

Challenging Patriarchal Culture of Taliban Regime: A Woman Struggles in Qaderi's *Dancing in The Mosque*

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Abstract

Afghanistan, during the Taliban regime, has traditionally been shaped by patriarchal cultural norms and values that limit women's rights and opportunities. Homeira Qaderi's novel Dancing in The Mosque deals with the struggles and challenges faced by Afghan women, particularly in a patriarchal society that oppresses and limits their freedoms. The three objectives of this study are to describe the patriarchal culture of the Taliban Regime and its effects on women and the actions of the women characters to fight against the patriarchal. The researcher uses the library method to help analyze this research. The primary data of this research is a novel entitled Dancing in The Mosque by Homeira Qaderi (2020). The secondary data comprises books, various journals, and articles related to women's struggles during the Taliban regime. The feminist approach is used to reveal the action of the women characters to fight against the patriarchal culture and the theory of patriarchy is used to reveal the impact of patriarchal culture on Afghan women. This study concludes that Afghan women challenge the patriarchal culture by speaking up through education and making petitions claiming their rights. Education empowers them with knowledge and skills, enables them to gain financial independence, and helps to challenge and change traditional gender roles and cultural norms that perpetuate inequality. Education also increases women's self-esteem and confidence, which allows them to participate more actively in society and make decisions that impact their own lives and the lives of their families and communities.

Keywords: *Dancing in The Mosque; patriarchy; Taliban; women*

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Introduction

Afghanistan is a country that has traditionally been shaped by patriarchal cultural norms and values that limit women's rights and opportunities. Patriarchy affiliates

with its set of ideas that illustrates, defends and rationalizes the notion that men are inherently superior to women (Maconis, 2012). Men's control over women's labor force, fertility, movement, and financial resources are only a few examples of the ways

that Afghan women were subjugated (Schutte, 2013). Male power forbids Afghan women from participating in politics, the workforce, or education in the name of religion. The patriarchal structure and traditional tribal culture are intertwined with Afghanistan's history (Meera & Yekta, 2012). However, due to societal and cultural limitations, discrimination, and gender prejudice, many women still have limited prospects (Zohair, 2016).

Maseno and Kilonzo (2011) argue that patriarchy poses challenges to the realization of women's empowerment, being that society subordinates and limits the rights of women. Despite these challenges, there have been significant efforts to empower and uplift Afghan women and challenge patriarchal cultural norms. These efforts have included advocacy campaigns, education programs, and the formation of organizations and groups focused on promoting women's rights and equality. Singh (2014) notes that in the past when society exploited and denied women their rights, it needed women's efforts to earn their place in the community. Afghan women have made significant progress in recent years and continue to fight for their rights and a more equal society.

This research will examine women's struggle to challenge the patriarchal culture of the Taliban regime. *Dancing in The Mosque* by Homeira Qaderi is a novel that deals with the theme of women's issues in Afghan society. The novel focuses on the struggles and challenges faced by Afghan women, particularly in a patriarchal society that oppresses and limits their freedoms. Some of the women's issues explored in the novel include forced marriages, lack of education and employment opportunities, gender-based violence, and limited access to healthcare. The novel also highlights the power of women's solidarity and resistance against oppression, as well as the importance of women's education and empowerment in breaking down patriarchal structures.

This research is worth studying since there is not much research about Afghanistan women. Through this research, it is expected that people will be more open-minded about

the issue of equality and women's struggle to reach their freedom and rights. This research will dig deeper into the oppression by the patriarchal culture of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and reveal women's struggle to challenge the regime.

Two authors who consistently study the issue of women's struggles are Khaled Hosseini and Nadia Hashimi. Hosseini studies the obedient, resistant, and empowered Afghan women in his work. He uses simile that portrays women as contemporary archetypes who are empowered, submissive, and resistive to gendered oppression manifested via their bodies. Through his literary works, Khaled Hosseini provides moral support and a voice for women by creating strong, independent, rebellious, and resilient female characters. Hashimi's study explores how Hosseini challenges the patriarchal norms that shape women's identities in Afghanistan, using theoretical support from theories such as Johnson's Patriarchal Terrorism and Spivak's Can the Subaltern Speak. The plight of women is correlated with the state of the nation as a whole, especially during and after the war, on the terror regime. Thus, the resilience of women and Afghanistan in the face of oppression and hostility become equally important themes in Hosseini's writing. According to this study, Hosseini links the war on terror, foreign invasions, and the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan to issues affecting Afghan women, such as tradition and modernity, women and Islam, mother and daughter relationships, resistance and rebellion, and their quest for change and empowerment (Imran, 2022).

One of Hosseini's novels, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, exemplifies how the two major female characters, Meriam and Laila, must deal with domestic violence in their polygamous marriage with Rasheed. The story is set in Afghanistan, a nation that still follows patriarchal traditions. This study attempts to demonstrate how domestic abuse is shown in Khaled Hosseini's book *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and how the book combats domestic violence via Mariam and Laila, the two main female characters. The gender studies approach was applied in the research, which employed a qualitative methodology. It

specifically made use of Ganley's concepts on domestic abuse and gender-based violence. The research's findings indicate that the two main female characters experienced physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, among other forms of domestic violence. Ultimately, though, they rebel against Rasheed's actions and win newfound physical and psychological liberties. Finally, contrary to what is expected of women, the two female characters in the book attempt to confront the practice of domestic abuse rather than keeping quiet about it (Fadhilah & Handayani, 2022).

The theme of women's struggle against patriarchy can be found in *A House Without Windows* by Nadia Hashimi. A study conducted by Fauzia & Rahayu in 2019 attempts to depict the challenges faced by Afghan women as they seek to advance in their community. This study focuses on the female characters—Zeba, Gulnaz, Latifa, Mezghan, Bibi Shireen, Judge Najeeb's wife, Sitara, Meena, and Aneesa—who struggle with issue-solving in light of their unfavorable circumstances. They become more self-aware, demand decision-making autonomy, announce their hostility to male dominance, and fight for their fundamental rights, including the freedom of speech, the right to an education, and the ability to work for pay. The first step taken by women to overcome male dominance and advance in both their personal lives and society is demonstrated by their strong self-awareness and resolve, as exemplified by the female characters. Radical feminism highlights, via these literary examples, women's attempts to defend their rights to acknowledge that there is still discrimination and a lack of possibilities for women (Fauzia & Rahayu, 2019).

The other literary work from Nadia Hashimi entitled *One Half from the East* (2016) also depicts the patriarchy using strict cultural norms of behavior for women to monitor and control every element of women's lives, including movement, expression, and education. However, even in a society where violence is a possibility, women can carve out spaces for themselves where they can oppose such oppressive hegemony and express their resistance. Hashimi's meta-narrative, with its protagonist who defies submission and turns

into a tool of transgression, refutes the chauvinism and tyranny of Afghan culture. Given the oppressive nature of Afghanistan, women recognize their marginalized and subaltern status and strive to overcome their limitations. This embodies resilience. The study focuses on how the protagonist, by performing patriarchal norms like the *bacha posh*, explores uncharted territory of freedom forbidden for women and, paradoxically, creates a space where one can resist patriarchy while remaining within its discourse (Das & Rai, 2022).

While there have been numerous studies conducted on the issue of women's struggle against patriarchy as demonstrated by studies conducted by Imran (2022), Fadhilah & Handayani (2022), Fauzia & Rahayu (2019), Das & Rai (2022), there has been a gap in the exploration of women's struggle to fight back patriarchal regime. *Dancing in The Mosque* by Homeira Qaderi is one such piece that has not been frequently studied in academia, particularly in the context of women's struggle.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative method to analyze the patriarchal culture of the Taliban, its effects, and the actions of the women characters in to fight against it. Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014). This method is used to describe patriarchal culture, its impacts, and the actions of Afghan women against the patriarchal culture that happens in the novel *Dancing in The Mosque*.

Feminist literary criticism was employed to examine the women's struggle in literature. Feminist literary criticism, according to Cuddon (1999), is an attempt to analyze the attitudes and actions of women in all genres of literature, including plays, novels, and poetry. It critiques the ideas and literary interpretations of men. It is a way to assess how men view women in a patriarchal society. Feminist literary critique provides women greater freedom to express their ideas and questions male-based norms.

To answer the research questions, the researcher employs the theory of patriarchy (Kandiyoti, 1988), the theory of gender oppression (Montagu, 1953), and the theory of feminism (Beauvoir, 2010). The theory of patriarchy is used to reveal the patriarchal culture reflected in the novel. The theory of gender oppression is used to reveal the impacts of the patriarchal culture on Afghan women and the theory of feminism is used to reveal the actions of Afghan women against the patriarchal culture.

This study is included in the gender studies approach. The data is gathered from the narratives and the dialogues in the novel that contain evidence of the patriarchal culture that oppressed women, its impacts, and women's actions against the patriarchal culture. The researchers then categorize the data and analyze it by using the theories and conclude the findings.

Results and Discussion

Patriarchal Culture reflected in Dancing in The Mosque

This section divides the discussion of patriarchal culture reflected in the novel into two main aspects: patriarchy in society and patriarchy in the family. Patriarchy in society was reflected by the law, customs, religious norms, and belief systems during the Taliban regime. Patriarchy in families based on Kandiyoti (1988) was reflected by the oldest men having the highest authority, girls being forced to get married at a very young age, women being treated as property, and women being vulnerable to violence.

Patriarchy in The Society

Patriarchy is reflected precisely by Afghan laws. In the year that the Taliban emerged and took over, it was also then that women became targets for oppression, where they lost their freedom and security and were treated unfairly (Roshan, 2019). This study reveals the power imbalance that exists in Afghan society is a result of both cultural and religious norms. Firstly, in Afghanistan, men and women are treated differently in many aspects of the public sphere. They have

different rights and opportunities to participate in public areas. While men are dominant, women are submissive in societal life. Secondly, males are given absolute power and authority over their families. Afghan religious conventions believe that men are the head of the family. Therefore, fathers are acknowledged leaders and rulers in Afghan society. Last but not least, women are frequently excluded or rejected from the public realm. Women's involvement in public discourses is limited since they are expected to be at home, taking care of their family members. These points note the indication that gender is the primary source of the power imbalance in Afghan laws.

When your father came through the curtain, he had the yellow birth certificate in his hand. I took the birth certificate from him and read it. It contained your name, your father's name, and your grandfather's name. But nobody had asked for my name. I was irrelevant. (Qaderi, 2020, p.23)

During the Taliban regime, Homeira noted that in Afghanistan, women especially mothers were mistreated as the Afghan laws permitted only fathers' and grandfathers' names to be recorded on children's birth certificates. This law was aligned with the cultural life of Afghanistan, where the patriarchal system and values have been profoundly embedded for a long time in its society. In Afghan culture, men are more significant in society and typically have greater opportunities to participate in the public sphere, such as politics. Women, on the other hand, are consequently kept subordinate in practically every aspect of life. This then explains why, even though they are the ones who give birth, mothers have no right to be named on their own children's birth certificates.

Later, when your father brought in the identity registration card, once again my name, as your mother, was nowhere to be seen. Even in your passport, they didn't ask for my name. Your mother's name does not appear in any paper document. My son, in your motherland the mentioning of a woman's name outside the family circle is a

source of shame. And no child is known by its mother's name. (Qaderi, 2020, p.23)

In addition, women's names are also referred to be "a source of shame" outside the family circle. Therefore, in other legal documents besides children's birth certificates such as identity cards and passports, no mothers' names are required. This demonstrates that the patriarchal value, which assigns males as the most dominant figure in a family to track children's lineage and inheritance rights, has a major impact on Afghan law. Furthermore, Afghan religious norms that are heavily influenced by the conservative interpretation of Islam also emphasize men's role as the protector and leader in the family. Since patriarchal cultural values are upheld by this religious norm, the omission of women's names from legal papers is acceptable under Afghan law.

But my attorney wrote to me last night, "The court has determined that the child belongs to the father under any and all circumstances." The court won't grant a mother her most basic rights. (Qaderi, 2020, p.41)

According to Afghan religious norms, males are given absolute power and authority over their families. In conservative Islamic interpretation, men are the head of the family. Therefore, fathers are acknowledged leaders and rulers in Afghan society. This affected the way Afghan laws are established. When it comes to child custody, the laws commonly favor fathers. Due to the founded cultural and religious beliefs that perceive the father as the primary protector, ruler, and provider of the family, mothers are frequently underestimated. The thing that scared Homeira and her grandmother was the fact that Homeira would lose his son, Siawash. The quotation above is Nanah-jan's advice to Homeira, who insisted on rejecting her husband's polygamy proposition. Homeira would lose his Siawash, once she objected to her husband's right to take another wife.

According to Afghanistan laws, fathers are the most rightful parties to claim children's custody. The court agreed and granted custody of Siawash to his father, in other words,

Homeira's husband. The custody practices that favor and privilege fathers over mothers could be seen as the patriarchal system practice reflected in Qaderi's *Dancing in the Mosque*. That is the law that oppresses women by denying their rights to motherhood.

Suddenly, the streets were barren of women. Only men were allowed in the bazaars and markets. Female doctors were dismissed from the hospitals and sent home, except for a few in the maternity wards. (Qaderi, 2020, p.53)

Moreover, women are frequently excluded or rejected from the public realm. Women's involvement in public discourses is limited since they are expected to be at home, taking care of their family members. Taliban banned women and girls from public places such as streets, bazaars, and markets. This restriction is noticeable as an act of patriarchal practice.

In the era of the Taliban, this kind of policy limits women's freedom and restricts their movement and access to many opportunities and resources. It highlights the notion that women are not entitled to present in any public areas as they are supposed to be in a more private sphere, such as the household. Since men are destined for the public sphere, they gain more opportunities to grow and authority to hold the power to have control over women whose participation is denied in public discourse.

Patriarchy is also reflected in Afghan customs. In Homeira's family, there are no equal portions that are shared between women and men. This is most likely the result of the patriarchal culture that privileges men in many aspects. This following quotation demonstrates that Homeira, as a girl, shared unequal rights with her brother. In her family, boys or men deserved more than girls/women. This inequality might be considered as the effect of a patriarchal system in which men are regarded to have greater opportunities than women.

When I would say to Nanah-jan, "I want the same size piece as Mushtaq," she would look at me and say, "Since when has a girl's

share become equal to a boy's?" (Qaderi, 2020, p.27)

Patriarchy is also reflected in the aspect of education. Women's right to education was denied by the time the Taliban decided to close girls' schools. This policy shows how the Taliban believes that women do not belong in public areas.

Mushtaq looked at me, perplexed. "Why are you crying? I wish the boys' school were closed. I am the unlucky one. I wish I were a girl." (Qaderi, 2020, p.53)

This quotation is noted as Mushtaq's reaction towards Zahra's crying when the Taliban restricted girls from studying and closed school for girls. Mushtaq as a little kid doesn't understand well that banning girls from education leads to the rejection of women's rights, voices, and participation in society. Due to such policy, Herat girls have no access to numerous benefits from education which is a tool to empower ones to think critically, challenge social norms, and pursue independent paths. Without access to education, Herat women are kept subordinate in a society, in which men hold the primary power and authority to control things.

Patriarchy in Family

Male domination, which is the main sign of patriarchy, is portrayed in Homeira's family by her husband. The fact that Homeira's husband holds a dominant power within the household is shown in the following quotation.

The whole time in the park, as we were supposed to be enjoying the lush and glorious surroundings, my husband was complaining about my eye shadow. Life might have been freer here, I thought, but still, I am expected to obey my husband. Reluctantly, I wiped off the eye shadow. (Qaderi, 2020, p.122)

This quote gives us the clue that Homeira as a wife has to obey and please her husband. Therefore, when her husband complains about her appearance, specifically about her eye shadow, she has no choice but to wipe it off.

This shows that women are expected to be under men's control, even after marriage.

All of a sudden, my husband wanted to return to Afghanistan. He wanted to work in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—his dream job. (Qaderi, 2020, p.127)

The quotation above depicts the situation indicating the existence of male domination in Homeira's family. Homeira was enjoying her freer life in Iran, but her husband intended to return to Afghanistan to pursue his dream profession. Her husband's desire plays a big part in consideration for making a decision. While Homeira dislikes the idea of returning to Afghanistan, they move nevertheless. This explains a lot about the domination of Homeira's husband in terms of decision-making within the household.

Patriarchy in the family also can be seen in girls that forced to get married at a very young age. Long before the Taliban regime, marrying girls at a young age was a common cultural practice in Afghanistan. Kandiyoti (1988) said that underage marriage is prevalent because fathers use girls as a means of getting rid of them because they are useless in the home or as a gift to be given to build strong relationships in politics. It is crucial to note that an Afghan girl who has experienced puberty is automatically considered a grown-up woman. Therefore, many believe that it is appropriate for girls who have experienced puberty to be married at a young age.

I was sixteen years old and I had a woman's figure that needed to be hidden from the prying eyes of men. (Qaderi, 2020, p.106)

In the era of the Taliban, there is a strict upgrade to this tradition. The head of the girl's family has no right to turn down the Taliban man's proposal to the daughter in his family. It suggests that as long as a young girl has experienced puberty, her father must give his approval when a Taliban man proposes to that young girl. The quotation above clarifies the reason why Homeira believes that she must hide when the Taliban raid her house. She fears if the Taliban man sees her, he will ask her to be his bride. Unfortunately, that becomes true. This young girl is forced by the

Taliban's rule to not reject the proposal of marriage, even at a young age. However, Homeira is lucky because Commander Moosa, a Taliban man who asked for her hands in marriage, suddenly required to be in Kabul and did not return.

Wasn't there a chance that Commander Moosa would never come back, that I could escape marriage altogether? "Madar, I don't want to marry. Even a Herati man will keep me from my work of writing stories." (Qaderi, 2020, p.115)

Unlike the previous situation in which Homeira is forced to marry the Taliban, the quotation above indicates that Homeira is being compelled by her family to marry a Herati man, even at a young age, to avoid marriage with Commander Moosa. When the Herati man asks Homeira to be his bride, her family does not hesitate to send her to be married immediately. They assumed it was the best decision since they would not be separated, like if Homeira was married to Commander Moosa. Her family believes that if she is married to a Herati man, Homeira would not be wandering the streets of faraway lands. Consequently, In the end, Homeira could not escape marriage despite her strong objection.

During the Taliban regime, women are treated as property. In some traditional beliefs, women are men's assets. Men have the power and authority to control life and physically punish women and children (Summers & Hoffman, 2002). In Afghan marriage tradition, the groom's family will give some amount of money as a trade to acquire a wife. This transaction which has been traditionally rooted in Afghanistan society reinforces the idea that women are like other commodities that are usually traded with money, goods, or property. The quotation below shows that women's values are measured in terms of economic value. This provides an understanding that Afghan women are treated as properties who could be traded.

In adherence to the traditions of our city, Agha and Baba-jan fixed the pishkash amount, the bridal price paid to the girl's family. Mine was a hundred million Afghanis, the same as Aunt Aziza's and my

cousin's. Nanah-jan said, "Make sure the bride price is high so they won't think something is wrong with her." (Qaderi, 2020, p.115)

.. since now that we were married, I had to behave the way my husband wanted me to behave. I had to conduct myself the way he wanted. I had to dress in whatever way he suggested. I had to cook what he liked and do whatever satisfied him. I had to follow my husband wherever he went. (Qaderi, 2020, p.120)

Additionally, in Afghan society, men are the head of the household. No wonder women who are just married usually live with the groom's family. When they could finally move and live by themselves, husbands had total authority over their wives and children. Wives are claimed to be their husbands' belongings and have no freedom to represent themselves. For example, in the immigration office, husbands are the ones who typically give their wives' passports to be confirmed. Not only that, married women are expected to behave, act, and dress according to what their husbands desire. In many households after marriage, women do not stand for themselves as individuals but as properties belonging to their husbands. This cultural tradition emphasizes the authority of men treating women as their property.

Sharifah gave birth to another girl. Derisively telling Sharifah that her daughters were of no use to him, Omar left the house and didn't return for weeks. (Qaderi, 2020, p.46)

Afghan society has traditionally been structured around patriarchal norms, where male heirs are given greater authority and privileges. Sons are considered more valuable as they could carry on the family name and lineage. However, daughters do not belong to their fathers anymore once they are married. As one's wife, a man's daughter belongs to her husband. Due to this patriarchal value, many husbands expect their wives to bear sons instead of daughters.

In Sharifah's case, Homeira realizes that she has always been pregnant. It was revealed

that in fact, she had already given birth to 8 daughters and no sons. Sharifah's husband, Omar, longed for sons but Sharifah gave him daughters only. Therefore, he is disappointed and unhappy with his daughters. It is said that he left the house and didn't return for weeks. The fact that Sharifah was always pregnant just because Omar wished for a son suggests that he treated his wife as a machine to produce sons. However, when his wish was not granted, he left his family for weeks. This reinforces his view that his wife and daughters are unworthy, so he abandoned them.

The Effect of Patriarchal Culture on Female Characters in the Novel

The main effect of patriarchal culture is the subordination of women. This section divides the symptoms of women's subordination into women being vulnerable to violence, women are lack of education, and women living in fear.

Women are Vulnerable to Violence

Women are vulnerable to violence due to gender oppression. Gender oppression refers to the systematic and structural disadvantages and discrimination that women have historically faced and continue to experience. Violence experienced by women is an act of gender-based violence, and the side effects of this violence can be felt directly or indirectly. It was found in several studies that women are more prone to mental disorders than men (Golmakani & Azmoude, 2013). The violence experienced by Afghan women that is reflected in the novel are physical, verbal, and sexual violence. The physical violence against Afghan women has taken various forms, including domestic violence, forced marriages, honor killings, and violence perpetrated by armed groups. The physical violence can be seen in the quotation below.

Slightest infractions subjected women to public whipping with cables. Women accused of adultery were to be stoned or shot. (Qaderi, 2020, p.52)

There are times when the Taliban imposed sharia law in Kandahar, which includes closing girls' schools, prohibiting

women and girls from leaving the house, and many more. Due to such rules, not only women's freedom are limited, but they also become truly vulnerable to physical violence as the punishment for any violations of the rule. The aforementioned quotation explains that women could be whipped in front of the public with the slightest infractions. If accused of adultery, women would be thrown stones and shot. Thus, it is concluded that women are a common target of physical violence.

Everyone said "Ameen" in unison, except me. Nanah-jan hit my leg with the tasbeh. "Why are you silent, child? If you don't say 'Ameen,' there will be no henna for you, Homeira." (Qaderi, 2020, p.43)

In addition, for an insignificant reason, Homeira's grandmother, *Nanah-jan*, whipped her using *tasbeh*. When Homeira did not say 'Ameen' at the end of the prayer, for example, *Nanah-jan* started to get mad and used the *tasbeh* in her hand as a weapon to physically harm Homeira. The act of swinging the *tasbeh* makes it considered a weapon used by *Nanah-jan* to hit Homeira. By hitting her using *tasbeh*, *Nanah-jan* is considerably performing an act of physical violence toward Homeira. Thus, the quotation above implies that women (girls) are vulnerable to physical violence within the family even for an insignificant reason.

Verbal violence against Afghan women has been influenced by the country's social and cultural norms, as well as its recent history. Verbal violence can take many forms, including verbal abuse, threats, humiliation, and demeaning language. The verbal violence can be seen when he explodes. "Who are you?" (Qaderi, 2020, p.134)

The quote above is Homeira's husband's final comment when discussing his decision, to engage in polygamy, with Homeira. They had an intense argument before this statement. Homeira's husband insists that polygamy is a right granted to him by Islam and the Prophet, not by Homeira. Consequently, when Homeira declares that he has no right to bring another wife to their house, he becomes enraged, believing that Homeira does not respect him as the head of the family. He, as the man, does not take Homeira's objection seriously and even

underestimates her opinion on polygamy as he perceives Homeira as nobody compared to the religion and the Prophet. Homeira is simply a woman, and her place in the household requires her to obey and please her husband. Thus, the quotation above implies that Homeira's husband is verbally disrespectful and rude toward his wife, Homeira.

Sexual violence is a broad term that encompasses various forms of non-consensual sexual acts or behaviors that are intended to harm, humiliate, or exert power and control over another person. It involves the use of force, coercion, or manipulation to engage in sexual activities against the will of the victim. The sexual violence can be seen in the quotation below.

Suddenly, the Maulawi's hands were beneath my burqa, pummeling my breasts. He had glued himself to me. ... His hand crawled from my breasts up to my mouth. I opened my mouth. He thrust two fingers inside. (Qaderi, 2020, p.100)

Homeira was on her way to Leila's house, where they had a writing class with Professor Rahyab. She left without a mahram accompanying her. She is being sexually assaulted by Maulawi Rashid. Maulawi Rashid had been trying to sexually abuse her, however, he didn't succeed. But this time, while Homeira is outside without the company of a man who could protect her, Maulawi Rashid takes advantage and abuses her sexually. This indicates that without mahram accompanying women, they are very vulnerable to sexual violence.

The bicycle man hunted for my lips beneath my burqa. I wanted to chew his face off. Over and over he kissed me through the fabric, slobbering through the eye mesh, panting and grunting... The bicycle man tried to push me onto my back, tried to force his knee between my legs. His hand was tugging at the hem of my burqa. (Qaderi, 2020, p.101)

Not only Maulawi Rashid, but a bicycle repairman also committed sexual violence toward Homeira. After running away from Maulawi Rashid, who sexually assaulted her

too, Homeira bumped into the bicycle repairman. A week before that unwanted meeting, the bicycle repairman showed an inappropriate interest in Homeira by chasing her. Although he didn't succeed at that time, he successfully molested Homeira on her way to escaping from Maulawi Rashid, who had sexually abused her first. It is stated that the bicycle man trying to hug, touch, and kiss Homeira. While Homeira is trying to fight back, the bicycle man pushes her and uses force. This fact that Homeira is being sexually abused by two different men in a row on the same day proves that women and girls are unfortunately vulnerable to sexual violence.

Women are Lack of Education

During the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, women and girls faced severe restrictions and limitations when it came to education. The Taliban's interpretation of Islamic law imposed strict rules and policies that severely curtailed women's access to education and participation in public life. The quotation below shows how the patriarchal norm during the Taliban regime limited women from education.

They closed all the girls' schools. Women and girls were forbidden to leave their houses. The Taliban ordered that no woman's face or form should be seen anywhere in public. Burqas became mandatory, and a woman who had a good reason to be on the street had to be accompanied by a mahram. The slightest infractions subjected women to public whipping with cables. Women accused of adultery were to be stoned or shot. (Qaderi, 2020, p.52)

From the quotation above, closing the girls' schools is the strategy for the Taliban to make women stay uneducated and submissive to the patriarchal culture. This is the way how Taliban preserve patriarchal culture under their regime. Girls grow up illiterate, they even can not write their names.

Living in Fear

Men show their domination over women during the Taliban regime by spreading fear.

By being trapped in fear, women's position will be subordinate. Catherine A. Mackinnon in *Feminism Unmodified* said that the act of sexual abuse works as a form of terror that can be seen as a way to maintain male domination in the hierarchy of control (Mackinnon, 1987). Women living in fear can be seen in the quotation below.

Almost immediately, you could feel the change. Suddenly, the streets were barren of women. Only men were allowed in the bazaars and markets. Female doctors were dismissed from the hospitals and sent home, except for a few in the maternity wards. Most women chose to have their babies at home because of the danger of being out on the street, even with a mahram. The Taliban beat women on the street on any pretext. In our neighborhood, a baby or a mother died in delivery almost every month. (Qaderi, 2020, p.53)

From the quotation above it can be seen that the Taliban spread fear to the women to legitimize their power. Montagu (1953) said that it appears obvious that men have kept women in a submissive role by using their physical advantage. The more powerful male can create a state of physical and social dominance over the female in human societies. Taliban oppressed women by creating a norm that limit women's access to public places. The norm has consequences in the form of physical punishment that increases fear among women. Women's absence in public places becomes the strategy for preserving patriarchal culture.

Women's Acts to Fight Against Patriarchal Culture

This section divides the discussion of women's acts carried out to end the injustice and women's oppression into self-actualization, being herself and female intellectuals (Beauvoir, 2010)

Self-Actualization

In Homeira Qaderi's *Dancing in The Mosque*, the Taliban built their patriarchal power by limiting and oppressing women in many areas. Walby (1989) explains that

patriarchy is a system of social structure, a practice that places men in the dominant, oppressive, and exploiting position of women. Homeira shows her self-actualization by independent action in the field of education. When she got a chance to be in Tehran, Iran. She uses this chance to get an education. Women in Iran were more empowered; they had fought for equal opportunity to attend university. As an ideal Afghan woman, a wife should have a baby. Historically, the womb can be an argument for controlling women because of their biological role. As the primary objective is to generate their husband's interest in the child, the womb may be a worse fate for women (Romanis et al., 2020) Homeira shows her resistance by deciding to not have a baby until she finishes her studies. It can be seen in the following quotation.

By night, I was afraid and embarrassed to let my husband know that I was trying not to get pregnant, but by day, among my books and my friends, I knew I was making the right decision. If I were to get pregnant, I would be expected to remain home, and I was nervous that I would have trouble ever resuming my education. (Qaderi, 2020, p. 131)

As a woman, Homeira bravely decided on her future. As an ideal wife in a patriarchal culture, she should have a baby. But she took all the consequences to achieve her desire for education. Homeira also showed her self-actualization by publishing a book during her stay in Iran. Writing a book was her strategy to voice herself.

In Kabul I was no longer his ideal wife. I was a wife who published books, a wife who spoke in public, a wife who came home late from teaching at the university, a wife who was recognized in her own right. A woman who behaved like this was never going to be an ideal wife to the average Afghan man. (Qaderi, 2020, p.131)

From the quotation above it is shown that she not only published books, but also spoke in public and taught at the university. Through her self-actualization, she successfully proved that she was not an inferior woman in a patriarchal culture.

Being Herself

Homeira's act to fight against patriarchal culture can be seen by the decisions taken by herself. She decided to be the version of herself. Beauvoir (2010), women who are aware of their independence will be free to make life decisions without outside influence. As a wife, she showed her decision to be not an ideal Afghan wife as seen in the previous citation. Homeira also decided to refuse to be polygamous. Polygamy was something usual during the Taliban regime and an ideal wife should submit her husband's order. When someone told Homeira that her husband wanted to have a second wife. Homeira refused it.

Polygamy is still very common in Afghanistan, and what it requires of women is the willingness to accept that your husband has other wives, but even more, to accept that you have become just a number in the family and in the world. I would always be my husband's wife number one, but of what value is that? A number is a number and my dignity is lost. (Qaderi, 2020, p.132)

Homeira bravely said to her husband about her decision. She said, "I also want to let you know about my decision. I never want to be wife number one." (Qaderi, 2020) Homeira voiced her decision although she knew that she would lose her son. Due to the divorce, her son will legally belong to her husband. From this, it can be seen that Homeira was free to determine her choice. Women in patriarchal usually cannot speak up for their own choices. They always follow what the family or husband has decided for them. They are considered weak since they have no opinion of their own. Homeira shows her strength and power by being herself.

Female Intellectuals

According to Dalton and Fatzinger, many women utilize silence as a means of asserting their agency and voice inside institutionalized power structures. Then, within the prevailing patriarchal system, the marginalized people create a special power (qtd. in Liao et al.). To show her rejection of the patriarchal culture of the Taliban era, Homeira showed her intellect

by empowering women to claim their rights. She acknowledged that the Taliban had started the war with women by closing the girls' schools, therefore she influenced other girls to start fighting to claim their rights back.

The past wars were between men, but now, the Taliban have declared war on women, so we are a party to this war and must fight for ourselves." (Qaderi, 2020, p.71)

Homeira is considered to be truly aware of how the war with the Taliban left women oppressed. As a result, Homeira considers women's participation in this war as an obligation, portraying it as women's act to fight for themselves against the Taliban. Therefore, she encouraged the girls to join her in this fight.

"I am not a commander, but I do have a question: For how much longer are we willing to accept these tyrannical laws without a fight?" (Qaderi, 2020, p.70)

Homeira took the initiative to inspire the other girls in the public bathhouse to join her in the act of showing resistance towards the Taliban. She provoked the girls to fight back by reminding them that they were not supposed to accept the tyrannical laws of the Taliban.

One of my classmates asked me, "So, Homeira, you want to find a husband now because the schools are closed?" I lowered my voice. "No! A husband is not the solution to our problem. We have to do something to return to our studies." (Qaderi, 2020, p.70)

Homeira opposed the notion of perceiving marriage as the sole option for women since the Taliban has imposed numerous restrictions on them, including forbidding them to go to school. She insisted that women should do something so that they would be allowed to go back to their schools. Beauvoir (2012) said that women who are intelligent are those who recognize that, as human beings, women are subjects, not objects. Consequently, if women are able to act as active subjects as opposed to passive objects, they may be able to control themselves. Homeira's response reflected directly her

determination to resist the oppressive law of the Taliban and fight for her right to education. She expressed her intellect on this matter while also persuading the other girls to do the same thing.

Someone called out, "What if they shoot us?" A deadly silence enveloped the hammam. I took a deep breath. "I'm as afraid of being killed as you are," I said. "But I'm even more afraid of getting buried alive for the rest of my life without realizing my dreams." (Qaderi, 2020, p.72)

Even though the other girls were on the same page as Homeira, still they feared the Taliban. However, Homeira noted that it would be more terrifying for them if they did nothing to fight back, gave up on their dreams, and became nothing when the Taliban's era ended. More crucially, Homeira did not deny the fear of being killed by the Taliban, but she was determined to face her fears. This courageous act gave off a powerful sense of empowerment that resonated greatly with the other girls in the hammam. She established a sense of togetherness and solidarity among the girls acknowledging their shared dread.

It took a few minutes for the older girls to realize that I wasn't going to sit down until they heard me out. Finally, they quieted down. "Imagine the day that the Taliban finally leave," I continued. "The schools will be reopened, but the world will have passed you by as you will all be in your husbands' homes. Won't that be a shame? The world will say that Afghan girls were all waiting for the Taliban to come along so that they could get married and avoid an education." "I had planted a seed of rebellion in the girls in the bathhouse. Now we had to be patient and gather more allies to our cause. (Qaderi, 2020, p.70)

Homeira then gathered the girls and despite their fears, she led them to have a protest in front of the amir's palace. Together, they demanded the Taliban to reopen the schools for girls. They were determined to be heard although it meant they were breaking the rule and being rebels.

Two Taliban walked toward us, rifles slung over their shoulders. "What do you want!" one of them shouted. My mouth felt as dry as a desert. My tongue was glued to the roof of my mouth. I took a breath. "We want the girls' schools reopened," I said in a quavering voice. (Qaderi, 2020, p.74)

Homeira was successful in organizing the protest against the Taliban together with the girls from the hammam. This protest highlights the girls' courageous action to fight against the Taliban to reclaim their rights to education. Although in the face of intimidation, Homeira and the other girls feared being shot, they were doing an excellent job of voicing their opinions and reclaiming what had been stolen. Homeira was not only successful in empowering other girls to fight back, but she was also successful in creating a movement to fight back, which was the protest against the Taliban in front of Amir's palace.

Conclusion

The objectives of this study are to reveal the patriarchal culture, the effect of the patriarchal culture on women, and women's acts to fight against the patriarchal culture in the Taliban regime. To answer the problem formulation, the researcher uses the theory of patriarchy to reveal a depiction of patriarchal culture, the theory of gender oppression to reveal the effect of patriarchal culture on women, and the theory of feminism to reveal women's acts to fight against the patriarchal culture in the Taliban regime.

The patriarchal culture of the novel is reflected in the society from the law, customs, and education, also reflected in the family by male domination, girls that are forced to get married at a very young age, and women that are treated as properties. The effect of patriarchal culture on female characters is reflected in women who lack education, women who live in fear, and women's vulnerability to violence. Afghan women challenge the patriarchal culture of the Taliban regime through self-actualization, being themselves, and showing their intellect by empowering women to claim their rights. Education empowers them with knowledge and skills, enables them to gain financial

independence, and helps to challenge and change traditional gender roles and cultural norms that perpetuate inequality. Education also increases women's self-esteem and confidence, which allows them to participate more actively in society and make decisions that impact their own lives and the lives of their families and communities. Through education, women can become agents of change and contribute to a more equitable and just society.

The scope of this study is narrowed to Qaderi's *Dancing in The Mosque*. A suggestion for future research is to expand the scope, examining other literary works from Afghan writers that reflected the Taliban regime to enrich the insights into women's struggle and their effort to fight back against the patriarchal culture.

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