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Khona: A Silent Voice of Female Leadership in *Patriarchal Hegemony*

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Abstract

Khona, a legendary figure of ancient Bengal, is famous for her '*bachan'* or saying on climate, agriculture and other environmental issues, which survive in Bangladesh and other parts of this region. In some versions she is identified as a Sinhalese princess who came floating to Bengal with her childhood companion, Mihir, to the court of Vikramaditya. As Khona or Leelavati, her actual name, reveals to the court astrologer, Baraha, that Mihir is his son, Baraha accepts them. Mihir and Leelavati are both astrologers and her deductions relating to the newly born prince earns them a position at the court. As Leelavati gradually attains popularity, she turns into a threat for Baraha and a terrible conflict due to gender difference begins between the two. For Baraha, Leelavati's femininity is being destroyed through her activities in the masculine realm of the concerns of life outside the four walls of a house. This is a clear exposition of the idea of the construction of 'gender' and it continues even today. Khona's life is a prime example of how patriarchy denounces female leadership and suppresses beneficial knowledge and power when it comes through a woman. This power provides a woman with a voice and this voice is regarded as a threat to patriarchy. Baraha combats this threatening voice by silencing it; but, ironically, she attains immortality through her proverbs handed down the ages as '*Khonar Bachan'*. The paper studies the phenomenon of 'Khona' as part of the Asian women's struggle to establish their leadership through knowledge and power and attain a decisive voice in the policies of the state.

Keywords: gender, female leadership, patriarchy, hegemony

Introduction

Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet (2003), in their book *Language and Gender*, writes "gender is embedded so thoroughly in our institutions, our actions, our beliefs, and our desires that it appears to be completely natural". One of the reasons for gender to appear natural is probably due to its existence since the earliest development of civilization. Unsurprisingly, a continuum of certain fixed ideas and

beliefs, of men being superior and more powerful, is found throughout the development of civilization, even though a few matriarchal societies with women as decision makers are held up as examples of female empowerment. One such legendary figure of southeast Asia is Khona or Leelavati, who lived sometime between the 9th and the 11th centuries and was famous as an astrologer and medieval scholar of knowledge related to agriculture. She left behind many proverbs known as "Khona-r Bachan," or the proverbs of Khona. Hailed as a Princess and a court astrologer, Khona's life was cut short due to her conflict with the representatives of patriarchy of the ruling class that believed that Khona actually had challenged their leadership with her knowledge and personality.

Literature Review

Before we delve into the discussion of more intriguing issues of female leadership and its nature of relationship with a patriarchal society, we need to know what leadership means. Keohane (2010) defines leadership as "Leaders define or clarify goals for a group of individuals and bring together the energies of members of that group to pursue those goals". A leader can influence a group of individuals, a segment of the population or a nation through insight, foresight and 'knowledge' that promise to bring about a positive change in the target community's life. This brings forth two dimensions of leadership: power and authority (Keohane, 2020). All leaders are supposedly entitled to have power in the sense that they can influence decisions and can make significant changes in others' lives. Robert Dahl (1957) clearly differentiates power form leadership suggesting, "*A* has power over *B* to the extent that he can get *B* to do something that *B* would not otherwise do." So, exercising power has nothing to do with leadership. Over the years, the world has seen the rise of many authoritative leadership of which all have been exhibited by men. Alice Eagly and Linda Carli (2007) employs the image of 'labyrinth' to identify the manifold obstacles of woman to achieve leadership in the male dominated society. The primary barrier is the stereotypical gender role of homemaking and child rearing. The society invariably takes for granted that the woman of the house is solely responsible to manage the household, take care of the children and to take care of any aging members of the family including parents. The daunting expectations from the woman corrode away the inner strength from even the most unyielding persona of a woman. Another persistent obstacle for a woman to climb up the ladder of the social leadership position is at the same time the necessity and the lack of sponsor/mentor.

Sponsorship/mentorship for women is critical for establishing authority in a society, but Kanter (1977) in her research found out that finding sponsorship for guiding them to a position of leadership is a tall task as women frequently report that "they felt pressure from male managers to live up to the expectations stemming from what the wives were expected to do" (Kanter, 1977 cited from Carbajal, 2018). The cognitive bias (Nelson, 2001) of gender role impulsively subjugates the role of a woman in a society. The gendered concept of leadership, thus, infringe the right of women to talk, to participate in the decision-making body and even to disseminate knowledge that they have which may impact the social index to go higher, because

knowledge is the tool of leadership. Collins (2000) puts forward the intersectionality theory that focuses on knowledge as how it is disseminated, in what way the elements that are considered to be knowledge is established, and the authority that decides what is deemed to be knowledge. Intersectionality and feminist poststructuralism (Tisdell, 1998) consider the correlation between the construction of knowledge and one's position in social structures as defining factor of establishing power and self-identity in the society. Social factors, like class, gender, and economy, play a significant role in identifying and creating knowledge and the way that knowledge is to be used in the society. Collins (2000) identifies and describes four levels of "matrix of domination": structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal. The structural domain discusses the legal societal structure and other factors of oppression like religion, economy, and education. In the disciplinary domain marks the connection with the leadership issues. Leadership is a defined vehicle of control over the masses that has been instrumentalized in oppressing the voice of women. Many are uncomfortable with the idea of 'powerful' (in the sense to be in leadership) women in the society whose knowledge base confronts the 'world' typically depicted by the 'powerful' men and challenges the so called 'stability' of the society. This deep buried and distorted notions create opportunity to constraint the women empowerment. According to Collins (2000), the hegemonic domain validates domination at the cultural level. This involves socially constructed sex/gender roles that inject the belief that the pre-defined roles are fixed and inexorable. The doctrine runs through language (all important/powerful elements are referenced through 'he', whereas softness/mild natured elements are referenced through 'she'), imagery (like colour association: pink for girls and blue for boys), values and behaviour (rationality as superior represented by male beings and emotion as inferior represented by female beings), projection of female figures in different mass media, and even the treatment by parents in a family (e.g. during meal-time, boys are given preference for dietary options over girls) etc. Finally, the last domain, the interpersonal factor, is influenced by all the above-discussed domains, triggered by the daily interactions with the people around. Through this, the identity of a woman is constantly negotiated and renegotiated. In the legends of Khona, the primary conflict arises with the clash with her father-in-law's 'male chauvinism'. When Khona has been hailed for her knowledge and personality, the male and the elite class representative of the society, namely Baraha, feels threatened that his authority is challenged. He initially attempts to control Khona through hegemonic practices and when that fails, an open interpersonal domination conflict ensues. Baraha cannot see the leadership goes to the hand of a woman. Thus, he attempts to silence the woman's voice.

Legend of Khona

According to Purabi Basu (2015), (Kingbadantir Khana or Khanar Bachan), there are five legends about Khona and her life. The legends place her life between the 9th and the 11th centuries. The legends contain the same stories, differing in time and exact location. The three main actors are similar- Khona, her husband Mihir and her father-in-law, Baraha, who cannot accept her

scholarship and popularity with the King and Queen as well as the common people and conspires to destroy her. For this essay, the published play *Khona*, composed by Samina Luthfa Nitra in Bangla and translated into English by Professor Kabir Chowdhury (2011), has been used. Samina Luthfa has fashioned her play by researching into this legend quite thoroughly and visiting the archaeological findings located in India. The plot of the play is quite simple: Leelavati comes to Deulnagar with her husband Mihir and convinces her father-in-law, Baraha, to accept Mihir as his long-abandoned child. She points out Baraha's mistake in his astrological accounting regarding the life of his son and is accepted warmly by Mihir's father. She also corrects Baraha's calculations regarding the future of the newly born Prince, Bichitraketu. Very soon, the King and Queen are impressed by her astrological powers and honours her with a seat in the King's court. Gradually, Baraha and Leelavati get into a conflict and finally Baraha orders Mihir to cut off her tongue to silence her. Through this simple plot, narrative in style, the playwright has delved into the deeper issues of gender conflict, female empowerment, freedom of choice and finally, freedom of speech.

The independence that a woman may enjoy is actually dependent on her identity in the world she lives in. As Simone de Beauvoir (2009) noted, a woman's identity is always determined in relation to that of the man:

> "Humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being.

She determines and differentiates herself in relation to man, and he does not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other."

Consequently, women are perceived as secondary as opposed to the primary male human being, leading to oppression and exploitation of the 'weaker' form: thus the centre of gender conflict is formed. Very simply, any woman who attempts to cross the boundaries set for her, is seen as a threat to patriarchy. The ancient story of Sita in *Ramayana* where a circle is drawn by Lakshmana for her to stay safe inside it, and the dangerous war that ensues when she steps out of the circle, cannot but be perceived as an "objective correlative" of this situation. Predictably, Sita is held responsible for over-reaching the limits of her role that society had constituted for her. Subsequently, she has to undergo many trials as punishment. However, that idea of naturalness has been questioned many times since, and as McConell and Eckert (2003) writes:

> "But it is precisely the fact that gender seems self-evident that makes the study of gender interesting. It brings the challenge to uncover the process of construction that creates what we have so long thought of as natural and inexorable – to study gender not as given but as an accomplishment; not simply as cause, but as effect and not just as individual, but as social"

This idea that gender is not something a person is born with, has been effectively challenged by Judith Butler (2004) and she insists that, "…gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo". Examining other theoreticians as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, de Beauvoir, Victor Turner and others, Butler (ibid) submits that the notion of gender

appears in-born because the body, "…becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised and consolidated through time." Hence Butler's famous claim that gender is a performance rather than anything else. In this play, Baraha's performance is illustrative of the above-mentioned concepts leading to gender conflict. The gender conflict in the play between the daughter and father-in-law begins very simply. On her arrival to Deulnagar, Leelavati convinces Baraha that her husband Mihir is Baraha's son and his calculations regarding the fate of Mihir at childbirth were incorrect. Baraha happily takes Mihir and Leelavati to the court of king Dharmaketu and introduces them as his son and daughter-in- law. He also announces the good fortune of the newly born Prince Bichitraketu, admitting his mistake regarding the fortune of the newly born child. The whole kingdom is filled with joy and celebration. However, the happiness of Baraha ebbs away very soon as the king announces that Mihir as well as Leelavati are appointed Councilors in the court. Hearing the proclamation, Baraha reacts immediately:

Baraha: Mihir is eminently qualified to be member of the Royal Council. I thank the king for his graciousness. But why Leelavati?..... What role will she, a woman, play in the Council? Will cooking or home-management find a place in the Council meeting agenda?

Thus speaks patriarchy.

Queen Sumitra, who was already grateful for Leelavati's good work, immediately reminds Baraha:

Sumitra: Strange! Such quick forgetfulness! Leelavati dispelled the evil fate of prince Bichitraketu . She pointed out the mistake in Baraha's calculations. Now is the Royal Council going to receive instruction from her only in the art of cooking and home-management?"

The Narrator of the play also comments: "when a woman steps out of her home the first opposition comes from within her own home" (16)

Baraha voices his belief about the role of a woman: she is to live within the house and perform all the household works; she cannot be a part of the Royal Court and its functions. Since *Khona* is an ancient story, Baraha's reaction may be considered as outdated or archaic but reality does not say so as Deane Curtin (1997) in an essay, 'Women's knowledge as Expert Knowledge' published in *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature* indicates the existence of this fact even in late 20th century:

"Patriarchal cultures tend to locate women's practices on the border between nature and culture ... mothering, cooking, health care, Weeding, tending to livestock.... etc. are considered to be women's work" everything else is not. As the play unfolds, Leelavati's excellent knowledge of astrology, health care, climate, crops, seasons and all other practices of agriculture and the environment are revealed. In her book, Purabi Basu (2015) claims Khona as the first woman agriculturist and environmentalist of Bengal, besides being the first woman poet, astrologer and mathematician of Bengal. In the play, when Queen Sumitra falls ill, the physicians of the Royal Court are unable to fathom her sickness and advises the King to abandon the Queen and marry a healthy young woman. Leelavati, with the king's permission cures

her by simply shifting the Queen's private chambers to a more open, airy and sunny part of the palace. Khona produces one of her famous proverbs which effectively survives in this part of the world even today:

"South-facing houses are for kings,
East-facing one are for subjects,
West-side open ones are for fools,
North open ones are totally useless" (25)

Khona also suggests that the Queen should have more natural food as fruits and fresh water and do some work. The Queen should also be entertained by music and songs. As the Queen happily recovers, the King and Queen become very fond of Khona. But of course, this incident only increases the unhappiness of Baraha and the other Councilors. They begin to perceive Leelavati as a threat to their patriarchal powers. Leelavati appears as an empowered female who may diminish the power of the males. The beliefs, attitudes, behaviour of the males is seen more openly among the ruling elites as at the core of gender conflict lies a struggle for power rather than anything else. As Baraha and Leelavati both belong to the ruling class, this conflict cannot be perceived as a class conflict. Leelavati being as, if not more knowledgeable as Baraha, can be perceived as an 'equal' of Baraha. But as Simone tells us, a woman can only be the 'other' for man, never his equal. Hence, any woman approaching the authority of the male is deemed as a dangerous menace.

Leelavati's power appears more threatening to Baraha due to her natural leadership among the common people of the village. Leelavati loves to wander around the village, getting close to nature, like Wordsworth's nature children and develops strong bonds of friendship with the village cowherd 'Rakhal' and a wise old cultivator Jatha (uncle). It is by mingling with the villagers that Leelavati's knowledge and wisdom related to the important factors of an agrarian world-seasons, climate, crops plantation and harvesting times, fruits, fauna, trees- increases to a much higher level than Baraha's. Baraha is a scholar but lacks the expertise developed through the real-life experiences that the villagers possess: all the life-saving and life threatening factors of the natural environment. The playwright through a few incidents only, portrays Leelavati's gradual development into, what we would today term as, an ecological environmentalist. When she notices that the mango tree in Baraha's courtyard is not producing mangoes she tells her father-in-law to trim its branches:

> Mango trees in north-west yield fruits in the honeyed months; After rain of Ashar and Sravan are over, cut the branches for fuel for the stoves (17)

Predictably, Baraha does not like to be instructed and he did not even notice his mango tree.

One day, through her astrology, Leelavati learns about the possibility of very heavy rainfall. She imparts the information to her villager uncle, and he becomes very frightened. He tells her: 'If it rains in Agrahayan, then the King has to go begging' (27). Leelavati rushes to the King and advises him on means of combating the impending famine. She requests the King to provide free seeds to the farmers which are water resistant and they can get new crops sooner. She also advises him to excuse the peasants from

paying taxes that year. King Dharmaketu being a wise ruler, follows Khona's advice and overcomes the crisis. Unfortunately, even at present, development planners do not listen to women's voices so easily. As Deane Curtin (1997) writes in her essay: "women's expert knowledge of soil, climate and seeds is marginalised as anecdote, it is often dismissed as mere 'wives' tales".

As the play progresses, King Dharmaketu's kingdom flourishes, but Baraha and Leelavati's conflict deepens and Baraha's feelings move towards hatred for her. Baraha now objects to the way Leelavati chooses to spend her daily life. He complains to Mihir about the misconduct of his wife:

Baraha: Your wife is very arrogant.

Mihir: I seek your forgiveness, father.

Baraha: She does not seem to be very interested in the study of astrology.

Mihir: She wants to go close to the common people. She says that the peasants know more than she does.

Baraha: .... Her main work is the study of astrology. Besides it is not proper for her to associate with common peasants and farmers.

Mihir: Please forgive her, father. Leelavati is an extraordinary person. She never takes a single step towards something that she does not like.

Baraha:If women were allowed to act according to their own judgment, it would be difficult to preserve order and discipline in the world. Remember, king Dharmaketu may be annoyed any moment at Leelavati's close association with lowly peasants and farmers" (19)

Baraha uses the strategy of being a concerned parent to check Leelavati's freedom of movement. Mihir loves Khona and mostly supports her in her actions. But he cannot come out of the deeply entrenched patriarchal behaviour of a male and begins to question Leelavati's behaviour when his father subtly provokes him: "A definite change had come about in her language manners and thoughts...why were she so restless? In fact, her conduct today was unpardonable.....Leela's ways and manners had to be corrected..... Mihir had to keep in mind his position in the royal household, too. How the tune of power makes one go astray! Mihir took strong firm steps and went looking for his wife. She must face a trial" (Chowdhury, 2011). Although, Mihir has been portrayed as a loving husband of Leelavati – following her wishes and desires – the underlying male values existing in him, float to the surface, as Baraha very cunningly incites him. Mihir cannot but *perform* as is expected of him. This notion is illustrated very interestingly by Myra Jehlen (1995) in an essay titled 'Gender', where she uses *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Twain, 1994), calling it "…a man's book about a boy". Jehlen (1995) presents the incident of Huck disguising himself as a girl by dressing up and trying to behave as one. However, he is unmasked by Judith Loftus, a woman to whom Huck goes for help, as she tells him "…you do a girl tolerable poor, but you might fool men, maybe". "This is the final blow not to male authority but to the authority of gender itself, for if women recognize femininity better than men that can only mean that femininity is a performance and not a natural mode of being.'' Similarly, when Baraha restates what Butler (2004) acknowledges borrowing from Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977), "regulative discourses", Mihir immediately responds by behaving in a 'masculine' manner. In fact, in

the patriarchal hegemonic authority, Mihir, unknowingly, has been instrumental and plays the role of agency in the matrix of domination.

To bring Leelavati under his control so that she does not cross her given perimeter, Baraha uses the ancient weapons of patriarchy – the appeal to decency, appropriate behaviour, not to mingle with outsiders, to protect the honour of the family, and the belief that the good name of the household must never be compromised. These above-mentioned strategies that Baraha believes so ardently are parts of the social order that is culturally and socially constructed to restrict and restrain the free movements of the females. The appropriateness of the female behaviour as decided by society and culture are constituted to specify the role of women in society. While doing so, opposite kind of behaviour is determined for the males also and a binary pair, locked in opposition is formed. Hence de Beauvoir's (2009) assertion that a woman cannot be "an autonomous being" but is always seen as correlated to men. When Baraha criticizes Leelavati, he perceives her as *his* daughter-in-law and Mihir's wife; she is *not* an individual being. Baraha reminds Mihir that she is his wife but belongs to the wider social circle of the king and his court. As Leelavati goes out to meet the villagers, to Baraha, she is attempting to extend her perimeter, to cross the limits set by the world she lives in. Baraha is unable to accept the fact that Leelavati, in a short time has become the favourite, of not only the King and Queen but also, the common people of Deulnagar. His jealousy becomes apparent to the Queen, to Rakhal and to the vision of his dead wife Kongkona: they all point it out to him. Baraha suffers from multiple problems: he is envious of the adulation and fame that Leelavati inspired among all the social strata of Deulnagar; she is known as the 'learned queen-mother'; he is frightened that Leelavati is usurping the decisive position that Baraha enjoyed for so long; he feels challenged by the knowledge and expertise of Leelavati; he feels threatened that his power in the court is diminishing rapidly and very soon he may lose his identity as the foremost Royal Councillor. All these complexes weaken his self-confidence and Baraha takes recourse to unfair means to strengthen and reinstate his failing powers.

The conflict reaches a climax through direct confrontation when Leelavati discovers that Baraha had used one of her principles of calculation in his book but without any acknowledgement of her. Leelavati has been aware of the growing displeasure of her father-in-law all this time but now she loses all patience and control over herself and accuses Baraha directly:

Leelavati: ..... You used my Principles in your book, but did you acknowledge it anywhere? No, you didn't. The Prakrits would have called it theft and in your language you turned it into a profession of stealing.

Mihir: What are you saying, Leela?

Leela: Shall I not call one dishonest if he is really so? When Baraha acts dishonestly, why shall I be at fault by referring to his dishonesty?

Instead of explaining his own action, Baraha attacks Leelabati:

Baraha: There is a limit to impertinence, Mihir, Leelavati has crossed all limits.

She is determined to do all that is

prohibited. It is terrible. It is absolutely unpardonable (31)

Unhesitatingly, Baraha overlooks his own crime, hides his own deception and harps on Leelavati's faults. Baraha's accusations are the age-old ones: Leelavati has crossed over 'prohibitions' and 'limits' and cannot be forgiven at all. Mihir desperately tries to calm his father and keeps begging his forgiveness, but Baraha cannot be appeased. Actually, Baraha realises that Leelavati will unmask his scholarship and degrade him easily and so he gives his final judgement:

> Baraha: This arrogant woman has greatly insulted me by her impudent words. She must not be allowed to insult anybody any more by her words. To repay the debt you owe your father you must cut off her tongue and offer it to me. Else you will go to eternal hell. (32)

Barha's cruel judgement is to be meted out by Mihir because Mihir made a promise to obey his father when Baraha had graciously accepted him as his son: the most surprising factor here is the cruel punishment – Leela's *tongue* had to be cut off-not her head, which would have been more expected. Baraha was being defeated by Leela's words – her knowledge and scholarship and wisdom – and that is why that organ of speech – the tongue – must be cut off. Baraha is perfectly prepared to stifle Leelavati so that his crime is never exposed and his power of eminence lies unchallenged. Remarkably, a similar story is narrated in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1989), about two princesses. Princess Philomela is raped by her brother-in-law and her tongue is cut off so that she can never reveal the violation. But, Philomela stiches the story into a tapestry and the whole incident is exposed. Then the brother-in-law tries to kill both the sisters and the gods turn them into birds. Hence, traditionally, women's voices appear as a source of challenge to patriarchy and must be suppressed. In the 17th century England, an essay by a French priest Jacques du Bosc (1998), titled 'The Complete Woman' was translated into English and published as a didactic piece for women, particularly, for the aristocracy of that period. Bosc writes about an ideal woman requiring "…three perfections that Socrates desired in his disciples: discretion, silence and modesty" to be complete. Even the great humanist Renaissance playwright, Shakespeare, wrote about this in his play *Taming of the Shrew.* Most of Shakespeare's tender loving women speak less and obey more. Repeatedly, throughout the growth of civilization, women had to be silenced. Their freedom to speak remained unacceptable to men.

Leelavati's advice and wise sayings are preserved in the form of '*Khonar Bachan'*, i.e. 'the proverbs of Khona, in different regions of South Asia. According to Dr. Ali Nawas (2011), Khona's sayings are spread from Assam to Kerala. These are used in the agricultural arena in their original formation or sometimes in slightly transformed manners in the eastern parts of the Indian sub-continent covering Assam, East and West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. In Orissa, the proverbs are still sung in their original forms. When women are silent, their wants, desires, dreams, ambitions, anger, sorrows, sufferings as well as hopes, joys, happiness remain unexpressed and unexplored. Men in society find it easier to lead their lives according to their own wishes and preferences rather than having to confront the women. They fail to embrace the new vista

of wisdom brought forth by women.

The news of Baraha's wish to have Khona's tongue cut out spreads like wildfire all over Deulnagar. The villagers, as Baraha feared, rush to save Leelavati. Rakhal is ready to kill Baraha and they surround Leelavati's house to protect her. But Leelavati makes them leave her place. Even the Queen and King come to ask Baraha's forgiveness. Baraha tells the king that if Leelavati begs for forgiveness within seven days, he will take back his order. Leelavati refuses to beg for forgiveness because she was speaking the truth. The Queen wants to take Leela to her palace, but Leela refuses to hide or escape. Finally, no one can save her as Mihir cuts off her tongue and she dies. According to the legends, in those seven days, Leela recited her proverbs and the villagers memorised those to pass on from generation to generation. Today, her proverbs exist in Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, in various forms and language.

Conclusion

Thus, Baraha's attempt to silence her to hide his own crime and defeat her rise to power, actually fails as she has turned immortal through her 'bachans' or proverbs. It is noteworthy that the word 'Khona' in Bangla, has two different meanings when the first letter is changed. It means someone born at an auspicious moment and it refers to someone who is mute or dumb. Baraha wanted to make her speechless, a mute, but she proved to have an auspicious birth. Instead of being silenced and forgotten as Baraha desired, she continues to live through her words and sayings. In the gender conflict between Baraha and Leelavati, she emerges as the more powerful one. Leelavati also teaches the lesson of striving for power for women. The positive, life-giving power of women is absolutely essential to establish the identity of women and let them work as a source of life. Petra Kelly (1997), in her essay 'Women and Power', reminds women of their duty and responsibility to strive for power, for the betterment of the world:

> "Motivated to act on our own, not only as mother and nurturers but also as leaders in a changing world, we must stand up as women and become elected to political and economic offices throughout the world, so we can change the policies and structures from those of death to those of life."

The story of Khona, thus, proves that power and authority in society is not to be 'established' as the typical man-made notion goes, rather it is generated through the acceptance from the masses which in turn comes from the influence one can have over the people. Khona has been silenced in order to cut short her so called 'misconduct' but her 'bachans', the alleged misconduct, immortalize her and ascertain her leadership that exists even after her demise.

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