



SHADES OF RAHIMA

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Abstract:

"Seawater begs the pearl to break the shell" (Rumi)

Every human being has different colors, where the color is the various shades of characteristics that each and every human reflects. Such as a character called Rahima from the novel *The Pearl that Broke its Shell* reflects different shades of her characteristics at different circumstances of her life in order lift herself up each time when her society pulls her down. The novel *The Pearl that Broke its Shell* was written by Nadia Hashimi, who is a writer and a pediatrician by profession. She is an Afghan American writer, whose writing is inspired from the untold stories of the country Afghanistan. She aims to show the clear view of Afghan culture in every of her novel.

Afghanistan today stands depleted facing festering problems. The unending war, extremism and the long standing political and humanitarian crisis has affected the lives of Afghans, both men and women. But as history bears its testimony to the fact that women become the first and the worst victims of war and turmoil, such is the case of Afghan women who have been suffering the impact of a perpetual war and rising fundamentalism. And Rahima in Hashimi's *The Pearl that Broke its Shell* reveals the plight of every Afghan women through her life. This paper focuses on the different shades of character, which Rahima reflects to overcome the difficulties in her life as a woman in the Afghan society.

Introduction:

As the above quoted lines says, Rahima, a nine-year-old Afghan girl, who is the major character in the novel *The Pearl that Broke Its Shell* written by Nadia Hashimi, also breaks the shell of her life and finally lets her out independently. Her life is not easy as it is expected to be for a nine year old. Most of the Nadia Hashimi's characters have been portrayed differently; each and every characteris unique in their own way. But Rahima's character is deep and intense when compared to others. Rahima's transition throughout the novel is beautifully shown in the writings of Nadia Hashimi.

Shades of Rahima:

Rahima's character has different shades; she is primarily shown as a submissive woman. But deep inside she has various qualities other than just being submissive and ignorant. It's hard to understand her, as she stays as an unsolved puzzle throughout the story. She makes others feel pity for her at the same time she amazes by taking unexpected turns. The whole story is blended along with the character of Rahima. The reflection of whole womanhood in the countries like Afghanistan is seen through Rahima's character, she is everything of a woman, docile, fearless and utopian.

Rahima's submissiveness is seen in many parts of the story. She obeys everyone and accepts everything without uttering her opinion. By this way, she lets all the bad and cruel things happen to her. Starting from going to the school, her docile nature is seen. In the story, Rahima and her sisters are followed, chased and disturbed by some local rugged boys in the street on the way from their school. As the result of it they often used to come to home from the school late. This angers Rahima's father, so he stops her and her sisters from attending the school. Even though Rahima's sisters insists her to reveal the truth about the boys at the streets, she just lets her father stop their education as she didn't protest by saying nothing.

On the other hand, she has been made into a bacha posh, as she lets her mother do everything to her. Rahima is not concerned about her own feelings. She just says yes to all the things that are asked towards her. In this case, she must live as a boy in disguise for a short span of time as the practice of bacha posh, until she attains the marriageable age. It is more complicated than it seems, when it comes to the practice. She does not revolt against things that are happening to her. Although she has doubts about the way she looks after disguise, she chooses to be silent throughout the process.

After marriage she is treated like a slave in her husband's house. She is expected to fulfill the requirements of her mother-in-law and husband without any fail. Throughout this phase Rahima is hurt both physically and emotionally but never revolts against them. She never complains or negotiates the commands given by her husband and mother-in-law. Instead she bears, obeys and does all the works which is allotted for her. She is a powerless docile woman before them. She is afraid of everyone around her, such as her father,

husband, including her mother-in-law everyone are a threat to her. This fear which leads to submissiveness is that what makes her life even worse.

There are places where Rahima's bravery is seen in the novel. It is difficult for a person to be submissive and brave at the same time. Rahima's character has this huge transition, where she's submissive but yet bold. Her moves in the story like nailing the boy getup which is the result of bacha posh, where she behaved and expressed everything a boy does without any hesitation. She goes the shops, deals with the men around there, she does all the activities which a girl dares to do even in the bacha posh form. After getting married, Rahima is not allowed to go outside. It is a strict rule made by her mother-in-law in order to hold the control over Rahima. But even though the rule is known to her, she breaks it bravely by asking permission to her mother-in-law, as she didn't allow, Rahima took a huge step out of bravery and went out to meet her sister. When working with Badriya in parliament, she educates herself about politics and computer. She helps Badriya with the works from parliament with the help of education she acquires. When Badriya voted for a man, who is not good enough for governing, just because Abdul khaliq, her husband insists her to do so, Rahima bravely opposes her by expressing her opinion against her voting. Her brave acts are reflected everywhere in the story in a subtle tone.

Conclusion:

Rahima is hopelessly optimistic in all the stages of her life. She just hopes for everything to happen well, even after experiencing all the vain. Her expectation for good things to happen to her is what that never changes in the story. She sternly believed KhalaShaima, her aunt to change things and save her from distress, but when she fails to do so, she doesn't give up and still hopes for good things in her life. Throughout her damaged life, she motivates herself by taking inspiration from her great grandmother, Shekiba. As Shekiba changed her destiny by making things better for her life all by her own, Rahima also decides to change her distressed life into a happy one. Rahima and Shekiba's lives are similar to each other, as Shekiba climbed every opportunity she had for a better life, Rahima also takes inspiration from her and changes her own destiny.

References:

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