



Interpersonal Relationships and Resilience in Nadia Hashimi's Novels

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Abstract:

*The article focuses on Nadia Hashimi's novels intricately explore the themes of interpersonal relationships and resilience, particularly in the context of Afghan society. Through her vivid portrayal of female protagonists navigating societal pressures, cultural norms, and personal struggles, Hashimi illuminates the profound impact of human connections in shaping identity and overcoming adversity. This article examines how Hashimi's characters forge and maintain relationships that serve as both a source of strength and a means of survival. By analysing novels such as *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, *When the Moon Is Low*, and *A House Without Windows*, the article investigates how these relationships, whether familial, romantic, or communal, act as pillars of resilience in the face of conflict and displacement. Through the lens of feminist literary criticism and trauma theory, the study underscores the transformative power of interpersonal bonds, revealing the complexity of navigating love, loss, and survival in a rapidly changing world. Hashimi's exploration of these themes offers a powerful commentary on the resilience of the human spirit and the critical role that interpersonal relationships play in overcoming personal and societal challenges.*

Keywords: Interpersonal, Resilience, adversity, diminish, circumstances.



Introduction:

Nadia Hashimi's novels provide a poignant examination of Afghan women's lives, their experiences with resilience, and the profound impact that interpersonal relationships have in shaping their journeys. As an Afghan-American writer, Hashimi's work addresses the complexities of identity, cultural conflict, and survival, often set against the backdrop of Afghanistan's turbulent history. Central to her narratives is the theme of resilience—an enduring ability to overcome adversity—and the relationships that either strengthen or challenge this resilience. In a world where women's rights are often oppressed, Hashimi's characters forge interpersonal relationships that help them navigate the harsh realities of war, displacement, and personal loss. Through these connections, Hashimi explores the vital role of human bonds in both individual and collective survival.

At the heart of Hashimi's novels is the profound connection between resilience and relationships. While resilience can be seen as an individual trait, it is often nurtured through interpersonal interactions, especially in societies where community ties and familial bonds are paramount. Hashimi's works, including *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* (2014), *When the Moon Is Low* (2015), *A House Without Windows* (2016), and *Sparks Like Stars* (2021), depict how characters—particularly women—navigate oppressive environments with the help of these relationships. These novels feature protagonists who, despite facing tremendous obstacles, find strength not in isolation, but through their connections with others, whether family, friends, or romantic partners.

In *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, for example, the protagonist, Rahima, lives in a world where her freedom is constrained by gender norms. Her relationship with her grandmother, whose own life was shaped by similar limitations, provides her with the strength to survive and



eventually challenge societal expectations. This relationship becomes a source of resilience, allowing Rahima to navigate a patriarchal world that seeks to diminish her agency. Similarly, in *When the Moon Is Low*, the story of Najia, an Afghan refugee, shows how the bonds formed with her family, her romantic partner, and fellow refugees provide the necessary emotional and psychological strength for survival. Despite the harrowing circumstances of displacement and the loss of her parents, it is these human relationships that enable her to preserve hope and continue her journey toward a new life.

Hashimi's works also explore the theme of *collective resilience*, highlighting the importance of community solidarity in the face of trauma. Interpersonal relationships in these novels are not limited to familial or romantic ties but also extend to broader social networks. In *A House Without Windows*, for example, the protagonist, Azita, an Afghan woman wrongfully imprisoned for the murder of her husband, finds strength in the friendships she forms within the confines of a women's prison. The connections she builds with other women who share similar experiences of oppression create a support system that enables her to challenge her fate and seek justice.

The significance of interpersonal relationships extends beyond the realm of survival into the realm of personal identity. In societies where women's roles are often relegated to secondary positions, Hashimi's characters must navigate the tension between familial expectations and their personal aspirations. These characters seek to assert their autonomy, often through their relationships, and the resilience they exhibit is not just about surviving external threats but also about claiming their right to define themselves. Through these interpersonal interactions, Hashimi sheds light on the emotional complexities of resistance, as her characters not only fight against external oppression but also challenge internalized limitations.



The role of resilience in interpersonal relationships is further illuminated through Hashimi's exploration of trauma and recovery. Many of her characters are survivors of violence, war, and displacement—experiences that leave deep emotional scars. Yet, these scars do not define them. Instead, they are transformed through the healing power of relationships. This process of healing is not linear; it is fraught with setbacks and moments of despair. However, it is the enduring human connections that help Hashimi's characters move forward. In *Sparks Like Stars*, for instance, the protagonist, Sitara, who survives a brutal attack on her family, is able to rebuild her life and sense of self through her relationships with others who have also suffered loss and trauma. Together, they form a collective resilience, supporting each other as they rebuild their lives.

The theme of resilience, particularly in the face of trauma and adversity, is central to Hashimi's storytelling. However, it is through interpersonal relationships that her characters find the emotional and psychological strength to rebuild and redefine themselves. These relationships are not just a means of survival but also serve as a platform for personal growth and transformation. Hashimi's portrayal of these relationships reflects the broader cultural context of Afghanistan, where familial ties and social networks play a crucial role in shaping individuals' lives.

This article explores how Nadia Hashimi's novels depict the intricate relationship between interpersonal bonds and resilience. Through a close reading of *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, *When the Moon Is Low*, *A House Without Windows*, and *Sparks Like Stars*, the article examines how Hashimi's characters navigate the complex terrain of love, loss, and survival. It argues that interpersonal relationships, whether familial, romantic, or communal, are integral to the characters' ability to endure hardship, overcome trauma, and ultimately reclaim agency in a world that seeks to diminish their voices. By focusing on these relationships, Hashimi



offers a nuanced portrayal of resilience that emphasizes the power of human connection in the face of adversity.

Main Thrust:

Nadia Hashimi's novels are not only a reflection of Afghan women's personal journeys but also an exploration of the intricate role interpersonal relationships play in fostering resilience. In a world where societal pressures, gender inequality, and violent conflict frequently dominate the lives of women, Hashimi portrays how human connections serve as lifelines that provide both strength and purpose. The central thrust of this article is to examine how interpersonal relationships—whether familial, romantic, or communal—serve as key mechanisms through which resilience is cultivated and nurtured in Hashimi's characters.

Storytelling is the depiction of women who face extreme adversity—whether in the form of gender-based violence, political conflict, or forced displacement. These women are often navigating societal norms that limit their freedom, yet they find the strength to resist, not through individualistic endeavors but through the bonds they form with others. This is a central element in Hashimi's writing: resilience is never portrayed as a solitary pursuit but is instead deeply embedded in interpersonal dynamics. One of the most powerful representations of this theme is in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*. Rahima, the novel's protagonist, lives in a world where Afghan women's autonomy is severely restricted. However, it is her relationship with her grandmother, who shares similar life experiences, that allows Rahima to cultivate a sense of self-worth and resistance. The bond between them becomes a foundation for Rahima's survival as she navigates the oppressive structures of patriarchy. In the novel, Rahima's resilience is not a product of inner strength alone but a reflection of the emotional and psychological support provided by her familial relationships. The influence of her



grandmother's stories and wisdom strengthens Rahima's resolve to challenge the gendered expectations of her society.

Similarly, in *When the Moon Is Low*, the novel follows Najia, an Afghan refugee who is separated from her family during a violent conflict. Her relationship with her brother, whom she is determined to reunite with, becomes the emotional anchor for her resilience. As Najia struggles to survive as a refugee, it is her unshakable bond with her brother that drives her to endure harrowing conditions. The novel demonstrates how resilience is not simply an innate characteristic but is continuously shaped and reinforced through interpersonal connections. In Najia's case, her love for her family and the hope of reuniting with them provide her with the emotional strength to confront the many challenges of displacement and survival.

In *A House Without Windows*, Hashimi shifts the focus to a different kind of interpersonal relationship—one formed in a women's prison. The novel's protagonist, Azita, finds herself imprisoned for a crime she did not commit, yet the solidarity and support she receives from other women in the prison become key sources of strength. In prison, Azita forms friendships with women who, like her, have been victims of societal injustice. These relationships act as a counterbalance to the oppressive environment, enabling Azita to cope with her circumstances and fight for her freedom. Through the portrayal of these relationships, Hashimi underscores the importance of solidarity and collective resilience. The emotional bonds formed between the women are portrayed as critical to their ability to survive the trauma of imprisonment and the injustices they face.

Another critical element that emerges across Hashimi's novels is the intersection of resilience and trauma. Many of Hashimi's characters have experienced significant trauma—be it the death of loved ones, displacement, or the horrors of war. In this context, resilience is not



merely a reaction to hardship but a continuous process of recovery. Hashimi's characters often rely on their interpersonal relationships to heal and process their trauma. In *Sparks Like Stars*, Sitara, the protagonist, survives the brutal murder of her family in a terrorist attack. Her subsequent journey to rebuild her life is heavily shaped by the relationships she forms along the way. It is the support of those who have also experienced trauma, as well as the guidance from individuals who offer emotional support, that allows her to reclaim a sense of self and move forward.

The resilience depicted in Hashimi's novels is also shaped by the broader societal context in which her characters exist. In patriarchal societies where women are often denied their autonomy and rights, interpersonal relationships become crucial mechanisms for resistance. Hashimi's female protagonists do not operate in isolation; instead, they draw on the collective strength of the women around them. This collective resilience is emphasized in many of her novels, where relationships between women serve as sources of empowerment. By focusing on the importance of these relationships, Hashimi not only highlights the challenges of individual survival but also underscores the importance of communal solidarity in overcoming adversity.

In the larger context of Hashimi's body of work, these interpersonal relationships serve as a critique of the social and political structures that seek to disempower individuals, particularly women. Through her characters, Hashimi emphasizes that resilience is not a passive response to hardship but an active, ongoing process of negotiation, survival, and transformation. In her novels, resilience is not simply about enduring pain but about actively engaging with others to overcome the emotional and psychological barriers imposed by trauma, oppression, and societal expectations.



Ultimately, the central thrust of this article is to argue that in Nadia Hashimi's novels, resilience is intricately tied to interpersonal relationships. Through her nuanced portrayal of Afghan women's lives, Hashimi demonstrates that resilience cannot be isolated as an individual trait but must be understood as a product of the emotional, psychological, and social connections that shape people's lives. By focusing on the interpersonal dynamics of her characters, Hashimi provides a rich, layered exploration of how human connections form the bedrock of survival

Conclusion:

Nadia Hashimi's novels offer a profound exploration of the ways in which interpersonal relationships contribute to the resilience of individuals, particularly women, within the context of Afghan society and the broader themes of displacement, gender inequality, and trauma. Throughout her works, Hashimi illustrates that resilience is not merely an individual trait or a solitary pursuit but is deeply intertwined with the connections characters form with others. Whether through familial bonds, romantic relationships, or solidarity between women in times of crisis, these interpersonal dynamics serve as vital sources of emotional support, empowerment, and survival.

In novels such as *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, *When the Moon Is Low*, *A House Without Windows*, and *Sparks Like Stars*, Hashimi vividly portrays the challenges faced by her protagonists—women who endure violence, oppression, and personal loss. However, it is through their relationships with others that they find the strength to persevere and overcome these adversities. The emotional and psychological resilience displayed by Hashimi's characters is a direct result of the ways they nurture and rely on their interpersonal connections.



These relationships not only help them survive but also allow them to reclaim a sense of agency and identity in a world that continually seeks to suppress them.

Moreover, Hashimi's novels underscore the importance of collective resilience. In contexts where women's voices are often marginalized, the solidarity between women, whether in the form of familial support or the creation of sisterhoods in oppressive circumstances, emerges as a critical factor in enduring hardship and resisting societal limitations. These communal bonds create a foundation for resilience, enabling women to navigate the complex terrain of cultural expectations, trauma, and social injustice.

Through her richly layered characters and their relationships, Hashimi offers a nuanced commentary on the power of human connection in overcoming adversity. Resilience, in Hashimi's world, is not a passive response to suffering but an active, ongoing process of emotional healing, empowerment, and resistance. The strength to endure hardship, fight for justice, and rebuild lives is found not in isolation, but through the enduring, transformative power of interpersonal relationships.

In conclusion, Nadia Hashimi's works provide a compelling exploration of how interpersonal relationships shape the resilience.

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