AFGHAN WOMEN’S RESPONSES TOWARD OPPRESSION IN NADIA HASHIMI’S *THE PEARL THAT BROKE ITS SHELL*

AN UNDERGRADUATED THESIS

Presented as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of *Sarjana Sastra* in English Letters

By
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Student Number: 164214042

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LETTERS
FACULTY OF LETTERS
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No amount of guilt can change the past and no amount of worrying can change the future.

Umar ibn Al-Khattab
For myself,
my beloved family,
the people that love me
unconditionally and supporting me to this
day.
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Armeta Fajar Surya Nugraheni
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ABSTRACT


This thesis analyzed Nadia Hashemi’s novel entitled The Pearl That Broke Its Shell. The novel tells about the two generations of Afghan women, Rahima who lived in the late 20th century and Shekiba who lived in the early 20th century. The novel highlights the life of both the characters experience oppression in Afghanistan.

To understand the oppression that the main characters experience, the writer formulates three objectives in this study. The first objective is to analyze the description of the main characters. The second objective is to reveal the oppression that main characters experiences. The third objective is to analyze the main characters’ responses toward oppression.

The method used in this thesis is library research. In this study, the primary source is the novel entitled The Pearl That Broke Its Shell. The secondary sources come from other books such as Young’s book about oppression and Hooks’ book about feminism. This thesis used Feminist Criticism as the approach to reveal characters’ responses.

The result of this thesis are first, Rahima is described as a brave, obedient, and educated woman and Shekiba is described as brave, passive, and uneducated. Second is the oppression that main characters experienced which are marginalization, powerlessness, and violence. Third, the responses of both main characters toward oppression. Rahima chooses to disguise as a boy and escape from her reality with her friends as the proves that she refuses to be inferior, however, Shekiba chooses to continue her life as a wife who did not experience physical abuse anymore.

Keywords: oppression, feminism, Afghan women
ABSTRAK


Untuk memahami penindasan yang di alami oleh karakter utama, penulis merumuskan tiga masalah dalam studi ini. Tujuan pertama adalah deskripsi analisis dari tokoh utama. Tujuan kedua, masalah yang dirumuskan adalah untuk mengungkap penindasan yang karakter utama alami. Tujuan ketiga adalah masalah yang dirumuskan adalah analisis respon dari karakter utama terhadap penindasan.


Kata kunci: oppression, feminism, Afghan women
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Literature has become a big part of human lives for many ages, and it has helped people to express their emotions and creativity. It plays a significant role in impacting people’s perspective, shaped the political system, and society. Literary work has its way of beauty, they came in many different styles from different years and cultures that represent a lot of perspectives and purposes. According to Long, literature is the part of art that conveys the truth and beauty of the image of some truth, the grace which hard to see, and only some people who can feel it to their deepest soul (1909, p. 18). The literary works usually have their purpose through the expression of beauty, have hidden meanings, or have noticeable meanings that show directly to people.

People have their fondness and passions, thus literature also come in different types of forms. Novel is one of the genres of literature. In The Cambridge Introduction to the Novel, novel is defined as a self-contained piece of fictional prose longer than 40,000 words (MacKay, 2011, p. 22). Novel is divided into non-fiction and fiction. Non-fiction novel consists of narrative non-fiction, essays, biography, autobiography, and speech. Fiction novel consists of drama, poetry, fantasy, humor,
fable, fairy tales, science fiction, short story, folklore, horror, tall tale, legend, mystery, mythology, fiction in verse, and historical fiction (*Genres of Literature*, 2010, para. 2).

One of the types of novel is based on the actual event is historical fiction. This genre is used to describe the bleak situation in the real case. Historical fiction used fictional characters to highlights the perspective in the settings. Some female authors used this genre to depict the situation in real tragedy uses female characters. The issue of feminism gives them the platform to show women’s struggles in certain actual events. As it stated by Cooper and Short, female novelists use historical fiction to depict women’s mental health in the real historical women. It is also to explores the misrepresentations of historical accuracy, especially about female figure in history (2012, p. 4).

Afghanistan is one of the places where female are struggling against patriarchy. Many tragedies happened in Afghanistan, notably The Great Game which happened around the early twentieth century, and the Taliban’s rule affect the most to Afghan women around the late twentieth century.

The Great Game is a contest between the British Empire and the Russian Empire over Afghanistan. This war happened because Russia wanted to take over Afghanistan in around the nineteenth century. The Great Game is a contest between the USSR and the USA and to the struggle for control of oil resources in the region of the Caspian Sea (Yapp, 2001, p. 179).
In the late twentieth century, Afghanistan’s government hardly controlled all the Afghans, especially the rural areas. The Taliban ruled the southern Afghan province of Kandahar as social order force in 1994, and the Taliban controlled all of the small northern Afghan in 2001 (Taliban, 2019, para. 2).

The stories of the Afghan people under the Taliban regime are written in literary works. There are authors like Khaled Hosseini who wrote famous novels such as Kite Runner and A Thousand Splendid Suns, Abdul Salam Zaeef wrote a book entitled My Life with the Taliban, and Seth G. Jones who wrote In The Graveyard of Empires: America’s War in Afghanistan. These literary works depicted the cruelness of the Taliban in Afghanistan by the perspective of men and women.

The Pearl That Broke Its Shell tells about two different women in the twentieth century during the Great Game War and during the Taliban reign. This novel is written by Nadia Hashimi and regarded as historical novel. She has been known as one of Afghan women authors who promote women empowerment and gender equality.

The Pearl That Broke Its Shell reflects the burden of living in the patriarchal society. The novel depicted the life of women of two generations who struggle for their life in patriarchal society. Both characters experience difficult lives under patriarchal system, however, they strive to change their fate and gain their freedom. This thesis uses this novel as the object of the study to analyze the experiences of the main women characters.
B. Problem Formulation

In this research, there are three problems that the writer wants to analyze. The formulated problems are:

1. How are the two main women characters of two generations described in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*?
2. What forms of oppression are experienced by the two main women characters in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*?
3. What are the responses of the two main women characters toward the oppression in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*?

C. Objectives of the Study

In this thesis, first, the writer wants to identify the traits as well as context of the two main women characters of two generations. Second, the writer examines two main Afghan women characters’ experience the oppression. Third, the writer analyzes the responses of the two main women characters toward oppression in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*.

D. Definition of Terms

This part present several important terms to analyze *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* by Nadia Hashimi. This part aims to avoid misuderstanding and help the term more understandable.
The term is **Oppression**. Oppression appears when the superior group dominate the inferior group to take advantage upon them. As Iris Marion Young states in her theory that,

> Oppression consists in systematic institutional processes which prevent some people from learning and using satisfying and expansive skills in socially recognized settings, or institutionalized social processes which inhibit people's ability to play and communicate with others or to express their feelings and perspective on social life in contexts where others can listen” (1990, p. 38).

The individuals that do not belong in the dominant are lacking the equal treatments and privileges. Thus, the individuals are silenced and not allowed to express their feelings.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Review of Related Studies

To analyze this research, the writer uses four studies that are related to the present thesis. In this part, the writer uses two journal articles and two theses. The purpose of these presented related studies are to provide the basis knowledge on the topic and prevent duplication from other writers.

The first study is written by Susan Piland (2015) entitled *The Stories They Would Tell*. In her journal article, Piland wrote the historical background of the novel. It describes the real event that happened in Afghanistan into five sections which point out the women situation as the inferior to men, how the women cannot go to school, only some that can read and write. Most of the women experience domestic violence. As the author of *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, Nadia Hashimi tells the reader about the story of Afghanistan as the bleak place for being female. She stated, “It’s not based on religion at all. It’s a cultural thing. And variations of a cross-dressing practice exist in other parts of the world, too, like Albania” (2015, para. 31). The tradition of bacha-posh is the way for the family to get the solution for the idea of having a son is everything for them to survive since boys can do everything and girls can do almost nothing. The article also shows Hashimi’s life when she decided to
write her novel. This article gives more information about the background of the story and the author’s perspective of writing the book.

The second study is a journal article written by Menon’s and Vijayalakshmi’s entitled *Identity Crisis Among Afghan Girls as a result of Bacha Posh Practice: A Cultural Study of Nadia Hashimi’s Novels The Pearl That Broke Its Shell and One Half from the East*. It is about the idea of bacha posh as the tradition for Afghans to solve the problem for not having a son in the family. The presence of a son in the house is a pride to the family while daughter is a disaster. The tradition of bacha posh is prevalent in Afghanistan. The female disguise their ‘female’ identity with the presentation of man’s look, which has short hair and wears pants.

Afghan families have numerous reasons to change their girls to bacha posh. New York Times states, “these are poverty and need for the girls to work outside home, social pressure to have sons and, in some cases, superstition that doing so can actually lead to the birth of a real boy.” To make a girl into a bacha posh, it is not difficult, just wear her typical dress of Afghan men and cut short her hair. There are no religious or legal formalities against the bacha posh practice in Afghanistan. Sons are the most valuable in Afghanistan and only the boy child is permitted to take the father’s assets and raise the family name and reputation; those families without sons are the objects of sorrow (2018, p. 1918).

This tradition is usually applied to the youngest daughter to help the economy of the family. Being a boy means having privileges and opportunities to do various activities. In Afghanistan, girls are easily get raped by men, so their father always put them inside the house and marry them off with men since this considered as their solution to protect their daughters from crimes.
Menon and Vijayalakshmi discuss the different characters between the novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* with *One Half from the East*. Both main characters, Rahima and Obayda experience the life of bacha-posh, however, they cope with this tradition differently. The bacha-posh usually experience gender dysphoria and identity crisis when they turn twelve, which the typical age for girls to get married because they are pushed to undergo the womanhood. These novels give the perspective of the women who have burden of their fathers’ demands and how they cope themselves through the phase of being a boy to a woman.

This journal article focuses on the identity crisis from the two novels of Nadia Hashimi. This article contrasts the two books in the same topic but different type of characters’ coping mechanism. This article gives the perspective of the main characters’ experiences the double life as female and male in Afghanistan.

The third study is written by Istikomah entitled *Women’s Attitudes Towards Gender Discrimination in Khaled Hosseini’s A Thousand Splendid Suns*. In her undergraduated thesis, she emphasizes the gender discrimination in a novel entitled *A Thousand Splendid Suns* written by Khaled Hosseini. The topic that she explores is about women in Afghanistan. Both of the novels use historical novel as the genre and use Afghan women characters.

The researcher uses Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns* which portrays the different attitudes of women towards the discrimination they face. Concerning the idea of gender discrimination and the different attitudes of women towards it, the researcher employs feminist literary criticism to analyze *A Thousand*
Splendid Suns. Feminist literary criticism has started to question the differences between women, including how race, class, ethnicity, and age intersect with gender in a patriarchal society. Thus, the theory can help the researcher to answer the research questions, i.e. 1) what kinds of gender discrimination are faced by women in Hosseini’s A Thousand Splendid Suns and 2) what the attitudes of women towards gender discrimination they face (2015, p. 43).

Istikomah’s thesis is similar to this thesis. She used the theory of feminism to analyze the text. However, the difference is the object of the study. She uses a novel called A Thousand Splendid Suns written by Khaled Hosseini.

The fourth study is an undergraduated thesis written by Endah Ratnasari from Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, entitled “Parvana’s Struggles Against Gender Inequality in Taliban Society in Deborah Ellis’ The Breadwinner: A Feminist Children’s Literature Study.” Endah analyzes the gender inequality experienced by the main character of the novel while this thesis analyzes the oppression that the characters’ experienced. Her object of the study entitled The Breadwinner has similar topic to the present thesis’s object of the study. In her thesis she focuses on the feminism that reflected from the main character.

However, the biggest problem that Parvana has to face is gender inequality. The text explores more how a female child, Parvana, lives in Taliban society and how she struggles against gender inequality. The text can show how difficult life Parvana and other female children have in a male dominated society, the Taliban. The text also tells how Parvana does some struggles in patriarchal society led by Taliban group. Therefore, the researcher assumes that Parvana has certain quality that supports feminist values (2015, p. 9).
Similar to the thesis conducted by Istikomah, Endah's thesis also identifies the main character’s struggles to end sexism. The difference between Endah's thesis and the present thesis are the object of the study, which Endah uses Deborah Ellis' novel called *The Breadwinner*.

Those studies above help the writer to discover different perspectives from similar topic. Thus, the related studies presented in the present thesis are needed. These studies help to understand the topic related to the novel, *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, that is used as the object of the study.

**B. Review of Related Theories**

In this section the writer provides several theories that used to analyze the problem formulation. There are three theories that fit in to be applied in the analysis.

**1. Theory of Character and Characterization**

This thesis uses theory of character and characterization to reveal the main characters in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*. This thesis uses the theory from Abrams, in his book entitled *A Glossary of Literary Terms*.

Character is the most important role in the story. Character helps the story to become more interesting and helps the readers to understand the message. Character, according to Abrams is, “The character is the name of a literary genre; it is a short, and usually witty, sketch in prose of a distinctive type of person” (1999, p. 32).
Abrams also mentions that characters are the persons in a dramatic or narrative work that interpreted with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities from their action and their dialogue (1999, p. 32). Abrams explains that there are two types of character. The first is flat and the second is round,

A flat character (also called a type, or "two-dimensional"), Forster says, is built around "a single idea or quality" and is presented without much individualizing detail, and therefore can be fairly adequately described in a single phrase or sentence. A round character is complex in temperament and motivation and is represented with subtle particularity; such a character therefore is as difficult to describe with any adequacy as a person in real life, and like real persons, is capable of surprising us (1999, p. 33).

In his book, Abrams explains about the methods of characterizing. According to Abrams, in characterizing the persons in a narrative uses two types which are showing and telling. Showing or the dramatic method is how the author presents the characters talking and acting which leaves the reader to interpret the motives and disposition in the character’s say and do. There is also inner showing which is the character’s inner thoughts, feelings, and responsiveness to events that authors illustrate. Telling is how the author describes or evaluate the motives and dispositional qualities of the characters (1999, p. 33).

2. Theory of Oppression

Theory of oppression is used in order to identify the form of oppression in the main characters’ life experiences. Oppression can be defined as “unjust or cruel
exercise of authority or power” (www.merriam-webster.com, 2020). This term defines the suffer of inferior against the superior.

This thesis uses Iris Marion Young’s theory from her book entitled Justice and the Politics of Difference. In her book she proposes five forms of oppression. The five forms oppression are exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism or cultural domination, and violence. Although this theory highlights the class oppression, however, this theory also applied for other oppressed groups.

My starting point is reflection on the conditions of the groups said by these movements to be oppressed: among others women, Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and other Spanish-speaking Americans, American Indians, Jews, lesbians, gay men, Arabs, Asians, old people, working class people, and the physically and mentally disabled. I aim to systematize the meaning of the concept of oppression as used by these diverse political movements, and to provide normative argument to clarify the wrongs the term names. (1990, p. 40).

This theory is suitable for other groups, including for women. Young also explains that all the oppressed people are experience the oppression in different ways. However, those people face a common condition toward oppression (1990, p. 40).

The first form of oppression is exploitation. Exploitation usually known as the superior who make advantage upon other people, as Young stated that “The injustice of capitalist society consists in the fact that some people exercise their capacities under the control, according to the purposes, and for the benefit of other people” (1990, p. 49). The natural rules in a society makes the system of the level in a work that inferior has to follow. The differences of social groups that
exploitation are class, race, and gender. Specifically, the form of exploitation in gender, that experience exploitation is women.

Women's oppression consists not merely in an inequality of status, power, and wealth resulting from men's excluding them from privileged activities. The freedom, power, status, and self-realization of men is possible precisely because women work for them. Gender exploitation has two aspects, transfer of the fruits of material labor to men and transfer of nurturing and sexual energies to men (1990, p. 50).

In a patriarchal society, women live to serve men. Women get lower-paying even unpaid to work. As an example cited from Deply in Young’s theory, “She makes it clear that the exploitation consists not in the sort of work that women do in the home, for this might include various kinds of tasks, but in the fact that they perform tasks for someone on whom they are dependent” (1990, p. 50). Women who are married and work in the home are usually work for free which benefit men that work outside. Men receive an emotional care from women’s hardwork and energies.

The second form of oppression is marginalization. Marginalization can be defined as the form of oppression that separate the group of people who have privileges and expel other groups of people who do not have privileges from opportunities. As Young stated that, “Marginalization is perhaps the most dangerous form of oppression. A whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life and thus potentially subjected to severe material deprivation and even extermination” (1990, p. 53).
There are groups of people that are called as dependent that expelled from opportunities. As Young stated in her theory, “Thus poor people, women, the mad and the feeble-minded, and children were explicitly excluded from citizenship, and many of these were housed in institutions modeled on the modern prison: poorhouses, insane asylums, schools” (1990, p. 54). Women as an example who marginalized, cannot get an education as men. Due to this oppression, women are tend to be in the house and dependent to men, as Young also stated that “Female experience of social relations, arising both from women’s typical domestic care responsibilities and from the kinds of paid work that many women do, tends to recognize dependence as a basic human condition” (1990, p. 55).

The third form of oppression is powerlessness. Powerlessness can be found between in a form of class in the society. Young mentions in his theory that, The powerless are those who lack authority or power even in this mediated sense, those over whom power is exercised without their exercising it; the powerless are situated so that they must take orders and rarely have the right to give them (Young, 1990, p. 56).

The powerlessness can be found in the work spheres between the leader as the dominant and the follower as the submissive. The natural order from the dominant separate the kinds of groups that are able to receive the privileged. In Young’s theory, it is mentions that this negative form of oppression divided the professionals and nonprofessionals in three aspects. First, the professionals has privileged to gain education and knowledge which related to the job and opportunities. Second, many
professionals have autonomy. They use their authority to control others like their workers to supervise, or over auxiliaries, or over clients. Third, the professionals have respectability as their way of life. This makes them as the dominant which make people to listen to what they say or to do their request (1990, p. 57). These priviledges that professionals haves are the opposite of the powerless which makes them oppressed by the power.

Powerlessness brings the superior to have power over the inferior. Women is one of the groups that oppressed because of their position as powerless in the patriarchal society. Young stated that “The privilege of this professional respectability appears starkly in the dynamics of racism and sexism” (1990, p. 55). Thus, in the society this oppression excluded some of the groups as the unprofessionals, including women due to sexism.

The fourth form of oppression is cultural domination or also known as othering or cultural domination. Cultural domination defines the stereotype that we know from the past and accept it until the present time. Young explains this in her theory,

The stereotypes confine them to a nature which is often attached in some way to their bodies, and which thus cannot easily be denied. These stereotypes so permeate the society that they are not noticed as contestable. Just as everyone knows that the earth goes around the sun, so everyone knows that gay people are promiscuous, that Indians are alcoholics, and that women are good with children (1990, p. 59).
Those stereotypes that dominant groups made from their experience and made them normal to the society. Thus, the stereotypes made the groups that are different from them feel left out and marked as other. As Young also stated,

Those living under cultural imperialism find themselves defined from the outside, positioned, placed, by a network of dominant meanings they experience as arising from elsewhere, from those with whom they do not identify and who do not identify with them. Consequently, the dominant culture’s stereotyped and inferiorized images of the group must be internalized by group members at least to the extent that they are forced to react to behavior of others influenced by those images (1990, p. 59).

The ‘other’ feel oppressed to this cultural domination because they feel like they do not exist and belong to the society. Women are one of the groups that considered as ‘other’, as Young stated that “Consequently, the difference of women from men, American Indians or Africans from Europeans, Jews from Christians, homosexuals from heterosexuals, workers from professionals, becomes reconstructed largely as deviance and inferiority” (1990, p. 59). Moreover, their feelings and expression of feeling left out do not bother the dominant. The dominants normally reacts to something that are different from the stereotypes and interpreted as bad to their eyes.

Lastly, the fifth form of oppression is violence. Violence is very common form of oppression that can be found in everyday lives. As Young explains violence in her theory,

What makes violence a face of oppression is less the particular acts themselves, though these are often utterly horrible, than the social context surrounding them, which makes them possible and even acceptable. What makes violence a phenomenon of social injustice, and not merely an
individual moral wrong, is its systemic character, its existence as a social practice (1990, p. 61).

Certain groups receive violence from the dominants and considered the brutal acts as normal. The example of the groups that oppressed with violence are people of colors, gays, women, and other groups that receive hates. As it also explains by Young, “Violence - causing fear or hatred of the other at least partly involves insecurities on the part of the violators; its irrationality suggests that unconscious processes are at work” (1990, p. 63). The superiors that use violence actions are burying their sense of hate to the inferior which causes the horrible acts toward them.

From these five forms of oppression, there are only three forms of oppression that are useful to this thesis. There are marginalization, powerlessness, and violence. Considering that, this theory are fit to the analysis in order to analyze the women condition in patriarchal society.

3. Theory of Feminism

Women and men have different roles in society. In this case, the result of the different roles causes the dissimilitude of their rights, and especially women do not get the same equality as men. To change the inequality from society, women merge on the movement called feminism. As stated in Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center written by Hooks, “Feminism is a struggle to end sexist oppression.” (1984, p. 24). This movement helps all gender especially women to free from the inequality and oppression.
Referring to discussion before, women are oppressed by the patriarchal system. Marginalization made women left out from the public sphere like work. Society believes that women do not have ability to be productive in jobs.

Women are unable to cooperate in jobs because women do not have the privilege to gain education like men. Charlotte Bunch explains in Hook’s theory that women should challenge themselves to strive education. Even the basic skills like reading and writing in order to develop critical and analytical skills (1984, p. 114).

When women have knowledge and skills, they are able to be independent. Unfortunately, society made women have to struggle to gain an education. Women can take liberty and pride if they are able to be free from marginalization in patriarchal society.

Oppression also is known that men have power while women have no power in the society. The position of women as inferior are also powerless in men’s eyes. As Hooks stated that,

Women, though assigned different roles to play in society based on sex, are not taught a different value system. It is woman's overall acceptance of the value system of the culture that leads her to passively absorb sexism and willingly assume a pre-determined sex role. Although women do not have the power ruling groups of men often exert, they do not conceptualize power differently (1984, p. 85).

Women and men are taught differently in their early age. Thus, it made them to have different position in the society. In fact, the society standards are not degrade
women’s worth. Although women cannot have the same power as men, however, they face the oppression in different ways. Kollias as cited in Hooks mentions that,

One of the major issues of the Women's Movement has been to eliminate women's weakness and replace it with confidence, independence. This is partly because middle class women who have some kind of protector (a successful husband or father) feel a lack of control over their own lives and have felt the need to organize around that. This is valid within its own class context. (1984, p. 87)

The women’s trait of weakness that society made should be changed into confidence and independence. These basic power can make the inequality to equality in the society. As Hooks also stated in her book, “Recognition of that strength, that power, is a step women together can take towards liberation” (1984, p. 93). When women can change and believe that they have power, then women can take liberation.

Lastly, violence is the common acts in the society that are used from the powerful or dominant to powerless and dominated. In the society, women are mostly the victims of violence. Hooks explains the violence of women from men,

While male supremacy encourages the use of abusive force to maintain male domination of women, it is the Western philosophical notion of hierarchical rule and coercive authority that is the root cause of violence against women, of adult violence against children, of all violence between those who dominate and those who are dominated. It is this belief system that is the foundation on which sexist ideology and other ideologies of group oppression are based; they can be eliminated only when this foundation is eliminated (1984, p. 118).

Men uses their power to oppress women in order to hold their position from them. The violence acts that women’s receive are also considered as normal in the society. The men’s idea of feeling superior to women and have their all powers to control the society will never stop. Unfortunately, if women and men cannot work
together to end the violence, the violence will continue to be a norm. Women and men should not use any kinds of violence, as stated by Hooks,

Women and men must oppose the use of violence as a means of social control in all its manifestations: war, male violence against women, adult violence against children, teenage violence, racial violence, etc. Feminist efforts to end male violence against women must be expanded into a movement to end all forms of violence. Broadly based, such a movement could potentially radicalize consciousness and intensify awareness of the need to end male domination of women in a context in which we are working to eradicate the idea that hierarchical structures should be the basis of human interaction (1984, p. 130).

If women and men can cooperate and use the movement to stop all kinds of violence, the pain over this oppression can be stopped. The society will create the idea of decreasing the various acts of violence in the public and private spheres. Specifically, in the patriarchal society where men dominate and control the society, the movement helps all gender especially women to participated and fight for equal rights.

C. Afghan Women’s Oppression under King Habibullah and Taliban Regime

This thesis analyzes two main women characters of *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*. Both the characters come from different eras, Shekiba lives under King Habibullah Regime and Rahima lives under Taliban Regime. This part is the history of women’s oppression that Afghan women went through in King Habibullah and Taliban Regime.
1. Afghan Women’s Oppression under King Habibullah

Afghanistan uses Islam as their foundation of cultures and laws. According to Moghadam, Afghan Islam is different since they use the practices and precepts from Shar’i and tribal customs. There are no inheritance rights for females and in rural areas the households are in debt accumulation. Afghanistan also uses ‘walwar’ as the exchange of the bride to the groom and a part of ownership claim (2007, p. 210). Moghadam also states that, not only women must obey and dependent to their husbands, however, the women’s status and roles are also part of property relations, their livestock, land, and houses or tents are belong to the male (2007, p. 211).

In the history of Afghanistan, King Habibullah is known as the King with the modern monarchies. There are several attempts of modernization in Afghanistan. As Ghosh explains that Habibullah built schools to educate women (2003, p. 4). However, the tribal leaders blocked any attempts at modernizing the state and the Habibullah’s efforts to get Afghanistan modern (2003, p. 2).

According to Ghosh, since Afghanistan’s tribal ethics are the ones who made the rule for society, Kabul struggles to control all of the Afghans. Afghan women were considered as the raw material for ethnic prominence. The Islamic laws became their foundation to decide the gender roles. In rural areas, this foundation was solid to control the Afghans. This patriarchal system controls the women’s position in danger. Thus, the system made women force in marriage and not allowed to divorce, they
also banned to have education, and put them in the second position in the house. The laws made them require to wear veil, and they cannot speak in the public area. This patriarchal system use women as their invention in the nation (2003, p. 2).

2. Afghan Women’s Oppression under Taliban Regime

Taliban took over the Afghanistan systems. Ghosh explains that, the Taliban ruled Afghanistan in 1996. In full control of the Afghans, they use Islamic Sharia Law. Thus, the laws had specific strict rules for females. In this particular situation, they set up Amar Bil Maroof Wa Nahi An al-Munkar to control Afghan women. They put strict standards for females, such as no permission for women to go outside unless with their male relatives, the burqa is required, no makeup or fancy shoes, women are also unable to go to school, or meet male doctors and indulge in forced marriage and rapes (2003, p. 7).

Taliban Regime was the cruelest in Afghan history. The strict rules of the Taliban uses violence to the Afghans. The punishment to Afghan women are very extreme. As Runion explains that, women who exposes their finger nail and use nail polish can be punished, such as cut women’s finger tips off. Also, women who protest against the Taliban’s rule are punished to burn themselves alive. When women caught wearing makeup or white socks under the burqa, they are punished by splashing in acid or beaten with cutting wire. The amputation of hands and feet is the punishment for stealing (2007, p. 123).
D. Theoretical Framework

This present thesis focuses on the main character’s life experiences in which the characters suffered from gender inequality in society. There are several theories that this thesis uses to answer the problem formulation. The first theory is the theory of character and characterization. The second theory is the theory of women’s oppression. The third theory is the theory of feminism.

The first formulated problem is the description of the main characters. This thesis answers the first formulated problem used the character and characterization theory. The theory that this thesis use is from A Glossary of Literary Terms written by M. H. Abrams.

The second formulated problem is the oppression that the main characters experienced. There are the oppression of women from the patriarchal society in the novel. Thus, to answer the second question, this thesis uses the theory of oppression from Iris Marion Young’s book entitled Justice and the Politics of Difference.

The third formulated problem is the responses of the two main characters. Following the first question, this question is their action or thoughts of the oppression of women. In answer, the third question, the theory of feminism, is used to analyze their responses. To answer the third question, this thesis uses a theory of feminism. The theory is from Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center written by Bell Hooks.
This thesis also uses the review of related backgrounds. The review of related backgrounds is needed to support the analysis. There are three sources that the writer used for the history backgrounds of Afghanistan. The first is from the book entitled Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East written by Valentine M. Moghadam. The second is from a journal article entitled A History of Women in Afghanistan: Lessons Learnt for the Future or Yesterdays and Tomorrow: Women in Afghanistan written by Huma Ahmed-Ghosh. The third is from the book entitled The History of Afghanistan written by Meredith L. Runion.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

A. Object of the Study

In this part, the writer explains the object of the study used in the present thesis. The object of the study is a novel by Nadia Hashimi entitled *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*. The novel published on May 2014 by William Morrow. It was in the nominee category for Goodreads Choice Awards Best Fiction in 2014. *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* portrayed the actual event that happened in a specific place with the fictional characters. Therefore, the genre of the novel is considered as historical fiction. The book consists of 452 pages which is divided into 69 chapters. The story has two main characters and Nadia used each of the names of the main character as the chapter in the novel to make the reader knows their point of view before they read the chapter.

*The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* is a story about the life of two Afghan women who are a century apart live under a patriarchal society. Rahima is a young girl who lives in the late twentieth century in Afghanistan under the reign of the Taliban, and Shekiba lives in the early twentieth century in Afghanistan under the reign of King Habibullah. Both of the characters experience the pressure of being female and experience the same tragedy even though they are a century apart.
Rahima is the third child of the former soldier named Arief, who lives her half-life to look like a boy known as bacha posh. The tradition of “bacha posh” helps her family in so many ways since her parents do not have a son. Therefore, this tradition helps the family to do certain chores that only males can do. Rahima’s temporary transition into a boy makes her experience the privilege in a male’s position, which drastically different from the female’s position. However, the feeling of having freedom as a boy does not last long, and her father decided to marry off her daughters to older men to be their other wife. Rahima, who is not mentally ready to be someone else’s wife, undergoes the hardest time in her life. Abdul Khaliq, Rahima’s husband, abuses her in the house. Rahima has to get through the loss of her sister, who decides to suicide and her son’s death, who was sick. Rahima chooses to work in the parliament as an assistant to Badriya, Abdul Khaliq’s first wife, since Badriya cannot read or write. In the parliament, she learns a lot about her surroundings, which leads to the time where she knows that she should escape from Abdul Khaliq. In the end, she disguises her appearance in short hair and dresses as a boy to help her escape from her reality.

Shekiba is the only child that survives from cholera and her mother died from depression. She spent as the only child to her father, however, as her father gets older, Shekiba becomes her daughter-son since she does all of the chores in the house, including the male’s chores. When her father died, she was left alone in the house for months until her father’s family come by to the house. The family then knows that
Shekiba is alone in the house, they take over the home and claim as theirs instead, Shekiba becomes a servant to Azizullah’s house. Shekiba being a servant in Azizullah’s house makes it worse to her life. She knows that her father’s house should be hers instead of her father’s family. When she gets the deeds, she tries to find Hakim to help her claim the land, yet as a female, she cannot inherit the property, and the deed then tore into pieces. Azizullah’s wrath leads him to sell her to King Habibullah as a servant. However, in the palace, Shekiba becomes the harem guard to the king’s harem. One time, she fell in love with the prince and tries to know him by telling Aasif, the prince’s friend, that she could bear a son.

Nonetheless, her effort to get the prince does not happen because she had to marry Aasif for his mistake. Aasif gets caught in sleeping with one of the harems named Khanum Benafsha. Shekiba marries Aasif as Shekiba’s punishment, while Khanum Benafsha’s punishment is to get stoning. At the end of Shekiba’s story, she accepts her position as Aasif’s wife and watches Queen Soraya’s speech of the new revolution for women.

B. Approach of the Study

In analyzing the problem formulation, this thesis uses feminist criticism. This approach is chosen because it is related to the main characters’ experiences who live under patriarchal society. This approach gives the space for oppressed women to get the freedom from domination, as Hooks stated,
Its aim is not to benefit solely any specific group of women, any particular race or class of women. It does not privilege women over men. It has the power to transform in a meaningful way all our lives (1984, p. 26)

The theory of feminism is considered suitable for this research because the approach focuses on oppression through the novel that depicted the main characters, Rahima and Shekiba, who undergo their hardest life because of the oppression of the patriarchal society. However, they overcome oppression and finally find their right purposes.

C. Method of the Study

In this study, the method that the writer used is library research. All of the data related to the study are books, e-books, internet, journals, and articles. The primary source used in this thesis was taken from the novel itself, *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* written by Nadia Hashimi. The secondary data were the books and articles related to this study.

There were several steps that the writer did to analyze this study. The first step was reading and understanding the novel. The second step, the writer was focusing the topic on the response from oppression through the approach of feminist criticism. The third step was analyzing the problems. The last step was making a conclusion from the analysis.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

This chapter consists of three parts. The first part is the analysis on the main characters. The second part is the analysis of oppression experienced by the main characters. The third part is the analysis of two main women characters’ responses toward oppression that they experience.

A. The Description of the Main Women Characters in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*

In this first part of analysis, the writer gives explanation about the characters use theory of characterization. There are two main characters that the writer analyzed, which are Rahima and Shekiba. This part is needed to reveal the characters’ thoughts and behavior in order to understand their life processes throughout the story.

1. Rahima

In *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, Rahima is described as a young girl who surrenders to her life. She never pictures or dreams of having the experience that she wanted, rather she is submissive to her fate in life. However, there are some points that make her realize that she deserves a better life which she needs to fight for it.
a. Brave

Rahima has a brave personality. Rahima’s personality as a courageous character are seen in her dialogue with other characters. Rahima tries to handle the tough situation by persuade her mother to get the solution while her siblings choose to stay quiet.

“Madar-jan it wasn’t our fault! There was this boy on a bicycle and we ignored him but he kept coming back and I even yelled at him. I told him he was an idiot if he didn’t know his way home” (p. 4).

Rahima’s sisters choose to not say anything because of the accident can make their father angry. Whereas, Rahima try to make her mother understand the situation and persuade her to not tell their father. Rahima and her sisters are afraid to get punishment from their father due to Parwin, Rahima’s sister, got an the accident with the male cyclist. In the accident, Parwin unaccidentally got her dress open. Women must cover all of their body in order to protect them from unwanted actions from men. Thus, the accident was a big trouble for Rahima and her sisters.

Rahima also bravely takes the opportunity to work in the public sphere that Khala Shaima, Rahima's aunt, suggests to her,

“Hm. I’ll think about it. It’s demanding job and I could use some help with it... but I wonder what Abdul Khaliq would say. You know he doesn’t like for us to be away from home. He made an exception for me” (p. 257).

Women belong in the house in patriarchal society. Meanwhile, Rahima’s aunt who is very supportive throughout Rahima’s life offers the idea to work in the parliament. Her aunt believes that Rahima has potential to be in a public sphere. At
first, Rahima was questioning whether she can pursue it or not. She then tries to persuade Badriya to go with her in parliament and leaving her responsibility in a home for working outside.

b. Obedient

Rahima’s parents struggle with the economy. Madar-jan, Rahima’s mother, figures out to change the economy for the family. Her idea is to dress Rahima as a boy which also called as bacha posh. The presents of son in the Afghan family will lead to trouble-free life which is very important to the father since Rahima’s father strive to have a son. Madar-jan wanted Rahima to do ‘son’s chores’ such as going out to public and help her to buy groceries with affordable price.

Since women cannot go out in public without male relatives and the only man in the house is her father, the presents of bacha posh in the family helps them. Unfortunately, the only male in Rahima’s family is her father, yet he is unable to help the family because he suffers from depression. Madar-jan tells Rahima that being a boy can make her run to the stores, go to school, and play games, which this idea excites Rahima.

It sounded like a dream to me! I thought of the neighbors’ sons. Jameel. Faheem. Bashir. My eyes widened at the thought of being able to kick a ball around in the street as they did (p. 23).

As an Afghan woman living under a patriarchal society, Rahima obeys Madar-jan’s wishes in order to continue her family’s life. However, being a bacha-
posh cannot be happen forever. Young girls eventually have womanly bodies, thus Rahima cannot continue to be a boy for a long time. Then, when the economy get worse, Rahima's father decides to marry their daughters to landlords. For the last time, Rahima's mother gives an advice to obey men and elders to her daughters,

“Now, my girls, there’s one more thing. There will be other wives to deal with. Treat them well and I pray they will show kindness to you. Older women are spiteful toward younger girls, so be careful how much you trust them. Make sure you take care of yourselves. Eat, bathe, say your prayers and cooperate with your husbands. And your mothers-in-law. These are the people whom will need to keep you satisfied” (p. 149).

Rahima and her sisters listen to Madar-jan’s last lesson before they leave their family. It is necessary to obey the husband and husband’s family. Madar-jan wanted her daughters to obey them even though she knows that they will be struggling in their new home. As it also happen to Rahima when she has to obey Bibi Gulalai, mother-in-law,

Bibi Gulalai, his mother, had sisted 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 (p. 162).

Rahima’s situation made her realize that being obedient to the new family can protect her as well. In a though situation, she has nobody and she has no choice but prioritize the elders. Although Rahima feels oppressed to Bibi Gulalai’s expectations, Rahima being obedient to her is an important behaviour that she must do.
c. Educated

Rahima is the only child that gaining education compares to her sisters. Taliban’s system makes limited access for the Afghan women. They cannot study at school or even go outside. Thus, Rahima and her sisters have to cut off their education.

However, Rahima has the opportunity to continue her study. Her experiences to be a bacha-posh gives her opportunity to go to school and she also has a lot of skills that boys can do 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 (p. 164).

Men are definitely have privileges, especially being able to go to school. The opportunity to become a bacha-posh gives Rahima a chance to go to school without having to worry. The idea of becoming a bacha-posh provides a lot of opportunities for Rahima, including gaining education. This opportunity gives Rahima a lot of benefits which are gain knowledge and skills.

2. Shekiba

Shekiba, as the second main character has a similar life to Rahima. Shekiba is also a submissive character to her fate. She is surrender to her life because she does not have a purpose. Shekiba is unable to have freedom, her grandmother given her
away to another family and in the end she gets to married Aasif as a punishment from the parliament.

a. Brave

Similar to Rahima, Shekiba stucks in her position. Her grandmother passes her to another family, Azzizullah’s family, which her grandmother’s get the debt from him. After her suffers days in Azzizullah’s house, Shekiba urges herself to claim her father’s land. She believes that she is the only family that rightful to inherit the land.

“That land should be mine. My grandfather gave it to my father. My father wanted nothing to do with his family. I should be the owner of that land” (p. 81).

Shekiba knows that her father’s land should be hers. Without any hesitation, Shekiba plans to escape and get the deed in her grandmother’s house which was her fathers.

"I could leave now, Shekiba thought. What if I just opened the door and left? I can find my home from here. I could look for the deed and maybe even make it back for the end of the prayers" (p. 96).

Shekiba tries to find the way out to go to her old house and get the deed. She tries to escape without Azizullah’s knowledge. After she succeeded to escape and get the deed, she then plans to find the hakim. Then she tries to find the hakim by herself in the morning. "I have to get to the hakim. That's my only chance" (p. 124).

Shekiba’s action to escape from the house without male relatives is an outrageous action. Shekiba breaks the custom’s rule to go out by herself and wander
around the town which also dangerous for her. Although she fails and gets beaten by Azzizullah after people find her out, the only chance that may saves her is to claim the land. Shekiba knows that she needs to find a way to break her uncontrol life and she fights for it.

b. Passive

Unlike Rahima, Shekiba is more passive in the way of choosing her life’s purposes. She does not think to escape from her reality due to the patriarchal system. Instead, she responses her misery with being passive. Her passivity shows on her responses towards Azizullah’s conversation with his friend, Hafizullah. He plans to give Shekiba to the king as a servant.

Shekiba had heard enough. She walked back to the kitchen, her legs wobbly beneath her. Her head was spinning.
The king? The palace?
Words that foreign to her.
Shekiba, tha half face. The girl-boy who walks like a man.
Shekiba was not a whole anything, she realized (p. 115).

Shekiba realizes that her presence in Azizullah’s place is nothing. Shekiba’s feeling of self-loathe comes from Azizullah’s words. His utterance about herself makes her realizes that she is nothing. Without a fight, Shekiba chooses to believe that she is incapable of anything.

Another passiveness that she shows as her personality is when she attempts to escape from Azizullah’s house and fails to claim her father’s house. Her passiveness
also can be seen in her dialogues with Azizullah’s wife, Marjan. She keeps believing that death is the only way to get out of her brutal life. Then Shekiba’s responses to Marjan when she warns her that her action was out of control, “Then I should die” (p. 142).

Shekiba also shows her passiveness in her conversation with her husband. It shows when Aasif comes to her to get sexual intercourse because he wants a son. Shekiba refuses to fulfill his volition because she has period as her excuse. However, her excuses causes a verbal abuse from her husband. Shekiba responds it with an acceptance to the fact that she is nothing, "Not a man, not a woman. I am nothing" (p. 381).

Shekiba’s act of being passive shows that she is actually stuck in her situation. Her attempt to escape once was proven her that even the society will not make her free from her miserable life. Shekiba chooses to be passive because she has no choice to be free from her reality.

c. Uneducated

Shekiba is the character that lives in 50 years earlier than Rahima. Unlike Rahima, she does not get any education in her life. Her character as uneducated reveals in the end of her story when she attends Queen Soraya’s speech,

She is a wise woman, Shekiba thought. A woman like that would have given my father’s land to me. She would have told my grandmother to send me to school instead of fields (p. 435).
The presents of Queen Soraya made Shekiba realizes that she can save her and help her to obtain the purpose that she wants without any struggles against the patriarchal system. Even, Shekiba does not receive any education since she was given away as a servant throughout her life. Moreover, the importance of education in her era is far from necessary.

Shekiba has no experience to study in school or gain any education from other resources. However, she learns to do various male’s chores such as lifting weights and planting. Thus, her self-taught made her become independent and survive in her cruel life.

B. The Oppression Experienced by the Two Main Characters in The Pearl That Broke Its Shell

Out of the five forms of oppression theory, there are three forms of oppression that are related to the main characters’ life experiences. Both of the main characters experience the form of oppression, which can be seen as they suffered throughout the story. In this part, the writer analyzes the oppression that they experience.

1. The Oppression Experienced by Rahima

a. Marginalization

Marginalization made certain groups expelled from opportunities, including women. Women have unequal opportunities and do not have equal privileges as
men. In the story, Afghan women are not allowed to go outside without male relatives and they are struggle to have education in school.

We begged and pleaded with Padar-jan to let us return to school. One of Parwin’s teachers, a childhood friend of Madar-jan, even showed up at the house and tried to reason with our parents. Padar-jan had relented in the past but this time was different. He wanted us to go to school but struggled with how to make that happen safely. How would it look for his daughters to be chased by local boys for all to see? Awful (p. 5).

Rahima knows that it is impossible for her and her sisters to go out and go to school. The prohibition to go outside made Afghan women struggling to do anything. In the time where Taliban took over Afghanistan, women are risk to go outside without male relatives. The presents of son in the Afghan family is considered as honorable since women do not have privilege like men. Even Rahima’s father wishes that he has a son in the family.

If I had a son this would not be happening! Goddamn it! Why do we have a house full of girl! Not one, not two – but five of them!” he would yell. Madar-jan would busy herself with housework, feeling the weight of disappointment on her shoulders (p. 5).

Padar-jan treats his family as worthless because his expectation to have son failed as Madar-jan only bear daughters. In this situation, not only Rahima that marginalized, but also her sisters and her mother. Even being female in the family, women still experience oppression.

b. Powerlessness

In this form of oppression, the oppressor hold the power while the oppressed are powerless. As in patriarchal society, women are powerless while men have the
power to control the society. In the private sphere, men have full power to control the house.

He hit her again. Parwin and I, we were scared to look but we could hear it. He went on yelling and screaming about how it wasn’t bad enough that she had failed him as a wife. Now she was failing as a mother (p. 105).

As the head of the house, Rahima’s father can control the family with abuses. Rahima witnesses his acts toward her mother. As a powerless woman, she cannot do anything to prevent his action. Even Rahima’s mother told her that men are powerful, “Men are unpredictable creatures,” she said, her voice tired and defeated, “God knows what he’ll do” (p. 107). Rahima taught to be obedient toward men especially her father. This personality is also Rahima’s duplication on her mother’s responses toward her father’s violent.

The reason why Rahima being obedient toward men is because she has no power. Her feeling of powerlessness also signifies as a wife to Abdul Khaliq. As a new bride, she has a responsibility to her husband. In patriarchal society, women are expected to do husbands’ command which is also the wives’ duty.

“I will not tolerate insolence. Yesterday, I let you be. That was my gift to you, to show you I can be kind. Today, things are different. You are in your husband’s home, my home. You will behave as a wife should” (p. 161).

Rahima has no one that will saves her from the oppression in private sphere. Being a wife to Abdul Khaliq has no chances to refuse his commands. Even when she refuse to do, she does not get toleration from him. Just like Rahima’s father, Abdul Khaliq shows her the power that he has as the husband of the house.
“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” (p. 168).

As the man who has power to the family, Abdul Khaliq tells Rahima the rule to the house. Live in her husband’s house means Rahima should obey his commands as well. She does not has any chance to break this oppression. The society has made her to feel powerless toward men, even Abdul Khaliq’s other wives are also shows obedience toward him.

Being a woman makes Rahima in the position of powerlessness, both as a wife and a daughter. Her father and her husband show the power to intimidate women. The men’s power are the sign for women to obey the men in the family, especially in private sphere. This oppression makes them unable to fight against them and stay powerless.

c. Violence

Most victims in the oppression of violence are women. Moreover, patriarchal society makes violence as normal to punish women. In the story, Rahima experienced this form of oppression in the private sphere. As she receives multiple abuses from her husband.

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 (p. 168).

Rahima receives sexual abuse from her husband. Without Rahima’s consent, Abdul Khaliq forces her to do his demand in bed. Rahima feels weak in that situation, she expresses her emotion through her tears. However, Abdul Khaliq does not care about it and still continue to do the sexual intercourse. Not only that, Rahima also receives another physical abuse from her husband,

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 (p. 408).

Abdul Khaliq punish Rahima because he thinks that Rahima cannot be a good mother to their only son, Jahangir. Abdul Khaliq expresses his anger with the abusive act toward her. Rahima feels oppressed because she cannot do anything, even beg him to stop does not stop his action. This form of oppression is the most harmful to the victim, since Rahima could die and the society will never judge the man who does it.

Not only in private sphere, Rahima also witnesses violence in a public sphere. In the world of work, especially in patriarchal society, men have priviledge and likely to be the dominant to women. As in the story, someone tries to kill Zamarud, Rahima’s collegue, because she stands up for the right moral against the men in the
parliament, she does this because the leaders corrupted Afghan’s money. When the meeting is over, they use a bomb as the tool to kill Zamarud.

My stomach lurched. I pictured her storming out of the building remembered the hateful leers she’d drawn from some of the men. Even some of the women had shaken their heads as she walked by. People thought she was out of the line, and the punishment for being out of line was severe in our world. It always had been (p. 314).

Women that try to resist the leaders’ rules can get punishment. Zamarud is one of the examples of woman who struggles in a job in a full of men. Even when she stands for the right thing that do not fit into men’s need, she get a punishment. Men use their power to oppressed women and make women physically hurt.

Women’s voices are silent by the society, even other women are not uphold others who struggle against patriarchal society. Rahima’s experiences in the public sphere makes her realizes that women are in the dangerous situation. Both in private and public sphere, women are oppressed by society.

2. The Oppression Experienced by Shekiba

a. Marginalization

‘Othering’ made women unable to choose their life’s purposes. After Shekiba lives in Azzizullah’s house, she realizes that her grandmother should not seize her family’s property. Shekiba tries to claim her father’s land to change her fate. However, her attempt was failed.

“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” (p. 82).

Although Shekiba as a woman can inherit a portion of her father’s land, however, her position as an unmarried and an orphan girl cannot claim the land. Additionally, Shekiba is a part of Azzizullah’s, which also limited her to get what she wants. As Madar tells her,

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” (p. 82)

Afghan women have no right to claim property. Men are the only gender that rightful to inherit family’s property. Even though Shekiba got the deed, she still cannot claim the land. The hakim rejected and ripped the deed into pieces as a sign that it was nothing. Even when women are struggling to have the rights that they deserved, marginalization places men as the superior and made women dependent upon them. Thus, men’s position made them unresponsive toward oppression.

Women struggle to choose their purpose because their position to depends on men. After Shekiba married to Aasif, her position as a wife forces her to become dependent toward him. As Aasif blames her after Shekiba refusal of his commands,

“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 curse face! Damn you!” (p. 381)
Aasif’s anger toward Shekiba highlights the breadwinner of the family should be respected and are obeyed by their wives. Marginalization on the patriarchal system made women expel from opportunities in society. As women belong in the home while men work, their position forces them to be dependent on the breadwinner.

b. Powerlessness

Women as the oppressed gender in the society are powerless to the dominant. In the story, Shekiba depicted as the only woman who still alives in the family. Her grandmother hates Shekiba’s presence and she decides to give her away to other family. This decision is made because she has debt to settle to Azzizullah. Since Azzizullah has a son, he accepts Shekiba as a future wife for his son.

“Zalmai, I want you to speak to Azizullah and tell him that his son is still young. God willing, he and his father have long lives ahead of them with plenty of time to arrange for a suitable marriage. Tell him it would be more useful for them to have someone who can help them at home now. Tell him a happy wife bears more sons. Then you can offer Shekiba” (p. 59).

Shekiba is submissive to her grandmother’s action in order to settle the debt. As Shekiba reacts to Bobo Shagul’s statement, “That is the problem with gifts, Madar-jan. They are always given away” (p. 59). Shekiba feels powerless to the reality that she has to be given away. Even she mentions her name which means ‘gifts’ to respond her powerlessness.

In the context of sexuality, Shekiba feels powerless toward her husband. Aasif asks her to have sexual intercourse with him in the first night. Shekiba refuses with an
excuse that she is in her period. Since Aasif do not get what he wants, he scolds Shekiba,

“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!” (p. 381).

Aasif throws his emotion to Shekiba because she refuses to his demand. The breadwinner who is able to provide the needs for the family is considered as the superior. As a wife, Shekiba should obey her husband due to respect toward the breadwinner of the family.

Shekiba has no choices to refuse or disobey the people who have power. The only way for Shekiba to survive from the oppression in private spheres is being passive. Shekiba’s act of being passive is the depiction of powerlessness as the form of oppression that she experiences.

c. Violence

Violence is the oppression that uses brutal actions that can cause death. Shekiba had experienced this oppression several times in the story. One of the violence acts is the way Azzizullah treated Shekiba when she get caught of escaping from his house.

It wasn’t her naseeb to claim her father’s land. Instead, Azizullah had dragged her back to the house and beaten her for an hour. Every time his strikes slowed, he would yell and huff about the humiliation she had caused him. His
momentum would pick up again and he’d toss her left and right each blow (p. 141).

Shekiba has failed to claim her father’s land and she got beat by Azizullah. Shekiba’s act is considered as unacceptable behavior in Azzizullah and Hakim’s eyes. This causes Shekiba to receive physical violence as the punishment of her acts. In the patriarchal society, the violence is considered as normal. Even if it happens in the public, no one will help the victim.

Similar to Rahima, Shekiba also witnesses violence toward woman. Shekiba witnesses a woman who gets stoning sentence in the palace. The character that gets this punishment is Khanum Benafsha. 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 onward 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 (p. 330).

Khanum Benafsha is the harem of the king and she is considered as king’s property. Khanum Benafsha experienced stoning penalty on the back of an affair with Aasif. Yet, she is the one who is punished whereas Aasif gets to be free and marry Shekiba as the replacement of his punishment.

The violence in patriarchal society highlights the men as the dominant gain more advantage to oppress the weak without experience the same sufferings. Their action to oppress, especially to women is their indication of their higher position. Consequently, women have no space to against them, since women are also being
told that they are physically weaker than men. Thus, this form of oppression is the most brutal oppression since it can lead to disability or even death.

C. The Responses of the Two Main Women Characters toward the Oppression in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*

The previous chapter discussed the oppression as the reason to the main characters’ responses in the reflection of feminism. This part is the discussion about the way Rahima’s and Shekiba’s responses of the oppression that they experienced reflected on feminism.

I. Rahima’s Responses toward Oppression

a. Rahima’s Responses toward Marginalization

Rahima’s family is full of female and her father is the only male in the family. Her family lives in a tough situation. Since Rahima’s father wants a son, Madar-jan decides to make him feel better with the presence of son in the family. Madar-jan chooses Rahima to become a bacha-posh because she is the only daughter that capable to dress as a boy. This tradition brings benefit to Rahima. It makes her to have an experience of male’s freedom. Unlike female’s clothing, Rahima feels more comfortable in the male’s clothing, “My legs felt liberated as I ran through the streets without my knees slapping against my skirt and without worrying about chastising eyes” (p. 48).
The tradition of bacha-posh makes Rahima as the only daughter in her family that able to gain education in school. This privilege makes her able to have skills like writing and reading. This skills lead her to have the opportunity to work in the parliament. Khala Shaima, Rahima’s aunt, suggests her to be Badriya’s assistant, since she struggles to manage her work,

“But in Kabul you’ll see different things. It’s an education of sorts. See how people live there, see the buildings and see what parliament is doing. It’s an opportunity for you” (p. 247).

This situation made into an opportunity for Rahima to explore the public sphere. Rahima’s ability can take her to the opportunity that was impossible for women to take. The new opportunity also opens Rahima chances to get the freedom from the oppression,

The idea excited me even more once she brought up Bibi Shekiba. I had already experienced her double life, living as a boy. I wanted to see places she’d seen. But I wanted more than she had too. I didn’t want to be a pawn the way she had been, passed from one set of hands to another. I wanted to be bolder. I wanted to make my naseeb, not have it handed to me. But from what my mother had always said, I didn’t know it was possible (p. 248).

The possibility to work in the public excites Rahima. This opportunity makes Rahima believes that she can be bolder and even change her fate. Although she has small role that barely affects the working sphere, however, Rahima takes advantage to gain some new experiences that she will not get in the private sphere.

I felt privileged. A new feeling! I doubted even Hashmat had ever seen a computer, much less received personalized instruction on how to use it. I would have love to see the look on his face if he ever learned what I was doing in Kabul (p. 313).
Rahima uses every opportunity to learn new things in the parliament. Her excitement to be able to gain new experiences made her feel privileged. The only place that made her feel the freedom is in public sphere since she is independent and not under her husband’s control. Her decision to work in public sphere advantages her in many aspects, not only that she can learn new things but also made her learn about other women who are oppressed like her. Her opportunity also gives her the courage to strive for a freedom from the patriarchal system. Due to her colleagues’ support, Rahima is able to see the world and realizes how Afghan women are oppressed under patriarchal society.

b. Rahima’s Responses toward Powerlessness

Afghan women have no power in the private and public sphere. However, Rahima experienced being a boy made her believes that she has power. That mindset leads her to the realization that women are oppressed.

I wish I could say that I put on as strong a front as Shahla or even Parwin, at least for my mother’s sake. I wish I could have done something. After all, I’d been a boy for years. Boys were supposed to defend themselves and their families. I was more than just a girl. I thought (p. 151).

Rahima feels disappointed in herself. Her experience of being a boy cannot saves her family. Although she regrets that she is not able to break the oppression, Rahima used to feel the freedom which also leads her to has the thought of escaping from the reality. When she visits her sister, she comes up with the plan to run away, “Parwin, maybe we should just run away!” I whispered, interrupting her chatter. “Just
like I snuck out this morning. We could just take off!” (p. 189). Yet, Parwin disagrees to her plan and she tells Rahima that she is always making trouble.

In another private sphere, Rahima feels powerless as a wife to Abdul Khaliq. As a result of being powerless, Rahima uses the opportunity to work in a public sphere to change her destiny. She believes that her decision can make her has the better life.

I didn’t know what my naseeb was, much less that of my son. But I decided that night I would do whatever I could to make it the best naseeb possible. For both of us. I was not going to miss my opportunities (p. 249).

Rahima understands that stay at home will make her stuck to her uncontrol life. Her plan to escape from private sphere was rejected by her sister, then Rahima sees the potential to go in public sphere as an opportunity. Rahima believes that the decision can change her life.

Rahima deals toward the powerlessness can be seen from her responses. Women know that they are weak in physical strength compare to men. However, women can break the powerlessness by changing their mentality. As in the story, it illustrates Rahima who has the mindset to break the oppression through her actions and her thoughts. Instead of feeling weak and surrender toward the oppression and feeling powerless, Rahima signifies her power through her personality in order to control her life.
c. Rahima’s Responses toward Violence

Violence is the form of oppression that is hard to handle from the patriarchal society. Not only that this form oppression is dangerous, but the use of this oppression is considered as normal even in religious beliefs. Rahima experience this oppression mostly in the private sphere. Abdul Khaliq uses the violence to Rahima as the punishment of disobeying the husband commands.

As the result of this oppression, Rahima chooses to escape from her reality, “An escape. I need to find an escape” (p. 411). The violence that she receives repeatedly has made her to the point where she cannot deal with her misery life anymore. There is only one time in her life when she feels the freedom which is her experience as the bacha-posh.

Without a pause in my step, I raised an apologetic hand, silently thankful to know my disguise was working. Funny how easily I slipped back into this person, how comfortable I felt even though my nerves were on fire (p. 444).

To be free from the oppression, Rahima uses her experience as a bacha-posh to escape from her miserable life. Since Afghanistan views men as more vulnerable than women, Rahima uses man’s identity to get her freedom. As in her knowledge, the happiness that she has is only the time when she has the same previledge as man.

Feminism believes that to end the violence, men and women should work together. However, Rahima chooses to escape and become independent. Rahima’s responses toward the oppression of violence indicates that being female will never make the patriarchal society break the idealism unless all genders agree to be in the
same page. Thus, Rahima’s escape is the form to end the violence that she experiences.

2. Shekiba’s Responses toward Oppression

a. Shekiba’s Responses toward Marginalization

Marginalization made the dominant expelled certain groups from opportunities. Shekiba cannot inherit her father’s land. The action that Shekiba does to fight this oppression is to claims her father’s land. Although she failed to claim her father’s land, she believes that the only person that rightful to have the land is herself.

But I have always been my father’s daughter-son. My father hardly knew I was a girl. I have always done the work a son would do. I am not to be considered for a wife, so what’s the difference? What of me is a girl? (p. 83).

Madar told her that she could not inherit the land, simply because she is a female. However, Shekiba insists even her gender is female. She has always been ‘a boy’ to her father’s eyes. Since in the past, she always did the male chores,

Shekiba’s father took his daughter-son to the fields to help him manage their small plot of land. She hoed, she slaughtered and she chopped as any strong-backed son would do for his father. She made it possible to Ismail to go on believing that life had always been father and son. Shekiba proved to be able-bodied, affirming her father’s confidence in her ability to manage the farm. Her arms and her shoulders knotted with muscle (p. 20).

Compare to other Afghan women, Shekiba has strong physic. Her ability to do male chores made her believes that she is no different to men. In her early life, she always believes that she is a man as well. However, due to the patriarchal system, she is unable to decide her life's purpose.
Shekiba also chooses to be dependent on Aasif. She realizes that she has to obey her husband as the breadwinner to the family and Shekiba also had a son which makes him happy. It made Shekiba realizes that after her miserable life, her being a wife to him is her right place,

I have no reason to complain, though. I am married to a man with respectable position in the Ministry of Agriculture. He keeps us fed and clothed in an esteemed neighborhood of Kabul. He provides for his children and does not beat me. What more could I have asked of Allah? (p. 403).

Marginalization pushes women as the non-productive group to dependent on men. In Shekiba’s era, the presents of Queen Soraya gives freedom for Afghan women and allows them to gain an education. As she speaks in her speech,

“Do you think, however, that our nation from the outset needs only men to serve it? Women should also take their part as women did in the early years of our nation and Islam. From their examples we must 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.” (p. 434).

Queen Soraya’s speech is not only the response to powerlessness, however, it is also the response to the marginalization. Queen Soraya wants to rise the women’s realization that they have been oppressed by men, as Shekiba response to her speech, “A woman? Telling their wives to acquire knowledge?” (p. 435). Queen Soraya’s idea is impossible to Shekiba due to her life’s experiences, “She knew Queen Soraya was speaking of changes that wouldn’t affect her” (p. 435). Shekiba has no support from any women in her life and she is also an uneducated character which leads her to be blind toward men’s doctrine in a patriarchal society.
In response to this form of oppression, Shekiba chooses to embrace the patriarchal system since she realizes that break the oppression will never make any results. Different from Rahima’s story, Shekiba has no one to look up to throughout her life. Thus, after her attempt failed to claim her father’s land, it is impossible for her to find freedom. Even the presents of Queen Soraya is considered as late to Shekiba. As long as women do not realize the importance of education, and they still are oppressed by marginalization. Since the new opportunity to gain knowledge can take parts of society, it also will bring them to the importance of feminism as the movement to end oppression.

b. Shekiba Responses toward Powerlessness

Throughout the story, Shekiba is described as a woman who is unable to control her life. Even after her grandmother given her away to Azzizullah, her life is not getting any better. In her early life, her position as an orphan who has no one to lay on forces her into feeling powerless, “Because she was Shekiba, the gift that could be given away as easily it had been accepted” (p. 66). Being passive as a character is a part of her realization that women are powerless.

To deal with powerlessness, Shekiba embed the mindset to break the oppression, “I cannot go on like this forever. I must find a way to make a life for myself” (p. 83). After she failed to claim her father’s land, Shekiba tries to convince herself that she should end her sufferings. Her thoughts to break the powerlessness
comes to her mind, her misery situation brings her to the point where she had enough. This realization made Shekiba understands that she deserves a better place.

After Azizullah given her away to the King, Shekiba experienced to be a harem guard which makes her to dress up as a man. Her experienced to work in the palace made her see the public world where there are actually women who act like men. However, Shekiba believes that her experienced being a harem guard was not her fate.

Shekib wondered what her place in this world was. Something told her it was not her place to be a house servant. And it was not her place to be unwanted granddaughter. Surely, being a harem guard could not be her fate either, as comfortable as it had seemed in the last couple of days. Shekib knew in her heart that she would need to act if she were to find her true purpose. Shekib knew in her heart that she would need to act if she were to find her true purpose (p. 204).

Different from Rahima’s experienced, Shekiba believes that her experienced on being a harem guard or dress like a man is not suitable for her. Considering that, Shekiba does not get a better treatment and experiences for being a man. Shekiba keeps finding her true purpose by thinking that marry to a prince will change her life, yet in the story she failed to attract the prince.

In the story, Shekiba decides to stay as Aasif’s wife. After the oppression that she experiences which came from both private and public sphere, she finally in the point where she believes that there is someone who will change Afghanistan’s system. In the end of the story, Shekiba attends to Queen Soraya’s speech.
“Do you think, however, that our nation from the outset needs only men to serve it? Women should also take their part as women did in the early years of our nation and Islam. From their examples we must 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.” (p. 434).

Queen Soraya as the woman who bravely speak out in public makes Shekiba believes that she can end powerlessness for women. Shekiba understands that being a woman in patriarchal society is hard, especially women are oppressed by men. The existence of Queen Soraya to Afghanistan is Shekiba’s realization that women will have better life to fight against oppression and in the end of the story that what makes her settle down to her final life’s decision.

Unlike Rahima, on the response toward powerlessness Shekiba is more likely to be passive. Several ways and several places that Shekiba experiences are not able to make her free from the oppression. Her position as a woman makes her oppress in powerlessness, however her miserable position realizes her that she can find a way out from the oppression of powerlessness.

c. Shekiba Responses toward Violence

As a character that chooses to be submissive in her life, Shekiba’s responses toward violence is different from Rahima. She receives physical violence many times, especially in the private sphere. However, she responds to this form of oppression with silence and passiveness.
Shekiba received unstoppable violence from Azzizullah. After Azzizullah knows her action to claim her father, she receives physical abuses from him. She cannot throw an anger but she only wishes that her misery life is over, “Shekiba wished Azzizullah would have killed her. She wondered why he hadn’t” (p. 142). Shekiba cannot fight against this oppression and the thought to stop violence is only death.

After the violence that Shekiba’s been through, her fate to marry Aasif makes her realize that it is her true purpose. She believes that being his wife is her right place. Compare to other places that she experiences, the only place that do not require violence is being Aasif’s wife.

I have no reason to complain, though. I am married to a man with respectable position in the Ministry of Agriculture. He keeps us fed and clothed in an esteemed neighborhood of Kabul. He provides for his children and does not beat me. What more could I have asked of Allah? (p. 403).

Shekiba’s way to end her violence is to get the place where she does not have to receive any brutal action from anybody. Different from Rahima’s way of life, Shekiba accepts to be inferior to men. Her life experiences were misery to her and she ended to have a better position as a wife and a mom to a son.

Throughout her life, Shekiba was feeling miserable to handle violence. This form of oppression causes her to think that death is her only way to break it. That thought emphasizes that Shekiba has never meet someone who has the same life’s problem as her and she has no one that can save her. Thus, being passive and
submissive to her life in the patriarchal system is her way to end this form of oppression.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the writer can take a conclusion of the analysis from the previous chapter. There are three formulated problems presents in the first chapter. The first is about the description of the main characters in the novel. The second is about oppression that the main characters’ experiences. The third is about the responses of the main characters toward the oppression.

The first discussion is about the description of the main women characters of two generations. The first main character is Rahima. She is described as a brave, obedient, and educated woman. She is described as a brave woman because she stands up for her sisters and takes the opportunity to work in the parliament. Rahima also described as obedient. In order to help her family’s economy, Rahima obeys her mother’s demand to make her become a bacha posh. She also listens to her mother’s advice to obey her husband and the elders. Rahima is described as an educated woman because she has the experience to go study at school as well as she is able to write and read.

The second main character is Shekiba. Shekiba is described as a brave, passive, and uneducated woman. She is described as a brave woman because she faces the struggle to get her father’s land, however, she cannot obtain it since it is under custom’s rules. Shekiba also described as a passive woman because she does
not react or fights to stop Azzizullah from his decision to give her away as a servant to King Habibullah. Also, when Marjan tells her that she cannot inherit her father’s land, she chooses to believe that death is her only way out. Shekiba also described as uneducated woman because she never goes to school or gains any knowledge from other sources.

The second analysis is about the oppression that the main characters experience. There are three forms of oppression that fit into the analysis, which are marginalization, powerlessness, and violence. In Rahima’s experience of marginalization, due to Taliban’s limited access for women, Rahima and her sisters struggle to get an education in school. Powerlessness makes Rahima feels powerless toward her father and her husband. Her situation forces her to obey the men in her life. Rahima also experiences violence, she receives abuses from her husband and witnesses abuses from the work sphere.

On the other hand, Shekiba’s experience of marginalization is her inability to inherit her father’s property and her position forces her to dependent upon the breadwinner of the family. Shekiba feels powerless toward Azzizullah and her husband, which makes her unable to obtain freedom from her misery life. Shekiba also receives violence, she receives abuses from Azzizullah and she witnesses a stoning sentence as the punishment for an affair in the palace.
The last problem formulation is about the main women characters’ responses toward the oppression. Rahima responds the marginalization with the benefit of bacha posh to get an education and she works in the parliament to gain more experiences and skills. In her responses toward powerlessness, Rahima changes her mindset from powerless to a strong woman who can decide her life’s purposes. In Rahima’s responses toward violence, she decides to escape from her reality and builds a new life with her female friends.

As the second main character, Shekiba believes that she is her father’s son and deserves to own the land. However, she chooses be submissive to her husband as her escapism from marginalization. Shekiba tries to find a way to change her life’s purpose as her response toward powerlessness. Her life’s experiences to be a servant in Azzizullah and harem guard in the palace are not suitable for her, however, she chooses to settle down for Aasif. In her response toward violence, Shekiba chooses to stay with Aasif since he is the only man who never abuses her physically.

In conclusion, Rahima and Shekiba are two characters that face oppression in different ways. Both of the characters experience similar situation, however, Rahima is more likely to refuse to be inferior toward oppression while Shekiba is rather to embrace the patriarchal system as her survival. There is reasonable evidence to indicate that their different responses are most likely because Rahima has people that support her, whereas Shekiba has no one who supports throughout her life.
characters portrayed the women’s situation in Afghanistan. Even almost a century apart, Afghan women are still oppressed by the patriarchal society.
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