict gender segregation practices that are beyond those of other comparable societies. There are a lot of things, including historical, cultural, religious, and ethnic. The social standing and interactions of women in Afghanistan are interconnected and interdependent. However, the status of women is closely intertwined with and shaped by several historical, political, social, economic, and religious elements. The destiny of women in Afghanistan is determined by an intricate interaction of internal forces within the nation and outside factors from the outside world, hence:

Women in Afghanistan are not an isolated institution; their fate is entwined with and determined by historical, political, social, economic and religious forces. In addition to a range of internal tensions, outside or international political forces have impacted Afghanistan in significant ways” (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2003, p. 2).

Religion, specifically the understanding and implementation of Islamic precepts, influences the definition of women's responsibilities and rights in Afghan society. Generally, the role of men and women is defined within the framework of society, but the strict gender roles are generally based on the interpretation of Quran. Subsequently, they use religion to justify and restrict the roles of women (Zulfacar, 2006, pp. 47-48). The issue of women's position emerged as a prominent focal point during the Taliban regime, and the regime imposed severe restrictions on women. Women experienced subjugation under the rule of two separate groups, namely the Islamist (Mujaheddin) and the Traditionalist (Taliban).

The Islamist parties, under the guidance of intellectuals, sought to establish a contemporary political philosophy that drew inspiration from a revised interpretation of the Quran and the Hadith, and this reinterpretation mirrored notions akin to Western political thinking (Zulfacar, 2006, p. 42). However, it is important to state that during the Taliban there was a notable closure of girls' schools, and they introduced new

restrictions on women's participation for activities outside home, and they also banned women to get medical treatment from male doctors. It was mandatory for women to put on a burqa, which is a garment that covers the entire body, and women did not also have a chance to travel alone without having a male family member (Schulz & Schulz, 1999, p. 241). Hence, it might be stated that the conventional Afghan basic values are contradictory with the pursuit of complete gender equality. As recently highlighted in a 2005 report:

The definition of gender roles is so central in Afghan society and culture, that any perceived or planned changes require consultations not only with the household but also with the larger community. Men and women to a large extent share the same cultural ethos and values, including their conception of gender roles, and they seek to validate these within their communities. Women not only carry the burden of symbolizing the honor of the family, but often are seen as embodying the national honor as well. Gender has thus been one of the most politicized issues in Afghanistan over the past 100 years, and attempts at reform have been denounced by opponents as un-Islamic and a challenge to the sanctity of the faith and family. (Bank, 2005, p. 6)

Also, Afghanistan has a historical record of enacting laws that exhibit gender bias. The 2009 legislation known as the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law was implemented in Afghanistan with the aim of prohibiting acts of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse against women. However, it is worth noting that this law does not encompass the criminalization of 'honor killings' specifically targeting women. The term 'honor killing' pertains the act of intentionally causing the death of a woman with the aim of preserving the social standing of the family (Gibbs et al., 2018, p. 2). Men have to save the family's honour, but when men fail to save, it is called 'daus' (cuckold), and this refers to an individual who lacks the ability to defend his honor (Edwards, 1996, p.58). In the context of Afghanistan, a singular focus on economic intervention had positive outcomes in terms of enhanced women's economic engagement and mobility. However, it did not demonstrate any noticeable influence

on women's social standing inside the domestic sphere (Beath et al., 2013, p. 541)

In Afghanistan due to worries about regulating women's sexuality and safeguarding the family's honor, the freedom of women is sometimes severely condensed, particularly in rural areas. This restriction results in 'purdah' which is a ritual that is used in various Muslim and Hindu civilizations in which women remain in a designated area of the home or hide their faces and bodies to prevent unwanted being seen by unrelated male family members (Boesen, 2004). Due to the constantly changing regimes and policies, the place of women in Afghanistan has been shaken with every change, and for this reason, these changes have typically had a negative impact on the status of women, as each change tends to increase the pressure on them. For instance, the mobility of women was strictly regulated and prohibited during the Mujahideen regime (1992–1996) and the Taliban regime (1996–2001) (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2003, p. 7). In particular, the Taliban regime made it illegal for women to “leave their houses without a mahram (a male family member)” (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2003, p. 7; Wimpelmann, 2017). In cases where women had no sons or male relatives, their mobility outside the home was severely restricted (Echavez, 2012, p. 14; Ganesh, 2013, p. 2). The Taliban even compelled women who do not have a Mahram to marry (Rostami-Povey, 2007). Rostami-Povey takes an example of a girl who has not got a Mahram: “we paid a man from within the extended family or neighborhood to pretend that he is our Mahram and to accompany us in public so that we could go to work” (Rostami-Povey, 2007, p. 7). Not only women but also men got a chance to make money in Afghanistan because of this hidden labor, but it was very risky, as those discovered pretending to have a Mahram could be executed.

When the economic dependence on male members of the family was taken into consideration, daughters and girls were often seen as burdens, while sons and boys were considered to bring pride to the family since they could earn money, so they were seen as the savers of the family. Therefore, many families allowed their daughters to disguise themselves as boys, which enabled them to minimize the challenges their daughters faced outside home while they are outside. Girls need to make money, but without a mahram this is unthinkable for them. When there is no son in the family,

families feel ashamed as well as desperate as they need a son to secure their daughters and protect family honor. As stated by Nordberg, in order to gain prestige in society again, families organize this practice for their daughters “having a made-up son was better than none” (Nordberg, 2014, p. 24), so this explanation makes it clear that the demands that society imposes force them to change their children’s gender for a short term. Bacha posh girls enjoy having certain rights, such as the permission to go shopping on their own, pick up their younger siblings from various places, secure positions in workplaces, and hang out freely without having social pressure. ‘Dressing like a male’ is also a very prevalent tradition, and it can be practiced before the menstrual cycle of girls.

Furthermore, a bacha posh might facilitate the enhanced mobility of female family members since they might serve as a mahram by escorting their sisters, mothers, and other female family members while they are far away from their homes such as shopping, visiting someone or going to school (Moghadam, 2002, p. 26). This practice is also crucial in more traditional (typically rural) communities, where women's mobility is severely limited (Nordberg, 2014). It is essential to understand that bacha posh is not merely a personal experience but as a means of accessing some rights that women are otherwise deprived of.

When the major factors of bacha posh are considered, it can be figured out that they include power structures, inflexible gender norms, accessing to assets and getting some opportunity related to feeling freedom. Afghan women are unable to complete independence, so they must rely on males for survival. Government regulations and policies, mostly determined by a council of men, impose significant restrictions on what Afghan women can do, how they get their inheritance and their rights, reinforcing their submissive position and male supremacy in the society (Ahmadi, 2015). The underlying idea here is that women’s freedom and activities are restricted by the legislative and sociocultural structures that are created, frequently by male-dominated groups that make decisions. This may comprise prohibitions and restrictions on their actions, challenges in obtaining succession of inheritance, and restrictions on what they are entitled to. It implies a strengthening of conventional gender norms, whereby

women are anticipated to display submissiveness, while men uphold a position of superiority. Consequently, women often face systematic discrimination and unequal opportunities in many different areas.



CHAPTER FOUR - WOMEN VICTIMS OF PATRIARCHY AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN NADIA HASHIMI'S *THE PEARL THAT BROKE ITS SHELL* AND *A HOUSE WITHOUT WINDOWS*

4.1 Patriarchy Reflected in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* and *A House*

Without Windows

Nadia Hashimi was born on December 12, 1977 in New York and she was raised in New Jersey, USA. Before the Soviet invasion in the late 1970s, both of her parents left their hometown in Afghanistan. Nadia Hashimi got a degree in medicine (M.D) from the State University of New York Health Science Center in Brooklyn, and then she has a bachelor's degree in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Brandeis in 2000. She works as a pediatrician and she is also a well-known novelist with international best-seller books which are about different topics ranging from migration, poverty, violence and war. She is also an activist and spends her time for organizations and clubs to help children who need care, hence she tries to find a way to help people who are in need in Afghanistan, and not only she belongs to a council which tries to help Afghan Women, and it also supports women financially. The council attempts to find a solution for education and healthcare. On the other hand, Hashimi works as a consultant for Kallion which is an organization aiming to improve leadership via the humanities. She is also a health care commissioner for Montgomery County and works for some book club organizations, and she is a committee member for Gaithersburg Book Festival as well. She prefers spending time with readers of all ages around the world.

Nadia Hashimi has written *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* (2014), *When the Moon is Low* (2015), *One Half from the East* (2016), *A House Without Windows* (2016), *The Sky at Our Feet* (2018) and *Sparks Like Stars* (2021) so far. As well as her novels, she published two children's books. Nadia Hashimi is married to Amin Amini and the couple has four children. They live in the USA. Her husband also comes from Afghanistan, but when he was 17 years old, he and his family left the country after the

Soviet occupation finishes. He graduated from the faculty of medicine and works as a neurosurgeon in the USA. When he was 17 years old, he left Afghanistan.

In an interview, she says “I came into writing in a most unexpected way,” the novelist mentions Kimmerly Martin (Hashimi, August 19, 2016), and she adds:

I was a cheerful pediatrician working in a busy emergency room in Washington, DC. Plus, I was an avid reader who felt compelled by the strength and resilience demonstrated by Afghan women ... writing, like medicine, demands attention to the human stories around us. (Taylor-Dunn, January 10, 2022)

Hashimi started running for Congress in Maryland’s 6th District in September 2017. To solve the state’s healthcare issues, Hashimi made campaigns about health problems because of being an experienced doctor. According to Hashimi, the main issue with the healthcare system is that too much money is invested without producing enough results. She states “on either side of the aisle, we all agree that the skyrocketing costs of healthcare require attention” (F. Perry Wilson, 2018). In this interview she says that her daily life has always included some elements of Afghan culture and she is curious about the current events in her hometown (Hashimi, August 19, 2016). Her mother, who graduated from Kabul University with an engineering diploma, helped her to reflect on the culture at their home showing the way of living vividly which is similar to Afghanistan, and also she has a lot of trips to Afghanistan, and she has written reports and made some investigations there. Being an Afghan American writer, she tries to draw a picture of Afghanistan and reflects the spirit of Afghan people as well as the history and culture. Her novels demonstrate the lives of women from various social classes and backgrounds aiming to illustrate their struggle against patriarchy. She not only mentions poverty, refugee problems, misogyny and drug addiction but also shows a number of problems that Afghanistan has faced recently. As based on the views of her, she states that people must do something to prevent Afghanistan from being used as a political tool. She thinks that Afghanistan has always been used as a scapegoat for the Cold War, or Afghan people have been used for some political aims. As it is a human issue, someone should do something to help innocent

people who need help. With the help of social media, she launches some campaigns to be seen by many people around the world to pay attention to this issue. She keeps on working on the boards of organizations which are founded for education, and she supports Afghanistan's helpless children. She wishes to make them educated and well-qualified for the future (Hashimi)

The Pearl That Broke Its Shell, published in 2014, narrates an intergenerational tale of two Afghan women whose lives are connected to each other although they live in different times. Rahima, a teenage girl, resides in Afghanistan in the 21st century, while her great-great-grandmother, Shekiba, lives in monarchical Afghanistan in the early 20th century. The story swaps between the lives of the two individuals, highlighting their struggles to survive before and during the Taliban rule. Rahima lives in a small village with her parents and her younger sisters, Rohila and Sitara, as well as her other sisters, Shahla and Parwin. Occasionally, her aunt Khala Shaima pays a visit, assists with the family's needs, and shares stories regarding their great-grandmother, Shekiba. All of Rahima's sisters aim to attend school, but their father does not permit it. Rahima's aunt suggests that Rahima as being the youngest at home can be a 'bacha posh' which is a tradition for girls to disguise themselves as boys until they reach puberty. After being a bacha posh, Rahima feels liberated and this opportunity gives her more freedom outside home. Her father is an opium addict, and he rarely pays attention to his family. Interestingly, Rahima is not the first member of her family to follow this peculiar tradition. Her great-aunt Shekiba, orphaned by an epidemic a century earlier, had employed a similar custom to protect herself and embark on a new life.

Throughout history, it is a well-known fact that numerous societies have imposed some specific tasks on women, often claiming that women are created for the service of men. Inasmuch as the life of women is governed by the male members of the family, women's lives have been extremely under control. It is also very difficult to stand against the rules of their husbands. For this reason, as girl, daughter, wife and mother, women are profoundly aware of their inferior conditions and status, recognizing that disobedience after marriage can lead to violence or even death. De

Beauvoir vividly states that “it is men’s society that allows each of its members to accomplish himself as husband and father; woman, integrated as slave or vassal into the family group dominated by fathers and brothers, has always been given in marriage to males by other males” (2014, p. 1092). This implies that men possess the autonomy to carry out the responsibilities of husbands and fathers, which allows them to seek personal achievements within the context of their families.

On the contrary, women are expected to fulfill subordinate roles similar to slaves or servants, under the authority of fathers and brothers. This also illustrates that women are not considered weaker, and they lack the same agency and autonomy, but other males frequently decide and arrange marriages for them instead of letting them make their own decisions. The common idea that “every man is king of his own beard” prevents abused women from seeking assistance, as they risk their safety when they reject the dominance of men (2014, p. 139). In the novel one of the young brides reflects, “madar-jan had told me exactly what to expect, but then I think if she had, I never would have made it to the *nikkah*” (2014, p. 169). In order to understand what conditions they have, it is important to figure out the patriarchal traditions which make women inferior. These women bear the majority of the burden both before and after giving birth. Their struggles stem not only solely from their sexual roles but rather from the social roles that they have to do. Particularly, women are unable to define themselves as anything other than mothers and wives. In addition to their gender expectations, they seek to satisfy their particular needs and wishes as human beings.

The selected novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, Rahima, one of the main character, is portrayed as a submissive girl (Jibin Monish & Kannadhasan, 2021, p. 1211). In patriarchal societies, there is no place for being a rebellious or stubborn girl, and these behaviors are also unacceptable, thus there is always someone who watches the girl and warns any mistakes. Therefore, girls learn to conform to social norms without any objection from a young age. It is explained by McDowell and Pringle that women should not solely be evaluated based on their relations with males, but their dependence and submissiveness must also be taken into consideration (1992). Consequently, women are encouraged to possess traits helpful to dependency on men.

Mothers and mothers-in-law play a significant role in teaching these expected behaviors. In the novel, Rahima's mother frequently reminds her, "you are Rahima. You are a girl and you need to remember to carry yourself like one. Watch how you walk and how you sit. Don't look people, men, in the eye and keep your voice low" (2014, p. 138). Since women and men are constrained by familial, cultural, and societal standards, the social environment plays an essential role in shaping gendered power dynamics (Hanmer, 2000, p. 174). Mothers, having experienced the same strict system themselves, impose such strict rules on their daughters or daughters-in-law. They complain about their daughters' behaviors: "Rahima! Why are you sitting like that? For God's sake, aren't you embarrassed?" (2014, p. 170). Mothers' eyes are always on their daughters because any inappropriate behavior can result in punishment for both themselves and their children: "Thank goodness my mother hadn't witnessed this. She had warned me over and over again to carry myself as a proper girl in my new house" (2014, p. 170). Even though the years change and even a century passes, Rahima and Shekiba, who live in two different times in the novel, are subject to the same warnings.

"Shekiba, Azizullah agrees ... hey, girl! What is wrong with you?"

Marjan took one look at Shekiba and froze. Her hands flew to her hips and her eyes narrowed.

"Huh? What is it, Khanum Marjan?" Shekiba looked down at the pile before her, wondering what had offended the mistress of the house so.

"Is that how a girl sits?" she said, waving an arm at Shekiba's sprawled legs.

Shekiba turned to look at herself. She was leaning against the wall and had her knees bent, the pile of potatoes in the valley her skirt formed between her legs.

"In the name of God, have some decency! Fix yourself before the children see you! Were you never taught how to sit?" (2014, p. 93)

Mothers have to teach their daughters all manners; otherwise, husbands may

complain about their children, which makes their daughters' marriages more challenging. Shakiba and Parwin's mother gives various advice before they get married as it is the mother's responsibility to raise suitable brides for their future husbands. She tells them:

“Now, I haven't had much time to prepare you, but you are young women,” she said, hardly believing her own words. “Your husbands will expect things of you. As a wife, you have an obligation to your husband. It won't be easy at first but ... but with time you'll learn how to ... how to tolerate these things that Allah has created for us.” (2014, p. 148)

She also warns them about potential problems regarding their in-laws and previous wives: “eat, bathe, say your prayers and cooperate with your husbands. And your mothers-in-law. These are the people whom you will need to keep satisfied” (2014, p. 149). Mothers-in-law adhere to the patriarchal control mechanisms, maintain order, and continue to pass on these expectations: “listen to me carefully. You are to behave like a proper bride and learn how to keep house. That tantrum you threw in your father's home will not be tolerated here” (2014, p. 172). In an environment where such strict rules are enforced, it becomes unbearable for women to endure the daily problems and violence they face. For some, the only way to escape from these unbearable lives is death, as they feel so helpless that they cannot imagine any other option.

In the light of this information, families attempt to avoid any dishonor that a girl can cause. This is also the reason why girls are not sent to school since parents attempt to protect their daughters from any potential harm. Additionally, families worry that no one will protect their daughters if something happens to them. For example, families who have beautiful daughters endeavor to find many ways to protect their daughters: “My older sisters were quarantined since they were older and noticeable” (2014, p. 5). They sometimes disguise their daughters or they force their daughters to get married in an early age. The importance of having a son determines the status of the family in society. The continuance of patriarchy and the maintenance of the existing social order depends on the birth of sons. Fathers who have only daughters

are ashamed of their children, and they force their wives to become pregnant again or threaten them with remarriage. Patriarchal systems impose people that “boys are blessings” (2014, p. 75). Male children are esteemed by female members, and even if they are not the eldest, they are considered the leaders of the household and expected to take care of their sisters. Female children are treated unfairly owing to the fact that girls sooner or later will marry and join another family, while boys are seen important as they keep on using the family name by adding new members to the family. Women who grow up in patriarchal societies begin to behave as representatives of patriarchy that ensure the system’s maintenance and control. After giving birth to a son, a woman manages to gain a place in the family; otherwise, the woman will be seen as a burden, not a wife:

Bobo Shahgul proved to be a woman of her word. Since her husband had died two years ago, she had happily taken on the role of the family matriarch. She presided over her sons’ brides with her walking stick, though there was nothing at all wrong with her legs. She had earned the right to walk with her head high since she had given her husband six sons and two daughters. Now it was her turn to oversee the roost with the same iron fist she had survived. (2014, p. 40)

It is seen that giving birth sons is a way of being an authority in family. In the novel *Shekiba* also confronts this harsh reality, and she states: “She had sons, she would seal her fate. A mother of sons would not be passed from hand to hand like livestock” (2014, p. 209). She realizes that being a mother of daughters holds little significance for husbands, as they can easily remarry to have sons, often ignoring their wives’ feelings. Fathers feel shame in society when they have daughters: “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!” (2014, p. 5). As it is shown, Rahima’s father demonstrates disappointment and annoyance as he does not have any son. In another example, Rahima’s father criticizes the number of daughters that he has.

She said she was taking care of all of us. She said it was a house full of dokhtar-ha-jawan and it wasn’t easy. All of a sudden, he got quiet. Then

he started pacing the floor, saying his house was full of young women and that it wasn't right." "What's not right?" "Don't you know what people say? They say it's not right to keep a dokhtar-ha-jawan in your home. (2014, p. 105)

The phrase "dokhtar-ha-jawan" means "young girls" in Persian language, and this part reflects the unhappiness about having daughters rather than sons. This quote illustrates that fathers find daughters challenging and unfortunate, and this also implies that people may gossip about their daughters, thus it shows prejudices and stereotypes regarding women. This perceived indispensability of men within the family structure leads to desire to have sons, especially in rural places where males adjust social life, and women are prevented from participating any decision making processes (Khan, December 31, 2022). Men have historically exerted control over women through various ways, including physical, economic, institutional, and psychological power as shown by Rich (2021).

The patriarchal understanding, which is embedded in all social institutions on the basis of the family, systematically gives men power over women through ideological and oppressive mechanisms, thus it can be understood that patriarchy is most felt in the family, as one of the smallest institutions. As Kate Millett states, "patriarchy's chief institution is the family" (2016, p. 33). A family is a prototypical unit that follows the same patterns throughout nearly all civilizations, thus it can be figured out that it is an institution that imposes male-centric thought on individuals in many societies. In traditional systems where the family is treated as property, the father assumes dual roles as founder and master (Millett, 2016, p. 159). The patriarchal system stemming from notions of masculinity creates male dominance power in society and becomes a fundamental weapon of women's subordination. While it does not have a biological basis, it has a hegemonic structure created by cultural and social values of society, and men have taken advantage of all the benefits, thus any struggle to fight against their authority is met with severe consequences. They often seek to find ways to cast women who reject their authority. In this system men are recognized as authorities, and women are expected to sustain and work for the family, as well as

protect the family's honor (Tonsing & Tonsing, 2019, p. 2). In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf explores women's societal roles including "what age did she marry; how many children had she as a rule; what was her house like; had she a room to herself; did she do the cooking; would she be likely to have a servant?" (2015, p. 34). Families do not ask their daughters when or who they want to marry, so marriage does not represent a bond of love for girls because it is a kind of contract. The passage above stresses a terrible truth that reflects the daily lives of many Afghan women:

"We need to settle this debt. Azizullah is losing patience with us. He says he's waited long enough."

"Hmm. What exactly were his demands?"

"I spoke with him in the village two weeks ago and he told me that he is in need of a son of a wife for his son. He wants one of the girls from this family." (2014, p. 58)

As seen in the above dialogue, women are sometimes considered so worthless that families may offer them in exchange for a loan, with no chance for the women to object to these decisions. Families attempt to find a son-in-law in exchange for their debts or to gain economic status from another powerful family. Shekiba's uncle cannot pay his debts, hence he offers Shekiba to the man he owes money to. Shekiba will help the man with the housework and work as a maid, thus her uncle's debt will be erased. He explains this saying "our debts are settled, as long as this girl works as you've said she will" (2014, p. 64). Shekiba does not have a chance to refuse as her family is trying to get rid of her since she does not have any parents. Her uncle does not value her in any way and that is why she tries to avoid attracting attention by doing all the work at home, but she cannot make anyone happy. She feels "like a puppet; her arms and legs were being directed by her uncle. What else could she do? Her every move was propelled by her desire to stay out of this house" (2014, p. 98). As it is seen, Shekiba feels powerlessness and discrimination in her uncle's house where her movements and decisions depend on her male relatives.

An uneducated woman, trained to dependence, with no resources in herself

must make a failure of any position in life. But society says women do not need a knowledge of the world, the liberal training that experience in public life must give, all the advantages of collegiate education; but when for the lack of all this, the woman's happiness is wrecked, alone she bears her humiliation; and the attitude of the weak and the ignorant in indeed pitiful in the wild chase for the price of life they are ground to powder. (Stanton & Ladd, 2001, p. 4)

As it is seen from the above paragraph, Elizabeth Candy Stanton questions the traditional treatments and demands which are imposed on women as they do not have proper education and lack their own autonomy. She underlines society's discrepancy against women since the society sees no value regarding education; however, when they witness any problem or are not happy about the results of any action, they blame women without any hesitation. Although Shekiba seeks to live her life very carefully, she is sure that even the smallest mistake will cause huge problems, thus the writer informs "women who brought scandal or trouble to a home were not tolerated. Even a naïve girl like Shekiba knew as much. Shekiba began to fear for her life" (2014, p. 112).

It is clear that the head of the family is always the father and his decisions are the same as laws, thus it is similar to a trade agreement which no one dares to question: "my father handed me over to my new husband. My mother-in-law stared with a critical eye" (2014, p. 152). Although the best way to get rid of poverty is to find a rich husband to match, which is a dream shared by both parents and daughters, they have difficulty in living peaceful. On the other hand, females who marry at a young age have not had the opportunity to develop their own identities, making it challenging that they cannot be assumed as wives because they do not know anything about intimate relations. They have to adjust themselves when they are family home, and Rahima knows what she has to do in the family house; however, when she gets married, she does not know what to do as she never meets her husband and her in-laws. When her husband, Abdullah takes her home, he says "you are in your husband's home, my home. You will behave as a wife should" (2014, p. 161).

Women learn to be helpless from childhood, experiencing traumatic events that lead them to feel desperate. Such events and experiences can diminish their capacity to control their destinies, ultimately resigning them to their fate. Rahima is always forced to obey every order that her husband commends, but she does not know how to reject when she does not feel like doing. Thus, women's familiarity with warnings from adults becomes a reality in their daily lives:

Maybe you haven't received any instruction on what it is to be a wife. From what I've seen of the women in your family, I wouldn't be surprised. Let me explain to you how things are here. I am your husband and this is your home. When I ask for something, you make it happen. In return, you will be given shelter and have the privilege of being wife to Abdul Khaliq. (2014, pp. 167-168)

Abdullah Khaliq, as the head of the household in the novel, lays out the rules for Rahima, emphasizing that living under his power requires Rahima's obedience to his demands, and Rahima has no hope to escape this authoritarian rule. As illustrated from the sentences, Abdul Khaliq's previous wives are submissive to him. Women often find themselves seeking shelter by gaining the approval of powerful males within their families or society. While it is nearly impossible for women to attain full rights within their marriages, women may gain more rights when they have children: "Well, it seems that you're pregnant now. The sickness will pass, you'll see, but other things will change for you" (2014, p. 193). The hope that they may have a son makes fathers excited, and then, they give extra importance to the pregnancy period. Paradoxically, while the process belongs to women, men control it to ensure the birth of a healthy son. As Rothman clearly shows "what is valued is the relationship of a man to his sons, women are a vulnerability that men have: To beget these sons, men must pass their seed through the body of a woman" (1995, p. 1244).

In patriarchal societies, females are often valued less than male children due to the fact that they will marry 'out' of the family and give birth to sons who will inherit their father's property. Female children are considered a burdensome when dowries are required as part of the marriage contract:

“Shekiba-jan, you are asking ridiculous question. Your father’s land will go to his family, since your brothers are dead, may Allah grant them peace.” Marjan’s response was blunt but it was reality-regardless of what the laws might say. Her candor gave Shekiba confidence to speak openly.

“But what about me? Am I not rightfully an heir to the land? I am his child too!”

“You are his daughter. You are not his son. Yes, the law says that daughters may inherit a portion of what the son would inherit but the truth is that women do not claim land. Your uncles, your father’s brothers, have no doubt taken the property.”

Shekiba let out a frustrated sigh.

“My dear girl, you are being quite ridiculous. What do you think you would do with a piece of land? First of all, you are living here now. This is your place. Secondly, you are unmarried and no woman could possibly live on a piece of land alone! That is simply absurd”. (2014, pp. 82-83)

The quotation illustrates that being a woman not only implies full submission but also entails being deprived of essential rights, such the right to inherit. Inheritance from parents is not possible for daughters. However, in cases where there are no sons, uncles and other male relatives claim the inheritance. Thus, there is no other way except marriage for girls, as they cannot sustain themselves financially after their parents die. Mary Astell questions this saying “if all men are born free, how is it that all women are born slaves?” As they must be if the being subjected to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary will of men, be the perfect condition of slavery” (1986, p. 76). Astell highlights the importance of equality as women always experience discrimination and gender inequalities. Men control women and take all rights of them to make women inferior in society, hence the discrimination is clear in many ways in daily life.

Accordingly, in *The Crisis of Woman's Identity*, Friedan argues that women often

adopt the identities of their husbands or children, rather than having their own individual identities in society:

You are not solely dependent on your husbands and your children for your identity. You do not live your life vicariously through them. You do not wail passively for that wise man to make the decisions that will shape your society, but move in and help shape society yourself, and begin to make it a more human world. You bridge that old, obsolete division that splits life into man's world of thought and action and woman's world of love. With little help from society, you have begun to make a new pattern in which marriage, motherhood, homemaking--the traditional roles of women—are merged with the possibility of women as individuals, as decision-makers, as creators of the future. (1965)

This reflects the idea that women have adopted the roles and identities of men since they believe that the only way to secure their place in society is to relinquish their own identities. Friedan also pushes women to engage in social works rather than remaining in submissive roles for example being dependent on their husbands or children, and she states that taking part in society actively helps them to form their own identities. In the patriarchal system, fathers or brothers are supposed to take care of their daughters, which is why some families prefer sons over daughters. In the selected novels, women are also proud of being married to men in higher positions, and parents and relatives are aware of the fact that a girl cannot survive alone without finding a man. Although mothers or relatives may not wish for their daughters to marry at a young age, society deems it normal, and parents often do not reject marriage proposals for their daughters. As one passage suggests, “my dear girl, you are being quite ridiculous. What do you think you would do with a piece of land?... you are unmarried and no woman could possibly live on a piece of land alone! That is simply absurd” (2014, pp. 82-83). According to Das, it is crucial to illustrate the blatant violations of Afghan women's most fundamental civil rights and freedoms, as they consistently face unfair treatment and injustice in a society where men exercise complete control over every aspect of their lives (Das, 2004, pp. 11-12). In

Afghanistan, that kinds of injustice and discrimination reinforce the inferior status of women, who are denied their rights as equal human beings to males (Fauzia & Rahayu, 2019, p. 2).

In the novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, girls must be careful when they leave school as, even when boys follow them, it is considered that it is the girl who wants attention “but it frightened the girl since people would have loved to assume that she’d sought out the attention” (2014, p. 2). In patriarchy, the blame associated with sexuality is attributed to women, who are traditionally seen as being responsible for every sexual encounter, regardless of considering the underlying circumstances, hence this makes a woman a sexual object rather than individuals (Millett, 2016, p. 54). When Rahima comes from school, she is followed and bullied by a group of boys on the street. Her sister suggests that she must report the issue to their father, but Rahima is afraid of being blamed by men, making her reluctant to speak up. Mentioning the harassment might result in her being prohibited from continuing her education:

Very funny, Rahima. You’re so brave, aren’t you? Let’s see how brave you are when Padar-jan comes home,” Parwin said, pouring. Granted, I wasn’t a very brave nine-year-old when it came time to face Padar-jan. I kept my thoughts bottled behind my pursed lips. (2014, p. 5)

Here as it seen, boys choose specific girls to follow and signal their preference by saying, “this is my girl, it told the others, and there’s only one room for one shadow here” (2014, p. 2). It is very difficult for a girl to go to school freely and easily in patriarchal societies as boys want to hang out any of the girls. Since boys grow up in an oppressive way, they do not care for preferences of the girls, thus this scares girls as well for rejecting a man’s proposal may also cause a problem for them. It is not possible for girls to walk outside alone, and girls who are alone are either warned by adults or complained to their families. In order to go out, they must be accompanied by a male member of the family.

“Khanum, who are you?” he called out.

Shekiba kept her gaze lowered and slowed her step even more.

“Khanum, where are you going by yourself? Who are you?”

Shekiba debated asking these men if they knew Hakim-sahib. She stopped, afraid to get any closer to them.

“Khanum, this is very wrong! Whoever you are, you should not be wandering around alone,” he scolded. “What family are you from?” (2014, p. 125)

It is clear that Shekiba’s presence outside is being questioned by men, and they are eager to find her identity, which shows their curiosity. It also reflects that being alone is not normal for women, and men scold Shekiba not to find someone to accompany in her way to home. In patriarchal societies, women are not allowed to receive education, and the people who earn money are always men, thus they are always dependent on men, otherwise there is no place for them outside. Elizabeth Cady Stanton demonstrates the importance of education as it enables development of skills and intellectual capacities of women. She promotes the vitality of freedom in many areas:

The strongest reason for giving woman all the opportunities for higher education, for the full development of her faculties, her forces of mind and body; for giving her the most enlarged freedom of thought and action; a complete emancipation from all forms of bondage, of custom, dependence, superstition; from all the crippling influences of fear—is the solitude and personal responsibility of her own individual life. (*The Solitude of Self - Jan. 18, 1892*)

A man has to be with them in all their work, and there is always an excuse for these restrictions. Shekiba would like to get permission from the house owner where she works as a servant and wants to pay a visit for her uncle’s house, but her purpose is not to visit, but to find the judge in the neighborhood and deliver the inheritance documents to him. She will not be able to do this if someone else accompanies her. While she seeks to get permission, the woman that she serves cannot believe that she will be going alone.

“Khanum Marjan, a world of thanks, but I do not wish to trouble your husband. I can find my own way and I will not bring him out of his way.”

Marjan looked at her incredulously. Shekiba never ceased to amaze her. The girl was quite handy and efficient in the house but when it came to common sense, she was seriously lacking.

“You expect to go wandering around the village by yourself? Have you lost your mind?” (2014, pp. 93-94)

After her parents died, Shekiba starts living alone at home, but her family becomes aware of this situation, and they do not leave her alone in the house as this is unacceptable to them. If people notice that a woman lives alone, they immediately start gossiping, and menstalk the woman.

They wondered how long this girl had been living alone and shook their heads with the shame of the situation. A girl, by herself! What dishonor this could bring to their family if anyone in the village were to find out! (2014, p. 39)

Rahima also describes the chaotic environment in which women have to live in. She and her sisters are confined to their homes and rarely allowed to attend a school or leave the house due to their gender. Girls have to take care of all house chores, as Rahima narrates, “I swept the floors, washed the diapers and cleaned the western toilets as best I could. My hands burned at the end of the day” (2014, p. 177). In the novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, Shakiba’s disabled sister, Parwin, tragically commits suicide. It is suggested that “sometimes women are pushed too far, kicked too hard, and there is no escape for them. Maybe she thought this was her only way” (2014, p. 215). Disabled individuals have long been neglected in patriarchal societies, with their lives made even more challenging. Families are thankful if someone agrees to marry their disabled daughter “and a disabled wife at that; truly you are a great man” (2014, p. 150). Rahima, the protagonist, always expresses her gratitude that her children were born healthy, as her sister is disabled and her great-grandmother has a scar on her face that make their lives very unbearable. She states, “I didn’t want my

son to carry such a scar. Life was difficult for the disfigured” (2014, p. 213). In patriarchal societies, orphaned girls are at a higher risk of physical or sexual violence, causing families to force young girls to marry in advance: “What do you think they’ll do without their mother? For God’s sake, look at your in-laws! You’ve got two widows in this compound and your brothers-in-law are eyeing them already” (2014, p. 140). Since women do not have economic power, women have no choice but to remarry when their husbands die. Brothers of deceased spouses are also candidates for new spouses. Widows try not to attract attention in society as their every move attracts attention since they do not have a husband to protect themselves.

A House Without Windows (2016) portrays the unsafe conditions faced by women in Afghanistan and how unforeseen events can cruelly alter and reshape their lives. In the beginning of the novel there is a murder scene in the courtyard of their home, the main character Zeba, who is also a loyal wife, finds her husband Kamal pitilessly slain with a hatchet to the skull. Although no one knows the reason, her neighbors and even her children suspect her of the crime when she is found next to him, covered in blood. It is not clear from Hashimi’s description of the scene whether Zeba accidentally killed Kamal or if he was murdered. As a result of this tragic event, Zeba is detained and sent to the Chil Mahtab which is a women’s prison in Kabul. There, she shares a cell with three other inmates, all accused of violating Afghanistan’s traditional patriarchal rules, hence they are waiting for their trial. Zeba encounters Latifa, Nafisa, Mezghan, and three other women who share a cell with her in jail. It becomes evident that many women are sent to prison for having ‘zina’, or other offences which are connected with engaging in relationships out of marriage. During her time in this prison, Zeba meets a young lawyer called Yusuf, who grew up in America, but he is originally from Afghanistan. Yusuf looks into the circumstances surrounding Zeba’s murder case. Even though he believes that his legal expertise and knowledge of Afghanistan can help her and save her life, Zeba is acutely aware of the unwritten traditions and societal expectations placed upon Afghan women. In her struggle for justice, Zeba reflects upon the sacrifices that she has made to create a stable home in a place with limited option; however, she did not prevent her children from experiencing or witnessing violence due to her husband’s neglect. Through this

novel, Nadia Hashimi offers insights into Afghan culture, the country's criminal justice system, and the status of women, paying particular attention to their resilience and strength. The narrative explores the stories of two families, shedding light not only on traditional Afghan family life, but also on immigrants who pursue education and better opportunities in the USA.

Due to their perception as inferior beings with severely limited rights, women often face a lack of respect. In *A House Without Windows*, Hashimi reflects the different worlds of men and women. All women in this novel experience anxiety, terror, and fear stemming from the unfair treatment by men who consider themselves as masters over women:

And women? She asked thoughtfully". "What is the world to us?"

Gulnaz offered a meek smile.

"Do you not know, my daughter? Our world is the spaces between the rocks and meat. We see the face that should but doesn't smile, the sliver of sun between dead tree branches. Time passes differently through a woman's body. We are haunted by all the hours of yesterday and teased a few moments of tomorrow. That is how we live - torn between what has already happened and what is yet to come." (2016, p. 138).

As a result of this implied inequality, women consistently find themselves deprived of their fundamental rights, to the extent that they are unable to make their own judgments, whether simple or complicated. The characters vividly illustrate the subordinate condition of women as wives in society. Zeba expresses "what a burden it is to be born a woman" (2016, p. 198), highlighting how patriarchal culture demands that women meet certain expectations to be respected in society, while men do not have to accomplish such expectations, hence they enjoy not being a female in society. In the novel, women sing a well-known song that emphasizes "men treasure their manhood as God's gift" (2016, p. 198), highlighting the fact that men perceive their power and rights are intrinsically linked to their masculinity. This perception of women as inferior beings with severely limited rights leads to a lack of respect for

them:

Woman is the other of man, animal is the other of human, stranger is the other of native, abnormality the other of norm, deviation the other of law-abiding, illness is the other of health, insanity the other of reason, lay public the other of the expert, foreigner the other of state subject, enemy the other of friend. (Bauman, 1990, p. 8)

According to Zygmunt Bauman, the concept of ‘other’ is closely associated with binary oppositions and the concept of differences, suggesting that society itself creates these distinctions. This duality sheds light on how people perceive gender and identity:

Women have been, and still are, considered to be lower beings, creatures not quite as human as the male; not as wise, nor as intelligent; deficient in the development of virtually all the capacities and abilities with which the male is believed to be plentifully endowed. (Montagu, 1999, p. 65)

As the social environment is highly constrained, the ideal role of an Afghan woman is complete submission, akin to a bird in a cage, where men dictate the fate of the prisoner according to their own preferences. Zeba frequently reminds herself to “just keep him happy, she told herself. It could always be worse” (2016, p. 69). Edward Said describes the condition of women in countries with patriarchal systems have as: “backward individual who living within the four walls of the house, veiled, crippled and ignorant who lacked the ability to accomplish the social roles” (1978, p. 136). In this society, a woman is expected to embody purity, virtue, and weakness; otherwise, she may be deemed ‘heathen’. Despite different generations, discriminations and violations against women keep on: “we will not know our own injustice if we cannot imagine justice. We will not be free if we do not imagine freedom” (Le Guin, 2004, p. 220). In the novel, Zeba’s mother Gulnaz is forced into marriage when she is fifteen. Her mother advises her to “act like a lady...answer questions politely and kiss the hands of grey haired. Keep your voice and words soft” (2016, p. 121). Boys are brought up with complete freedom, while girls, on the other hand, are confined to their homes. Consequently, under the same circumstances they are raised with different rights,

believing that this prepares boys for their roles as legitimate heirs responsible for running households and wielding authority:

Parents, teachers and society in general both treat boys and girls differently and have different expectations as to how they should behave. The expected behavior of boys and girls is both encouraged and reinforced by the adults with whom they come into contact and the institutions of which they are members. ... Boys and girls who do not conform to the appropriate role model are both chastised and ridiculed by adults and by their peers. Boys who display what are seen as feminine traits are referred to as 'whimps', and girls who behave masculine ways as 'tomboys'. (Abbott et al., 2006, p. 7)

This part emphasizes the common cultural standards and various behaviors that have a role in the unequal treatment of males and females. Parents as well as people in society hold specific concerns and demands regarding raising children. Characters in the novel are often portrayed as not fully human, as they are confined to their homes only, assigned to fulfill their orders, maintain household cleanliness, prepare meals diligently, and bear male offspring. For instance, Zeba's husband, Kamal, exemplifies gender inequality through his hostile attitude toward his wife and other female family members. Zeba attempts to prevent her husband from drinking, but he responds by beating her. The novels illustrate women's dependence and the dominance of male characters in Afghan society.

As depicted in the book, gender inequality leads to misery, confusion, turmoil, and imbalance in Afghan culture. As a result of the husband's hostile attitude, the home appears wrecked, disorganized, and filled with violence. However, the title of the novel, 'windows' symbolizes hope, openness, light, and a link to the outside world. Without windows, a home becomes extremely gloomy, confined, and isolate from the outside world, mirroring the condition of the female characters in the novels (Salman et al., 2020, p. 24). From the beginning of the novel, there is no hope for Zeba, despite her being a devoted wife, a caring mother, and a dedicated housewife. In spite of the fact that she conforms to patriarchal society norms in her behaviors and interactions

with others, she finds herself accused of murdering her husband without any supporting proof. Women are not only solely responsible for childcare; they are also burdened with housework and various additional duties, leaving them with little time for themselves. In this novel, Zeba describes common daily routines that she always has, illustrating her way of life: “I lived with the man. I salted the food to his taste. I scrubbed the dead skin off his back. I made him feel like a husband should” (2016, p. 1). Zeba’s son, Basir, tries to understand why his mother never complains about the challenges that she faces in her marriage. He also questions the reason why her mother pretends to be happy, pondering, “why didn’t she ever scream out or strike back?”, due to his belief in her potential to alter their situation, he blames her mother responsible for their current conditions, “she’d done nothing to say things should be any different”. However, he is not old enough to work out the strict patriarchal conditions in the country. Unfortunately, due to his gender, he has difficulties when it comes to perceive the issues faced by women. He pities his mother because “she’s always carried on as if his father had been exactly the type of husband she’d expected” (2016, p. 112) Regrettably, he feels sorry for his mother since she has always behaved as if his father had fulfilled her expectations of being an ideal husband. For women, pretending to be happy by ignoring all the problems is the most important thing to sustain their marriages under strict rules. They avoid discussing daily problems, fearing that acknowledging them would lead to restrictions, strict rules, and verbal or physical violence for both themselves and their children. Even the victims often seek to minimize or overlook emotional abuse, which is a perplexing reality. In their personal lives, women have traditionally played the role of wife, providing assistance and support to the household and their husbands, while meeting societal expectations.

In other words, patriarchal expectations within the family are well-defined, culturally created, and deeply rooted (Tonsing & Tonsing, 2019, p. 162). This often leads mothers to adopt in a strict way to their children influenced by their own upbringing in patriarchal families. Furthermore, Hashimi’s books predominantly focus on the lives of Afghan people, with a particular interest in women. Her works delve into the challenges women face in patriarchal societies and provides detailed insights into the customs and beliefs prevalent in Afghanistan. Zeba is not the only woman who

experiences violence, despite her best efforts to make other people happy. Patriarchal institutions have historically placed women directly under the control of their fathers and husbands, providing them with limited assistance. Fathers and husbands are expected to safeguard women's roles as mothers and their sexuality. This concept of domestication of women often coincides with the protection of unmarried women's virginity. The patriarchal system grants men the authority to shape the division of roles. As a result, women often lack education and money, which leaves them with no choice but to depend on their husbands. As Zeba reflects, "She'd been too dependent on him, but what else was a husband for?" (2016, p. 73). Women learn complete dependence on their husbands when they get married.

From the perspective of Afghan women, a prenuptial agreement often results in a deadlock, compelling the married woman to comply with the demands and expectations of the patriarchal society (Rasheed, 2022, p. 3). Failure to obey their husbands' rules often results in women facing restrictions, violence, or other forms of punishment, as the threat is abundantly clear. Empowered by their position, men consistently view themselves as leaders of the household, allowing them to demand whatever they want. Furthermore, the detrimental effects of stereotypes along with prejudices are overwhelmingly felt by some women. As a result, women may be labelled, leading to increased violence and restrictions:

I wonder if he knew what kind of crazy his wife was or if she just snuck up on him. Women are odd creature, you know. Awfully good at hiding things. You just never know what they've got tucked in the folds of their skirts. That's what my father told me. (2016, p. 289)

One of the most pervasive prejudices against women is the notion that they cannot be trusted, often attributed to stereotypical beliefs. The only way to justify this is by emphasizing perceived biological differences. Patriarchal ideologies often put forward various justifications to oppress women, as they believe that women hide things, do activities secretly, manipulate their husbands, and may even carry out a spell to give harm someone that they do not like. It is known that patriarchy "is a system that both completely lacks and completely fears the feminine. Patriarchy is an

imbalanced, fear-based, warlike and truly insane structure because only a patriarchy is on top, obsessed with control and completely inhumane to everything below” (Means, 2011, p. 515). All unwanted or less preferred traits are attributed to women. There are various phrases that humiliate women and glorify men such as the saying that “women don’t swear and men don’t gossip” (Talbot, 2008, p. 463). Men are often portrayed as rational, bold, fierce, and cautious, while women are labeled as emotional. If women are not strictly controlled or warned, they can do things that will harm the family. They must be always informed about what they should not do. In order to maintain the so-called authority of manhood, they learn to suppress certain emotions and feelings that are directly connected to femininity (Michael, 1994, p. 65). As a result of these expectations, men feel the pressure to fulfill tasks which are related to power, as expressed by Michael: “We have to perform and stay in control. We’re supposed to conquer, be on top of things, and call the shots... We learn to beat back our feelings, hide our emotions, and suppress our needs” (1994, p. 65). These expectations are imposed without the need for scientific evidence, as the boundaries of manhood and womanhood are clearly defined by dominant patriarchal power structures from early childhood:

If, well before puberty and sometimes even from early infancy, she seems to us to be sexually determined, this is not because mysterious instincts directly doom her to passivity, coquetry, maternity; it is because of the others upon the child is a factor almost from the start and thus she is indoctrinated with her vocation from her earliest years. (De Beauvoir, 2014, pp. 273-274)

The text implies that girls learn to be passive, which is the outcome of outside factor, thus it is impossible to say that it is innate. These outside factors vary, and they have a significant impact on the development of girls’ identities. With the help of female characters such as Zeba, Mezghan, Nafisa, and Latifa, the author emphasizes domestic, physical, and sexual assault, as well as gender discrimination. Additionally, through the character of Bibi Shireen and two anonymous individuals, the unjust justice system of Afghanistan is portrayed briefly. The heroine, Zeba, is a sophisticated

and elegant woman who deals with domestic chores all day. She is a devoted mother and wife who lives tranquilly within four walls without causing any disruptions to her friends and family. Since women are supposed to be obedient, polite, and subservient mothers and wives who give their all, Zeba strives to please her husband although Kamal is not aware of all sacrifices that Zeba makes. While she is in jail, Zeba realizes that the place is filled with women who suffer from challenges, poverty, and abuse in Afghanistan's patriarchal society. However, the prison provides an environment for these captives of patriarchy to exchange their stories, experiences, and judgments. The prison called Chil Mahtab represents both tyranny and resilience, and it also serves as a personification of patriarchy, which oppresses women by enslaving them (Rasheed, 2022, p. 2). The prison becomes a safe home where women can freely converse and rest without having a nonstop watching eye, providing them with a sense of security that they often lack at home. This dialogue vividly portrays the horrific condition of women in places where they are constantly at risk of being falsely accused:

And if I had been, for the sake of this discussion, and I had seen Zeba kill her husband with her own hands, I'm only one woman. As far as I know, there isn't another woman who will come forward and complete my testimony.

It was true, and the judge nodded in agreement. A woman's account carried only half the weight of that of a man's. That was not his decision. It was how they'd always measured a woman's word. (2016, p. 174)

Trials for women are often subject to postpone without formal explanations, which leads women to believe that they are guilty. In prison, Latifa requests if Zeba has met the judge, but for months Zeba has not met the Judge, as the patriarchal system does not easily allow women to be found innocent. Women do not deserve equal treatment as this also shows: "They like to keep people a good, long time before they even start the trial. Keep you in here so long that you and everyone you know start to believe you're guilty for whatever's written in your file" (2016, p. 77). It indicates that women are imprisoned regardless of considering that they are guilty or innocent, and even witnesses avoid describing the crime scene. Yusuf, as Zeba's advocate,

interviews neighbors, but one neighbor refuses, stating, “I don’t want to be part of the gossip. Rumors can get a woman lynched in the streets” (2016, p. 340). This suggests that mere gossip can be enough to make a woman arrested, which discourages people from getting involved in the case. During trials, judges tend to impose heavier punishments on women compared to men, even for similar crimes. Zeba witnesses many inappropriate behaviors of her husband, but she cannot confirm anyone about them because the concept of honor differs significantly for men and women:

She could see the way Kamal’s eyes wandered through the market, feasting on the women who had thrown aside their burqas. She could see him tracing their silhouettes, undressing them with a greediness that made her face burn. She knew, when he came to her in the night, that he was thinking of a hundred other woman – any other woman. He would travel to a nearby city sometimes, disappearing for a day along with money that should have been spent on food for the family. There were some women, everyone knew, who would lie with a man for the price of a meal. (2016, p. 70).

Therefore, patriarchal laws force women into silence and blind them to any kind of sins or wrongdoing committed by men. Despite many neighbors being aware of Kamal’s inappropriate behaviors, they choose to turn a blind eye and avoid discussing it. Everyone in the neighborhood knows about her husband’s affairs with other women, but no one is willing to address the issue. Elie Wiesel touches the issue at the ceremony of Nobel Peace Prize, stating that people had better “take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere” (Prize, 1986). If a society ignores all forms of crime and injustice, such offenses will become rooted and nearly impossible to eradicate. If they are imprisoned for having an inappropriate relationship, they need to wait for the mercy of their abusers because an abuser’s or rapist’s acceptance may secure their release from prison. Otherwise, these women may face death sentences due to ‘zina’. They seek to be accepted as wives by their rapists, as they are regarded as ‘fallen’ or ‘sinners’.

Considering an Afghan women’s daily life in marriage, life is strictly controlled

and confined. On the other hand, this controlled environment offers more comfort than their own homes as there is no man around to command all the time. As depicted here, the warm atmosphere in prison is: “The prison was a small world. The cells were unlocked for the most part, and women walked through the hallways, gathering in open rooms or in the yard...there was even a beauty salon” (2016, pp. 48-49). Although Zeba misses her children while in prison, she also experiences a kind of freedom for the first time in her life, free from the responsibilities that had previously consumed her as a housewife. She remarks that “there were moments when Zeba felt light and liberated... but it was hard not to appreciate the freedom she had... she had no responsibilities in the kitchen. Her meals came with impressive regularity” (2016, p. 67). Zeba is aware of the reality that “this is not prison. Prison is out there” (2016, p. 207), recognizing that a free woman in a patriarchal society often faces more pressure than a convicted one. As bell hooks notes:

Home was relaxing to women only when men and children were not present. When women in the home spend all their time attending to the needs of others, home is a workplace for her, not a site of relaxation, comfort, and pleasure. (2000, p. 50)

This quotation depicts the notion that ‘home’ should be a place for relaxation for all family members, but only a place where women take all the duties. However, if women always take care of people inside the household, such as children and men, the home becomes a workplace for them, rather than being a setting associated with rest, comfort, and enjoyment. It is also implied that this duty covers all time leaving little time for personal relaxation or pleasure, and conversely, it transforms into a location where women engage in work and assume duties. In patriarchal societies, the imbalanced division of household chores and caregiving duties, resulting in women facing difficulties in their homes. While Zeba desires to help other women in prison, she is aware that she is unable to protect them all. Her character embodies both aggression and a lot of sympathy for women who suffers as she has, yet she struggles to find ways to assist them:

Zeba rubbed at her eyes. The stories were too much for her. There was no

way her jadu would free a prison full of condemned women. No spell would change the fact that a woman's worth was measured, with scientific diligence, in blood. A woman was only as good as the drops that fell on her wedding night, the ounces she bled with the turns of the moon, and the small river she shed giving her husband children. Some women were judged most ultimately, having their veins emptied to atone for their sins or the sins of others. (2016, p. 201)

In other words, in Afghan culture, women also suffer a lot when their husbands die as these widows are frequently forcibly compelled into marrying their brothers-in-law or any male relatives of their deceased spouses. One widow describes her situation in the novel, stating, "I had two children to feed and only my sewing kept us alive. Your uncles hinted at me marrying one of them" (2016, p. 141). Given that life in such societies can be extremely difficult for single women, girls who lose family members are immediately married. What is even more troubling is that married men within the family may try to remarry with single girls, posing a threat to married women within the family boundaries as well. In the novel Gulnaz's husband dies and she tries not to take the attention from men when she is outside: "When enough time passed that some began to refer to her as a widow, Gulnaz took advantage of their assumptions. She dressed in black, drew the curtains on the windows, and spoke in hushed tones" (2016, p. 27). If these widows do not have enough income, they have to marry again as it is not proper for women to live alone. Latifa, who is a prisoner in Chil Mahtab, thinks that the prison is better than her house, hence she wants to stay there even though she is held captive there: "Latifa had no interest in leaving Chil Mahtab, a place where she was treated better than she'd ever been treated in her life" (2016, p. 45). Because of the better treatment she receives, she is not eager to find a way to get out. Her home does not have any good memories, reminding her to escape with her younger sister, saying, "It was all my doing... I decided to flee that miserable home. I wanted to save myself and my sister" (2016, p. 45). It can be stated that this preference for prison over home can be attributed to the privileges women enjoy within the prison's confines, where they have limited freedom to leave, allowing them to adopt such a life: "the women never left the compound" (2016, p. 177). This illustrates the poor position of

women as commodities within the family, where they are viewed as having little or no existence. In such a system where dualities are seen much more clearly, preference is given to beautiful women over less conventionally attractive ones, leaving disabled women struggling to find their place in society, as handsome men gather most of the attention. This system grants men unrestricted decision-making power at all levels, allowing them to act in ways that align with societal perceptions of moral uprightness, legality, and preservation of the existing social structure. Consequently, men employ a variety of strategies, ranging from coercion to physical and social oppression, to maintain this authority and power over women. This not only empowers men to rule over women in all aspects of life, including their bodies and minds, but also normalizes prejudice, especially in daily life, leading to the normalization of unfair decision and discrimination.

One of the prisoners called Mezghan confesses that she is forced to get married with her sister's brother-in-law, but she does not admit marrying him because she has a relationship with a boy from her neighborhood. Additionally, Mezghan is sent to prison after the boy, whom she does not want to marry, accuses her of committing adultery. Mezghan continues to hope that her lover will come and save her one day, as she believes he is innocent. However, she encounters a lot of obstacles, as "his mother, she's impossible. She doesn't like me very much. She said I chased after her son, but that's not true at all. Haroon used to follow me home from school" (2016, p. 46). Regardless of their efforts, women struggle to convince society that they are innocent. As Lamichane notes, "for girls, sexual maturity meant a major lifestyle change, as it was the beginning of their lives of restriction. In order to lower the risk of losing their virtue before marriage, an adolescent girl's public movements were very controlled" (2012, p. 51). The dominating system orchestrates women's desires, feelings, and romantic drives to align with the benefit of men. These presumptions are prevalent in popular culture, which encourages drastic measures to suppress women. Prejudices against women, which are invariably justified in terms of preserving the tradition, are the underlying forces driving requests for giving up women's rights and for enabling men to make decisions on women's behalf.

The exclusion of women is rooted in religion, law, and culture. In such societies, a married man is often seen as his father's caretaker, whereas an unmarried woman encounter bias within her familial relationships from an early age. On the contrary, boys are raised with favored rights and activities in preparation for his future position. Latifa explains a medical procedure associated with the examination of virginity. The purpose of this test is to find out whether a single woman has a sexual relationship with a man, especially in nations where adultery is considered as a sin or illegal. The doctor says: "You'll have to take your underpants off and lift your skirt. The doctor's going to use a flashlight to look at every hole in your body to see if a man's been near it" (2016, pp. 68-69). As explained by Latifa, the procedure includes a thorough examination of her body by a doctor to verify her chastity. This is a man-made society, hence they have to prove that they are pure in order not to be accused of adultery ('zina') (Mohammed & Rasheed, 2022, pp. 121-122).

The phenomenon of honor killings is widespread throughout the world, but it is especially prevalent in Afghanistan, thus single women are afraid of being seen together with a boy, or a married woman tries hard not to have any interaction with men. In the light of what has been mentioned in the previous paragraph, the purpose of the restrictions and subordination surrounding patriarchal marriage is to ensure that a man has power on his wife or female relatives, and this can be done to protect a girl's virginity via humiliation, assaulting, keeping girls and women locked inside the house; forcing them to wear a hijab or restricting all necessary rights. Men often demand that wives must be sexually loyal to their husbands. In the novel, one of the characters called Aneesa, who works as a reporter for a newspaper, mentions a case which is about a girl that has sexual abuse many times after her parents die:

She'd taken from a village to Kabul, and after the family she worked for discovered both of their adolescent boys had been sexually assaulting her, she was passed on as a bride to a man in his seventies. The old man had turned her out two weeks after their marriage because she'd not been a virgin. Now the client had been arrested for *zina* and was to arrive in Chil Mahtab in the morning. (2016, p. 350).

In adultery, no one questions whether the man is guilty or not. Women are always easily blamed as they have to protect their honor. If the man who has a sexual relationship and abuses a woman, the women are left to die when he does not agree to marry. Intra-familial sexual abuse is generally ignored and girls are immediately forced to get married because families do not want this issue to be heard and their family reputation to be affected. In the marriages, loss of virginity matters for husbands, hence the sexually abused girls can also have problems with their husbands. After girls who are not virgins are forced to marry someone, they experience more abuse in their lives and are never valued.

It was all about honor. Honor was a boulder that men placed on the shoulders of their daughters, their sisters, and their wives [...]. This girl had lost her father's honor in Zeba's courtyard. If he knew that something had happened to her – the details hardly mattered – she might not be forgiven, even though she was an innocent child. (2016, p. 234)

In this part, it is clear that Zeba is aware of this child's future, who ought to have been exempt from criticism due to her gender and instead treated as a victim of sexual abuse. It can be concluded that in Afghan society, a woman is considered guilty whoever the offender may be if her honor is violated. Afghan women's perception of inferiority and subordination is reinforced by the norm that offender is innocent if the guilt is between man and woman, hence society places the blame on the victim without questioning.

In Afghanistan, arranged marriages are prevalent, as result, the desires of girls towards their future husbands are likewise deemed unimportant. It can be pointed out that it is a common practice to force women get married to men that they have never met, and in many cases, girls are sold like a material. Zeba's mother clearly demonstrates that male members of the family decide the marriage between the couples, thus mothers do not have any right to say. When Yusuf asks Zeba's mother about the match between Zeba and Kamal, Gulnaz candidly responds: "Did you approve the match?" "No one bothered to ask me." "Did you object?" Gulnaz shot him an impatient look. "It was much bigger than me" (2016, p. 166). As portrayed in the

novel, Zeba reflects that she has never seen her husband before their engagement, stating, “at her grandfather’s recommendation, her mother and brother had given her away when she was seventeen. She had no say in the arrangement...” (2016, p. 54). In many instances, two families decide upon a marriage without even consulting their own children about the matter. Mothers-in-law always consider themselves as the representatives of their sons, and it is normal for them to select the most beautiful girl with good qualities before she is taken: “Mothers of young men watched with a keen eye, looking for a girl who was beautiful but not too haughty, someone who danced well but not too suggestively, a girl who glowed with innocence and virtue and fertility” (2016, p. 122). Girls are asked to marry before they become adults. Families feel ashamed if their daughters do not marry, and since they see their daughters as a burden:

Meena was the right age and had recently finished college. She was taking computer classes, and they wanted to see her married a good person. They knew Yusuf’s family and heard that Yusuf had a job as an attorney. He would be a good match for her, Meena’s parents decided and hinted as much to Yusuf’s mother. (2016, p. 37)

As a result, patriarchy triggers women’s inferior position, and causes economic dependence, thus girls and women suffer a lot from traditional and patriarchal pressures. They have very limited options to live in man’s world, which in turn hinders their capacity to make a life freely having an occupation and pursue education. While working, they may experience unfair treatment and unjust wages in the workplaces. Men prevent women to achieve economic independence due to their belief that employment will restrict their household duties and hinder child-rearing. Arranged marriages or sometimes forced ones are prevalent in patriarchal societies, resulting in women having little or no control over the choice of their partners. Families seek to guarantee that their daughters get married to the person that they choose, using some forms of violence such as threats, bullying, physical or psychological violence. Family honor is the most important thing to be protected as the parents take care of societal expectations, cultural traditions and religion. These practices significantly impact

women's will and personal freedom, which leads to experiencing psychological distress and struggling with various illnesses and traumas in the near future. Women struggle to survive in a very strict patriarchal system where their voices are silenced in both their families and society, as portrayed in novels set in Afghanistan. They seem to have no other way out of their limited life except marriage, as they do not have economic independence. Traditionally, men have taken advantage of the possibilities offered by patriarchal systems, defining women as subservient and obedient. Opposition or expression of independence is punished brutally and socially stigmatized.



4.2 Cruel Exercises of Domestic Violence in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* and *A House Without Windows*

In patriarchal countries, it is customary for women to be confined to the homes as interpersonal relationships are seen as highly dangerous for women. Therefore, women are not allowed to be outside freely or make decisions without getting permission from male members as men hold complete power and control. When men perceive something as a threat to their authority or power, they use violence against women. Patriarchal ideologies grant men the right to maintain control within their families, further preserving the power imbalance between the sexes through societal norms that let men greater privileges. In order to avoid restrictions, prohibitions, or violence often comply with men's wishes in their families (Tonsing & Tonsing, 2019, p. 161). In alignment with the previous points, Mary Engel Potter clarifies that "ideologies of inequity [patriarchy] and the practice of violence are inextricably linked" (1995, p. 249).

Since the patriarchal system gives all rights to men, the smallest mistake which women make is punished by men. Different types of violence are included in this punishment, and that is why women have to be careful about every step they take in society. It is common to see the prevalence of fear in society because of punishments. This system has become deeply ingrained in society, compelling women not to expect rights or not to stand against male authority or violence. Since childhood women experience or witness many kinds of violence inside or outside home.

Nevertheless, they are left alone to endure different sorts of abuse and violence from their husbands or in-laws. It is also clear that the quiet existence of women may not be an intended or desired preference, but instead a consequence of the challenging conditions placed on them by society. This presents that women can decide to remain silent as a means of self-censorship. The act of self-censorship is triggered by the anxiety of harmful acts, such as mockery, harassment, or bullying. There are many tricky factors that may block women's interaction in society, and these factors show why women may be forced to stay quiet or cautious in specific circumstances. In

patriarchal societies, there is an expectation that men need to display their capacity for violence against women to prove their masculinity. In other words, they do not want to be perceived as weak since women are regarded as weak. Since traditions and societal norms cause this masculinity, men are made to show their capability to oppress women to avoid any possible objects. Patriarchal violence which includes physical, psychological or domestic violence is a common way of preventing women from social life. In the novel *A House Without Windows*, Zeba's mother sings some verses:

“Men treasure their manhood as God’s greatest gift

Because without it, justice is brutal and Swift.” (2016, p. 198)

In order to save their daughters, mothers make hard decisions as they know the society well. On the other hand, this violence pertains to the separation of public and private spheres, the delineation of male and female family roles, and women's legal and ethical commitment to their husbands (Yllö & Bograd, 1988). It is also understood that women are nearly invisible in society, and this contributes to the limited rights that women have in remote areas due to these strict traditions. Similar to this view, Young explains that “thus poor people, women, the mad and the feebleminded, and children were explicitly excluded from citizenship, and many of these were housed in institutions modelled on the modern prison: poorhouses, insane asylums, schools” (1990, p. 54). Furthermore, Afghan society has historically regarded domestic violence against women as a family problem, and even the slightest criticism has been seen as an offensive against the whole society. As pointed out, while men and women suffer from countless forms of violence, children and women are often the most common victims (Kilpatrick, 2004, p. 1217). In contradiction of the common belief, when taken into consideration the number of homicides of women in patriarchal societies, they are subjected to more physical violence and abuse at home than in public places, and they are more frequently killed by their partners within their own homes (Hooks, 2000, pp. 61-62).

For that reason, Nadia Hashimi creates a distinctive voice that highlights the societal and governmental neglect of Afghan women's issues. Besides that, she

attempts to promote consciousness about brutality against women in Afghanistan's patriarchal society. The female characters in her selected novels represent the lives of countless Afghan women who face domestic violence inside and outside their homes.

In *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, Madar-jan demands full obedience from her daughters, and Rahima complies since she knows that it will be better for her to follow her orders so as not to have any violence: "Men could do what they wanted with women. There would be no stopping what Padar had set in motion" (2014, p. 123). As the leader of the family, Rahima's father may give harm physically to maintain power. Rahima experiences the same violence and obedience every day as she carefully observes her father's treatment of her mother. As helpless as she is, Rahima is unable to resist and prevent any form of violence. She emphasizes her powerlessness by stating "men are unpredictable animals", adding, "Only God knows what he will do" (2014, p. 107). Rahima mirrors her mother's submissive nature, and this obedient behaviour towards men ultimately determines her fate as well. This quote demonstrates that Rahima's father uses violence so as to show his potential to protect his honor:

All we managed to do was embarrass my father. My mother sobbed, her hands in powerless fists. Khala Shaima shook her head and shouted that this, all of this, was wrong, a sin. She didn't stop until my father slapped her across the face. She reeled backward. Our guests looked on, feeling it was well deserved. My father had redeemed himself in their eyes. (2014, p. 152)

When they express their concerns, they experience violence as it is seen in the above quotation. Khala Shaima states her concern about forced marriages, but Rahima's father, in response to Khala Shaima's manner, became angry and reacted her by attacking her in the presence of people who visit them, intending to regain his self-respect and initiate his so-called masculine dominance. Such an uncontrollable power is very dangerous as men apply this violence to their sisters and daughters without any hesitation. Elizabeth Cady Stanton states:

The male element is a destructive force, stern, selfish, aggrandizing, loving

war, violence, conquest, acquisition, breeding in the material and moral world alike discord, disorder, disease, and death. See what a record of blood and cruelty the pages of history reveal! (*The Solitude of Self* - Jan. 18, 1892)

It is apparent that men have unlimited force over women or weaker people, hence they can use violence to oppress them. Women, who have been raised in a male-dominated neighborhood, might take in the notion that men are always right and consequently choose not to speak out about their criticisms or disagreements. In places where there is a prevalent culture of violence, men are frequently expected to exhibit hatred. This masculinity normalizes all things that women have and minimizes aggressive behaviors, abuses, or forms of violence making it socially acceptable, which actively fosters and causes more dangerous violence. In her marriage, Rahima's mother-in-law does not show any sympathy toward her daughters-in-law, and always mistreats her. Rahima describes this, saying, "his mother had assisted on me using me as a cane to get to the car. She was old and I was not rude enough to refuse, though I only answered her questions with one-or-two-word responses. She was sizing me up" (2014, p. 162). Despite the fact that Rahima wants to see her sister, her mother-in-law prevents her from going out even if she completes all the household chores. Her mother-in-law maintains strict control and keeps a watchful eye on her, as Rahima reveals: "My mother-in-law came back often. When the house wasn't cleaned to her standards, she would pull me by my ear and make me scrub the floors while she watched" (2014, p. 174). The following paragraph illustrates why women also resort to physical violence, as they attempt to reinforce man's dominance and supremacy within the household:

I couldn't spend much time out there or Bibi Gulalai would come chasing after me to tend to something that no one else wanted to do. She had taken to using a walking stick these days, a change driven as much by her intensified desire to discipline me as her unsteady step. (2014, p. 184)

As it is seen from these different quotations, in patriarchal societies, it is not only men who use physical violence, but also women try to resort to suppress those who

are younger or in lower positions (Salman et al., 2020). On the other hand, since they are also subjected to physical violence when they are children and young, they often view violence as the only way to enforce compliance with patriarchal rules or to educate others in accordance with these roles:

Rahima, this kind of behavior is exactly what I was worried about. You're a wild child and not a suitable wife for my son but he's taken you and now we have to undo what you are. Listen to me carefully. You are to behave like a proper bride and learn how to keep house. That tantrum you threw in your father's home will not be tolerated here. I'm leaving now but know that I'll be keeping an eye on you. (2014, p. 172)

Moreover, any disagreements within family members result in physical violence because the suppression of family members is deemed essential for establishing authority in patriarchal societies. Walker also demonstrates that "when one form of violence was found in the family, other forms were more presumably to occur and that violence in the family has a direct relationship to community violence and other forms of aggression and gender-based violence" (1999, p. 23). It is clearly known that, in these societies, men are assumed to be born to dominate, while women are born to be inferior due to the so-called superiority of men. The following part illustrates the control mechanism with the help of domestic violence:

But, please, Khala-jan. Just to see her for a few moments. I promise I'll have all my work done. I've already washed the floors and beaten the dust from the carpets this morning. I could even go there and help her with whatever she needs to do-" "Another slap across my face. I took a step back and felt my eyes blur with tears. I was always surprised by the amount of force her wrinkled fingers brought. (2014, p. 179)

Rahima would like to see her disabled sister who lives in the same neighbourhood, but she needs consent from her mother-in-law to see her. After asking for permission, she tries to persuade her by promising to do tasks and help around the house. However, her mother-in-law does not say anything about accepting or declining

the permission; instead, she gives the daughter-in-law a firm slap. The severity of the slap amazes Rahima, and it reveals a tense and potentially abusive relationship in the family. In the novel, Rahima is always concerned about her sister Parwin as she has difficulty in walking. Rahima worries about the responsibilities that she has to fulfill:

During the day I watched the compound's walls, hoping for a glimpse of my sister. I prayed Parwin would hobble into our courtyard unannounced and surprise me with a visit, drawing a smile. I couldn't bear to think of what her days were like. I hoped she didn't have to do all the things I had to do. Parwin's legs moved slowly, clumsily. People didn't like that. If the people around her were anything like the people around me, she was sure to be punished. I'd been smacked around more than once for a job not done well enough. (2014, p. 178).

The excerpt emphasizes a type of psychological abuse suffered by Rahima, which involves being deliberately separated from her husband and mother-in-law, hence it makes difficult for her to establish a bond with her sister, Parwin. Although Rahima and her sister live in the same neighborhood which there is just a wall between them, Rahima confronts considerable barriers in being able to see her sister. Parwin, who is wedded to Abdul Khaliq's cousin, Abdul Haidar, becomes a distant one as a result of this enforced isolation. Rahima's limited access to her own family portrays a sort of psychological assault, highlighting the emotional burden and difficulty she faces in her social relationships. However, punishment serves as a critical tool to make women learn submission and adhere to the rules; otherwise, they understand that there is nowhere else to turn.

There is a connection that patriarchy leads to gender imbalances, and patriarchal standards are frequently associated with various forms of assault and spousal abuse, which men use as a means to control women (Dobash & Dobash, 1998, pp. 171-172). In the novel, Rahima deeply feels grief and depression as she has to ignore problems in her daily life: "It angered me to realize how tight our leash was, even in this far away from Abdul Khaliq. I felt like I was being buried in a hole, deeper and deeper every day until I could hardly see daylight" (2014, p. 352). Even though she is

physically separated from Abdul Khaliq, she experiences increasing oppression which she describes similar to a hole, and she feels more alone and depressing day by day. She indicates the sense of powerlessness and desiring for release from this oppressive marriage, reflecting the mental and emotional weight brought on by the limitations placed upon them.

Psychological violence can be seen in many ways: “Hard to believe you could be even worse as a mother than you are as a wife! My son deserved better! He would be alive if he’d had a mother better than you!” (2014, p. 408). This sentence highlights how common verbal assault is in this patriarchal society. It also draws attention to the frequent threats, insults, and mocks Abdul Khaliq leads to Rahima and his other wives. It highlights how tough it is for Rahima to put up with Abdul Khaliq’s disrespect, mockery, taunts, and general abuse. The verbal abuse stresses the poisonous dynamics in the relationship and illustrates the detrimental effects of emotional violence on Rahima’s wellbeing, adding yet another level of psychological misery.

Gender roles are strictly constructed by men in underdeveloped countries (Zoloth, 2017, p. 140), and South Asian societies have long-established patriarchal gender roles, although the extent to which families and communities adhere to these roles may vary (Segal, 1999, pp. 215-2016). Women have little to gain and much to lose while being entirely dependent on their husbands. Being a woman in these societies means bearing a complicated burden in these societies as there are numerous rules to obey, and escape is rarely an option. Those who dare to leave the family home often face the risk of rape or death, as they are not readily welcomed into society, particularly without formal education. In a similar vein, domestic violence is a means to enforce women submission and loyalty to the male members of the family. When standard gender roles dictate that women must be obedient and feel weaker than men, they often find themselves in desperate need of male protection. If they deviate from patriarchal rules or resist their daily responsibilities, they become a target to the violence. It is crucial to acknowledge that in patriarchal societies, sex is a tool used by men to subjugate women rather than being viewed as a shared or consensual activity. It occurs “when a woman’s body is treated as an object, especially as an object that

exists for pleasure and use” (Heldman & Cahill, 2007, p. 3). It is believed that a husband has the right to claim sexual relationship whenever he desires, and women are not permitted to refuse their partner’s sex demand. Consequently, forcing a wife to have sexual relations is regarded as a form of rape, as both the physical and emotional effects of this activity cannot easily be erased.

He could have done it. I thought about it later and realized he could have done all the things he made me do, but that wouldn’t have served his purpose. One by one, he made me take off everything I’d been wearing. First the chador, then my socks, my pants, my dress. With every piece, I trembled more. When my pants came down, I began to cry, which didn’t faze him in the least. I was humiliated. I stood before him, weak and vulnerable, my arms doing their best to cover as much as they could. (2014, p. 168)

The narrative demonstrates that, for the husband, sexual activity is perceived as a necessary duty rather than an expression of love. Rahima is subject to sexual assault by her husband, Abdul Khaliq, who compels her to obey all of his commands, including sexual relationships. In such circumstance, Rahima feels helpless and endures further physical violence whenever her husband performs. His complete disregard for her feelings is evident as he continues these sexual activities without her consent. She recollects the physical violence inflicted upon her by her husband, often accompanying their private moments together. The following passage vividly portrays the physical abuse suffered by the story’s female protagonist:

In a flash, Abdul Khaliq grabbed my hair and pulled my head off the ground. My head slipped forward. He snatched again and jerked my head up. My scalp screamed. When I saw locks of hair on the floor around me, I realized what he was doing. I tried to pull away, begged him to stop, but he was barely there. He was trying to make me apart, to disassemble the pieces that were hardly holding together as it was. (2014, p. 408)

This passage depicts a scary and brutal struggle which Abdullah Khaliq leads to

Rahima. She wants to flee from this brutal attack but she is held back by his husband, and he causes immense pain which cannot be easily restored. He always intensifies his punishments because he believes that Rahima is not suitable to be a decent mother to their son, Jahangir. In general, a woman who aspires to become a mother needs to possess the physical and mental qualities which are important to provide for her child in ways that are respected by society. If she does not inherently possess these qualities, she must have the ability to assemble a substantial social support network to raise the child (Lopata, 2006, p. 230). It is undeniable that men use sex to demonstrate their perceived superiority over women by controlling them and satisfying their own needs, disregarding women's feelings

I feed you and clothe you and for nothing! This is what you do to me! I should throw you out on the street! I should throw you back to the palace and let them do with you what they planned! You and your cursed face! Damn you! (2014, p. 381)

Aasif, as a husband, does not receive what he expects at their first night since Shekiba makes an excuse to cancel the sexual relationship, claiming that she is menstruating. Aasif becomes furious because he is accustomed to getting everything he desires without refusal. Consistent with feminist theories, violence against weaker ones is related to the patriarchal structures of society, which generally includes physical or sexual violence against wife (Rakovec-Felser, 2014, p. 63). Additionally, it can be linked to notions of masculinity, as in these societies, it is often considered normal for men to command without taking into consideration of women's feelings and wishes. Shekiba attempts to flee from the house, as she witnesses violence against a woman who is sentenced to death by throwing stones on the street:

Her body jerked with each stone that hit her. The soldiers took turns. Picking, hurling, and moving to the back of the half circle. Ten minutes passed, a hundred stones. Benafsha's voice grew weaker; she slumped forward, her burqa sained in a dozen places, dark circles bleeding oward one another. The earth around her grew dark as well, blood soaking the soil. Two stones ripped through the blue fabric, gashed flesh showed

through the holes. (2014, p. 330)

The experience or witnessing of such mistreatment tends to evoke a sense of powerlessness and helplessness in women. They recognize that no one will come to save, but keeping domestic violence a secret only promotes its prevalence. However, many women are afraid to confess since when reporting may result in further violence and abuse from both their fathers and husbands (Asare, 2019, pp. 65-66). Violence is the unfair treatment that utilizes severe, sometimes fatal acts that can lead to the murder of women. Nevertheless, with each encounter with violence or exposure to abuse, women tend to grow more subdued and passive. Therefore, it is likely that almost all cases of rape in Afghanistan go unreported due to the victim's desire to avoid negative social pressure and disgrace:

The act of sexual abuse was deemed to have corrupted the girl and effected her 'fall' from innocence; once 'fallen', her moral status was dubious. The sexually girl was seen as a polluting presence, and was a particular danger to other children. (Jackson, 2013, p. 6)

This quote highlights an unacceptable societal view on sexual abuse, especially when it affects girls. In this situation, there is a generally widespread assumption that the girl has been morally stained or ruined since she was the victim of sexual abuse. 'Fall' is connected with the girl's loss of innocence after sexually assaulted. The idea that the girl's moral standing can be called into question following such an incident is indicative of negative and victim-blaming beliefs that are common in various patriarchal societies. Rather than announcing the child as a helpless victim, people often question her morality and unfairly judge her responsibility for everything that she experienced. The sexually assaulted women are labelled as dangerous to the society especially for kids, but no one encourages to deconstruct these prejudices and views that are very harmful for society.

Furthermore, Kelly and Radford assert that women are conditioned to denigrate the violence they suffer from males, which distorts their perception of the intensity of such abuse (1996, pp. 65-66). When considering Walker's views (1999, pp. 21-22), it

can be stated that the acceptance of domestic violence, women's inferior social position, oppressive policies, repressive religious beliefs that deeply affect women's status, as well as conflicts or civil wars, are all factors contributing domestic violence in many countries

Men are not punished for having sex with or even raping women of the enemy, slave women, women of lower classes, or women defined as 'loose', 'free', or 'whores'. This explains why even today a woman's sexual history is brought up in rape cases. (Christ, 2016, p. 219)

Consequently, Hashimi depicts the widespread subjugation of women in these books in a number of settings, such as in the workplaces, families, societies, and education. The stories take place in different eras, including the 20th and 21st centuries. However, the difficulties that female characters experience don't change in time. The stories demonstrate how difficult and complicated the fight for equality and recognition for women has been since women are treated less favorably than males in both novels. In these novels, women are seen less valuable than men, and men punish women whenever they find a way. Families have harsh measures taken against women when their demands are not fulfilled. Various forms of violence against women keep continuing in patriarchal societies, making women invisible and silent in spite of their efforts. Paradoxically, women suffer the most from punishments even when males are at fault, no matter what women do, they are invisible and silent. It is very easy to find excuses to punish women because the society hypocritically sees men as more important and essential, hence women are always sacrificed even if the man is guilty.

In *A House Without Window*, the narrator describes Zeba's personality as follows: "She was a loving wife, a patient mother, a peaceful villager" (2016, p. 3). However, Zeba's husband, Kamal, is enormously different. Even Zeba's kindness and deference do not make any difference to soften his heart, as he frequently subjects his wife and children to physical abuse. Kamal's harsh attitude leads to domestic violence, chaos, and disorder.

Kamal was one of those men who needed to exert his strength to reassure

himself he was capable of something. He needed to see his wife and children react to his presence to confirm he was in command. A man's might was right because no one had ever told him otherwise. (2016, p. 186)

He neglects his familial responsibilities and is depicted throughout the book as neither a respectable father nor a devoted husband. He is an alcoholic and aggressive man, often treating in a bad way:

With each time Kamal was spotted drunk in town, he further condemned Zeba to a life of ignominy. She begged him to consider their family, their reputation. For that, Kamal had broken her nose, her rib, and half of their dishes. His sober interludes were hardly a return to the man he'd once been - they were moments in which an angry Kamal stumbled about the house, shouted at the children to keep out of his way, and grumbled about needing his 'medicine'. (2016, p. 71).

She pleads her husband to stop, but her husband never refrains from using violence since, as a husband, he does not feel any guilt towards his wife. For Zeba, home is nothing but her responsibilities. Hashimi portrays their home as "home had been, for as long as Basir could remember, a broken place— broken dishes, broken ribs, broken spirit" (2016, p. 4). Kamal knows how to exert control over Zeba according to his own desires, causing severe physical, mental, and emotional harm. She seems imprisoned within her own body and futilely attempts to resist. The atmosphere of their marriage reflects the chaotic and violent state of their daily life. Not only does Kemal treat her with hatred and contempt, but he also takes advantage of her. Due to Kemal's indifference to his family, Zeba's position at home becomes invisible and nearly fragile. Consequently, when Kamal passes away, the family does not mourn his loss, as they have all endured immense suffering due to his actions. The following lines demonstrate their apathy towards their loss:

The children did not speak of their father. They did not need an explanation, having known what their father was in life. That he was no longer part of their world did not trouble them. They would not miss his

violent outbursts, the way he would leap at their mother's cowering form. Their ears still burned under his twisting fingers, their cheeks still stung from his slaps. They did not miss the sound of breaking glass or the anxiety that sent a stream of urine running down their legs in the middle of the night. It was better and fair that he was gone and their mother was returned. (2016, p. 408)

These sentences reveal the oppression and brutality inflicted by a husband upon a woman. Despite feeling helpless, women often continue to pretend to be happy in their marriages, even though their partners are consistently more ruthless. Emotional, if not physical, violence is always experienced at home because women are the ones who are seen unimportant. According to her, violence disrupts the harmony and mutual trust within family relationships. Besides, men frequently attempt to abuse women physically and sexually.

Similarly, violence can be observed in the furious behavior of males in their relationships with women, whether they belong to the same family. As asserted by Corradi et al., "the fundamental tenet of patriarchy is power; where power is distributed unequally between men and women, violence is the tool men use to keep women under their control" (2016, p. 5). All male family members often subject female members to physical, verbal and sexual mistreatment, making it nearly impossible to cultivate healthy relationship between men and women.

Hegemonic masculinity is characterized by (arguably) negative attributes such as toughness, aggressiveness, excessive risk-taking and 'emotional illiteracy', alongside 'positive' attributes like strength, protectiveness, decisiveness and courage, and features of more debatable values like individualism, competitiveness, rationality and a practical orientation. (Scott-Samuel et al., 2009, p. 3)

'Hegemonic masculinity' means prevailing or socially recognized type of masculinity, hence it enables some idealized standards for men. It is also important to figure out how specific features are promoted. However, it is clear that this makes

impossible to establish a flourishing household or community without women's active engagement. Therefore, it is vital to empower women to have an active role both raising children and managing family matters.

With his father and brother dead, Kamal became the patriarch of his family, though he still didn't garner the respect he felt he deserved. Day by day, his moods soured. He was bitter toward the children, brushing them away if they dared approach. More often than before, he would send Zeba tumbling to the floor with the back of his hand. She learnt to bite her tongue around him and quiet the children with a stern look. *Just keep him happy*, she told herself. *It could always be worse.* (2016, p. 68)

Zeba knows that since her husband is the head of the house, she has to do whatever he says or wants. That is why she tries to forget what she goes through and turns a blind eye to everything that happens as it is not possible to survive in society otherwise. It is not possible for her to take her children and start a new life. Even though their children are aware of their father's faults, "all the children, especially Basir, were old enough to have known their father for what he was. Still, an angry father was better than a dead father" (2016, p. 59). When Zeba is found to have killed her husband, everyone is very surprised since "typically, husbands killed wives, not the other way around". The society believes that "*you can't kill your husband, even if he's the borned devil himself*" (2016, p. 59). Everyone knows that Zeba is constantly subjected to violence by her husband and that her husband does not support the household. Zeba even seeks to report her husband's situation, but the situation has not been taken seriously:

"It didn't have to be this way," she said quietly. "You could have saved us."

Hakimi had not replied, busying himself with paperwork and nodding for another officer to take her into custody. True, Zeba had come to him a month ago, the flesh over her cheekbone purple and blue, warning him that some of the men from the village were praying to a new god, one that lived

in a bottle. They spent their evenings in a stupor and returned to their homes in a punishing mood. (2016, p. 60)

It does not make sense for women to report any situation or crime as even if the situation is true, men will always find a way to get out of the situation, and since judges and police are always men, they take the side of men. Even though Zeba has been the right one in what she experiences, she can never convince the society of her rightness. Kamal is never a good husband as he cheats on Zeba many times. This situation is perhaps known by everyone. Since there is a perception in society that a bad wife is better than being single, she has to put up with her husband since divorce is not an option in such a patriarchal society. Her husband not only does physical violence to Zeba, but also always shows that he does not respect her. He humiliates Zeba and always makes her feel bad as a woman.

Yes, she'd been too dependent on him, but what else was a husband for? She would not turn to him as much, she promised herself. She had less and less desire to, anyway. The way he turned away when she undressed, the way he snored through her labor pains, the rage-fueled times he'd called her a fatherless whore – those were all points in the wrong direction. The marriage game was not as close as it should have been. (2016, p. 73)

Zeba is aware that marriage is not this, but she has to continue this game for her children as well. Zeba never forgets what she has experienced as violence has become an integral part of her marriage, hence she always remembers “*Kamal's face again. His eyes wild and glaring*”(2016, p. 81). Zeba sometimes feels very bad, and when she talks about her fears and concerns, her husband uses both physical and psychological violence.

She worked up the nerve to tell Kamal about it.

There is something here, Kamal. It is hurting us.

It was blackening their lives, it was a shadow over their home. The first time she brought it up, she was surprised that Kamal bothered to listen to

her. When she finished talking, her hands wringing behind her back, he rolled his eyes and shook his head

“You’re imagining things. Don’t be like you’re your witch of a mother.”

His words stung, but she breathed a little easier. He was confident and concrete, and she could believe in him.

The second time she’d brought up her fears, he had said nothing but twisted her ear so hard that it swelled to a purple mass. She hid it with her hair and head scarf so the children wouldn’t ask her what had happened. (2016, pp. 84-85)

This dialogue reflects Zeba’s courage to express her concerns about something that is negatively affecting their life. When she first mentions the issue to Kamal, he does not care, and accuses Zeba of using her imagination, and despite the hurtful words, Zeba wants to believe in Kamal and lean on him. However, when she mentions the issue for the second time, Kamal uses physical violence by bending her ear so hard that it swells. The fact that she hides the wound with her hair and headscarf demonstrates her struggle not to show it to her children. Kamal’s treatment indicates how their relationship is going, and it also shows that there is no mercy and compassion in their marriage.

Since women have to submit unconditionally to their husbands, sexual violence is also common in marriages. Women do not have the right to reject their partners. Rape also happens within marriage. Zeba describes this: “She could almost feel the stubble on his face that had rubbed against hers just last night when Kamal had pressed himself into his wife despite her small pleas of protest” (2016, p. 86). Women are exposed to unbearable types of domestic violence in their marriages where they do not receive any love and affection. When Zeba hears that Kamal’s brother is dead, she prefers Kamal to die. When Kamal dies, she is afraid of the possibility of meeting him again: “Would they bury her next to Kamal? Husbands and wives were supposed to be reunited in the afterlife, she’d heard. But God couldn’t possibly be that cruel, could He?” (2016, p. 94). Even though she is sure that Kamal is dead, what she experienced

is so terrible that she worries that he will intervene in their lives again. She says “Zeba knew now that Kamal was not a person to be trusted, even in death. She needed to watch over him – to make sure he did not twitch his way back to life” (2016, p. 95). This situation shows how psychologically exhausted she is. The fact that her husband is dead does not mean that the threat is over, hence the process she has gone through cannot be compensated for. The extent of her traumas she has experienced also confirms this fear. Having children at home does not prevent physical violence, thus children also witness it. They also do not have any emotional bond with their father. The fact that their mothers or sisters are constantly exposed to domestic violence causes them to accept this situation. Hashimi reflects Zeba’s son Basir’s views about domestic violence that he has witnessed:

He saw the way she watched his father, her eyes skirting over his clothes, checking for something she never talked about. Though her behavior was peculiar, Basir loved his mother deeply. When his father raged, she made herself wide as a tapestry so that his hands would strike only her. (2016, p. 111)

Even though Basir tries to love his father, he never understands his mother’s indifference as his mother accepts every violence she experiences, and Basir has difficulty in understanding her tolerance: “Why didn’t she ever scream out or strike back? She’d done nothing to say things should be different. She’d always carried on as if his father had been exactly the type of husband she’d expected” (2016, p. 112). Basir has witnessed their arguments many times; however, he never sees her mother’s reaction to this violence:

He’d heard his father’s rage and seen the way his mother had reeled from his blows. Basir had believed his mother to be meek but devoted, exasperating but well-meaning. His father had a violent temper, but why couldn’t his mother, after all their years of marriage, avoid triggering his fury? Had his cowed mother finally had enough? Had she stood her ground in one grand gesture of defiance? Basir hadn’t really known his parents all that well, he admitted to himself. (2016, pp. 179-180)

Their father is a selfish person who only thinks of himself and spends the money he earns without bringing it home. The children are always hungry, but he does not care as the person who has to feed the children is the mother: “Everyone else was starving, especially the children. We begged him to try at least a little, that it wouldn’t feel right for us to eat if he didn’t join us” (2016, p. 167). Sexual violence is common in society as men dominate women, but women are always the accused party and are either forced to marry or punished for adultery. One of the prisoners mentions this:

“I was attacked by my cousin at my home. He cornered me in a room and told me he would kill me if I screamed. My family didn’t believe in me and when I went to the police, they arrested me”

“They arrested you?”

“No one had seen or heard what had happened. The police said if it had been forced, I would have screamed. Since I hadn’t shouted, they arrested me for zina. I was already in prison when I realized I was pregnant. Once my family found out about that, I never heard from them again.” (2016, p. 201)

As families remain indifferent for types of violence within the family, women try to overcome this situation on their own. Even if they try to get support through legal ways or from the family, all methods are against women. Women who become pregnant as a result of rape are forced to marry as second wives, or families seek to find a much older candidate who is eager to get married.

On the other hand, there is another traditional practice called Bacha posh which is prevalent in Afghanistan and some parts of Pakistan, and young girls are raised as boys until puberty. This practice allows them to access education and have more social freedom, and they can go to public areas where they are otherwise forbidden due to their gender. While this concept is one of the creations of patriarchy, it can be very complicated for girls in terms of gender and identity. In the selected novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, Hashimi depicts two Afghan women who experience living as bacha posh. In a society where female members of the household cannot leave the

house without a male accompaniment, Rahima's father attempts to find a solution. He is the only man responsible for taking care of them, but he suffers from depression heavily and he is also addicted to opium, leaving him with no strength to perform tasks outside the home. Consequently, he decides to make his youngest girl a bacha posh. Rahima disguises herself as a boy when she wants to go outside for shopping, earning money, or attending school.

For girls who live under very strict rules, being a temporary boy means enjoying the privileges of a patriarchal society. However, this liberation is only an illusion, and they will encounter harsh conditions as soon as this freedom ends. Nordberg points out, "these girls are hidden, and that is exactly the point. To everyone on the outside, they are just bachas" (2014, p. 48), thus no one cares about the girls and ignores their true genders. Bacha posh girls fully adopt their new gender roles, to the point where "the role fits so well that sometimes even outside the family, people are not aware that it exists" (Associated Press, 2022) . In the novel, Khala Shaima often visits Rahima's family and is aware of their problems. Since the family lacks any boys other than a very sick father, she advises that the only option for the family is to choose one of the girls and make her disguise herself as a boy.

Raisa, what else were you going to do? Your husband is delirious half the time and of no use to you. You can't send the girls to school or even to the market because you're afraid of what will happen. Your in-laws are all too busy talking about each other to help you out. (2014, p. 46)

Just as the girls' opinions are not sought in other circumstances, no one asks for their opinion when it comes to choose the bacha posh and convert her a boy until puberty. The chosen girl immediately changes her clothes in accordance with the necessary arrangements, and her hair is cut. Clothing and hairstyle are used to distinguish a boy from a girl, requiring certain changes related to physical appearance. Madarjan informs Rahima about 'bacha-posh', and she excitedly anticipates the chance to attend school, play freely outside, and go shopping for the necessary things for the house. To Rahima, it seems "like a dream," and she envisions herself with the neighborhood boys: "Jameel. Faheem. Bashir. My eyes widened at the thought of

being able to kick a ball around in the street as they did” (2014, p. 23). This idea thrills Rahima thrilled due to the freedom it promises. They immediately make some preparations for Rahima, including choosing a male name to replace Rahima:

Madar-jan took me behind the house with Padar-jan’s scissors and razor. I sat nervously while my sister watched. She pulled my long hair into a ponytail behind my head, whispered a prayer and slowly began to shear away... The next step was clothing. Madar-jan asked my uncle’s wife for a shirt and pair of pants... Bachem, from now on we’re going to call you Rahim. (2014, pp. 34-35)

Until Rahima has her first period, she gets the chance to keep on her education without any concern. Her experience as a bacha-posh enables her the possibility to attend school, and she possesses several abilities that men can perform as well.

Sure. I went to school. I ran errands for my mother. I even worked and brought money home. I was learning how to fix electronics,” I boasted. That was more that I had done for Agha Barakzai but Shahnaz wouldn’t know the difference. (2014, p. 164)

Being a bacha posh makes Rahima feel more at ease while in disguise, as she no longer needs to be cautious when she is outside. She is the only girl who is allowed to go to school and continue her education for a temporary time. With the help of her education, she becomes an assistant to her sister Badriya, and she helps her teach to read and write. This tradition becomes essential for families who do not have sons, as Rahima begins to understand: “I started to understand why Madar-jan needed a son in the home. Certain chores she had left for my father had not been done in months” (2014, p. 48). She can freely go out to buy bread from the baker’s. Rahima enjoys the newfound freedom in every sense when she dresses as a boy, sometimes even having her sisters serve or refusing her father’s requests:

Thrilled, I started to run faster. No one gave me second glance. My legs felt liberated as I ran through the streets without my knees slapping against my skirt and without worrying about chastising eyes. I was a young man

and it was my nature to run through the streets. (2014, p. 48)

As it can be seen from the above extract, Rahima enjoys freedom in every sense when she dresses as a boy. Sometimes she wishes her sisters would serve her, and when their father needs something, she no longer has to do it herself:

“Hey, Rohila. Padar-jan wants some tea and something to eat. He’s in the living room.”

“So? Why didn’t you put a plate together? You know there’s some korma-katchaloo in the pot.”

“He didn’t ask me. He said for me to tell my sister. That’s you. Anyway, I’m going out. Don’t take all day. He looks like he is hungry” I said cheerfully. Rohila’s hazel eyes gave me a look even as she turned to heat up a bowl of potato stew for our father. She was angry and part of me knew I was being a brat, but everything I was experiencing was new and I wanted to enjoy it. (2014, p. 49)

Her sisters are very resentful of this situation as they know that there is nothing they can do. Rahima is afraid of being forced to give up being bacha posh because she has enjoyed so much freedom through her disguise. She worries, “my mother was going to change me back into a girl” (2014, p. 116). Girls who disguise themselves as boys, enjoying the freedom to play on the streets, shop for the household, and earn money by doing various works, are once again confined to the house when they have their first period. “Most children who were made bacha posh were changed back into girls when their monthly bleeding started but Madarjaan had let me go on, bleeding but looking like a boy.” (2014, p. 84). The transition to womanhood, marked by the onset of menstruation, signals the beginning of social restrictions for girls. The grandmother believes that girls should be confined to the home at this point. Temporarily shedding their male identity and returning to their female identity can lead to identity confusion for these girls. Corboz, Gibbs and Jewkes reflect on the challenges faced by girls in this gender dilemma when they are forced to stop disguising as boys upon having their first bleeding:

When girls raised as boys reach puberty, they are usually ‘converted’ back into girls. This often poses a dilemma for those girls who had more freedom and mobility during childhood, only to have this freedom restricted when being required to re-adopt a feminine identity and sometimes being prepared for marriage a short time after becoming a girl again. Conversion back to being a girl may be particularly difficult for those *bacha posh* who identify as male and want to continue living as a boy. (2020, p. 587)

Rahima’s life is filled with constant adaptation to new, challenging roles imposed upon her. Hashimi clearly illustrates the complexity of these roles imposed on girls by masculine authority:

I was a little girl and then I wasn’t.

I was a bacha posh and then I wasn’t.

I was a daughter and then I wasn’t.

I was a mother and then I wasn’t.

Just as soon as I could adjust, things changed. I changed. This last change was the worst. (2014, p. 384)

As a result, in patriarchal societies it is common for a married man to be perceived as having the duty to look after his family as the leader of the house, thus he has many duties to uphold traditional familial responsibilities. Conversely, if there is no son in the family, families search for finding various methods to go on their lives as women are considered to be inside home. “Bacha posh” is a prevalent tradition which permits girls to pretend as a boy, and this cultural exercise necessitates clothing and treating young girls as males until they reach puberty. A girl’s shift to being bacha posh is solely up to her parents, and when a girl takes on the role of bacha posh, she requires to wear man’s clothes, cut her hair short, and adopt a male name temporarily. This shift also helps her to get a social standing, grant her the opportunity to participate in activities that are conventionally limited to boys. On the other hand, these girls who

participate in the practice of bacha posh may confront identity crises, and this leads to discomfort and unhappiness. Bacha posh girls are aware that they will never have complete freedom and will always experience some sort of subordination in society.



CONCLUSION

Unlike biological traits, social roles are not predetermined but are imposed on women through patriarchy, which, in its broader sense, denotes to the dominance and control of men in society. This system forces the subordination of not only women but also young men, children, and slaves or servants that are under the control of male domination. In patriarchal societies, there are a number of strict rules for women which render them feeling powerless and helpless. Over time, due to social and cultural developments, men and women have been treated unequally based on gender. However, the role of women in social life is very different in ancient times when women are actively engaged in activities outside the home, suggesting that the society is not necessarily patriarchal but possibly matriarchal. While males go hunting and involve in outdoor activities, females manage domestic work and family. The shift to a sedentary lifestyle disrupts the tie between agricultural society and nature on a large scale, weakening the social status and functions of women while strengthening male authority over nature and women.

Until the early 20th century, this situation confines women to the domestic environment, making them invisible in public life. In patriarchal institutions, men wield authority, make choices, and have power over women. They are generally more active than women in most areas. Many women are actively challenging patriarchy to achieve greater equal status in society, gain their own rights and liberties, especially in male-dominated environments that impose additional burdens on them. There are still places in the world where women have not secured even basic rights. Afghanistan is one such country that restricts the rights of women significantly. Under the rule of Taliban, Afghan women have been virtually imprisoned. Afghanistan shares its borders with Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and China. In 1996, after over seventy-five years of political instability in Afghanistan, the Taliban, a fundamentalist Islamic organization, seized control over nearly eighty-five percent of the country. Under Taliban leadership, women have practically disappeared. The restrictive measures of the Taliban prevent Afghan women from obtaining even the most essential things that are very necessary for women. Nadia Hashimi, who is an

Afghan-American writer, has written many novels, and in this study selected two novels called *The Pearl that Broke its Shell* (2014) and *A House Without Windows* (2016) are analyzed. The novels are about domestic and psychological violence against Afghan women who are not allowed to go out freely or experience merciless practices of patriarchy.

Due to patriarchy and other traditional practices, women are considered as inferior, and they are forced to live in strict conditions which men decide. Despite being born and raised in America, Nadia Hashimi clearly portrays the suffering of Afghan women within the patriarchal system and amplifies their silenced voices in her novels. The female characters in her selected novels are lacked of their basic human rights in a male-dominated society, where their every move is restricted. It is not possible for women to escape from the roles imposed on them, and resisting results in immense pressure, violence, and abuse. This thesis delves into the major problems of women who live in Afghanistan through Hashimi's selected novels, exploring their struggle for rights and the physical and psychological violence they endure. They seek ways to obtain some rights and survive despite the restrictions and violence they face. Domestic and physical violence, abuse and other kinds of mistreatment are so pervasive in Afghanistan that women often feel desperate and helpless, with severely limited rights. Living under strict rules and oppression, women are almost invisible in social life, and families adopt a system for girls that it temporarily permits girls to dress as boys and move freely until puberty, known as 'bacha posh'.

The works chosen for this thesis not only depict the experiences, identity conflicts, and resilience of the female protagonists in the novels, but also provide information about the continuing events occurring behind closed doors in Afghanistan. The story of women remains the same, despite changes in names and addresses. The objective of this thesis is to examine and give voice to women who have been silenced, marginalized, and suppressed. The experiences that they have should not be the destiny of women, no matter what place it takes place in.

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