SILENCED VOICES: PATRIARCHY AND SUBJUGATION IN NADIA HASHIMI'S A HOUSE WITHOUT WINDOWS

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ABSTRACT
This study examines the persistent impact of patriarchal institutions on Afghan women by analysing Nadia Hashimi's A House Without Windows (2016). Using feminist theory and post-colonial viewpoints, it places the story in the context of gender oppression and inequality in Afghanistan. This study investigates how patriarchal conventions stifle women's voices and maintain their oppression, with a particular focus on the protagonist, Zeba. It makes use of Gayatri Spivak's notion of "the subaltern" to comprehend the realities of oppressed women under patriarchal structures. This study focuses on Zeba's silence, which is seen as a survival tactic and a reflection of systemic suppression. This perspective sheds light on the larger implications of agency, resistance, and social change. The study advances sophisticated knowledge of gender and power relations in Afghanistan by placing the book in a socio-historical context and interacting with scholarly frameworks. Finally, it argues that A House Without Windows is a powerful indicator of patriarchal tyranny and a supporter of social justice and gender equality.

INTRODUCTION

A House Without Windows by Nadia Hashimi, published in 2016, is a moving examination of the persistent impact patriarchal norms have on Afghan women. In a culture where gender norms and power dynamics rule have been established, Hashimi's drama, set against the background of war-torn Afghanistan, reveals the terrifying reality faced by women. The book explores the intricacies of gender inequality from the perspective of its heroine, Zeba, illuminating the marginalised voices and subordinated lives of Afghan women. Before exploring the theme analysis of A House Without Windows, it is essential to comprehend the writer of this influential story. The former paediatrician-turned-novelist Nadia Hashimi offers a distinct viewpoint to her work by referencing her own experiences and Afghan ancestry. Born in America to Afghan immigrants during the Soviet-Afghan War, Hashimi's childhood was filled with tales about her motherland and its turbulent past. Hashimi maintained a close connection with her Afghan heritage while growing up in the United States, which helped her develop a strong sense of cultural identification and compassion for the difficulties encountered by Afghan women.

With a background in medicine and a love for storytelling, Hashimi's path to becoming a writer was slow. Following her graduation from Brandeis University and the University of Pennsylvania, Hashimi entered the paediatric field and mostly treated patients from underprivileged backgrounds. Hashimi initially saw the tenacity and bravery of women, overcoming hardships in her dealings with patients and their families. This topic recurs in all her literature. Hashimi became interested in fiction as a narrative medium because she wanted to highlight the stories of underrepresented women and give them a voice. The critically acclaimed novel The Pearl That Broke Its Shell (2014) was her first book and won praise for its realistic depiction of Afghan women's life-spanning generations. Hashimi's literary works, such as A House Without Windows, have consistently tackled the identity, perseverance, and consequences of patriarchal subjugation on the lives of women.

A House Without Windows is proof of Hashimi's dedication to empathetically and nuancedly capturing the complexity of Afghan life. Through a thorough investigation and an astute comprehension of cultural subtleties, Hashimi vividly depicts the challenges encountered by women, such as Zeba, whose opinions are often muffled by conventional customs and patriarchal frameworks. Hashimi gives readers a glimpse into the reality of Afghan women's lives by focusing on Zeba's trip, allowing them to relate to individuals whose experiences may vary greatly from their own.

The title of the work, A House Without Windows, alludes to the imprisonment and obscurity that Afghan women endure in a patriarchal culture. Similar to Zeba, many Afghan women are restricted to their houses and are not allowed to fully engage in public life or have control over their own lives. Hashimi sheds light on how patriarchal conventions restrict women's autonomy, uphold their subjection, and maintain them in a cycle of oppression and silence via Zeba's tale. Zeba is at the heart of the novel's examination of patriarchy; her story exemplifies the larger struggles that Afghan women encounter. Zeba, the main character, battles the social, political, and physical effects of her gender in a patriarchal culture. Her story, which spans from the tragedy of her husband's death to her imprisonment and subsequent conviction, provides an engaging narrative arc that emphasises the bravery and fortitude of Afghan women in the face of hardship.

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Apart from focusing on Zeba's challenges, the book also explores the structural problems that sustain the gender disparity in Afghanistan. Zeba's encounters with other female prisoners and her pre-incarceration memories provide Hashimi with a vivid picture of a society struggling to deal with the effects of decades of tyranny and violence. The book highlights many factors that work together to stifle women's voices and hinder their prospects for growth, from ingrained cultural beliefs to constricting gender norms. Within the pages of A House Without Windows, Nadia Hashimi challenges readers to face the harsh realities of patriarchy and gender inequality in Afghanistan. Reading Zeba's narrative forces readers to consider how power relationships and societal conventions affect women's lives, often with disastrous consequences. Hashimi's book amplifies the voices of Afghan women. It sheds light on their challenges, making it a potent reminder of the pressing need for social justice and gender equality in Afghanistan and abroad.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mohammed, Rouwaida Jasim. "A Non-Western Representation of Third-World Women in Nadia Hashimi's A House Without Windows." (2022). Western literature perpetuates prejudices about third-world women by depicting them as docile, uneducated, and identifiable. According to Mohammed, feminist methods may provide a more truthful representation; thus, there is hope for change. "A House Without Windows", a book by Nadia Hashimi, presents the actual hardships endured by Afghan women, therefore challenging these preconceptions. Mohammed's research highlights the ways in which women from developing countries overcome patriarchal systems and cultural norms by comparing and contrasting Western and non-Western portrayals of these women. This study's overarching goal is to encourage a more sophisticated comprehension of women from developing nations by examining Hashimi's writings through the prism of Transnational Feminist Theory. Mohammed stresses the need to acknowledge and honour the resiliency and power of women in non-Western cultures via this investigation.

Alebrahim, Mona Khaled. "Metropolitan Hybrid Identity in Nadia Hashimi's A House Without Windows." (2023). Through an examination of Yusuf's character in "A House Without Windows" (2016) by Nadia Hashimi, Alebrahim explores the effects of colonialism on Afghan society. This article uses Orientalism as a theoretical framework to analyse how Hashimi uses imitation and othering to depict urban hybridity. It examines how Yusuf believes that his own culture is inferior because he absorbs colonial beliefs. Because of his dual identity as a hybrid and local Afghan, the piece delves into how Yusuf represents an imperialist mindset that upholds the West-East dichotomy. This study delves into discussions on Orientalism and the rise of Western dominance via this analysis, which questions the tactics used to portray Yusuf as a mixed-race Afghan and their impact on Orientalist discourse. To reinforce Orientalist stereotypes and power relations, Alebrahim points out that Yusuf uses imitation as a double articulation tactic, imitating the West while also separating himself from the local Afghans.

Putratama, Muhammad Raihansyah. "Prison and Freedom in Nadia Hashimi's A House Without Windows." (2022). The central issue of Putratama's study is the concept of freedom, as it pertains to a jail in "A House Without Windows" (2016) by Nadia Hashimi. The essay contrasts the male-dominated outside world with the characters' emancipation behind the prison walls, drawing on Sartre's idea of freedom. This study draws on Stuart Hall's representation theory and Sartre's existentialism to examine the evolving conceptions of freedom of female characters. They experience many types of persecution outside of jail, but inside, they discover a renewed feeling of power and independence. According to Putratama, one may still achieve freedom, even in a severely limited setting like jail, via their words and deeds, and not only because they are in a physical location.

DISCUSSION

The third novel by Nadia Hashimi, A House Without Windows, released in 2016, is a moving examination of how women are portrayed in modern-day Afghanistan. This gripping story explores themes of mothers' love, sisterhood, murder, and survival while illuminating how women's equality and rights are treated in Afghan culture. Tightly politically, it offers a biting indictment of Afghan law and society while narrating the compelling story of a guilty woman's fight for justice. Women have experienced a multitude of harsh conditions throughout Afghanistan's turbulent history, with patriarchal standards and social restraints trampling their rights. Throughout Afghan history, patriarchy has been a pervasive and damaging social structure that has left women second-class people. Men rule both the public and private spheres, marginalising and oppressing women wherever they go.

Elaheh Povey's observations in "Women in Afghanistan: Passive victims of the borga or active social participants?" (6) highlight the widespread impact of patriarchal beliefs and practices, which exacerbates the difficulties faced by Afghan women. Afghan women continue to fight against males, ethnic groups, religions, and outside authorities, among other power structures, even after experiencing systematic persecution. Men have a disproportionate power and influence in this patriarchal society, which forces women into subservient positions and continues to exploit and marginalise them. This power dynamic is captured by the word "patriarchy," which clarifies the means by which

women are consistently oppressed and subjugated. It is clear from our theoretical examination of the story and characters that A House Without Windows is a microcosm of the larger problems that Afghan women experience. Hashimi challenges readers to address the systemic inequalities that still affect Afghan women by highlighting the nuances of gender relations and cultural norms through complicated plotlines and nuanced characterisations.

The suffering of the story's heroine, Zeba, in Nadia Hashimi's striking tapestry A House Without Windows, perfectly captures the brutal reality that women in patriarchal Afghan culture must endure. Zeba struggles against the oppressive limitations placed on her by society's expectations and gender conventions, and as a result, she becomes entangled in a web of subordination and oppression.

Zeba's status as a woman in Afghanistan is limited to a subservient position, with males being the only factor that determines her value. She is denied the basic freedom to express herself because she is imprisoned within her community, and the clamour of patriarchal control muffles her voice. Post-colonial academics have appropriately referred to these marginalised persons as "subaltern", a word that signifies their subordinated position within a dominant social structure. As stated by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, the term "subaltern" is "those groups in a society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes … they have less access to the means by which they may control their representation, and less access to cultural and social institutions" (314-315).

Zeba's existence serves as an example of the widespread effects of patriarchy, which often denies women the right to vote and pushes them outside of society. Her abusive and violent marriage to Kamal is a prime example of the terrible effect of well-ingrained gender norms. Zeba struggles through unimaginable adversity, but she is unable to question her husband's authority or stand up for her rights—a powerful illustration of the patriarchal grasp that Afghan women are subject to. Afghan women have historically experienced systemic marginalisation and oppression; a patriarchal society that prioritises male supremacy has taken away their agency and autonomy. They are not even granted the barest rights and liberties, which feeds the vicious cycle of marginalisation and subordination. Elaheh Povey underscores this reality, stating that "the patriarchal attitudes and structures remain extremely strong in Afghanistan" (6).

Zeba's tale is a potent critique of patriarchal tyranny and a call for action to empower women in the face of such systematic injustice. Her hardships expose readers to the terrible reality that Afghan women experience, spurring a movement to demolish patriarchal systems that prolong their misery. Hashimi's moving account of Zeba's journey highlights the pressing need for social reform and forces readers to face systemic injustices that affect Afghan women. As Zeba's narrative progresses, it becomes evident that her predicament is not an isolated occurrence but rather a sign of a larger oppressive system that has to be destroyed in order to establish real justice and gender equality. A House Without Windows opens with Zeba, the protagonist, in a state of shock and disbelief, bringing the reader into the horrific aftermath of a crime. Hashimi vividly captures Zeba's numbness and tangible tension in the air in his graphic depiction of the situation. Zeba's tale is a potent critique of patriarchal tyranny and a call for action to empower women in the face of such systematic injustice. Her hardships expose readers to the terrible reality that Afghan women experience, spurring a movement to demolish patriarchal systems that prolong their misery.

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Zeba does not say anything, her shaking hands revealing her inner agony, even if the overwhelming evidence points to her culpability. When Kamal's family demands retaliation against her and suspects her of the murder, the suspicion only grows. Zeba's gender gives society the impression that she has no voice and cannot defend herself against the charges made against her.

Zeba's situation is better understood in light of Gayatri Spivak's groundbreaking work on post-colonial theory, which emphasises the idea of "the subaltern." Spivak contends that social institutions that deprive marginalised people of agency and autonomy, especially women, mute them. Zeba is unable to speak up against the abuses done to her because of her subaltern status, which keeps her in a state of helplessness. Her unwillingness to face the reality of Kamal's behaviour and her situation highlights how deeply ingrained patriarchy is in Afghan culture.

As the story progresses, Zeba's quest turns into a moving examination of change and resistance in the face of persecution. According to Spivak, Zeba's final claim to her voice signifies a dramatic break from her prior enslavement and a symbolic win over the forces that had been trying to silence her. Zeba's new agency acts as a light of hope,

encouraging others to fight the current quo and reclaim their proper position in the world amid a patriarchal society that attempts to eradicate her.

The portrayal of a vulnerable subordinate lady in A House Without Windows was realistic. The thing that breaks my heart the most about Zeba's tale is how little was known about the abuse, humiliation, and suffering that she had to undergo. She has been raised to accept the patriarchal orientation of society; therefore, she never speaks when confronted with violence because she knows that no one would sympathise with her or be able to support her if she does. In other words, after being the victim of verbal, physical, or psychological abuse, she is unable to freely express herself because of the "systematic silencing" of her culture and society. Zaba's predicament highlights the struggle of women in Afghanistan, where they face comparable obstacles, have no voice in society, and deem it morally right to be quiet, even when given the opportunity to express themselves. Spivak in Towards a History of the Vanishing in A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: The subaltern cannot speak, as the present declares:

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-construction and object formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shutting, which is the displaced figuration of the 'third world woman' caught between tradition and modernisation, culturalism and development (304).

The idea that women are becoming more subdued represents the pressure placed on them by society to follow socially and culturally defined roles and standards. Women are encouraged to accept their allocated place and social standing, as the phrase emphasises, and to think that it will benefit them essentially in this world as well as the next. Zeba's story is an example of this phenomenon. It starts with her marriage to Kamal at the young age of 17, which her grandfather arranged without consulting her or getting her agreement.

In Afghan culture, males usually hold the majority of choices of this kind, making women passive objects of destiny instead of active agents in their own lives. Zeba's dependence on Kamal as the family's major provider highlights her inferior position and reflects the social norm that demands that women rely on their husbands for support and nourishment. As she says, "She had been too dependent on him, but what else was a husband for?" (AHWW 73). The gendered division of labour and power relations within the home is further reinforced by her position as a conventional housewife devoted to children and household chores.

Zeba is forced to assume the role of the "poor woman" in the eyes of society when Kamal dies, a title that is linked with the subordinate position she has. A woman's value in Afghan society is often based on her connection with the male patriarch, and being a widow signifies losing one's security and social position. While many around her express their anguish, "This poor woman- without a husband- may Allah protect her and her dear children!" (AHWW 20). Zeba is reluctant to disclose Kamal's death's reality, a sign of her deeply ingrained internalisation of her marginalised position, even in the face of Yusuf's efforts as a young lawyer, who is desperate to help her.

Using Gayatri Spivak's post-colonial theory, Zeba's situation may be understood in light of the larger issue of subaltern women being silenced. Spivak argues that the culture of male domination and patriarchal control permeates South Asian civilisations, systemically silencing women's voices. Because of the deeply entrenched ideas of male supremacy and gender hierarchy, women like Zeba often repress their agency and remain mute even when given the chance to speak out for themselves. Consequently, women's quieting signifies both the internalisation of subordination and the outwards imposition of silence, which feeds the cycle of marginalisation and oppression that many women experience in patriarchal countries.

Therefore, one way to read A House Without Windows is as a political criticism of Afghanistan's judicial and cultural structure. This book succeeds in its objective and is far more impactful than fiction or the tale of a single condemned lady. Hashimi's portrayal of Zeba allowed him to speak uniquely about the predicament facing women incarcerated. This book sheds light on how the judicial system oppressed Afghan women in the post-colonial period. Women often avoided a fair trial of accused adultery under the cover of Zina. Adultery is associated with issues such as the flawed judicial system and honour system in Afghanistan. Zeba, the main character of A House Without Windows, chooses not to disclose the facts because she wants to protect the reputation of the little child Kamal sexually assaulted in the courtyard. In response to Yusuf, Zeba's attorney, pressuring her to reveal the facts so he can figure out how to keep her alive, she says,

Anything I say will ruin her. I do not know if her family knows. What if they do not know? What if she is okay now? The possibility is everything to me. I know what they might do if they find it out. You may not, but I do. Every woman in Chil Mahtab is aware of this. Every woman and girl in Afghanistan know. (AHWW 234).

Zeba wanted to rescue the young girl that Kamal had sexually assaulted because she knew that the world would find out about Laylee, the young girl, if she revealed the truth about Kamal's murder. She says, 'Just a little girl and already so much to hide' (AHWW 361). According to Asma Jahangir and Hina Jilani's book The Hudood Ordinances: A Divine Sanction,

Women can be accused of rape, as can children; laws of mutual consent may easily convert a case of child abuse into a prosecution of the child for Zina, for fornication. Furthermore, unmarried men and women can be convicted of having committed rape against each other since a subsection of the Zina offence defines rape as 'one where the man or women have illicit sex knowing that they are not validly married to each other' (Jahangir 58).

The comment above effectively highlights the widespread practice of using women as scapegoats, holding them accountable for crimes regardless of the circumstances or available evidence. Accusations of misconduct sometimes mix unrelated offences —for example, mistaking an instance of child abuse for zina or a serious moral transgression— in the shaky Afghan judicial system. Zeba struggles with the difficult choice of whether to tell the truth and jeopardise the safety and reputation of a helpless little child or to come clean and admit her role in Kamal's murder. The ramifications of the charges are far-reaching, as they have the potential to damage a girl's family's reputation and honour. This finding highlights the intricate relationship between gender roles, ethical principles, and cultural norms. Hashimi deftly highlights the moral complexities and structural inequalities that abound in postwar Afghan culture via Zeba's internal struggle, especially regarding women's agency and rights. Women experience the greatest amount of social scrutiny and expectations, with their lives confined by the need to maintain honour and propriety. At the same time, males participate in the commission of these crimes. As said by Hashimi, "What a burden it is to be born a woman" (AHWW 198), capturing, within a patriarchal context, the deep feeling of vulnerability and oppression felt by Afghan women.

Hashimi used the stories of Zeba's fellow prisoners at Chil Mahtab to illuminate the predicament of Afghan women further. Every woman in Afghanistan embodies a distinct aspect of the structural inequalities and gendered oppression that are pervasive in the country. These ladies, Nafisa, imprisoned to avoid an honour killing; Latifa, running away from a life of cruelty and suffering; and Mezghan, awaiting trial for the unmarried pregnancy crime, represent the many struggles and injustices that women encounter. The jail turns into a haven and testing ground where sisterhoods emerge despite the harsh reality of imprisonment and social disapproval. Hashimi illuminates the widespread culture of injustice and accusation that characterises post-colonial Afghanistan with vivid characterisation and a moving narrative. One way to describe the judicial system is as "twisted as a mullah's turban." (AHWW 146) embodies the larger social shortcomings and systemic injustices that keep Afghan women trapped in a never-ending cycle of subjugation and exclusion.

For these women, jail is like a little universe. Thoughts and worries about loved ones beyond this cage prevented some inmates from fully appreciating their current situation. The thoughts of her children growing up without a parent broke Zeba's heart, and she worried about them all the time. The thought that Bashir would be a good caretaker for his brothers while she was away helped to ease her pain. He is obviously different from Kamal. An excerpt from the couplet that Zeba penned while incarcerated captures the central theme of the book:

"What good is a woman's telling of the truth
When nothing she says will be taken as proof?" (AHWW 231).

Being a woman makes a person inadmissible as a witness or defence attorney in a court of law. This proves beyond reasonable doubt that male-dominated Afghan culture does not value women's opinions. Spivak called this the "systematic silencing" of female subalterns, and it fits the theoretical description. Although Yusuf and every other character in the book are aware of the pervasive unfairness that results from the country's political instability, no one is able to end the cycle of injustice. According to Spivak, the subaltern is mute because

between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-construction and object formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shutting, which is the displaced figuration of the 'third world woman' caught between tradition and modernisation, culturalism and development (Spivak 304).

Therefore, to silence women is to convince them that conforming to the behavioural standards and status quo dictated by their social, cultural, and religious context is not only the right thing to do but also has intrinsic personal and societal benefits. As Zeba challenges the traditional gender conventions and expectations inside Chil Mahtab, her story shocks and intrigues her fellow prisoners. One observer pointed out that "Zeba's story was more intriguing than most. Typically, husbands killed wives, not the other way around" (AHWW 59), emphasising how seldom women publicly challenge the power of dominating male characters in their homes or face patriarchal tyranny. The proverb "an angry father is better than a dead father" (AHWW 59) encapsulates this widespread cultural norm. It highlights the social desire to preserve the patriarchal order, even when faced with abuse or injustice.

Many women in Chil Mahtab and elsewhere find themselves in Zeba's shoes—in jail not for what they did but for refusing to conform to gender norms and societal expectations. Society and law place Zeba's gender ahead of her guilt or innocence; they evaluate her based on her gender rather than her deeds. In a country like Afghanistan, where patriarchal norms and judicial prejudices work hand-in-hand to keep women down and unable to stand up for themselves, her story is emblematic of the systematic unfairness that women encounter.

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This work highlights the error of seeing women as a singular category without intersectional complexity, drawing on the work of the post-colonial feminist scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty. Mohanty stresses the need to recognise the variety of women's experiences and identities and warns against essentialising women across class, caste, and race. Through its examination of the many sociocultural and structural factors that impact women's lives, the book questions simplistic narratives and advocates for a broader and more holistic perspective on gender oppression and resistance.

Thus, in any given piece of feminist analysis, women are characterised as singular groups on the basis of shared oppression. What binds women together is a sociological notion of the 'sameness' of their oppression. It is at this point that an elision takes place between 'women' as a distinctively constructed group and 'women' as material subjects of their history. Thus, the discursively consensual homogeneity of 'women' as a group is mistaken for the historically specific material reality of groups of' women'. This results in an assumption of women as an always-already constituted group, one which is labelled 'powerless', 'exploited', 'sexually harassed', etc., by feminist scientific, economic, legal and sociological discourses (Mohanty 23).

Consequently, in A House Without Windows , every woman in Chil Mahtab feels the same way about their tyranny and lack of authority. Because they are female, they do not absolve certain women from the need for a fair trial. In the murder case involving Zeba, the difficulties and hardships of these women take the central stage, perhaps more so than the crime itself. Time is of the essence as Yusuf and Zeba race against the clock to spare Zeba's life. They encounter several challenges, such as patriarchy, honour, and an ineffective legal system that fails to address the injustice plaguing their oppressed nation adequately. As a result, Hashimi uses Zeba as a vehicle to express her thoughts uniquely. Since Zeba is a woman, she asserts that "A woman was only as good as the drops that fell on her wedding night, the ounces she bled with the turns of the moon, and the small river she shed giving her husband children" (AHWW 201). By highlighting the ways in which colonial patriarchal regimes marginalised and dominated women in the Third World, the author draws attention to Zeba's oppression and suffering. Accordingly, Mohanty's theoretical worldview seems to reveal an outward expression in Hashimi's book. Pramod. K. Nayar offers an alternative theoretical definition of "post-colonial subalternation" as:

If the native was the subaltern during colonial rule, post-colonialism created its subalterns. Women, lower castes, classes, and ethnic minorities rapidly became Others within the post-colonial nation-state. The new elite was as oppressive and exploitative as colonial masters. Democratic approaches failed, and economic and social emancipation slipped across the horizon as millions of post-colonial saw themselves colonised by the new powers. (Nayar 100).

In the thirty-plus years that the term "subaltern" has been a popular and theoretically attached term among post-colonial studies' many keywords inform Pramod Nayar's use of this term. This exemplifies how the word "subaltern" comes to mean members of socially disadvantaged groups whose plight is contingent upon policies and legislation enacted by the dominant group.

The characters created by Hashimi are realistic and vibrant. A comprehension of the following terms is necessary for enjoying this novel's characters: "Sometimes, you cannot make it through unless you completely lose it." Zeba and Yusuf, the story's presenters, bring a cast of characters to life with extraordinary skill.

Yusuf, Zeba's young lawyer, had studied in the US. Educated and well-off, Yusuf's parents lost their employment due to political unrest and ultimately chose to flee to the United States. Since the refugee camps were horrible, and many others did not have the opportunity to locate a nice place to stay, they felt lucky. He returned to Afghanistan, his birthplace, to aid his nation after studying law in the USA. He felt an irresistible tug towards his homeland. Despite the challenges he faces, he diligently works on his first case, attempting to understand the motives behind the husband's murder. The victim is a seemingly average woman—a nurturing mother who supports her neighbours. This reality becomes clear to Yusuf over time, and his suffering represents the everyday problems of Afghan women. Despite the persistent injustice that they faced at the hands of males, the nation, and the judicial system, they were unable to speak out.

Hashimi paints a vivid image of postwar Afghanistan through Yusuf. Because of the political unrest and general chaos in the nation, the population seemed 10–20 years older than their actual age. It is characterised as "… a whole country of broken hearts" (AHWW 52). Here, falsehoods, rumours, and gossip were more widely trusted than truth. You will not find many opportunities for advancement in this nation. They say that people are just puppets. Based on what Qazi Najeeb says, it is "The problem is that we all are puppets. We all have strings on our head and arms, and someone else pulls them: the Russians, the Americans, the warlords, the mullahs, the Taliban" (AHWW 313). The judge held out hope for a change since he thought political instability had worsened the justice system.

Hashimi's book, A House Without Windows, is where Mohanty traces another major idea, which is the fellowship of women. Hashimi acknowledges that colonialism and local patriarchy violate Afghan women's lives. However, she also uses the symbol of Afghan women's unity based on "the common interests, historical location, and social identity" (Mohanty 12). In Mohanty's view, the political opposition of women from the Third World is based on their common battle against patriarchy, imperialism, capitalism, and power structures dictated by hierarchical discourse. In the past,

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women in Afghanistan gathered secretly, either in homes or along riversides, to write and exchange poetry as a way to release pent-up feelings and burdens. After that, Zeba says that, "Anyone with a heavy chest can be a poet" (AHWW 48). Even Zeba, who lived a lonely life, created couplets as a means of evading her pain.

Gulnaz, Zeba's mom, was a witch who had obtained her powers from grandma. The renowned murshid, Safatullah Kazimi, was her father. She was a fiercely independent woman who never allowed anybody else to dictate her actions. "No one doubted her when she made a vow. They knew, by then, that she could circumvent nature to make it so" (AHWW 25). She has two children and beautiful green eyes. Both her life and deceit were entirely within her power. Unlike other oppressed Afghan women, Gulnaz is fearless, intelligent, and strong. Gulnaz does not let patriarchy govern her. When she wants to say something, she plainly says it. This is in stark contrast to the patriarchal culture prevalent in Afghanistan, where wives often cower in submission whenever their husbands demand anything. She had internal information on Zeba's innocence that few others had. As her children were so little and dependent on her, she begged the court for leniency. After seeing she could not do anything to assist, Qazi Najeeb made the statement, "As long as men are the judges, nothing will change." (AHWW 327). In her opinion, patriarchal males would never understand the real motivations behind Kamal's murder. However, in her role as a mother, she spared no effort during her mission to reunite Zeba with her children.

Many female characters undergo a radical change as they develop an awareness of their self-consciousness towards the novel's conclusion. Among these, Zeba stood out the most. She continues to lie throughout her trials and places herself completely at the mercy of the court. Yusuf claims that she is the strongest lady he encountered. Zellika Zeba, which literally translates to "queen," is the name of Zeba's cell mate. They attribute her unique abilities to those of her mother, who, through prayer and taweez, secured fair trials for other incarcerated women. Latifa and Gulnaz are the other two women who experience self-consciousness alongside Zeba. These women show much independence in how they handle the males.

As a result of sharing this experience, the two women may find that they are more likely to develop feelings of self-consciousness at the same time. According to the American radical feminist Kate Millet, patriarchy is a revolutionary institution. According to Millet, "politics" refers to power-structured interactions in which one group of people exerts authority over another. Millet writes on the struggle of women in patriarchal societies:

Women are aware of their situation both in society and at home to form their self-consciousness as women, to demand their equality with men, and to obtain their autonomy. Resistance is one way to achieve equality, dignity, and rights (such as the right to education, birth control, divorce, and participation in decision-making) (Millet 77).

Female protagonists who find ways to overcome their unfavourable situations are at the centre of this research. These include characters such as Zeba, Gulnaz, Latifa, Mezghan, Bibi Shireen, Sitara, Meena, and Aneesa. Their demands for decision-making autonomy, rejection of male dominance, and acquisition of fundamental rights such as freedom of speech, education, and the capacity to work for financial gain all coincide with the emergence of self-awareness in this demographic. The female characters' exemplary levels of self-awareness and resolve serve as models for other women as they fight for gender equality and social advancement.

According to current studies, discrimination and a lack of opportunities for women are the primary causes of women fighting hard to achieve their rights. Within patriarchal institutions, males have all the cards and are able to force women to conform to their standards. Conversely, women possess inherent resilience, which may alleviate their pain. If oppressed women want to end their plight, they must raise awareness. They must overcome the shame and inferiority complex that they internalise. The novel's female protagonists in A House Without Windows are a metaphor for modern women who strive to improve their lives. They help others going through the same thing to become more self-aware by serving as an example. Women should demand more say in their daily lives and make important choices as the starting point. The lack of self-control makes it unable to exert effective opposition. Equally important to their survival is the freedom of free expression, adequate education, and gainful employment, all of which they must struggle for. A House Without Windows is a very significant title in Rumi's enormous work Masnavi III. Rumi was a prominent Persian poet.

The poem goes like this,

The message, the rain, and the divine light come through my
window
Falling into my house from my origins
Hell is a house without a window (AHWW I).

These lines symbolise how light and rain, representing divinity, might enter a home via its windows, serving as a constant reminder of one's origin. This person is a gift from God, and it is to him that we return. The lines also show that the home is dark and forlorn because there is no light streaming from outside. When Kamal was there, Zeba's home seemed windowless. No outside light could penetrate the darkness. As a genuine patriarch, Kamal took

advantage of the cramped quarters of their homes to subject Zeba and their children to brutal abuse. According to Zeba, "He did not understand that they lived in a house with no windows" (AHWW 84). This signifies the end of the debate since there is no longer any space for it.

A spoof of the Afghan judicial system, the judge's office is also characterised as a cramped, windowless chamber. In the judge's windowless chamber, the lady had very little chance of achieving justice. Additionally, the post-colonial era did not have a functional judicial system. As a result, Zeba remained silent when led into this chamber to stand. As with Chil Mahtab, the quarters of female inmates are cramped and windowless.

Nevertheless, the jail provided Zeba and other female inmates with a safer and more renovated home than their own. She states, "For a house with no windows, Chil Mahtab is not that bad. Sometimes I breathe easier here than I ever did at home" (AHWW 398). In jail, Zeba was able to escape her abusive husband. Her children were one thing she longed for while inside. As the story closes, Zeba goes home with a fair trial and throws open every window. Her residence is no longer a living nightmare thanks to this gesture. "She had thrown open the windows of her house to let the odour of decaying food and vacantness out" (AHWW 407). Zeba had ensured that the whole home was spotless and pleasant for their stay by cleaning it thoroughly.

The characters in A House Without Windows are women who have experienced repression of society. In light of the long history of the colonial and indigenous patriarchy in Afghanistan, Hashimi hopes to advocate for the country's female population. That is, according to Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Third World women must speak for themselves, rewrite their history, and produce knowledge about themselves. She suggests that the important question is: who is speaking for Third World women, and from what geographical location they are doing so?" (Mohanty 52). Hashimi, a woman born and brought up in the United States, has a distinct vantage point from which to recount the experience of marginalisation and hardship endured by Afghan women. Despite the novel's continuous attacks on female characters by sexist and classified forces, it is not easy to generalise them. She is certain that Third World women should create their history to reflect the specific conditions and challenges they confront. When Gulnaz's husband goes missing, she becomes a symbol of strong, independent women like herself who have never had to worry about something. In contrast, Zeba is a conventional woman who respects men's inherent dominance and works hard to fulfil her roles as a wife, mother, and daughter. Her spouse and family also considered her a dear friend.

Zeba represents women who have come to terms with their destinies. Following this line of thinking, Mohanty suggests that, while analysing women, we should see them as a single entity and that "results in an assumption of women as an always already constructed group, one that has been labelled powerless, exploited, sexually harassed, and so on" (Mohanty23). Nadia Hashimi skillfully reveals in this book how colonial and indigenous patriarchal systems repress and marginalise women. Her goal is to provide a voice to Afghan women who do not have one.

CONCLUSION

In her eloquent A House Without Windows, Nadia Hashimi sheds light on the oppression of Afghan women by colonial and indigenous patriarchal systems. Hashimi shows the complex dynamics of gender, class, and power through Zeba's story, which highlights the many forms of oppression that Afghan women experience. The story is a powerful indictment of Afghan legal and cultural institutions that expose the oppression and marginalisation of women like Zeba. Society norms and power systems sustain the systematic silencing of women, which Zeba symbolises by remaining silent in the face of violence. Skillfully navigating themes of violence against women, resilience, and gender inequity, Hashimi delivered a scathing critique of the patriarchal forces that control the lives of Afghan women. She shows how difficult it is to fight back against repressive regimes through the experiences of people like Yusuf and Gulnaz. As a whole, A House Without Windows is a powerful statement about the need to listen to and share the tales of Afghan women, as well as a tribute to their bravery and perseverance. A strong call to action, Hashimi's book urges readers to fight patriarchal systems that oppress and repress women worldwide.

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