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The Subjugation of Women and Bach Posh Tradition of Afghanistan in Nadia Hashimi's *The Pearl that Broke its Shell*

Rutva N. Shah¹, Dr. J. Santhosh Priyaa²

¹Research Scholar, Department of English, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women,
Coimbatore, India

²Associate Professor, Department of English, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women,
Coimbatore, India

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Abstract

The paper establishes that the laws and cultures simulate ideologies that construct, control, and influence the collective understanding of a community. They can impact the personal experiences of the people belonging to that community. Afghani community favoured a patriarchal system of society for a considerable period. According to the rules of the Taliban and the cultural codes of the Pashtun community, a man is considered to embody dominance protecting a woman and considering her equal to an object. A female in Afghanistan, being a subordinate didn't have a voice. They didn't have an opportunity to stand up for their concerns. Hence the only way to challenge these dominant ideologies was through communicative memories of women performing the roles that are conventionally retained for a man. These memories can alter the constructed patriarchal notion, distorting the conventional male dominance. The study uses the novel *The Pearl That Broke its Shell* by Nadia Hashimi to show that a communicative memory can empower women to be independent of the dominant patriarchal rules and gazes. Bacha Posh is a tradition in which a female dresses up as a male in front of society to perform all the tasks and enjoy all the luxuries reserved for a male. The bacha posh tradition is not officially documented and recognised but thrives through communication within a community. This study exemplifies bacha Posh as one such communicative memory that has the power to reshape the inferior status of a woman in Afghanistan.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Bacha Posh, Communicative memory, Culture, Dominance, inferiorly, Taliban.

Memory has always been a subject of psychology. According to the Western model of culture, "memory is an individual phenomenon, triggered by outside stimuli, that happens largely inside our heads. Second, Memory works like a camera, registering photos at the time of the experience that remain unchanged, crystallised images that we can later recall at will." (Cole 2001). Memory was considered to be individualistic, natural and universal. Maurice Halbwachs' argued in his classical study *Collective Memory* (1950, 1980) that individual memories can be understood only in the context of society. The memory doesn't remain unchanged. It is constantly reconstructed based on the present needs of society. In his book *Forget Colonialism? Sacrifice and the Art of Memory in Madagascar* Jennifer Cole, states that:

Individual memories can be interpreted only within a social context, and it is the social context that renders them coherent, allowing them to be narrated. Further, memories are not stored in the brain to be retrieved at will, as the photographic theory of memory would have it. Rather our memories are constantly reconstructed in keeping with the needs of the present. (Cole 2001)

Maurice Halbwachs and Aby Warburg were the founders of Memory studies. They studied memory about the social environment. They believed memory to be in a dialogic relationship with the social surroundings. Pierre Nora, Jan Assmann, and Aleidia Assmann focused on the cultural aspect of memory. Theorists like Andreas Huyssen, Alison Landberg, Daniel Levy, Natan Sznajder, and Michael Rothberg concentrated on the memory concerning mass media and the way these memories are represented through mass media. These theorists also focused on the transnationalisation of the memory.

In the chapter "Communicative and Cultural Memory" Jan Assmann asserts that memories are constructed not only with social

actives like communication but also with symbols. "Memory, which people possess as beings equipped with the human mind, exists solely in constant interaction not only with the other human memories but also with outward symbols." (Assmann 2011). Memories found in the cultural settings such as the "landscape in which people grew up, the texts they learned, the feasts they celebrated, the churches or synagogues they frequented, the music they listened to, and especially the stories that were told and by which they live." (Assmann 2011). The institutions provide support to cultural memory.

Jan Assmann proposes to rename the Halbwachs' notion of collective memory as a communicative memory. Communicational memory is dependent on daily conversations. Institutions do not support communicational memory. The duration of these memories is limited. They are reconstructed or forgotten with the changes in the power structures. Jan Assmann in the chapter "Communicative and Cultural Memory" states that:

The institutional character doesn't apply to what Halbwachs called collective memory and what I propose to rename *communicative memory*. Communicative memory is non-institutional. It is not supported by any institutions of learning, transmission, or interpretation, nor is it cultivated by specialists or summoned or celebrated on special occasions. It is not formalized and stabilized by any form of material symbolization. It lives in everyday interaction and communication. For this very reason, communicative memory is of fairly limited duration. (Assmann 2011)

Cultural memory dates back to the time a community can remember. There is no distinction between history and myth. These memories are vulnerable to the act of forgetting and are reconstructed. In the chapter

"Communicative and Cultural Memory" Jan Assmann explains cultural memory:

Cultural memory rests on fixed points in the past. Even in cultural memory, the past is not preserved as such but rather galvanized in the symbols, for they are represented in oral myths and history vanishes. What counts is not the past as it is investigated and reconstructed by archaeologists and historians but only the past as it is remembered. (Assmann 2011)

Louis Althusser considered culture to be one of the apparatuses for ideology. The Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) is different from the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA). RSA uses violence to function and ISA uses ideology to function. "What distinguishes the ISAs from the (Repressive) State Apparatus is the following basic difference: the Repressive State Apparatus functions 'by violence' whereas the Ideological State Apparatus functions *by ideology*." (Althusser 2016). Both the state apparatuses use violence and ideology. RSA predominately uses violence whereas ISA predominantly uses ideology.

The term ideology has multiple definitions. Ideology can be a collective group of ideas propagated by a community. Ideology can distort the reality. They produce false consciousness, working for the powerful against the powerless. It is used to mask the domination. The powerful don't see themselves as oppressors and the powerless don't see themselves as oppressed. In *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* John Storey explains the second definition of ideology as follows:

A second definition suggests a certain masking, distortion or concealment. Ideology is used here to indicate how some texts and practices present distorted images of reality. They produce what is sometimes called a 'false consciousness'. Such distortions, it is argued, work in the

interests of the powerful against the interests of the powerless. (Storey 2014)

The above meaning of ideology is derived from Karl Marx, where economic production affects culture. The culture produced out of the economic productions favours those in power. The term Ideology's third meaning establishes a relationship between text and ideologies. The texts present a picture or an image of the world, consciously or unconsciously. Bertolt Brecht's statement can be taken as an example. Brecht suggests that a play can be good or bad but will always present an ideology. The texts are political. Texts enable people to see the world from a particular ideology. The fourth meaning is derived from Roland Barthes' notion of ideology, for Barthes's ideology is associated with the connotative meaning of the word. "Barthes argues that ideology (or 'myth' as Barthes himself calls it) operates mainly at the level of connotations, the secondary, often unconscious meanings that texts and practices carry," (Storey 2014).

"According to the first definition by Althusser, Ideology is a 'practice' through which men and women live their relations to the real conditions of existence." (Storey 2014). The ideology removes contradictions from the lived experiences of the people. It gives pseudo but seemingly true solutions for the real problems of the world. The ideology is considered to be unconscious. "Ideology dispels contradiction in lived experience. It accomplishes this by false, but seemingly true, resolution to the real problems. This is not a 'conscious' process" (Storey 2014). The relationship that one has with the existent conditions is both real and imaginary. The conditions are real but the representations are imaginary. In *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* John Storey explains that the concept of ideology can be associated with the dominant and subordinate classes:

This applies to both dominant and subordinate classes; ideologies do not just

convince oppressed groups that is all well in the world, they also convince the ruling groups that exploitations and oppression are quite something different, acts of universal necessity. Only a 'scientific' discourse can see through the ideology of the real conditions of existence. (Storey 2014)

If a particular text propagates a system of ideologies provided as a solution for the problems, then one must also take into notice the obstacles are not acknowledged in the texts. "in this way, it is argued, a text is structured as much by what is absent (what is not said) as by what is present (what is said)." (Storey 2014). To understand the text completely, one must also take into consideration the assumptions of the text. " Althusser argues that if we are to fully understand the meaning of a text, we have to be aware of not only what is in a text but also the assumptions which inform it (and which may not appear in the text itself in any straightforward way but exist only in the text's problematic)." (Storey 2014).

Louis Althusser considered culture to be one of the apparatuses for ideology. The Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) was different from the Repressive State Apparatus(RSA). RSA uses violence to function and ISA uses ideology to function. " What distinguishes the ISAs from the (Repressive) State Apparatus is the following basic difference: the Repressive State Apparatus functions 'by violence' whereas the Ideological State Apparatus functions 'by ideology'." (Althusser 2016). Both the state apparatuses use violence and ideology. RSA predominately uses violence whereas ISA predominately uses ideology. The ISA reproduces the relations of production under the protection of RSA. ISAs such as "the educational apparatus, the religious apparatus, the family apparatus, the political apparatus, the trade-union apparatus, the communication apparatus, the 'cultural' apparatus etc." (Althusser 2016) propagate the ideologies of the ruling class holding power under the protection

of RSA. The educational apparatus is considered to be the dominant one.

Nadia Hashimi's *The Pearl that Broke its Shell* as a text exhibits all the cultural norms influencing the inferiority of women in both the private and public spheres of the world. These cultural norms of the Pashtun and Taliban communities influence the ideology of the families in Afghanistan. This text also represents Bacha Posh, an undocumented tradition by which a woman can prove that she is not inferior or subordinate to a man. A woman can imitate the embodiment and performance of a man, proving her equality. It is part of the living memory, communicated by women of the household. It produces an ideology that is in contradiction with the norms that are against gender equality.

Rahima was turned into a Bacha Posh so she could help her family of seven members. Unlike her other sisters, she went to school, played soccer and earned some money for the family. Things changed for her when she was chosen as a bride for the warlord, Abdul Khaliq. At her new home, Rahima was under the constant pressure of being a dutiful wife and a daughter-in-law. She was always made to realise that she was a subordinate and she would never have a voice. She gave birth to a son, Jahangir which improved her position at home. Her family members were allowed to visit her. Khala Shaima was the only connection between her past and present.

Khala Shaima would soothe her with the stories of her great-great-grandmother, Shekiba. Her great-great-grandmother had two elder brothers and a younger sister. Her siblings passed away due to an influenza that took over the village. Shebika was the only daughter but except for her parents, everyone would point out that it was better if Shekiba died instead of her siblings. Shekiba was deformed, her face half burned. After the death of her siblings, her mother became insane and her madness killed her. Shekiba became her father's daughter-son.

She did all the work that a son was required to do for a family. Soon, her father passed away. Shekiba was forced to live with her grandmother and her uncles. She despised them. She was given as an offering to Azizullah so that they could escape from paying the debt. Shekiba was then offered as a female guard to the palace of Habibuallah for the concubines. Shekiba's life was a role model for Rahima.

Khalid Hosseini, in his novel *The Thousand Splendid Suns*, mentions the rules and regulations given by the Taliban. Some of these rules were against the norms and gender equality and inculcated a strong desire to have a son. Some of the rules are:

Attention women:

You will stay inside your homes at all the time. It is not proper for women to wander aimlessly about the streets. If you go outside, you must be accompanied by a mahram, a male relative. If you are caught alone on the streets, you will be beaten and sent home.

You will not, under any circumstance, show your face. You will cover with burqa when outside. If you do not you will be severely beaten.

Cosmetics are forbidden.

You will not wear charming clothes.

You will not speak unless spoken to.

You will not make eye contact with any men.

You will not laugh in public, if you do, you will be beaten.

You will not paint your nails. If you do, you will lose a finger.

Girls are forbidden from attending school. All schools for girls will be closed immediately.

Women are forbidden from working (Hosseini 2013)

Rules such as these make women dependent on men with no room to voice their thoughts. Since women will not be educated, they have to believe the knowledge system which empowers patriarchy. With the ban on books, movies, social media and technology, there are no resources through which these laws could be contradicted. Such gender-specific rules, generate a culture in which sons are favoured over daughters. The cultural norms such as a family is complete and can lead a comparatively better life if a male child is born; The boys are the real link to the clan; it is a wife's responsibility to give birth to the male heir, if she doesn't, she has failed in her duties. The status of superiority is added to men because they are considered providers.

"the male-centric texture of Aghan society is particularly visible while examining the construction of the family, where the birth of the boys is highly celebrated, and where women are perceived to be responsible for producing a male heir" (Corboz et al. 2020). Rahima's father Arif considers Raiza to be not a responsible wife because she gave birth to the daughters. Raiza herself thought that she was a disappointment to her husband. Arif used to physically abuse his wife while pointing out that she failed as a wife and she was also failing as a mother. According to Arif, Raiza was not taking proper care of Rahima, a bacha posh by then. Arif considered Rahima to be his son. "He hit her again. Parwin and I, we were scared to look but we could hear it. He went on yelling and screaming about how it wasn't bad enough that she had failed him as a wife. Now she was failing as a mother." (Hashimi 2014).

Abdul Khaliq had four wives. His first wife, Badriya was considered to be the most esteemed among all. One of the reasons is that she gave birth to five sons. Jameela was the second most important wife of Abdul Khaliq because she gave birth to three sons and two daughters. When Rahima gave birth to a son, her life became tolerable. According to Bibi Gulali, this was the only right thing Rahima had

done as a wife. "Even Bibi Gulalai left me alone for a while. At least I had borne a son, she said. Finally, I had done something right." (Hashimi 2014). When Jahangir, Rahima's son passed away, Abdul Khaliq was disappointed with her because she was away while Jahagir was sick. He saw it as Rahima's failure and wanted to get rid of her as a wife. "Hard to believe you could be even worse as a mother than you are as a wife! My son deserved better! He would be alive if he'd had a mother better than you!" (Hashimi 2014)

Shekiba observed while guarding the Herem that concubines giving birth to the sons were considered superior. Neelab, one of the concubines gave birth to the three sons but they didn't survive for more than one month. Since she had disappointed the king, she won't be getting any special attention. Mahbuba, other concubines had given birth only to the sons. It was believed that a woman was responsible for the gender of the baby and hence Shekiba wanted to learn some tricks from Mahbuba. Shekiba wanted Prince Amanullah to know that she belonged to a family of women who bore only sons. The Prince would be impressed and she would escape from the fate of becoming a guard. "She found a reason to speak to nearly anyone who crossed her path and made certain to mention that women in her family rarely bore anything but boys." (Hashimi 2014).

The boys were considered to be real links of the clan, hence their well-being was considered to be more important. When Sheikba's brothers Tariq and Munis passed away, everyone appearing at the funeral contemplated that the situation would have been less grim if one of the sons was alive. "It went without saying that they pitied Shekiba's parents, not so much for the loss of their three children, but for the disappointment that Allah could not have spared one of the sons instead of the defective girl." (Hashimi 2014). Rahima after giving birth to her son, Jahangir observes that Abdul Khaliq loved his sons very much and always kept them around "Abdul Khaliq kept

his daughters at arm's length but his sons stayed at his side." (Hashimi 2014). Boys were always considered to be a blessing. Even after his first wife gave birth to two sons, Rahima's uncle Obaid resolved to get married once again. When Rahima gave birth to her son, she was happy because he would enjoy his childhood. "He would go to school and enjoy the privileges that came with being a warlord's son." (Hashimi 2014).

The status of superiority is attached to men because they are considered as the family's provider. "As you know, my son is a man who takes pride in meeting his duties as a Muslim. And one of the duties that Allah has outlined for us is to build families and to provide for women and children." (Hashimi 2014) Women and children are dependent on men and hence men are in a space of authority. Women are not allowed to wander alone in the streets. They have to be with a legal companion or travel with the whole family. Shekiba was walking in the streets alone. She was searching for hakim, only a person of authority could help to inherit her father's property. A man approached Shekiba and advised her not to wander alone.

Before the Taliban came to power, Afghanistan had some liberal rules but people followed their traditions rather than the rules of the country. The laws allowed. The laws permitted girls to inherit their family's property but from the perspective of culture, it was prohibited. The women representatives were included in the parliament so that their concerns could be heard. They were used as pawns and the selected women spoke the language of patriarchy. It was hard for women to come out of the culturally enforced subjugation and dependence on men. Women were objectified and they were used to resolve a feud and appease a member of higher authority. In the period before the Taliban, women were dominated only through cultural norms, still in the period in which the Taliban came to power, women were dominated both by the laws and culture.

The young girls are married when they reach the stage of puberty. Rahima was married whereas the boys of the same age are relishing their childhood. "Several boys, two of them looking to be almost my age, were kicking a ball around. They shouted and teased each other. I felt my heart beat faster, wanting to be with them instead of bent over a metal pot with potato peels stuck to my fingers." (Hashimi 2014). The married girls are not allowed to go beyond their compound walls. Rahima explains, "The women never left the compound. The children played together and fought together as brothers and sisters but subdivided." (Hashimi 2014).

When Shekiba was at Azizullah's home, she got a desire to inherit her father's property. The laws of Afghanistan allow women to inherit their father's property but because of cultural restrictions, it is impossible to follow. "I am only here to claim what is rightfully mine! I am my father's daughter and that land should belong to me! My father would never have chosen his brothers over me! He never did!" (Hashimi 2014). "Girl, you know nothing of tradition," he said, and tore the deed into pieces." (Hashimi 2014).

Raisa never wanted her daughters to be married young but she couldn't stand up for her daughter because it was her husband Arif, responsible for making all the major decisions of the house as a provider of the family. Arif decided that Rahima would be married to Abdul Khaliq. Shahla and Parwin would be married to Abdul Khaliq's nephews. On the second day of marriage, Rahima was instructed to follow everything that her husband said to receive food and shelter. "When I ask for something, you make it happen. In return, you will be given shelter and have the privilege of being a wife to Abdul Khaliq." (Hashimi 2014). Abdul Khaliq being the patriarch of the family decided that his wives would not be allowed to go to hospital. Rahima delivered her son in her home, without the help of any midwives. The wives of Abdul Khaliq were always on the edge.

If things don't go well for their husband, they will be having a hard time in the household.

Abdul Khaliq wanted to be powerful to become a member of the parliament. His wife Badriya was chosen as the party's leader so that they could win the election with the help of women voters. Abdul Khaliq was against this idea but he had to accept it for power. Badriya was physically abused because she was proving her superiority in front of other wives. Abdul Khaliq wanted to exhibit that he would always be superior to her even if she was a member of the parliament.

The traditions in Afghanistan do not have a space for women's voices. They are objectified and treated as an inferior community. This subordinate status of women in Afghanistan is socially constructed so that men can defend their violence against women. When Raisa spoke against the marriages of her three daughters, Rahima and her sisters could hear the breaking of glass in another room. Shekiba was physically abused by Azizullah for going out of the home compound without asking for permission. Shekiba was inflicted with multiple fractures and bruises but she still didn't consider herself to be weak because she had the strength to fight for the inheritance.

Khala Shaima was against the marriages of her nieces. She shouted while Asif was dragging his daughter Rahima out of the house. Khala Shaima voiced that all this was a sin. Khala Shaima received a slap from Asif to affirm his superiority. To find a place in the parliament, Abdul Khaliq had to bring forward a woman representative to bring forward a woman representative. He didn't like this idea. His wives were seldom allowed to go out of the compound. He wanted his wife Badriya to know that she had been selected only because of the rules and he allowed her. Her selection to run the parliament has nothing to do with her capabilities. Rahima explains:

"He warned her not to turn into one of those women, the kind who make a lot of

noise, talk with lots of people. He wanted her to know that he decided to put her into the election and that it had nothing to do with her. I think he's heard her talking about it. That's not what he wants of his wives. I don't know what exactly she said but he was rough on her last night." Jameela shook her head and clucked her tongue. "It sounded like he was at his worst." (Hashimi 2014)

There are Pashtun traditions indicating the ideology of objectification of women in society. One such tradition is the bride price, given to the bride's family during the marriage ceremony. Asif agreed to get his three daughters married at a young age because he wanted the bride price, to solve his financial difficulties. "Well, my family traditionally asks for a large bride price for our daughters" (Hashimi 2014).

The girls were given from one clan to another to solve the dispute or to appease the tribe. Shekiba's uncles were in debt with Azizullah. The uncles decided to pay Azizullah by deciding to send Shekiba as a gift, a maid for the family. Later, Azizullah gifted Shekiba as a guard to appease the king. "*Your name means 'gift,' my daughter. You are a gift from Allah. Who could have known that Shekiba would become the name she was given, a gift passed from one hand to another?*" (Hashimi 2014).

The concept of fate has been introduced in this novel as a way to cope with all the trauma of gender equality in families. It is irresistible for Rahima's father not to accept the offer pitched by Abdul Khaliq's family. Her mother giving up hope confessed to Rahima that to get married to a man twice her age was a part of her fate. Rahima felt that he could have forever been disguised as a guy if her fate had not intervened. Khala Shaima was against the concept of fate because she thought that people blame everything on their fate if they cannot fix something. During the time of marriage, Rasia instructs her daughters that it is the fate of the girls to be married and become part of another

family. They are obligated to fulfil all the expectations of their husband and mother-in-law. Shekiba accepted that she would not be able to inherit her father's land because nothing could save her from society's cultural expectation. It was her destiny to be under the control of her master, Azizullah.

Abdul Khaliq wanted to win a seat in the parliament. His advisors came up with the idea of defeating his competitors. One of his wives had to run for the elections because they would benefit from women voters. Abdul Khaliq agreed to his advisor's idea because he didn't desire to lose control over his area. Among all his wives, Badriya was chosen because Jameela was too beautiful; Shehnaz and Rahima were young for the parliament. Abdul Khaliq warned Badriya not to gain any pride because even if she was a member of the parliament, she would always be under his control.

These ideologies driven by culture and then observed through the behavioural pattern of the family indicate the subjugation of women in Afghani society. The young married women in the family are subjugated twice, by their husband and also their mother-in-law, often regarded as the matriarch of the family. The matriarch must ensure everything takes place according to the likings of the patriarch, the male leader of the family. Raisa wishes that the other wives of the household would show some kindness to her daughters. She hopes that their husband and mother-in-law will be satisfied.

Badriya had the most comfortable life in the compound of Abdul Khaliq because she was the second cousin of Bibi Gulalai. After Rahima's marriage, Bibi Gulalai wanted Badriya to train Rahima because she has been a Bacha Posh for a long time. Rahima wanted to meet her sister Parwin married next door. Rahima asked for Bibi Gulalai's permission by stating that Rahima was unable to manage her duties and that she should not escape from her responsibilities. Abdul Khaliq didn't like the idea of his wives leaving the family compound.

Rahima was slapped for asking the same thing twice.

Rahima was anxious about her sister Parwin, married to Abdul Khaliq's nephew. Parwin's new home was nearby but still, Rahima was unable to meet her. One morning, Rahima wakes up early and leaves the compound to meet her sister. Her plan succeeded but someone informed Bobo Gulalai about Rahima's escape from the compound. This made Bibi Gulalai hate her more because married women were not allowed to leave the compound. "Someone had seen me leaving the compound. Word got back to Badriya, who, probably happily, reported the news to Bibi Gulalai. It didn't matter much. Just made me hate them more." (Hashimi 2014).

In the absence of books, movies, social media and technology that are responsible for reproducing culture and generating contradicting ideologies, the communicative memory is a resource through which ideologies that contradict the dominant culture can be established. Bacha Posh is a tradition, known to people only through oral communication. The tradition is not officially documented. Bacha posh is a tradition in which a girl is brought up as a boy in her childhood. Through this tradition, the girls can enjoy their childhood because they are allowed to play and receive education until they reach puberty. In times of poverty, a bacha posh can generate an income for the family. When a bacha posh reaches puberty, she is re-converted and married which creates a dilemma as their freedom is taken away. This tradition circulating through communication carries an ideology that a female can embody and produce all the male-dominated activities. It contradicts the dominant ideologies in which a female is represented as weak, inferior and is been objectified.

Khala Shaima gave the idea of bacha posh to Rahima. Khala Shaima narrated the story of Shekiba, the first bacha posh in their family line.

The family needed to have a bacha posh because all the girls would be able to receive an education, and additional income for the family could be generated. Rahima was converted into a bacha posh. She received an education, played with other children; worked for Agha Barakzai, and purchased items from the marketer. Predominately, it was Asif's duty, but he was intoxicated and unpredictable. Rahima explains her mother's motive:

Most children who were made *bacha posh* were changed back into girls when their monthly bleeding started but Madar-jan had let me go on, bleeding but looking like a boy. My grandmother warned her it was wrong. *Next month*, my mother would promise. But I was too useful to her, to my sisters, to the whole family. She couldn't bear to give up having someone who could do for her what my father wouldn't. And I was happy to continue playing soccer and practicing tae kwon do with Abdullah and the boys. (Hashimi 2014)

Rahima was reconverted into a girl when she got married. She faced difficulties as she was not trained in female-centric duties. "Sure. I went to school. I ran errands for my mother. I even worked and brought money home. I was learning how to fix electronics," I boasted. That was more than I had done for Agha Barakzai but Shahnaz wouldn't know the difference." (Hashimi 2014). Bibi Gulalai gave the responsibility of training Rahima to Badriya. Rahima was educated and this education played the role of a saviour in her life. She was able to see the world, out of her small village as she was taken to Kabul to help Badriya with some official works. When Abdul Khaliq thought about killing Rahima because he wanted to remarry again, she escaped from Kabul, cross-dressed as a boy. She travelled using public transport to a rehabilitation centre established by foreign volunteers because she was educated.

The dominant cultural system, laws, and family as an institution, working for patriarchy produces a false notion of women being inferior to men. The emerging traditions are in contradiction with the dominant culture. In the absence of agencies that are responsible for cultural production, communicative memory becomes a resource through which emerging ideologies can be generated. Bacha posh is a tradition that represents and proves that females are equal to males if given the right surroundings and opportunities. Through the bacha posh traditions, the girls would receive a primary education which would help them to realise that their inferiority is socially constructed. Bacha posh is a vital tradition because it practically proves the equal status of men and women.

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