
VOLUME 1 NUMBER 3, **APRIL 2024**

CULTURAL NARRATIVES

PUBLISHER:
ERA DIGITAL NUSANTARA



Woman as Second-Class Citizens: The Impact of Patriarchy on Afghan Women in Hashimi's *One Half from The East*

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ABSTRACT

Nadia Hashimi's novel, *One Half from The East*, serves as a lens to explore the pervasive issue of gender inequality in a patriarchal society. This study analyzes the depiction of women, who are consistently viewed as inferior to men and denied fundamental rights. Employing qualitative research methods and Bell Hooks' feminist theory, the analysis exposes the limitations placed upon women within this social structure. The research highlights how Afghan women, like Obayda and Rahima who resort to disguising themselves as men, face oppression and discrimination from birth. Their restricted access to education, healthcare, and even control over their own bodies exemplifies the profound impact of patriarchy on their lives. The findings of this study suggest that gender inequality is deeply ingrained in patriarchal societies and continues to limit the rights and freedoms of women. This study underscores the ongoing struggle for women's equality not just in Afghanistan, but across the globe. In conclusion, this novel became an evident that the fight for women's equality is far from over, and efforts must be made to challenge and dismantle patriarchal structures not just in Afghanistan, but worldwide.

Article history:

Received 20 July 2024

Accepted 31 July 2024

Keywords:

Afghan Women, Gender inequality, Patriarchal society

INTRODUCTION

Despite significant advancements in human rights, a staggering statistic reveals that even in the 21st century, millions of women globally are relegated to a secondary status due to the persistent grip of patriarchal structures. These deeply ingrained social systems, often rooted in tradition and cultural norms, prioritize men and confine women to a predefined set of roles, severely restricting their access to education, healthcare, and even control over their own bodies (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001; Jayne & Jejeebhoy, 1997; Stromquist, 1989). This systemic inequality continues to cast a long shadow, hindering not just individual lives but also the overall development of societies where women's potential remains untapped (Kamal, 2018).

Patriarchy, a dominant social system with historical roots, establishes a hierarchy in which men hold primary power and authority. This dominance extends into many areas of life, including family structures, political institutions and economic opportunities. According to Padmi (2018) under patriarchal rule, the concept of masculinity is often equated with strength, leadership and decision-making, while femininity is associated with submissiveness, nurturing and domestic duties. These ingrained beliefs translate to a system in which men are seen as the rightful heads of households, exercising authority over women

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and children. In line with that, Lerch et al. (2021) argues women's rights are greatly restricted, limiting their participation in public life and decision-making. They may face restrictions on their education, forced marriages at a young age and a lack of control over their own finances and reproductive decisions. This unequal power dynamic fuels a cycle of oppression in which women are not only denied opportunities, but are also expected to conform to societal expectations that prioritise male dominance. The impact of patriarchy extends beyond individual limitations, hindering economic progress as women's skills and talents remain undeveloped, and slowing social development by perpetuating a divided society where half the population is systematically disadvantaged (Padmi, 2018).

Similar themes of female empowerment and resistance against patriarchal structures are explored in Nawal El-Saadawi's *Two Women in One*. The protagonist's deliberate transgression of gender boundaries destabilizes male dominance and offers a glimpse into the fluidity of power relations. (Nkealah, 2013) Fatima Bhutto's *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon** also delves into the complexities of female identity and the subversion of preconceived gender roles in the context of Pakistani society. (Zaidi et al., 2022). Using the same object, research from Vincily and Grace (2019) highlights Nadia Hashimi's dedication to raising awareness about the plight of Afghan society through her novels. It also emphasizes the detrimental effects of overseas incursion on Afghanistan's culture and ecology. According to Das and Rai (2022) states the book *One Half from the East* by Nadia Hashimi challenges the oppressive patriarchal norms in Afghan society and demonstrates how women can carve out spaces of resistance even within a highly conservative and misogynistic environment.

Nadia Hashimi's *One Half from The East* takes us to a patriarchal Afghanistan, a country where war and entrenched customs have squeezed most of the hope out of women's lives (Darkhasha, 2023). Against this backdrop, education - an absolute right everywhere else in the world - becomes a costly and often elusive privilege for girls. Open spaces, so full of life elsewhere, are narrowly restricted for Afghan women, who are usually confined to the home environment. This practice becomes a powerful indictment of the societal constraints on women when it is practised as 'bacha posh', raising girls as boys to fulfil a family's need for a male heir (Abbady, 2022; Padmi, 2018). In Obayda and Rahima, Hashimi gives us a nuanced exploration of the limitations, frustrations and quiet acts of defiance that define the lives of Afghan women.

Hashimi's masterful storytelling allows us to enter the world of *One Half from The East* not just as observers, but as empathetic companions alongside characters like Obayda and Rahima. Through their eyes, we witness the multifaceted nature of gender inequality in a patriarchal society. Forced to adopt the life of a boy to fulfil a family need, Obayda experiences a temporary taste of freedom and agency, only to be confronted with the harsh reality of her limitations when her true identity is revealed. Rahima, a young girl subjected to a forced marriage, embodies the powerlessness and loss of autonomy faced by many Afghan women. Their stories resonate not only as individual tragedies, but as powerful illustrations of the systemic disadvantages woven into the fabric of their society. The novel goes beyond mere depiction, using Obayda and Rahima's journeys to expose the insidious ways in which patriarchy manifests itself in everyday life. From the lack of educational opportunities to the restrictions on career choices, from the control over their bodies to the limitations on their social interactions, *One Half from The East* is a nuanced and unflinching portrayal of the challenges faced by Afghan women. By personifying these experiences,

Hashimi forces us not only to acknowledge the injustice, but also to critically examine the societal structures that perpetuate it.

The study, entitled 'Women as Second-Class Citizens: The Impact of Patriarchy on Afghan Women', aims to shed light on the pervasive effects of patriarchal structures on the lives of women in Afghanistan. Through a critical analysis of Nadia Hashimi's novel, *One Half from the East*, the research examines the ways in which these deeply entrenched social norms restrict women's access to basic rights and opportunities. It explores how patriarchal ideologies manifest themselves in everyday life, shaping everything from educational opportunities and career choices to control over one's own body and participation in the public sphere. By examining the experiences of characters such as Obayda and Rahima, the study aims to illustrate the practical limitations and emotional burdens placed on Afghan women. Ultimately, the research aims to contribute to a broader understanding of gender inequality within a patriarchal society, highlighting the human cost of such structures and the urgent need for change.

This study uses Hooks' feminist theory as a framework to analyse the representation of women in *One Half from The East*. Hooks (2014), a prominent scholar and activist, defines feminism as a movement dedicated to overcoming sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression in all its forms. Her work (2014) emphasises the interconnectedness of different forms of oppression, including sexism, racism and classism. This fits perfectly with the research focus on Afghanistan, where patriarchal structures intersect with the realities of war and limited economic opportunities, compounding the challenges faced by women. Hooks' concept of 'patriarchal terrorism', which describes the use of violence and intimidation to maintain male dominance, resonates deeply with the harsh realities experienced by many Afghan women (Biana, 2020).

While Hooks (2000) simply points to the oppression represented in patriarchy, she mainly focuses on destroying defined gender roles. The work calls for a critical examination of societal expectations that box women and men alike. In *One Half from The East*, such examination occurs through acts of defiance represented in characters like Obayda and Rahima. Obayda's decision to take on a male identity also reflects a deep longing for freedom and agency, normally denied to women. In the same manner, Rahima's silent acts of resistance against her marriage demonstrate that women never lose the sense of agency, no matter how oppressive an environment they find themselves in. This analysis of characters from a Hooksian framework purports that women have been capable of resilience and continue to write an alternative narrative to the one handed down by the patriarchy.

While this study focuses on the specific context of Afghanistan, the findings have profound global significance. Understanding the entrenched nature of patriarchy in Afghanistan sheds light on similar struggles faced by women in other parts of the world. Restrictions on education, lack of control over bodily autonomy and limited access to public life are issues that resonate across cultures and continents. The experiences of Afghan women serve as a stark reminder of the ongoing struggle for gender equality, highlighting the universality of patriarchal structures and the need for a global conversation about dismantling them.

The societal restrictions placed on Afghan women not only hinder their individual development, but also the overall progress of the nation. By denying women access to education and opportunities, Afghanistan is missing out on the potential of half its population. This resonates with broader discussions on sustainable development, where

gender equality is recognised as a critical factor in achieving economic prosperity and social stability. By highlighting the multiple effects of patriarchy in Afghanistan, this study serves as a call to action, urging the international community and local actors to prioritise initiatives that empower women and dismantle the structures that perpetuate their marginalisation.

METHOD

This study explores the portrayal of women in *One Half from The East* through the lens of qualitative research methods. Unlike quantitative methods, which focus on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative methods prioritise the in-depth exploration of lived experiences and subjective perspectives (Fraenkel et al., 2018). This approach is particularly suited to exploring the nuances of gender inequality within a patriarchal society. By analysing the rich details and complexities woven into the novel's narrative, qualitative methods allow us to understand the emotional impact of patriarchal structures on women's lives (Riyanto & Afdholy, 2024). Thus, it can be explored on how the characters' thoughts, feelings and motivations to gain a deeper understanding of how they navigate their limited options and resist societal pressures.

Qualitative methods also allow us to explore themes and recurring patterns within the novel. By examining how characters interact with each other and their environment, we can identify the mechanisms by which patriarchy enforces its control. We can also uncover instances of resilience and resistance, providing valuable insights into the agency women retain even within a restrictive society. This qualitative approach goes beyond simply quantifying the restrictions placed on women; it allows us to capture the human cost of these inequalities and the ongoing struggle for a more just and equitable world.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Defiance and Resilience in *One Half from The East*

Obayda's decision to become Obayd, a boy, in Nadia Hashimi's *One Half from The East*, is a complex act that embodies both defiance and the constraints of a patriarchal society. While it grants her access to education and a taste of freedom, it also exposes the limitations placed on women and the emotional toll of living a double life. The novel depicts how the female body is exploited to maintain patriarchal power, as Obayda is forced to hide her true identity and conform to male gender norms. However, the narrative also showcases her resilience and ability to subvert the system, as she navigates the challenges of her unconventional journey. Obayda's narrative echoes the struggle of many Afghan women to transcend the confines of a male-dominated society and assert their individuality. (El-Miniawi, 2021). Saya kira judul kurang merepresentasikan hasil penelitian.

The novel *One Half from The East* is set in Afghanistan where patriarchal culture is dominant. In this society, men hold control over almost every aspect of life. They are considered the leaders of the family with the right to make decisions and rule over women and children. Women, on the other hand, are prohibited from being leaders, making decisions, and working outside of domestic roles.

In this patriarchal society, women are often seen as burdens and less valuable. They have limited power over their own bodies and lives, as everything they do is controlled by men. Even their mere presence in the family is sometimes considered a problem or burden. In contrast, men are seen as reliable and important, while women are not. This belief system is

deeply entrenched in Afghan society. The importance of boys is also emphasized in this society, as they are considered crucial for a family's stability. Even from a young age, children are taught to think that boys are superior and more valuable than girls. This is demonstrated through the character of Obayda in the novel, who believes that a man is important as a father's backup.

This quote from the novel *One Half from the East*, "The oldest boy in the family is the one who's responsible for looking after everyone. He's sort of like the backup father. But my family doesn't have a son, which means we don't have a backup father". (Hashimi 2016, p. 6), highlights the deep-rooted belief in Afghan society that boys are crucial for a family's stability and that their absence is seen as a deficiency. The role of the oldest boy as a "backup father" emphasizes the importance placed on men as leaders and decision-makers.

In patriarchal societies like Afghanistan, men are considered the primary providers and protectors of the family. They hold the power and authority to make decisions and are seen as reliable and important. Women, on the other hand, are often relegated to domestic roles and have limited agency over their own lives. This unequal power dynamic creates a perception of women as burdens or less valuable members of the family.

The absence of a son in Obayda's family is seen as a problem or burden because there is no "backup father." This suggests that without a male figure, the family lacks the stability and guidance that a man is believed to provide. This mindset reinforces the idea that men are necessary for a family to function properly, while women are seen as insufficient on their own. Furthermore, this belief system extends beyond the role of a father figure. The expectation for boys to grow up to become responsible men who can provide and protect their families is deeply ingrained in Afghan society. Boys are taught from a young age that they are superior to girls and are instilled with a sense of importance due to their perceived ability to take on leadership roles.

The quote also highlights the pressure and responsibility placed on boys in Afghan society. The concept of being a "backup father" implies that boys are expected to step into this role at a certain age, assuming authority and providing guidance to the rest of the family. This places a significant burden on boys, as they are expected to shoulder the responsibilities traditionally reserved for men. The quote demonstrates the imbalance of power and the devaluing of women in a patriarchal society like Afghanistan. The belief that men are indispensable and that women are burdens or less valuable perpetuates gender inequality and restricts the agency and autonomy of women. Challenging these deeply entrenched beliefs is necessary for achieving gender equality and creating a more just society.

Obayda's decision to become *bacha posh*, a practice where a girl dresses and lives as a boy, further illustrates the societal pressure for boys to be seen as valuable. Despite her love for being a girl, Obayda sacrifices that identity to bring good luck and help her family overcome their difficulties. This decision weighs heavily on her, as she believes she owes it to her father to be a solution to their problems. Additionally, women are often considered less valuable because they are unable to do the things that men can. The patriarchal culture perpetuates the stereotype that women are weak and inferior to men. This viewpoint is depicted through the conversations between Obayda and her friend Rahima, who is also a *bacha posh*. Rahima admits that boys are seen as stronger, while girls are weak and expected to have many weaknesses. As can be seen in this quotation, "I remember what Khala Aziza said about this making my father better. She doesn't seem like the most reliable authority, but if there's even a chance shes's right. I should do it. I owe Padar-jan that much. (Hashimi 2016, p. 23)".

"You're a boy, not a bacha posh, Obayda. If you get that, there is nothing else. You know your weakness now, don't you? Boys aren't supposed to have weaknesses. Boys are built of rock and metal. We eat meat and show our teeth."

"And girls?"

"Girls are made of flower petals and paper bags. They eat berries and sip tea like something jump out of the hot water and bite them."

(Hashimi 2016, p. 73)

The quotation above from Rahima that highlights the societal belief that boys are stronger and superior to girls. It reflects the deeply ingrained gender stereotypes and expectations in Afghan society that play a significant role in shaping the experiences and identities of individuals like Obayda.

Rahima's statement to Obayda reinforces the idea that boys are not supposed to have weaknesses. They are expected to be strong, resilient, and capable of handling any challenges that come their way. Boys are compared to rock and metal, symbolizing their endurance and toughness. This portrayal of boys as unbreakable and powerful further perpetuates the notion that men are the dominant gender and inherently superior.

On the other hand, Rahima's description of girls reveals the contrasting perception of femininity. Girls are likened to delicate and fragile objects like flower petals and paper bags. They are depicted as vulnerable and in need of protection, emphasized by the mention of drinking tea cautiously due to the fear of being bitten by something unexpected. This highlights the view that girls are weak and require constant care and supervision.

This conversation between Obayda and Rahima reflects their understanding and internalization of gender norms and expectations in their society. It shows how deeply ingrained the beliefs about gender roles are, shaping their behaviors, attitudes, and self-perception. Obayda's decision to become a bacha posh reflects her understanding that there is more value and opportunity in being perceived as a boy. Despite her love for being a girl, she feels compelled to sacrifice her identity to bring good luck and help her family overcome their difficulties. This decision is rooted in the belief that being a boy will grant her more agency, freedom, and respect than being a girl. The pressure on Obayda to conform to societal expectations and become a bacha posh also reflects the tremendous burden placed on girls and women in Afghan society. Women are expected to comply with strict gender roles and face numerous limitations on their autonomy, mobility, and opportunities. The decision to become a bacha posh is an example of how girls often have to navigate and negotiate their identities within these constraints.

In short, the quote and Obayda's decision to become a bacha posh highlight the societal pressure for boys to be seen as valuable and superior. It also exposes the low societal value placed on girls, emphasizing their perceived weakness and limitations. These gendered expectations and stereotypes contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequality and restrict the potential and opportunities available to girls and women in Afghan society.

Obayda's mother also reinforces the notion that being a man is more valuable than being a woman. She convinces Obayda that becoming a bacha posh is what all girls desire, and that many girls would fight for the opportunity. As can be seen in this quote, "You'll be able to do what no other girl can do." "You're lucky to have this chance. Girls would kill to take your place." (Hashimi 2016, p. 18). This portrays being a man as having certain privileges that women do not have. In patriarchal countries like Afghanistan, being a man is considered something to be proud of, while being a woman is undervalued. However, it is important to recognize that both genders are equally valuable and should not be labelled as superior or

inferior. Gender equality and the removal of these assumptions is necessary for a fair and just society.

The Portrayal of Afghan Women Limitation

"But Obayda --- I mean, Obayd's got two big pieces of chicken right there. Even a drumstick!" "Obayd is a boy. He needs the meat if he's going to get stronger." (Hashimi 2016, p. 34). As can be seen in the quotation shows the unequal treatment of men and women in Afghan society. The fact that Obayd, who is now Obayda, is given two big pieces of chicken while the girls are not is indicative of the gender disparities and discrimination that exist. This passage also depicts that even in a simple matter like sharing food, there is a clear favouritism towards boys. Obayda's brother, Obayd, receives more food and a better cut of chicken simply because he is a boy. This unequal treatment demonstrates the societal belief that boys are more valuable and deserving than girls, perpetuating gender inequality.

The quote also implies that girls and women are denied equal rights and opportunities compared to boys and men. The fact that Obayda's brother can enjoy a larger portion of food while the girls cannot reflect the assumption that boys deserve more and have more privileges. This discrepancy is rooted in the patriarchal values and norms that dominate Afghan society.

Furthermore, the quote serves as evidence of the limited freedoms and opportunities afforded to girls and women in Afghan society. Women in Afghanistan face significant restrictions on their mobility, education, and autonomy. By denying them equal access to resources and opportunities, Afghan women are effectively marginalized and their rights as human beings are undermined. Moreover, the quotation reinforces the notion that women in patriarchal societies like Afghanistan have limited rights and face unequal treatment compared to men. It sheds light on the gender disparities and discrimination that are deeply ingrained in cultural norms and practices. The story exemplifies the struggles and limitations that Afghan women face in their daily lives, further highlighting the need for gender equality and the advancement of women's rights.

The quote, "Rahima's engaged to be married, and she needs to act like a respectable girl, (Hashimi 2016, p. 147)" showcases the oppressive practice of child marriage in Afghan society, further highlighting the strict limitations imposed on women. Despite Rahima enjoying her life as a bacha posh, being forced into a marriage forces her to abandon her identity as a boy and conform to societal expectations of a "respectable girl." Child marriage is a deeply entrenched cultural practice in Afghanistan, where girls as young as 9 or 10 years old are married off, often too much older men. This practice not only denies girls their right to education and personal development but also exposes them to physical and emotional harm. Girls who are married early are more likely to experience domestic violence, have limited control over their own lives and bodies, and face a higher risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

The fact that Rahima is forced into a marriage even though she is still young and has expressed her preference for living as a boy highlights the lack of agency and autonomy afforded to Afghan women. Women and girls are often treated as property to be bought and sold, a transaction that is often driven by patriarchal norms and economic considerations rather than the well-being and consent of the individuals involved.

The quote also exemplifies the way societal expectations and gender roles are imposed on women in Afghanistan. The notion of a "respectable girl" suggests that there are specific behaviors and appearances that women must adhere to in order to maintain their social

standing and reputation. This reinforces the idea that women should be submissive and conform to traditional gender norms, suppressing their own desires and identities. In addition, the quote emphasizes how child marriage restricts young girls' rights and limits their prospects for personal growth and independence. It highlights the deep-rooted gender inequalities and societal expectations that deny women agency and perpetuate their subjugation. Rahima's story serves as a powerful example of the impact of such practices on individual lives and underscores the urgent need to address and overcome these oppressive traditions.

Rahima and Obayda come from different families, and while Rahima never shared her family background with Obayda, it is evident that Rahima's father has complete control over her life. Rahima's father, known as a frightening and alcoholic figure, forces her to abandon her life as a bacha posh and marry at the young age of 13, despite her resistance. This signifies the lack of autonomy women have over their bodies and their lives. It reflects the unequal power dynamics between men and women, where men hold complete authority over women's actions. Similarly, Obayda's mother also determines when she should become a bacha posh and when she has to revert to being a girl. The most distressing part is that Rahima's and Obayda's feelings and desires are disregarded, especially when Rahima is coerced into marriage without any consideration for her emotions. Women and girls like Rahima are compelled to navigate their desires within oppressive societal norms. Refusal to comply with men's wishes often results in punishment, as Rahima experiences. Obayda faces a similar situation, as her mother forces her back into being a girl out of concern for potential consequences of living as a boy. Despite this, Obayda embarks on a personal journey to find a rainbow in a waterfall, exhibiting her determination. However, her actions worry her parents, leading them to convert her back into their daughter.

"Forget this boy stuff. It's all over now. By tomorrow, you'll be a new person. Or back to your old self. Which-ever it is." (Hashimi 2016, p. 209)". the quote highlights the societal expectations and traditional gender roles that limit women's autonomy. It suggests that women are not allowed to make choices for themselves, as their decisions are instead dictated by the desires and expectations of others, particularly men. In this case, the authority lies with the girl's mother, who forcefully changes her back into being a girl without considering the girl's own wishes or desires.

The phrase "It's all over now" implies that the period of the girl presenting as a boy is seen as a temporary phase or deviation from the norm, and that she must return to her "old self." This further reflects the societal pressure to conform to traditional gender norms and the belief that a woman's true identity lies within the confines of femininity. By disregarding the girl's own feelings and desires and determining her identity for her, this quote reinforces the idea that women are not allowed to make choices in their own lives. It underscores the power imbalance and lack of autonomy that women experience, where decisions about their bodies and identities are made by others, often based on societal expectations and norms.

The statement, "Some families think daughter are born to be wives and mothers and don't need to bother with books or writing. I feel bad for those girls because they don't get to do all the things schoolgirls do." (Hashimi 2016, p. 22 - 23, highlights the low value placed on education for females in Afghan society. By stating that "Some families think daughters are born to be wives and mothers", it implies that the purpose and destiny of women are limited to domestic roles and responsibilities. This belief negates the importance of education for

women and overlooks their potential to accomplish more in their lives beyond being wives and mothers.

Furthermore, the quote expresses sympathy for these girls, indicating that they miss out on the opportunities and experiences that come with education. It suggests that girls who are not encouraged to pursue education are deprived of the chance to explore their own interests, develop their skills, and achieve their full potential.

This attitude reflects the deep-rooted gender roles and expectations entrenched in Afghan society. It perpetuates the idea that women's primary role is to fulfill the expectations of marriage and motherhood, rather than pursuing their own dreams and aspirations. This mindset limits women's agency, opportunities, and possibilities for personal growth and autonomy. In addition, the quote presents evidence that supports the notion that some segments of Afghan society believe women will eventually become wives and mothers, and therefore do not need to concern themselves with education.

In Afghanistan, the belief that women will become wives and mothers often leads to limited access to education for girls. Unfortunately, this belief is reflected in the real-life situation of many Afghan girls who are denied their right to education. According to a survey conducted by UNICEF, approximately 3.7 million children in Afghanistan are out-of-school, with 60 percent of them being girls. This gender disparity in education can be attributed to various factors, including insecurity and traditional norms and practices concerning the role of females in Afghan society.

The gender gap in education becomes more pronounced as girls get older, with the largest disparity occurring at the age of fourteen. This is due in part to the challenges that arise when girls reach puberty. Sociocultural factors also contribute to the lack of education for girls in Afghanistan. For example, the scarcity of female teachers, especially in rural areas, impedes girls' access to education. Furthermore, the limited number of schools exclusively for girls, which make up only 16 percent of all schools in Afghanistan, often lack proper sanitation facilities, making it even more difficult for girls to attend.

Compounding the issue is the prevalence of early marriages for Afghan girls, with some marrying before the age of 15. These early marriages perpetuate the cycle of limited education for girls, as they are often expected to prioritize their roles as wives and mothers over their own personal development. Despite these challenges, there are families in Afghanistan, such as the Obaydas, who recognize the importance of education for women. They believe that educated and smart women make better parents to their children, even though they will eventually fulfill the roles of wives and mothers. These families understand that education equips women with the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to their families and society as a whole.

In summary, the low participation of girls in education in Afghanistan can be attributed to a combination of factors including insecurity, traditional norms, lack of female teachers, limited access to girls-only schools, and early marriages. However, there are families like the Obaydas who recognize the value of education for women, understanding that being educated enhances their ability to fulfill their roles as wives and mothers effectively.

Discussion

The Power of Storytelling: Giving Voice to the Silenced

Nadia Hashimi's *One Half of the East* is more than a narrative; it is an act of defiance against the silencing of women's voices. By giving voice to the experiences of Afghan women,

particularly Obayda and Rahima, the novel challenges the status quo and forces readers to confront the harsh realities of life under patriarchy. Hashimi's exploration of issues such as forced marriage, limited education and gender-based violence serves as a powerful indictment of a system that denies women their basic rights. Through powerful storytelling, the novel exposes the emotional impact of patriarchy on individuals and communities, and encourages readers to question the norms and structures that sustain inequality.

One Half from East not only reveals the oppressive nature of patriarchy, but also underlines the urgent need for change. By humanising the experiences of Afghan women, the novel makes readers empathise with their struggles and recognise the injustices they face. Hashimi's portrayal of characters like Obayda and Rahima, who in their own way defy societal expectations, offers hope and inspiration. The novel suggests that change is possible even in the most oppressive environments. By giving voice to the silenced, *One Half from East* becomes a catalyst for social change, inspiring readers to advocate for gender equality and challenge the structures that perpetuate inequality.

While *One Half from East* unquestionably portrays the challenges and constraints encountered by women in Afghan society, it also illuminates their noteworthy resilience. By recounting their experiences of adversity, characters such as Obayda and Rahima illustrate their capacity to draw upon inner resources in order to maintain resilience and a sense of optimism in the face of challenging circumstances. The accounts of these women, though painful, serve as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the capacity to overcome significant challenges. The vulnerability displayed by characters in *One Half from East* is not indicative of weakness; rather, it is a reflection of their courage to share their stories. By exposing the harsh realities of life under patriarchy, the novel contributes to the dismantling of the power structures that perpetuate inequality. The shared experiences of these characters inspire empathy and understanding, fostering a sense of solidarity among readers. Through storytelling, Hashimi creates a space for dialogue and reflection, encouraging readers to become agents of change in their own communities.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, gender inequality persists in Afghanistan and continues to have a profound impact on the lives of women. Patriarchal beliefs and norms result in boys being valued more than girls, leading to discrimination and limited opportunities for women. This gender disparity manifests in various aspects of Afghan women's lives, such as limited control over their bodies and lives, early forced marriages, and restricted access to education, health, and employment. The story of Obayda and Rahima in the novel *One Half from The East* illustrates the struggles faced by Afghan women as they try to navigate a society that still upholds patriarchal values. These fictional characters reflect the real-life experiences of countless Afghan women who are denied their rights and face ongoing oppression. It is crucial to continue addressing and challenging gender inequality in Afghanistan and beyond to ensure the advancement and empowerment of women.

One Half from East presents instances of defiance in which characters challenge the deeply entrenched traditional expectations of their society. Obayda's pursuit of education, despite the constraints imposed by a society that restricts female literacy, serves as a prime example. Her insatiable appetite for knowledge and her unwavering resolve to learn challenge the patriarchal norm that confines women to domestic roles. Furthermore, Rahima's passive resistance to her arranged marriage represents a challenge to traditional expectations

surrounding women's autonomy in selecting their partners. These instances illustrate the capacity for agency that women possess, even within a context of significant social restriction.

While subtle acts of defiance are pervasive throughout *One Half from East*, the novel also presents more overt challenges to traditional norms. The open advocacy for female education and the defiance of gender norms through behaviour and dress represent a more pronounced form of resistance. These acts of rebellion serve to illustrate the oppressive nature of the patriarchal system while simultaneously inspiring hope for a future in which women enjoy greater freedom and autonomy. By showcasing these acts of defiance, the novel encourages readers to question traditional gender roles and to support those who challenge the current situation.

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