

RAHIMA'S SUBALTERNITY AS SEEN IN NADIA HASHIMI'S

THE PEARL THAT BROKE ITS SHELL

A GRADUATING PAPER

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A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

I certify that this graduate paper is definitely my own work. I am completely responsible for the content of this graduating paper. Other researchers' opinion or finding included in this research is quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards.

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RAHIMA'S SUBALTERNITY AS SEEN IN NADIA HASHIMI'S

THE PEARL THAT BROKE ITS SHELL

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* where Rahima experiences oppression and subordination, both in terms of social and personal life, such as being unable to receive education beyond the age of twelve, unable to work, unable to leave the house without a male guardian, forced marriage, polygamy, and many more. This research aims to explain Rahima's condition as she lives in post-colonial Afghanistan and faces oppression, trauma, violence, and an identity crisis. After being forcibly married off by her father, Rahima's life gets worse in all aspects. The husband and mother-in-law control Rahima's life for their benefit. As qualitative research, this study aims to explain how Rahima deals with the inequalities that occur to her. Therefore, the researcher uses the postcolonial subaltern theory of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak to analyze the issues. Spivak emphasizes in her essay entitled "Can the subaltern speak?" that "the subaltern cannot speak". The only way for them to speak is to be dominant in language or voice. Spivak believes that if a subaltern woman wants to be free and voice her opinion, she must fight for herself without being represented by anyone. And based on the analysis using this approach, it can be divided into four parts, namely essentialism, representation, subalternity, and agency. Thus it can be concluded that Rahima was finally able to speak for herself by telling her friends and choosing to run away from her oppressors.

KEYWORDS: *Subaltern, Rahima, Postcolonialism, The Pearl that Broke Its Shell*

RAHIMA'S SUBALTERNITY AS SEEN IN NADIA HASHIMI'S

THE PEARL THAT BROKE ITS SHELL

Oleh: Umi Kalsum

ABSTRAK

Skripsi ini meneliti novel *The Pearl that Broke Its Shell*, dimana Rahima sebagai seorang subaltern mengalami ketertindasan dan subordinasi, baik dari segi sosial maupun kehidupan pribadi seperti tidak dapat mengenyam pendidikan diatas umur duabelas tahun, tidak dapat bekerja, tidak dapat keluar rumah tanpa wali laki-laki, dinikahkan secara paksa, poligami, dan lain sebagainya. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menjelaskan kondisi Rahima yang hidup pasca kolonial di Afghanistan dalam menghadapi penindasan, trauma, kekerasan, dan krisis identitas. Setelah dinikahkan secara paksa oleh ayahnya, kehidupan Rahima semakin memburuk dari segala aspek. Sang suami dan ibu mertuanya mengendalikan kehidupan Rahima demi kepentingan mereka sendiri. Sebagai sebuah penelitian kualitatif, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana Rahima menghadapi ketimpangan-ketimpangan yang terjadi pada dirinya. Oleh sebab itu, peneliti menggunakan teori subaltern poskolonial oleh Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak untuk menganalisis kejadian tersebut. Spivak menekankan dalam karangannya yang berjudul "Can the subaltern speak?" Spivak mengatakan bahwa "subaltern tidak dapat berbicara". Satu-satunya cara bagi mereka untuk berbicara adalah dengan menjadi dominan dalam bahasa atau suara. Spivak berpendapat bahwa jikalau perempuan subaltern ingin bebas dan menyuarakan opininya, ia harus berjuang untuk dirinya sendiri tanpa diwakilkan oleh siapapun. Dan berdasarkan analisis dengan menggunakan pendekatan tersebut dapat dikategorikan menjadi empat bagian, yakni esensialisme, representasi, subalternity, dan agensi. Sehingga dapat disimpulkan bahwa Rahima pada akhirnya dapat berbicara untuk dirinya sendiri dengan menceritakannya kepada teman dan memilih untuk kabur dari penindasnya.

Kata Kunci: *Subaltern, Rahima, Pascakolonial, The Pearl that Broke Its Shell*

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MOTTO

Be Bold and Brave.

~ Afialla



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DEDICATION

To the voice that the world has attempted to silence, I hope the sirens will bless your throat. I

hope the shiny moon will nourish your head. And the universe will hear your poetry.

Hey, you are not alone. I hear you!



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Yogyakarta, 15th May 2023

The Researcher,



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

It is hard to break the patriarchal culture, such as in Afghanistan, where women have experienced a great deal of injustice. There are striking differences between the roles of women and men. It is because Afghanistan is a third-world country that is very pervaded by a conservative patriarchal culture and so paternalistic that women become second-class human beings and sexual commodities (Saadawi, 2007). According to Sylvia Walby in *Theorizing Patriarchy*, patriarchy means a system of social structures in which men dominate women and receive the essential benefits of women's subordination (Walby, 1991: 3). While paternalism is a system in which the authorities restrict the liberty and responsibilities of those who are subordinate to them in their sustained interest (Kalle Grill and Jason Hanna, 2018: 3).

Patriarchy adheres to the idea that men are superior beings with primary power in social, laws, economic, cultural, political, and moral authority, even in the personal sphere. In a patriarchal society, men are considered first-class human beings with a primary position compared to women, so they feel entitled to regulate and control women's lives from various aspects, such as reproduction, sexuality, movement, the division of labor system, and others. In addition, Afghanistan embraces hard-line Islam, which increasingly corners the side of women where religious interpretation is carried out based on the point of view of patriarchal men.

This situation can be seen from policies that are very detrimental to women, such as women not being allowed to receive education, not being allowed to work, not being allowed to leave the house without a male guardian, forced marriage, polygamy, and many more in the name of religion. Religion is often used as a tool to control women's lives, which requires women to obey the words of men automatically. Those issues mentioned before are illustrated in one of the novels titled *The Pearl that Broke Its Shell* by Nadia Hashimi.

The Pearl that Broke Its Shell describes the difficulties women face living in a patriarchal culture. The novel talks about Rahima as the main character, and her four sisters struggle in a household headed by their drug-addicted father called Arif. They are unable to leave the house, go to school, or work since they have no brothers. Rahima takes solace in the age-old tradition of *bacha posh* that recommended by her aunt, Khala Shaima. *Bacha posh* is a cultural practice in Afghanistan for families without sons to make their daughters live and behave as men around puberty. In other words, girls must be dressed up as boys (Hashimi, 2014). Moreover, this novel is set in the postcolonial situation in Afghanistan. The story focuses on Rahima's struggle for freedom and human rights. Rahima, as subaltern, try to free herself from the restraint of many participants, not only from tradition but also from all forms of domination she has received.

In this case, Rahima's powerlessness to defend herself is convenient for Spivak's opinion about female subalterns. The term subaltern refers to women's lower class and marginal position in society (Sawant, 2015: 4). Spivak argues that women, as subaltern subjects in society, have never been able to speak out to get

their rights as human beings. They are subordinated economically, socially, and politically, which makes them unable to act and have a voice. It happens because they are excluded from cultural and political representation. Furthermore, the form of social treatment received by subaltern women is more complicated than that received by subaltern men because of the ideological construction of gender maintenance, which prevents women from speaking, being heard, and even living in shadow (Spivak, 2003: 28).

It can be seen in the character of Rahima. Rahima has absolutely no chance to have a right to every choice or decision made in her life. Her guardians use their voices arbitrarily for their benefit. Rahima was expelled from the school by his father just because she was a woman who would attract the attention of men out there, and she was then forced into marriage with an older man by her father because she was a family burden.

The transformation of becoming a *bacha posh* makes Rahima slowly get used to living as a man. She likes the freedom men usually get, so when her father is forced to marry her off to her father's boss, Rahima is trapped in an identity crisis. She returns to dressing like an ordinary woman but still behaves like a man. The re-transformation and forced marriage had a substantial physical and mental impact on her life. She began to get worse treatments, such as domestic violence by her husband, mother-in-law, and her husband's two wives. Her life became more isolated from society, even from her own family. Her husband takes control of all aspects of her life while she is forced to submit. In Afghanistan, women are forced

to obey their husbands and do not have the right to ask for a divorce (Ghosh, 2003: 2).

In her first published novel, Nadia Hashimi wants to show the injustice endured by women to maintain the dominant hierarchy in Afghanistan. They have been brutally and systematically suppressed by men's authority and social norms, which have led to violence, sexual harassment, deprivation, identity crisis, social pressure, and constraints on their freedom of choice, speech, or even movement in their lives, especially in the domestic sphere. Women's position in Afghan society is some form of male property. They are frequently subordinated and forced to comply with the rules regulated by men, including their behavior and dress. They are also forced to be compelled and obliged to their family and tradition. (Moghadam, 2002: 20)

On the other hand, this is another effect of the colonial influence practices that value the superiority of men over women and modernity over traditionality. Colonizers distinguished the function of men and women in their colonies. Men are selected and included in their operational system, while women are positioned in the domestic sphere. Thus, through this novel, the researcher would like to analyze those problems using the postcolonial theory by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Therefore, the researcher aims to analyze Rahima's character to gain a deeper understanding of how she fights against patriarchal culture. This analysis can be used as a tool to criticize problems or phenomena experienced by women in various cultures that endanger them, encourage them to speak about what they feel, and

what they want to enlighten their lives, both those who live in the third world and those who live throughout this world, especially in Afghanistan.

1.2 Research Question

1. How is Rahima's subalternity depicted against patriarchal culture, in Nadia Hashimi's *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* novel?

1.3 Objective Study

This research aims to elaborate on how Rahima was depicted as a subject of a subaltern fight against the patriarchal culture by using the subaltern approach.

1.4 Significance of Study

The researcher hopes that this paper is helpful for the development of the literary study, especially for those who use this subaltern theory approach. The researcher also hopes that this paper will be a good reference for those who want to analyze a topic similar to *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, which contains issues on gender subaltern, mainly in those living in three world countries such as Afghanistan. The researcher hopes that using this topic as research will reveal to the world the status of women in Afghanistan and then encourage the subalterns to speak on their behalf.

1.5 Literature Review

The Pearls That Broke Its Shell novel has been under discussion in some research and essays. The first one comes from an undergraduate thesis titled "*FEMALE MASCULINITY AS SEEN IN NADIA HASHIMI'S THE PEARL THAT*

BROKE ITS SHELL” written by Marwa Ropi Jahidah from Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University (2021). This thesis focused on how Shekiba’s masculinity was portrayed because of social and cultural coercion, using the female masculinity theory by Judith Halberstam.

The second one is from an undergraduate thesis titled *"Rahima's Struggle Against Oppression as Seen in The Pearl That Broke Its Shell by Nadia Hashimi,"* written by Desi Saras Mahdyawati (2020) from Sanata Dharma University. This thesis focused on how Rahima's against oppression from her father, husband, and society using a feminist approach.

The third research is a critical review journal titled *"Self-Created Identity of Afghan Girls Due to Bacha Posh Practice: A Critical Analysis of The Pearl that Broke Its Shell by Nadia Hashimi,"* written by Sreeshambhavi. S. (2020) from Hindusthan College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. This journal analyses that *bacha posh's* tradition is not only exacerbating the oppression of women but also causes women to get a crisis of self-identity.

The fourth research is titled *"Women Inferiority and Struggle in The Pearl That Broke Its Shell,"* written by Nur Anisa (2019) from English Department at Bung Hatta University. This research used the theory of feminism and a historical approach to analyze the inferiority and struggles of women characters as in this novel.

The fifth research is titled *"Twilight in Dark- Spirited Afghan Women Characters in Nadia Hashimi's The Pearl that Broke its Shell,"* written by Mallika

Tiwari (2019) from Jiwaji University, Gwalior, India. This research aims to explore more profoundly the victimization, a crisis of identity, and spiritual strength through the harsh circumstances of Afghanistan.

The sixth research is titled *"Resistance to Reclamation: A Study of Nadia Hashimi's The Pearl that Broke its Shell and Atiq Rahimi's The Patience Stone,"* written by Ms. Athira. S. S (2019) from Manonmaniam Sundarnar University. This research examines how the novel's two main characters resist obeying the patriarchal system and claim their freedom in their way.

The seventh research from a historical journal titled *"Ecological and Cultural Outlook on Nadia Hashimi's The Pearl that Broke its Shell and One Half from the East,"* written by R. Antony Vincily and Dr. Alby Grace (2019) from Holy Cross College. This journal focuses on the changing ecological structure in Afghanistan during the war and exposes Afghan cultural practices that harmed the surrounding environment.

The eighth research is a graduate thesis by Suraya Amiliya Wahyu (2018) titled *"Women Subordination in Nadia Hashimi's The Pearl That Broke Its Shell"* from Universitas Brawijaya. This journal analyses how several characters experienced environmental subordination and figured out that the *bacha posh* tradition cannot support gender equality in the social structure.

The ninth research is from Shahzadi Sumra and Mehroz Taseer, titled *"Subalternity in The Pearl that Broke Its Shell: An Alternative Feminist Analysis,"* written in the International Journal of English Language and Translation Studies

(2018). This journal investigates feminist theory in women characters as in this novel. It includes the socio-cultural, socio-political, and socio-historical development of feminism in Afghanistan throughout history. This section also includes an overview of concepts, such as the notions of gender inequalities, patriarchy, subordination, female subjugation, and subaltern, which helped to lay the foundations for this study. It also discusses how socio-economic and cultural factors form and manipulate Muslim women's identities. Finding the image of Muslim women in a country where almost all of the population is Muslim is defined by a patriarchal ideology that unjustly governs their lives. This subaltern analysis detects patriarchal oppression patterns in life and body through the female characters in the novel.

The tenth research is a journal titled "*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 Half from the East*," written by J. Rajasree Menon and Dr. P.P. Vijayalakshmi (2018) from India. This journal focuses on gender dysphoria, identity crisis, and marginalization among Afghan girls, especially those who changed into *bacha posh* practices like Rahima in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* and *Obayda in Half from The East* by Nadia Hashimi.

The eleventh research is titled "*Representation of Women and Politics of Identity Crisis in Nadia Hashimi's Pearl That Broke Its Shell*," written by Roshni C. (2018) from Malankara Catholic College, Kaliyikkavilai, India. In her journal, Roshni explained how women are represented in Afghanistan as in Rahima's &

Shekiba's characters, the two spiritual strengths of women who are victims of the patriarchal society.

The twelfth research is an International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Arts and Humanities titled *"Afghan Narratives Portraying the Identity Crises: Interpreting the Pattern of "Bacha Posh" In A Pearl That Broke Its Shell,"* written by Javeria Khurshid (2018) from Amar Singh College, Srinagar, J, and K. This journal explores the identity crisis in which females are constantly seeking freedom from hierarchical and patriarchal domination. Javeria Khurshid states that patriarchy is the leading cause of women's oppression. Men take over all roles to control women's life. They create the laws, controlling and manipulating religious interpretation for their benefit. The assumption of society that considers women as lowly beings, someone who cannot make decisions independently and the leading cause of suffering, makes women a life threat. It is reinforced by social myths inherent in society, as Eve became the leading cause of Adam's downfall in the valley of adversity. Therefore, women are believed to be weak in well-being and cannot do anything other than as a means of reproduction and be housemaids.

The thirteenth journal is titled *"Representation of Girl Child as the Victim in Hosseini's and The Mountains Echoed and Nadia Hashimi's The Pearl That Broke Its Shell,"* written by Dr. Md. Sahidul Islam (2018) from B.S. Abdur Rahman Crescent Institute of Science and Technology, India. This journal focuses on the various problems faced by girls in Afghanistan during the Taliban regime. This journal also exposes the miserably of women's & girls' lives in Afghanistan due to the country's instability, wars, and the dominance of patriarchal culture.

In the previous research, most researchers analysed the whole characters of the novel, while the other researcher who specifically focused on Rahima's character used a feminist approach. In the researcher's paper, the researcher applies the postcolonial theory by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as a primary theory for analysing Rahima's character. This paper will focus on how Rahima, a subaltern woman, struggles against patriarchal culture.

1.6 Theoretical Approach

Postcolonial

In this research, the researcher uses the postcolonial theory by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Postcolonialism refers to the impact of colonization on cultures and societies. The term "postcolonialism" has been used by literary criticism to describe the different cultural effects of colonization (Bill Ashcroft, 2007: 168). It examines how these texts build the superiority of the colonizer (generally male) and the inferiority of the colonized (usually female), thus legitimizing colonization. It is essential to postcolonial demeanor on the part of the colonized and attempts to comprehend the nature of colonized and colonization. Ultimately, the term postcolonialism refers to a critical approach to understanding colonialism's impact, which is reflected in literary texts.

The attitudes and actions of colonization led to aggressive oppressed groups who simultaneously resisted and tried to survive by receiving the ideas brought by the colonial nation. The oppressed group is called the subaltern. The term subaltern was a reinterpretation of Marxist terminology called "Lumpenproletariat" which

means “underclass”. Then later, an Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci invented the term “subaltern” to refer to the “inferior rank” to describe a lower class, excommunicated, and oppressed by the elite class hegemony in Uni Soviet who do not possess a general “class consciousness” (Spivak, 1996: 213). Generally, in postcolonialism studies, the term “subaltern” refers to any marginalized or disempowered minority group, notably based on gender and race. Starting from there, a group of subaltern studies historians delved deeper into this issue, such as Ranajit Guha, Homi K. Bhabha, Partha Chatterjee, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and others (Young, 2016: 354).

Guha defines subalternity as a general trait of subordination in South Asian civilization in the first issue of the subaltern studies journal. He uses the terms “people” and “subaltern classes” interchangeably. Although the focus of the essay on subaltern studies is very much at the bottom of the social scale on various groups within the underclass. Spivak disagreed with Guha's assessment. She contended that it was vital to insist on the application of subalternity to women's and gender concerns (Grossberg, 1988: 284). In Spivak's essay titled “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, Spivak states that subaltern women are more complex than subaltern men. Women become the second class in a patriarchal society, marginalized, oppressed, and considered weak. They hold no powers of social movement. Spivak categorized the subaltern by gender issues of subjects and of subaltern women in particular. Both of them are the subject of colonialist historiography and as a subject of insurgency in which men as the dominant ideological construction (Morton, 2003:56-57).

Certainly, there are several concepts that Spivak discusses in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" includes:

1. Essentialism: Spivak critiques the idea of essentialism, or the belief that social categories such as race, gender, or class have inherent, unchanging characteristics. She argues that essentialism is problematic because it erases the diversity and complexity of human experiences and identities (Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, 1999: 42-44).

2. Representation: Spivak emphasizes the importance of representation in shaping social identities and experiences. She argues that dominant discourses and narratives often exclude or marginalize subaltern voices, and that representation can be a powerful tool for either reinforcing or challenging power relations (Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, 1999: 50-51).

3. Subalternity: The concept of subalternity is central to Spivak's essay. She uses the term to refer to individuals or groups who are socially, politically, and economically marginalized or excluded from mainstream society. She argues that subalternity is a complex and shifting social location that is shaped by a range of factors, including gender, class, race, sexuality, and more (Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, 1999: 35-36).

4. Agency: Spivak also discusses the issue of agency, or the ability of individuals or groups to act and make decisions for themselves. She argues that subaltern individuals and groups often have limited agency due to their social,

political, and economic marginalization, and that their ability to speak and act for themselves is often constrained by dominant power structures (Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, 1999: 62-63).

Spivak examines the position of subaltern women through several analyses that concluded with the statement that “subaltern cannot speak.” The only way for them to speak is by being dominant in the language or voice. So that they can be heard. Spivak aims to provide the concept of a subaltern identity itself instead of focusing on the ability to give voice to political concerns. She says that no act of resistance on behalf of an essential subaltern subject is entirely separate from the dominant discourse that provides the language and conceptual categories by which the subaltern voice speaks (Bill Ashcroft, 2007: 201).

1.7 Method of Research

1.7.1 Type of Research

The type of research is qualitative research. Qualitative research involves direct observation of a sample, case studies, personal experience, introspection, an examination of relevant texts, interviews, life stories, and the researcher's participation in the setting. The qualitative approach helps to understand culture, society, and behavior more profoundly by analysing people's words and actions (John Hogan, 2009: 3-4). Hence, the researcher used the qualitative method to investigate Rahima's subaltern in *The Pearl that Broke Its Shell* novel.

1.7.2 Data Source

The primary data source comes from the novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* by Nadia Hashimi. Books, journals, the internet, and other resources relevant to the topic support the secondary data.

1.7.3 Data Collection Technique

The researcher uses a library research technique to compile the data. The first step is for the researcher to read the novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* to understand the story. Then, the researcher wrote down or gave marks on each sign of the issue. The next step is for the researcher to start interpreting the character of the collected data while looking at another relevant source.

1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique

The researcher uses several steps to analyse the data. First, the researcher categorizes the data based on the sentences, paragraphs, and words containing the subaltern subject. Then, the researcher categorizes the data based on the type of subaltern subject. Last, the researcher analyses the word, sentences, and paragraphs based on the theory concept.

1.8 Paper Organisation

This paper, the research is divided into four chapters. The first one contains the background of the study, research questions, objectives, study, significance of the study, literature review, theoretical approach, method of research, and paper organization. The second chapter explains about intrinsic elements of the novel. The third chapter analyses the gendered subaltern in Rahima's character using a theoretical framework, and the last chapter is the conclusion.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

4.1 Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, the researcher finds that Rahima's subjugation as a subaltern is the result of various factors, including incorrect religious interpretations, strong patriarchal traditions and cultures, economic crisis and colonialism values that have flowed in Afghanistan. According to Spivak, if a subaltern woman wants to be free and express herself, she must struggle for herself without being represented by anyone. Only then would others recognize her and pay attention to her voice. Nadia Hashimi characterizes Rahima in this novel as a subaltern who grows and develops in an unsafe atmosphere for women.

This disadvantages women and makes it difficult for them to reach self-actualization as living beings. Coming from a severe patriarchal cultural context as well as a harsh tribal tradition background and lower economic income, Rahima fights for her freedom from the oppressor. Rahima tells her situation to her friends and they want to help her out from oppression, this could be seen as a form of voicing herself. By sharing her experiences and seeking support from others, the subaltern is asserting her own agency and taking steps to challenge her oppression.

4.2 Suggestion

The Pearl That Broke Its Shell tells about powerlessness, subordination, and struggling to fight for freedom in a patriarchal culture with conservative religious beliefs. The researcher applies the subaltern approach of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, which focuses on one of the main characters who has been oppressed and manipulated by her guardians. However, the researcher suggests that the next researcher delve deeper into how capitalism plays a big role in women's equal rights. The researcher also suggests that the next researcher find out the impacts of forced polygamy on other women's characters in the novel.



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