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DOMAIN: FOREIGN LANGUAGES

STREAM: ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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**The Representation of Afghan Women's Resistance in Khalid**

**Husseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns***

**Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial fulfilment of the  
Requirements for Master's Degree**

**Candidates:**

**Ms. Aissi Rania Yasmine**

**Ms. Aimeur Chems Elhouda**

**Supervisor:**

**Mr. Senoussi Mohammed**

**2020**

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**2020**

## **DEDICATION**

To the one who saved my mother from the unknown,  
And raised her to be my source of Hope.

To the one who considers my success as her own,  
And nothing would have been possible without her cope.

To my first love, my magical wand,  
The one who made me who I am today.

To my angel who always healed my wound,  
The one who never left me in the midway.

To a heart full of compassion,  
The one that I consider my protection.

To the one who never complained when I do mistakes ,  
The one who always gives but never takes.

To my soul that always prays for me.

To my shield, I mean me.

*Yassmine*

## Dedications

All Praise is to Allah, the most graceful and most compassionate the Almighty, who gave us strength and good health for accomplishing this work despite all the obstacles.

Indeed, graduating in a worldwide Pandemic is challenging, but yet is special, as my journey during all these five years. Now sitting here writing this paper gives me a deep sense of gratitude and pride. Hoping from Allah to guide me through the new upcoming chapter in my life.

I hold gratitude to many people who supported me during this difficult time and I cite by name:

Undoubtedly a major thanks goes to my loving **parents** for their enormous support in each kind of way possible.

To my Sister *Nada*.

My Brothers *Ilyas, Akram*.

To all my Friends and family.

A special thanks goes to my partner *Rania Yasmine*.

Last but not least, I dedicate this work to all the Algerian women whom are enduring patriarchy and oppression in Silence.

*Chems Elhouda*

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*In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

Faithfully, we thank Allah, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Grateful for giving us the strength, the eagerness and the will to struggle through all odds in order to fulfil this work.

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## **Abstract**

Khaled Husseini's narrative *A thousand splendid suns* mirrors perfectly the history of his country Afghanistan that has been violated by a chain of different ideologies and many wars imposed on the country by force. The narrative, sheds light on the story of two women Mariam and Laila. Both characters in the novel are women of two different generations with different lives, Mariam is a poor illegitimate child who lives in the suburban, while Laila is born to educated parents at a enlightened time in Kabul's history, but their struggle united their destiny in unexpected way. Thus, this paper is an attempt to portray the oppression and the subjugation of women in male-controlled society in Afghanistan, through analyzing the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* that have depicted how women challenged hard life conditions and all types of brutality under both patriarchal society and colonization, and how they end up finding their ways to survive, through the light of post-colonial feminist theories. This dissertation is divided into two chapters; the first one investigates how Afghan women's position shifts during the turbulent history of the country, and it highlights the socio-political, cultural and traditional elements that plays a crucial role in the marginalization of afghan women. While, the second chapter seeks to study the dual struggle that major female characters experience throughout the novel. Starting with toxic male hegemony to a political mistreatment and abuse, and eventually demonstrating how they managed to resist and to grow that sense of sisterhood and solidarity.

**Keywords:** marginalization, patriarchal society, resistance, oppressions, gender discrimination.

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## General Introduction

In the postcolonial phase, the status of women continues to preoccupy many critics. Under the current circumstances of globalization and the almost complete sway toward a capitalist world-view, the condition of women has become a more urgent issue than ever. Until recently, feminist and postcolonial theory followed what Bill Ashcroft et al. call a path of convergent evolution (249). Therefore, Feminism becomes a point of the interest for postcolonial discourse due to the fact that both patriarchy and imperialism exert analogous forms of domination over those rendered subordinates, women and colonized, respectively (Tavassoli and Mirzapour 68). Consequently, the policies of post colonialism and feminism oppose this kind of domination. As Neil Lazarus asserts, "feminist theory and postcolonial theory are occupied with similar question of representation, voice, marginalization, and the relation between politics and literature" (201).

Postcolonial feminism, also dubbed third-world feminism, contends that third-world women are subjected to both colonial domination of empire and male dominance. The major themes used in postcolonial feminism are monitory and combative addresses to First World feminists, the repudiation of the roles and places routinely assigned to women and feminists of the Third World, the formation of alliances, and the introduction of nuance and complexity into the politics of feminism (Tavassoli and Mirzapour 69).

This dissertation thus sheds light on the history in Afghanistan between 1970's to 2001 that is filled of hardship; however, the oppression was dual against women and aimed at their suppression. Moghadam accurately points out that saying, the issue of women's rights in Afghanistan has been historically constrained by (a) the patriarchal nature of gender and social relations deeply embedded in traditional communities and (b) the existence of a weak central state, that has been unable to implement modernizing programs and goals in the face of tribal feudalism (qtd in Yawari 76).



*A Thousand Splendid Suns* is a novel that has been rewarded as New York Times Best Seller. Unlike other feminist novels, *A thousand Splendid Suns* is written by a man, named after Khaled Hosseini an Afghan-American author who was born to a diplomat and a Farsi and history teacher. His family later moved to Paris for his father's work, and they were there when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. When he was fifteen, his family came to the US as asylum seekers and settled in California. Hosseini ultimately attended Santa Clara University and later medical school. He was well-known as the 2006 Humanitarian of the Year by the U.S. office of the United Nations. Khalid got his reputation by becoming a bestselling author through his first novel *The Kite Runner*. He quit his job later as a doctor to a fulltime writer.

*A Thousand Splendid suns* is a contemporary novel about two women Mariam and Laila and the terrible things that happen to them in an environment where men have absolute power supported by law. The novel can be categorized under domestic fiction; it was first published in June 2007 by Riverhead Books and Simon and Schuster audio CD .The novel consists of fifty-one chapter divided into four parts. Part one relates the story of Mariam and Part Two tells Laila's story. Part Three focuses on the shared lives of Mariam and Laila under the same house, and Part Four presents a happy ending story of Laila's life with Tariq and her children after Rasheed's and Mariam's deaths.

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* is set in Afghanistan from the early 1960s to the early 2000s, to depict the plight of two women born in separate decades purposefully to compare the evolution of women status in Kabul. The novel covers three decades of anti-Soviet jihad, civil war and Taliban tyranny seen from the perspectives of two women Mariam and Laila, these women are both wives of Rasheed. Who is a man that constantly abuses and brutalizes them. Mariam the first female protagonist is the scorned illegitimate daughter of a wealthy businessman, forced at age fifteen after her mother's suicide into marrying

Rasheed, who grows increasingly brutal when she fails to produce a child. He beats her up for every miscarriage. Hence Mariam was abused both mentally and physically.

Eighteen years later, Rasheed takes another wife. The fourteen-year-old Laila, the second female protagonist, who is a smart and spirited girl. She has grown up in a home with possibilities to get an education, but because of the civil war that started in Afghanistan she could not continue her education. Laila ends up getting married to Rasheed. Leila's only other options, after her parents were killed by rocket fire, are prostitution or starvation. Mariam and Laila become partners in a combat with Rasheed, whose vicious mistreatment is endorsed by tradition and law. The author gives a clear demonstration of despotism where women are reliant on fathers, husbands and particularly sons, where the bearing of male children was their only path to an acknowledged social status. Each woman in the end is required to accept a pathway that will never be happily completed. Mariam will have to sacrifice her life to save Laila after she murders their husband. While Laila, despite her marriage to her true lover, must find a way to keep the sacrifice Mariam has made from not becoming an act done in vain. (Indra 10).

Afghani women have been under oppression since the Soviets' social and cultural transformation in 1979. Their hidden goal behind these transformations was to move the Afghan society towards modernization through forced secularization, which means distancing them from their religious and cultural practices. Another regime that puts women under severe oppression was the Taliban, but unlike the Soviets, the Taliban prohibited women to exist as human beings in the public sphere (Rezai 76).

Both regimes sought to take away women's agency. However, Afghani women did not submit to oppression. Therefore, and based on the previous background, the research shows how women characters in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* represent a portrayal of Afghani women suffering and resistance against their male dominated society as both post-

colonial individuals and females.

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* deals with female plight for liberty but also the struggle against repression. The constant images of oppressed Afghani women in the media generated a wave of negativity and stereotypes in the West. The Taliban's oppression against women resulted in portraying them as passive characters in the society awaiting liberation from the west. However, Afghani women never gave up the hope of freedom and equality (Pepelar 3). This is why the purpose of this study is to deconstruct the images of Afghani women as passive characters, and to introduce an alternative view originating from Afghani women's perspectives by using postcolonial and feminist theory.

Critics have praised Khaled Hosseini's profound treatment of the issues of gender and patriarchy in his birth country Afghanistan in all his novels from *the kite Runner* (2003) to *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013). Among the researchers who have attempted to investigate Khaled Hosseini's treatment of gender stereotyping and patriarchy in his novel is Samina Akhtar in her work, *A Legitimate End to Illegitimate Beginning: A Critical Analysis of Mariam's Character in A Thousand Splendid Suns*. In this study, Akhtar tries to describe the plight of Mariam that she undergoes due to her illegitimate social status, and focuses on the critical societal attitude towards the illegitimate women. This work analyzes Mariam's endurance, struggles and resistance in her painful journey to attain legitimate ending. The researcher used feminist literary criticism to interpret the text as a research methodology and adopted close textual analysis of the text by Khaled Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (Akhtar 113).

Another researcher Muhammad Imran Joyia devoted his work "Courageous Women" *A Study of Resilience of Women in Khaled Hosseini's Novel A Thousand Splendid Suns* to point out the shortcomings of the man-made system and delivers information about the males' attitude in Afghanistan. He describes how women are considered inferior creatures

to men to an extent where they are kept with the animals and excommunicated from the mainstream. By applying a feminist theory, the researcher talks about the cultural background of subalternity in Afghanistan and the awakening spirit among the females who are resisting and revolting against the center.

“The Oppression against Women in Afghanistan Portrayed in Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns*” by Sri Wulandari, who applied a feminist theory in her work, talks about women power that lies inside their struggle. In addition to the oppression they experience, not a miserable thing which has to get rid of, but as something that has to be fought back. The struggle and bravery which have been done by Mariam and Laila in determining their life have strongly implemented power feminism.

In the same vein, this study approaches the novel from a post-colonial feminist perspective, trying to shed a new light on women’s lives under colonization, the Taliban and oppressive families. We shall resort to Spivak and other theorists to broaden understanding about the war women are fighting behind closed doors. We shall discuss some symbolic images the writer used to paint an image of feminine struggle and resistance, the paper will also show the female bounding and the sacrifice that has been made by the protagonists in order to survive giving hope to all women that they can face this dilemma of patriarchy.

This research paper is divided into two main chapters: the first chapter is devoted to the theoretical framework and the socio-historical context. While the first part of the chapter will be devoted to display postcolonial and feminism theories, the second will treat the socio-historical background in Afghanistan from 1970’s to 2001. Both sections will be related to women’s oppression, resistance, patriarchy, identity, misogyny, the sexist law and the altered situation of women among each political regime. The second chapter will be concerned with the analysis of the novel from the postcolonial feminist perspective as it

will tackle several points of interests such as the double colonization oppression against women, violence, sisterhood and resistance.

We shall answer the questions raised in this dissertation starting with the following main question: How does *A Thousand Splendid Suns* portray the position of women in Afghan community?

In order to answer this question, this study will attempt to answer to the following sub- questions:

- 1) How can patriarchy affect the mind and life of women?
- 2) What are the forms of oppression utilized to undervalue women in all socio-political, cultural and traditional scope?
- 3) How has the bounding of two different women been played a crucial role against the traditions of the society?
- 4) What are the symbols used in the novel to paint an image of feminine resistance?

# Chapter One: SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## Introduction

In the last three decades, the country and its people were subjected to internal and external conflicts; the Soviet invasion in 1979, and the American intervention following the events of September 11, 2001. The years in between witnessed several military coups in addition to the rise of notorious Taliban regime. Throughout the rapidly changing political and social landscapes of Afghanistan, women's status exploited by the foreign newcomer as well as the patriarchal nature of gender and social relations deeply embedded in traditional societies. However, this country had also known peace and prosperity before the coming of the colonizer. In fact, women's rights in Afghanistan kept pace with the developments in the Western world until the 1990s, when war, instability, and Taliban regime brought a radical shift in the lives of women (Sweatman 44).

To make readers cognizant of the fact that Afghan people exist before the soviet and Taliban invaded Afghanistan (qtd in Souissi 492) can be considered as one of the premises upon which Khaled Hosseini based his works. Hence, his novels give an opening through which readers can (re)discover Afghanistan earlier to its unpopular identification as the cradle and sanctuary of terrorists (Ibid 492).

Khaled Hosseini, in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, interweaves historical facts and real political events with specific details like names of leaders and dates with a fictional narrative. His novel portrays the reality of Afghanistan history and afghan women's position. Therefore, this chapter is devoted to study how Afghan women's position shifts during the turbulent history of the country, and it sheds lights on how socio-political,

cultural and traditional elements plays a crucial in the marginalization of afghan women and considering them as the other.

## **1. The Status of Women during the Monarchy Period Modernization**

Throughout the changing political scene of Afghanistan within the final fifty years, women's rights have been misused by distinctive groups for political gain. Amanullah on the position of royalty mark the full ledged modernization period of Afghanistan. First he succeeded by overcoming The British within the third and last Anglo-Afghan war in 1919. He was so persistent in his endeavors to modernize Afghanistan that his modernizing plan included the freedom of women from tribal social norms. Amanullah's eagerness and determination in implementing these changes were intensely affected by the modernization agenda operating in Turkey and his impressions from his travels in Europe (Wahab and Youngerman 103).

In 1923, Amanullah drew up the very first constitution, forming the basis for the formal structure of the government and setting up the part of the ruler inside the constitutional framework (qtd in Gosh 4). Magmud Tarzi and his endeavors had highly affected and influenced Amanullah. Tarzi was particularly instrumental in planning and executing changes related to women through his individual illustration of monogamy, education and work of female family individuals and their unveiled public appearances. (Ibid 4)

His daughter Soraya afterward got married to Amanullah. Another daughter of Tarzi married Amanullah's brother. In this way, it was not astonishing that Tarzi's advanced and magnanimous mental philosophy bloomed and concretely inserted itself in Amanullah's rule. Amir Amanullah openly campaigned against the veil, against polygamy, and empowered education of girls not just in Kabul but also within the suburban areas. At a public function, he claimed that Islam did not impose the veil (4).

In addition to that, many female members from Amanullah's family that overtly engaged in organizations and went on to be government authorities later in life. As an example, is the organization of women's protection (The Anjuman-I-Himayat-I-Niswan) that was formed by Cobra, Amanullah's sister, in the early 1920s. This organization empowered women to complain and to bring their injustices to the organization and to make a unity against the brutal and oppressive institutions (Yawari 21). Beside with her mother, Soraya also started the first magazine for women called Ershad-I-Niswan (Guidance for Women). Another sister of Amanullah founded a hospital for women, and they are encouraged to get an education and in that attempt fifteen young girls were sent to Turkey for higher education in 1928. Queen Soraya was exceptionally instrumental in implementing change for women and publicly admonished them to be dynamic members in the country building (Wahab and Youngerman 207). In 1926 at the 7th anniversary of Independence, Soraya in a public speech conveyed:

Its "Independence" belongs to all of us and that is why we celebrate it. Do you think, however, that our nation from the outset needs only men to serve it? Women should also take their part as women did in the early years of our nation and Islam. From their example we must learn that we must all contribute toward the development of our nation and that this cannot be done without being equipped with knowledge. So, we should all attempt to acquire as much knowledge as possible in order that we may render our services to society in the manner of women of early Islam (Dupree 46).

Amanullah's attempt to merge Islam with state policies faltered because of his hastiness of imposing rapid changes concerning women's status. Many conservative Afghans in the rural areas felt that the reforms were too western for their society and the forced changes were against the doctrines of Islam, especially since men saw these changes as challenging for their familial and tribal authority. Resistance was tougher to the cancelation of bride price and polygamy, and to the introduction of education for girls



(Gosh 5). The 1920s were hence the time that clashes between the first-class pioneers and traditionalist tribes started to surface. The most bone of dispute was the changing status of women. What broke the acknowledged camel's back for the traditionalists and rural population was the institution in 1924 of the freedom of women to select their own partners and attempts to abolish bride cost. Fathers of young ladies saw such progressive laws as a misfortune of social status, familial control and financial security (Ibid 5).

Gosh mentioned in his work, *A History of Women in Afghanistan: Lessons Learnt for the Future or Yesterdays and Tomorrow: Women in Afghanistan that:* in 1928 the ethnic tribal leaders in the subaltern areas revolted against the freedoms that were given to women in Kabul. It should be pointed out here that in this period women in tribal and rural areas outside of Kabul did not receive the benefits of modernization. Tribal pioneers controlled not only their locales, but through inter-tribal solidarity, held sway over most of the country in standing up to endeavors at modernization (5).

Nevertheless, pressures on Amanullah mounted with the arrival of the Loya Jorga, and in 1929 he was forced to abdicate and leave the country. Gregorian declares that Amanullah, determined to improve this circumstance [the status of ladies] and keeping up that his support of the A group of tribal leaders and elected authorities coming together to democratically arrive at decisions, feminist cause was based on the true tenets of Islam, took more steps in this direction in his short rule than were taken by all his predecessors together (qtd in Gosh 5).

Amanullah was ahead of his time; his liberalism in a period when Afghanistan was barely united in a sense of nationhood was traumatic for the state. The next two decades saw the Afghan royalty change hands with different families and leaders, except leaders who would push the reform and women's agenda to the detriment of their rule. Following the exile of Amanullah, conflicting laws were introduced by a series of rulers, regarding

the status of women. From total abrogation of gender equality laws under Amir Habibullah II, a Tajik (who ruled for a period of nine months after Amanullah), to Nadir Shah who ousted him, women saw in the 1930s and 1940s a cautious introduction of rights (Gosh 6).

In 1931 Nadir Shah declared the second Constitution. Some schools for girls were opened some gender-based reforms were made but he focused on avoiding conflicts with the mullahs and tribal leaders. Despite his cautionary approach to women's rights, Nadir Shah was assassinated in 1933 and Zahir Shah came to power (Ibid 6).

## **2. The Soviet Invasion: The Beginning of the Dark Age for Afghan Women**

Afghanistan began a modernizing journey by the mid of the twentieth century 1950s, with enormous foreign help and technical aid from Soviet Union, women were in a great Demand to be economically active to assist Afghanistan accomplish its targeted developmental objectives in which women's issues were once given a few consideration (Gosh 6). The King's cousin and Prime Minister Mohammad Daoud Khan did not intend to repeat the mistakes of his predecessor Amanullah and announced the veiling as a voluntary choice the 1940s and 1950s saw a period of liberty for women (Ibid 6).

In 1964, the third structure had given ladies the correct to vote and to enter chosen legislative issues. The primary ladies Serve was within the wellbeing division, chosen to the parliament beside three other women. In 1965, People's Equitable Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), a Soviet-backed socialist organization was shaped. The same year moreover saw the arrangement of the primary women's bunch, The Law based Organization, of Afghan Ladies (DOAW). The most destinations of these women were to eliminate illiteracy among ladies, boycott constrained relational unions, and alter the bride price for great of the individuals who had weak economy (Gosh 6).

In late 1970s, there was a rise within the women's instruction, and there were ladies' teachers within the colleges and agents within the parliament (Dupree 86). The year of 1978 saw the rising of the PDPA to control. It is amid the PDAPA run the show that fast social financial alter and a few of the 1920s subjects implemented and mass literacy for women was introduced (Moghadam 432). Enormous land reform programs along with cancelation of the pride price and rising the age of marriage were also part of the PDPA agenda. On October 1978 a decree was issued with the explicit intention of ensuring equal rights for women. Minimum age of marriage was set at sixteen for young ladies and eighteen for boys. The obligation of women into education was perceived by a few as "unbearable interference in domestic life" (Ghosh 6).

Once more, revolutionary speed of social change caused concern among the Mullahs and tribal chiefs within the interiors. For them obligatory education, particularly for women, is going against the grain of tradition, anti-religious and a challenge to male authority. As a result, there have been an increase of incidents, shooting of women in western dress, murdering of PDPA reformers in rural regions and general harassment of women social workers expanded (Ibid 6).

Women found themselves put at the middle of a struggle between Western concepts of modernization and tribal codes of traditionalism a decade of a long war was seen during this ten year in Afghanistan. In 1989, when the Soviet left Afghanistan, the country was in a complete disorder and became the site for civil war with the government transfer of power in 1992. That year, Kabul was taken by the Mujahedeen who declared Afghanistan an Islamic state (Yahi 36). In 1992, women were increasingly precluded from public service. In conservative areas in 1994, many women appear in public only if dressed in a complete head-to-toe garment with mesh covered opening for their eyes (Gosh 7).

The period from 1992-1996 saw brutality by the Mujahedeen, where all forms of violence were practiced daily. Young girls chose suicide to avoid rape and forced marriage. This was the start of a long period of discrimination against Afghani women and gender Apartheid system which lasted until the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001 (Yahi 36).

### **3. The Graveyard of Women: Taliban 1990's.**

As mentioned earlier, women's plight journey started by the coming of the Soviets. However, women's intense misery reached its peak during the Taliban's tyranny. Thus, this title will demonstrate it.

First of all. The Taliban is a Pashto and a Persian word of Arabic origins referring to lower level students of Islam, usually from poor, rural background and always males (Wahab and Youngerman 205). Those students originate from Jamiat Ulema- Islam and constitute the core of the Taliban movement that ruled Afghanistan in the second half of the twentieth (Yahi 36). Taliban arose as an authoritative movement in late 1994 when Pakistan chose it to safeguard a line trying to open a trade route from Pakistan to Central Asia. With Pakistan providing armaments, military preparation, and financial funding, it gained control over numerous Afghan cities and effectively seized Kabul in September 1996 (Ibid 37).

Taliban brought the country into a disaster with their extreme fundamentalism. It was the time when Afghanistan was identified as the most dangerous place for women. In 1997, the Taliban altered the name of the country to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan with Mullah Omar, who had previously assumed the religious title of "Amir of the faithful". He shifted the regime of the country into an "Islamic" one, and announced that "the new Taliban government would be neither parliamentary nor presidential, but Islamic" (Yahi 38).

Yawari mentions the major changes that happened in the country after the Taliban's arrival "Massive changes were made by the Taliban regime in the social order. Daily, Radio Sharia reminded the citizens of their duty to the country and Islam, and listed the orders that everyone was obliged to follow. For women, they were prohibited from going outside, except to buy food. Women could not go anywhere without a mahram (male relative). Women had to wear the burqa, makeup or fancy shoes were not allowed. White shoes were banned since that was the color of the Taliban flag. Women at that time could not go to school nor to visit male doctors. Like The Mujahedeen, the Taliban practices brutal and malicious acts such as forced marriages and rapes (28-29). On the 29 liberation of Kabul in November 2001, Zoya states, "No one was sorry to see the Taliban defeated, but neither did they rejoice when the Northern Alliance [mainly Mujahedeen] took over. They too had blood on their hands" (qtd in Gosh 7).

Moreover, Taliban pushed the women of Afghanistan into a state of virtual house arrest. Addition to all of these inhumane activities, they put their own twist on the Quran and restored their own Islamic balance that was from their lens upset by the western culture invasion (Telesetsky 296). Women status was getting worse than in any other time or by any other society. The Taliban claimed to follow a pure, fundamentalist Islamic rolling system, yet the cruelty they committed against women had no roots in Islam.

As Wahab and Youngerman demonstrates:" Women are not permitted to leave their homes, women students are overthrown out of schools, female government workers lost their jobs and women are permitted to leave their homes if only accompanied by a male relative. Those who have lost their close male relative cannot leave their home even if they need medical care. Furthermore, shopkeepers were forbidden to sell to women customers otherwise they will be relentlessly punished" (Wahab, Youngerman, 236).

Plus. The Taliban brutally restricted women's access to health care and closed public bathhouses for women which functioned as female meeting places for social and celebrating purposes, in addition to essential hygiene facilities for households without water (Yahi 39). It is important to notice here that all these severe and discriminative codes are enforced in a haphazard manner, and varied from region to another, with more severe restrictions imposed in Pashtun areas (Telesetsky 24-25).

All in all. It is fair to note that the Taliban have abused and oppressed women's rights and freedoms. Women were absolutely marginalized and silenced, in public life at the Taliban's reign. Taliban enforced their version of Islamic Sharia law, to ban girls from life in each and every way possible. Eventually they made every woman believe, that being born a girl is a crime.

#### **4. Postcolonial Feminism: The Dispute over Third World Women**

Dr. Ritu, Tyagi in defines Postcolonial, "as a term, suggests resistance to "colonial" power and its discourses that still form numerous cultures, as well as those whose revolutions have overthrown formal ties to their colonial rulers. Postcolonial theory, therefore, focuses on subverting the colonizer's discourse that makes an attempt to distort the expertise and realities, and inscribe inferiority on the inhabited individuals so as to exercise total management. It's additionally involved with the assembly of literature by inhabited peoples that articulates their identity and reclaims their past within the face of that past's inevitable distinctness. The task of a postcolonial intellect is to insert the often 'absent' colonized subject into the dominant discourse in a very manner that it resists/subverts the authority of the colonizer (Tyagi 45).

Jones, furthermore gives a definition of Post colonialism" as a term suggests resistance to colonial hegemony, and as a theory it attempts to defend the oppressed and marginalized groups within the context of subverting the colonizer's discourse" (15).

In these overthrowing contexts. Post-colonial theorists tend to neglect female gender, concentrating solely on male experiences and role in overthrowing victimization. The reason for his or her neglect has to do primarily with the sense of nationalism that occurred throughout colonial and postcolonial eras. Nationalism contributes largely to restoring the settled nation's sense of belonging (Azzi, Belkhiri 31). It additionally functions as a weapon to subvert colonial discourse. Yet, it is wherever masculine power is exerted and favoritism sustains national identity. Indeed, it is wherever girls are oppressed and given one profession that is correct breeding. Girls who took an equivalent path as men against the colonizer are dreadfully written out of history. Afterwards, feminist movements resist to empower, and change and change through difficult such social and political state (Gandhi 81-82).

Therefore. Feminist thinkers pursue an inspection to the representation of women within the social and cultural contexts. The images of subordination and marginalization dyed in such contexts strengthen male supremacy throughout organized social and individual relations. Considerably, feminists lecture the unfair power relations in which women are defined by men; their role is formed within male-controlled structures where they are burdened and given a place on the margin. As such, feminists consider the very issue of fairness between the two genders, aiming at redefining social structures and abolishing stereotypes of femininity and motherhood (Hooks 14-15). However, women's misery cannot be interpreted from a single perspective. Women struggle due to numerous social and cultural issues; thus, their dilemma cannot match. Undoubtedly. Western feminists who coherent feminist theory have no understanding of third world women lived experiences.

In these context Mohanty asserts. "These women are not merely subjects to male hegemony; they are also affected by the process of colonialism. However, while

nationalists endorse patriarchy, capturing women within the boundaries of traditional stereotypes. Western feminists through their misrepresentation of third world women have also set the stage to further marginalize the colonized female subject” (56-57). As Spivak further explains, “Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the ‘third-world woman’ caught between tradition and modernization” (qtd In Gandhi 89).

The quest for a voice is another predominant issue in postcolonial feminism. The lives and experiences of postcolonial women against oppression are seen far, far away from history. Western feminists appear to silence defeated female figures in their tries to talk or represent them, despite cultural variations. Thus, Gayathri Spivak challenges the notion of generality. She rejects feminist’s representation to all or any women, and also the assumptions that all girls are identical. In other words, postcolonial women are noted as the other within both the imperial and patriarchal discourses. As such, Western feminists are blamed for their articulation to third world women histories, and lived experiences. Third world feminine figures are more complicated to be portrayed or analyzed in terms of Western crucial theory. The inadequate facts concerning the topic in question mutes the oppressed groups and contains them among the dominant vocabulary of Western critique and power (qtd in Azzi, Belkhiri 25).

Thus. Spivak and Mohanty each make a point that in order to analyze the plight of the subaltern subject, western feminists must speak to third world women and learn from their lived experiences, as they must cease privileging themselves in terms of universal sisterhood (Ibid 25).

Considering these explanations, it can be inferred that Third-world women are subjected to both the inferior and marginalized views of first world feminist, and patriarchy



of their own society. This subjection to discrimination as a colonial subject on the one hand, and as woman on the other hand, causes their "double colonization" (Tavassoli, Mirzapour 71).

In brief, postcolonial feminists debates the rejection of female figures identity that have been alienated by western thinkers and third world ideologies. Furthermore, Postcolonial feminists examine the complicated ways, in which gender and sexuality are the core of nationalisms and imperialism. They set up to study gender inequalities, engraved within a historical, socio-political, and cultural context.

## **5. Gayathri Spivak: Can the Subaltern speak?**

Gayathri Spivak is one of the most influential cultural and literary theorists writing in the United States and lecturing at various academic institutions throughout the world today. Her interventions into Marxist, feminist, deconstructive, psychoanalytic and historiographic problematics are well known and thoroughly recirculated. Yet, despite the centrality of Spivak's contributions to contemporary critical theory, there has been little sustained critic discussion of her work (Harasym 2).

The term, subaltern, refers to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes (Ashcroft et .al 215).It was first used by the Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci in his article Notes on Italian History, which later on occurred in his book Prison Notebooks. Gramsci refers to the term subaltern to denote a group of people of a lower rank, subordinate classes, and those groups eliminated from state power. The groups he intends to represent are the workers and peasants who are marginalized, and discriminated against by the dominant elite class, and whose ideas, culture and history are shaped by the ruling elite's perspectives (Morton 48).

Spivak wrote an essay under the title of "Can the subaltern speak?" where she argues that:" It is impossible for a western intellectual to accurately interpret the experience of the

subaltern, because every attempt to do so will be colored by the own experience and will thus never reach the true face of subalternity (Spivak 16). Thus, her essay is a clear statement of rejecting international civil society's trial to "save" the subaltern, because this attempt of saving them will damage more the identity of the brown woman and consolidate the highly asymmetric power relations between the North and the South (ibid 16). In the works of Spivak, the subaltern is with few exceptions gendered female, because of the worldwide structural subordination of women. (qtd. in Örtquist 17).

Furthermore, Spivak gives a definition of the subaltern as someone who is "removed from all lines of social mobility" (Spivak 475). She highly refuses the idea of subalternity could be once generalized according to hegemonic logic. And that's what makes it subaltern (Spivak 138). Spivak also insists on not confusing the real meaning of the "subaltern" with the widespread meaning of it that can be misleading. Therefore, she claims that subalternity is a position without identity or, in other words, the subaltern is defined by its difference (ibid 230).

Örtquist, discusses the latter idea by saying: "Spivak is comparing subalternity with her understanding of the strict definition of class. She argues that class is not a cultural origin; rather it is a collective feeling of economical connection and solidarity that makes up the base for action. Another example is that of gender. Spivak argues that gender is the societal treatment of gender differences that makes up the starting point for action, rather than the feeling of experienced difference. The same is true for race; it presupposes racism. By these examples Spivak is trying to come closer to the understanding of subalternity" (18).

One of numerous issues the subaltern lacks is the self-abstraction, which means the possibility to synecdochizing the self. In this vein, Frida Örtquist discusses this idea: "the possibility to synecdochizing the self, because there are no means to ignore difference

since the subaltern is defined by its difference (19). The resources for understanding what feature that connects oneself to the abstract whole is absent, and therefore there is no possibility to claim the right to the world one live in. (Spivak 151). Power and privilege can partly be defined by the ability of self-synecdoche, to let one or a few collective features within a group be the defining ones and through that create a base for collective action (ibid 148). Differentiating features can simply be ignored, if you are privileged enough to do so. Spivak argues that to create a base for action, the solution is not to celebrate or deny difference, but rather to define the type of inequality that leads to the use of difference and identify who has the capacity and privilege to deny it (qtd in Örtquist 20). When the general public sphere demands the subaltern to synecdochizing herself without identity political exploitation, the infrastructure which will enable her to do must should be present. This is often the essence of Spivak's strategic essentialism. This self-synecdoche should be attainable to require back once necessary, and may not be confused with identity (Ibid 20).

Spivak, argues that the access into public sphere is an urge that the subaltern must starts to synecdochize themselves. This process makes it possible to claim the idea that the state belongs to one, and the access to citizenship is the ultimate way of claiming the service of the state (Spivak 150).

Thus, how can we produce infrastructure that allows a formation of a base for action? , unfortunately Spivak offers no easy answer to the present question. She debates that it's not possible for international humanitarian organizations to easily give the subaltern a voice or a chance for them to be heard. She states" that the solution cannot come from the international civil society, from the self-appointed moral entrepreneurs that are spreading philanthropy without democracy" (Ibid 149).This is resulted from the difficulties that get in the way is the' subalterns' lack of the admission to an institutionally certified language.

Lacking entree to a language permitted by western academics, means being marginalized from the realm of authority and supremacy and the ability of self-government (Ibid 151).

Professor Rosalind Morris, discuss the concepts said by Spivak in the book *Can the subaltern speak?*: “The point is not that the subaltern do not know how to speak for themselves, rather the claim on the part of the intellectual that subalterns can and do speak for themselves stands in for not doing anything about the problems of oppression. At the same time, the claim to do something about the problem, as simply speaking “for” the subaltern also furthers the problem and the civilizing mission of benevolence while occluding the question of audibility”(Morris 88).

At the same time, the claim to do something about the problem, as simply speaking for the subaltern also furthers the problem and the civilizing mission of benevolence while occluding the question of audibility. In asking us to re-present ourselves, Spivak asks us to supplement our benevolent intention of “speaking for” with an ethics of responsibility- in the sense of cultivating a capacity to respond to and be responsive to the other, without demanding resemblance as the basis of recognition (Morris 88).

If in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow. In this respect, the argument here suggests that subaltern women are doubly colonized. They are subjects to both colonization and male-controlled social state. This point precisely covers the second part of “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in which the representations of sati women are deeply analyzed (Morton 56-59).

However, Spivak, argues that both Hindu religious codes and British colonialism representation of widow self-immolation, contribute to additional silencing the voice of female agency. In this context, she draws a conclusion that the subaltern as female cannot speak because her voice is not heard or acknowledged within such dominant systems of

representation. She argues that there is no space from which the sexed subaltern can speak (Morton 66).

Locating the female agency within such systems of exploitation, it is important to look more closely at patriarchal relations which rest as a model for colonial domination. John Berger notes that “In a patriarchal society, women are split subjects who watch themselves being watched by men. They turn themselves into objects because femininity itself is defined by being gazed upon by men (qtd in Loomba162). Therefore, in any patriarchal society, women are abused in a way that confines their comportment and bounds their freedom.

The marginalization of women’s agency under patriarchy and colonialism is sometimes sponsored by women themselves. In their trial to embody and articulate the voice of the oppressed female subject, Western feminists tend to refer to the female agency as consistently subjugated and disempowered. By universalizing such belief, they raise a view that women are always subordinate to men. (Azzi, Belkhiri 32).Chandra Talpade Mohanty claims that:” This focus is not on uncovering the material and ideological specificities that constitute a particular group of women as “powerless” in a particular context. It is, rather, on finding a variety of cases of “powerless” groups of women to prove the general point that women as a group are powerless” (Mohanty 56-57).

In the process of regaining female voice, the main worry of the plan is the probability of rewriting the silent group’s history from a non-European standpoint, eliminating all forms of domination, including the articulation of the histories and experiences of women within both anti-colonial nationalist and Western feminist dissertations. This work proceeds as its vital focus the identification of forms of supremacy that are used to troupe women as passive agents (Azzi, Belkhiri 31).

Spivak emphasizes the creation of the subaltern women under the hegemonic discourse of nationalist elite. In her deconstructive reading of subaltern agency, she argues that the voice of women is not among the narrative records of nationalist bourgeois. She goes further in her analysis to include women's experiences which are undermined in Western feminist discourse. She directs her critics to such group of feminists for attempting to describe third world women in terms of western vocabulary, ignoring their historical, cultural and social differences. As she criticizes them for ignoring political oppression of disempowered groups (Ibid 33).

For that reason, we shall resort to Spivak's theory to illuminate how Afghan women were not allowed to speak and silences beneath the Burqa of traditions. Spivak's theory can indeed be extended to Afghan women as they are Asian, oppressed and voiceless too. The next chapter shall seek to uncover Afghan women voices and feminine bounding and fight in male dominated society, in addition to the symbols used in the novel to paint an image of feminine resistance and solidarity.

## **Chapter Two: Women Resistance versus Double Colonization**

Women in the novel genuinely appear as suffering beings. The prolonged conditions of the conflict in Afghanistan have taken heavy toll on human life and brought enormous suffering and devastation for the country (Qtd in Basharat 3).

Despite the horrors of war, violent conflicts and life in exile many Afghan women have emerged empowered. They have reacted to different structures of power male, ethnic, religion, age, class and international power relations (Rostami 15). Through their struggles at different levels, these women have tried to change the patriarchal gender relations, recognizing only men as breadwinners, heads of household and decision makers. They have formed new and diverse conceptions concerning their identity and agency (Ibid 15).

This chapter is mainly devoted to highlight the dual struggle that major female characters have experienced throughout the novel. Starting with toxic male hegemony to a political mistreatment and abuse, and eventually demonstrating how they managed resist and to grow that sense of sisterhood and solidarity.

### **1. Splendid Women that Hide Behind the Walls of their Burqua: Symbols Decoding**

This title is devoted to analyze the meaning of the most significant symbols used in the novel by Khaled Hosseini and in this current study, which are both the thousand splendid suns and the burqa.

According to an interview with Book Browse, Hosseini asserts that the title of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* comes from a poem about Kabul by Saib-e-Tabrizi, a 17th-century Persian poet, who wrote it after a visit to the city left him deeply impressed.

Hosseini was searching for English translations of poems about Kabul, for use in a scene where Hakim, Leila's father, was leaving the city when he found this particular verse:

One could not count the moons that shimmer on her  
roofs,

Or the thousand splendid suns that hide behind her  
walls. (El Tabrizi, line 15-16)

He knew that he had found not only the precise line for the scene, but also an evocative title in the phrase "*A Thousand Splendid Suns*" which appears in the next-to-last stanza. The poem was translated from Farsi by Dr. Josephine Davis (book brows).

The title *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is tragically ironic. If it is true that art says one thing and means another, the title is given to a novel that depicts the complete destruction of Afghanistan in terms of its culture and sophistication. Therefore, the title partly highlights the tragedy of what has occurred in Afghanistan by forcing us to remember what it used to be like before their destruction.

At the end of the novel the verse reappears when Laila is teaching at the orphanage. Laila is comforted by the realization that, "Mariam is in Laila's own heart, where she shines with the bursting radiance of a thousand suns" (Hosseini 414). Therefore, *A thousand splendid suns* becomes a reference to the most important subjects in the novel, Kabul and women of Afghanistan.

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* notes the dilemma of women in Afghan society. It is in this society, that the burqa is used as a symbol of both the exploitive nature of male governance and the overpowering effects of obedience.

Mariam rapidly learns from her spouse that he as well will implement this unjustifiable bigotry, as Hosseini clarifies in the novel. "Where I come from, one wrong look, one improper word, and blood is spilled. Where I come from, a woman's face is her



husband's business only. I want you to remember that. Do you understand?" (63). Women are to be totally secured by their burqas always, unless at home with their spouses. Isolated and disengaged from society. They are quieted by this lean layer of cloth that wraps their bodies and are forced into obedience.

Men within the center of low classes, being of less education, may feel as in spite of the fact that they are not able to sustain women being more active and receptive than they are. Since of this insecurity, they constrain women to wear burqas so that they can consider themselves be dominant, indeed if it is as it were to cover their own wife. They ought to sense in control of their house hold since they are not in control of the exterior one. This overabundance of forceful behavior and require for self-consolation leads numerous of these men to request that their spouses dress burqas in open.

Mariam did not expect to feel comfortable wearing a burqa but it surprisingly, gave her a sense of consolation.as Hosseini mentioned, "And the burqa, she learned to her surprise, was also comforting. It was like a one-way window. Inside it, she was an observer, buffered from the scrutinizing eyes of strangers. She no longer worried that people knew, with a single glance, all the shameful secrets of her past" (66).

The burqa spares Mariam from the roughness of reality. It may be a curtain on her past, a securing post, so she does not feel like people can know who she is and how she came to be; a harami, or child born out of wedlock, her father a wealthy and noticeable person in society, and her mother a modest house keeper in his family. Beneath her cover she can see life like she has never seen it before. She is free of people's unpleasant gazes, and she no longer feels like she is the focus of everyone's stare. Beneath the burqa, Mariam finds consolation and safety in its folds, as well as liberty.

Rasheed's second wife, Laila, has parallel feelings about the burqa, as it is shown in the novel:

For Laila, being out in the streets had become an exercise in avoiding injury. Her eyes were still adjusting to the limited, grid like visibility of the burqa, her feet still stumbling over the hem. She walked in perpetual fear of tripping and falling, of breaking an ankle stepping into a pothole. Still, she found some comfort in the anonymity that the burqa provided. She wouldn't be recognized this way if she ran into an old acquaintance of hers. She wouldn't have to watch the surprise in their eyes, or the pity or glee, at how far she had fallen, at how her lofty aspirations had been dashed. (Hosseini 208)

The burqa shows that women wearing it feel protected in its mass amounts of cloth, encompassed and comforted by the truth that they are outfitted beyond recognition so that what little self-esteem they have cleared out is not stepped on by society, but or maybe supported and held.

One might say, that this one piece of cloth can govern and oppress so many women as the title of the book suggests, "Or the thousand splendid suns that hide behind her walls" (Hosseini 347). One cannot possibly, know the number of men who places themselves as masters to the thousand brilliant women that were veiled behind the cape of their burqas.

## **2. Major Female characters struggle against patriarchy: Mariam, Leila and Nana.**

This title depicts various forms of patience and endurance of women, from different generations and different environments to hard conditions of life such as gender inequality and patriarchy.

## **2.1. Like Mother Like Daughter: Nana and Mariam on the Path of Tahamul**

According to Ray Patriarchal system believes in the idea of motherhood which limits women's mobility and also obligates them with the burden of the duties to rear and nurture children (qtd in Istikomah16). While the political sphere is meant for men, on the contrary, private sphere is reserved for women as housewives and mothers, the position of women in Afghanistan has traditionally been inferior to that of men (Ibid16). Rahimi in describing Afghan women position says, "Her most valued characteristic was silence and obedience" (6).

"You are a clumsy little harami" (Hosseini 4). This is how Hosseini first introduced Mariam's character. Mariam represents women oppression struggling with patriarchy in Afghanistan. She is the 'harami' - an illegitimate daughter of Nana and Jalil, the wealthiest man in Herat. She lives alone with her mother on the outskirts of Herat as passive figures whose lives are controlled by men. Mariam belongs to a lower social class of women and is deprived of the opportunities to get some control over her life through education. She is damned to a submissive, substandard life without choices. This portrays the poor education system the country has provided in Afghanistan (Philip 793).

Hosseini says, "She understood then what Nana meant, that a harami was an unwanted thing; that she, Mariam, was an illegitimate person who would never have legitimate claim to the things other people had, things such as love, family, home, acceptance" (Hosseini 4). "Being a child, she cannot understand that her mother is the one who should be responsible for giving birth to an illegitimate child, not the illegitimate child himself as Hosseini mentioned "[...] [her] only fault is being born" (Hosseini 4). Philip describes how Mariam grew up lost because of her absent father, and her mother who provided her with very little guidance or love (114).

You know what he told his wives by way of defense? That I forced myself on him. [...] Learn this now and learn it well, my daughter: Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman. Always. You remember that, Mariam. (Hosseini 06)

The quote above shows that in a patriarchal society, men are always right even if they do wrong, and this is the case for Jalil. Nana was forcefully impregnated by Jalil who has three wives. Yet, the blame is given to Nana only and she had to bear disgrace for the rest of her life. "Jalil didn't have the dill either, Nana said, to do the honorable thing. To stand up to his family, to his wives and in laws, and accept responsibility for what he had done. Instead [...] he had made her gather her few things from the servants' quarters, where she'd been living, and sent her off "(Hosseini 6).

"To Jalil and his wives, I was [...] a weed," Nana said. "Something you rip out and toss aside" (Hosseini 06). In this context, Becker states that in patriarchy men are sexual subjects whereas women are sexual objects [...] it illustrates and teaches general patriarchal principles (28). Women are never treated as companions, instead they are treated as male's property "Woman? Very simple, say those who like simple answers: She is a womb, an ovary "(De Bouvoire 41).

What's the sense schooling a girl like you? It's like shining a spittoon. And you'll learn nothing of value in those schools. There is only one, only one skill a woman like you and I need in life, and they don't teach it in school "Endure. Women like us. We endure. It's all we have. Do you understand? Besides, they'll laugh at you in school. They will. They'll call you haram they'll say the most terrible things about you, she belongs here at home with her mother. There is nothing out there for her. Nothing but rejection and heartache. (Hosseini 12)

According to the quotes above the only quality Mariam learns is the basics of survival and endurance. "Since she doesn't possess anything, female is not raised to the

nobility of a man; she herself is a piece of man's patrimony, first her father's and after that her husband's". (De Beauvoir 93). As Istikomah says Patriarchal system has shamelessly upheld women's subordination to men in all spheres of life. Consequently, all the power and authority within the family, the society and the state remain entirely in the hands of men. Meanwhile, women are only the second-class group of people (16).

Women in *A Thousand splendid* seem to have very different educational experiences. Because of Nana's refusal, Mariam had no right to get formal education unlike Leila whose father emphasizes the importance of her education," a society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated, Laila no chance" (Hosseini 114). Philip views that Mariam simply takes everything in like a sponge and keeps it with in for the rest of her life. Her mother attempts to steel her to hardship in preparation for a future of injustice and abuse by men, assuming Mariam's future will be a parallel to her own past (794).

Rahimi asserts, "instead of sending them to school, girls are mainly encouraged to learn how to rear a child, to cook, to weave and to sew, and to become a good housewife "(10). Moreover, girls should be listeners in then-families. They should be tolerant. They stay mostly with their mothers. They often play with toys and are trained by their mothers. Their parents' aim is to get them married to gentle boys, and their own objectives are to have children and a comfortable life" (Ibid 10). They are turned into transparent and invisible objects in the hands of their father, husband as well as the elites of the society whom narrow outlook on colonialism continue to construct the female subaltern (Spivak 89).

Later, in the novel, Mariam is forced to get married to Rasheed, a shoemaker from Kabul who is twice matured than she is and already married once. She refused this marriage, "I don't want to," Mariam said. She looked at Jalil, "I don't want this. Don't make me." (Hosseini 47). However, Parents are the decision makers in all aspects of the

marriage of their girls in Afghanistan particularly if the bride and groom are not from the same community (Rahimi 12). Her approval is just a formality, “Actually, your father has already given Rasheed his answer,” Afsoon said [...] the nikka will be tomorrow morning, and then there is a bus leaving for Kabul at noon” (Hosseini 53).

According to Rahimi Young girls had no right to choose their future husbands, or question their engagement, which was arranged by their parents (6). Mariam was married at a very young age; thus, early marriage was the main cause of suffering for girls in Afghan society. Such marriages were both physically and psychologically unhealthy, and often resulted in sickness and psycho-neurotic diseases. Many young mothers died during delivery because of physiological reasons and early motherhood (Rahimi 6).

“Now, be reasonable, Mariam. You can’t spend the rest of your life here. Don’t you want a family of your own? You have to move on” (Hosseini 47). Apparently, age gap between Mariam and Rasheed is not an issue for her father and his three wives. What really matters for them is the opportunity to, “erase, once and for all, the last trace of their husband’s scandalous mistake. She was being sent away because she was the walking, breathing embodiment of their shame” (Hosseini 45).

“After their marriage Rasheed ordered Mariam to wear the burka (the veil), women were to veil themselves. They usually tried to hide their faces from men, calling them "Mahram", though the exception was for women in upper class families, the number of which was very small “(Rahimi 8). Rasheed’s action was definitely the biggest sign of his oppression, “I am a different breed of man, Mariam. Where I come from, one wrong look, one improper word, and blood is spilled. Where I come from, a woman’s face is her husband’s business only. I want you to remember that. Do you understand?” (Hosseini 63).

Hosseini states, “His hand was on her right breast now, squeezing it hard through the blouse [...] the pain was sudden and astonishing. Her eyes sprang open. She sucked air through her teeth and bit on the knuckle of her thumb” (44). From this quote Bekakra says that [Hosseini] sheds light on how Mariam feels and thinks when Rasheed is forcing her to have sex with him, at that point, she cannot defend herself (30).

As she is being raped in an early age, it affects her negatively, makes her experience that bad feeling of a fragmented body and thoughts of being possessed by her victimizer; feeling of losing herself, her life and her dignity (Ibid 30). In supporting that idea, Yawari declares that, “women are regarded as commodities and properties of men; they are not seen as honorable wives or mothers but simply viewed as reproduction machines [...] not as loving caring individuals” (qtd in Bakakra 95).

Mariam had several miscarriages that turned Rasheed into a monster, “Rasheed had grown more remote and resentful. Now nothing she did pleased him” (Hosseini 98). Philip mentions how Rasheed shows brutality and cruelty towards Mariam throughout the narration. He always proclaims his masculinity and control over her (795).

Saboory explains that it is legal for an Afghan man to marry one to four wives at the same time in the condition that the husband can treat his wives fairly (qtd in Istikomah20). Polygamy was damaging for the personality of women and caused contempt. This practice changed women into slaves (Rahimi 7). This quote asserts what Mariam experienced after the marriage of Rasheed with Leila. Istikomah views that Rasheed treats Mariam and Laila unfairly. Despite Mariam’s adherence and dedication to him, he often insults her while Laila always gets his praise (70), As Hosseini mentioned,” Well, one does not drive a Volga and a Benz in the same manner. That would be foolish, wouldn't it?” (217).

## 2.2. Patriarchy against Major Female Character: Leila

Khaled Hosseini Highlights the notion that Afghan women's rights are deeply excluded and abolished by toxic male dominant society, and how Afghan women are being marginalized and subordinated, Mariam, Laila and Aziza are among the unacknowledged Afghan women that demonstrate men's supremacy over women and their struggle under a patriarchal ideology.

Upon the first reading of the novel, it is clear that Hosseini's representation of Laila as an Afghan woman whose education, self-confidence and awareness; a girl who's in control of her sexuality, seem to play strategic role in breaking the shackles of patriarchy (Azzi and Belkhiri 49). However, Laila suffers in her own way from the marginalization from her mother's behalf, who seems to have abandoned her in favor of her two sons, who have gone off to battle and are eventually killed (Ibid 49).” It was hard to feel, really feel, Mammy's loss. Hard to summon sorrow, to grieve the deaths of people Laila had never really thought of as alive in the first place. Ahmad and Noor had always been like lore to her. Like characters in a fable. Kings in a history book “(Hosseini 140).

According to Serir” Laila is more fortunate than Mariam, she was not an illegitimate child but she had also her share of mistreatment by men throughout all her life” (29). “The first time was when she was at a young age, one of the boys of her village, Khadim, sprays piss on her by a water gun and makes her a laughing-stock in front of all his friends “. (Hosseini 177).

Laila's cruelty journey began when, Rasheed started abusing her. Once when he deceived her in order she agrees on marrying him by telling her that her only true love has passed. Besides, the horrors of Rasheed, Laila was beaten by the Taliban for going out without a “Mahram” to visit her daughter Aziza in the orphanage, “Sometimes she was



caught, questioned, scolded-two, three, even four times in a single day. Then the whips came down and the antennas sliced through the air, and she trudged home, bloodied, without so much as a glimpse of Aziza “(Hosseini 487).

Despite the fact, that Rasheed lied to Laila about the death of her lover Tariq. She kept unexpectedly hushed towards Rasheed’s religious strict standing at the beginning of their marriage because she is conscious of the bad consequences that might happen to her if Rasheed discovers the truth about Tariq; the father of her unborn child. Therefore, Laila obeys him and complies with her husband’s demands including wearing the burqa. Overall, women as guardians of tradition is a belief deeply rooted in the collectively of afghan society in which religious prejudice and double-standard penetrates almost all aspects of life (Katrak 159).

Prior to her miserable marriage to Rasheed, Laila, rebels against the mainstream and risks her reputation by having a sexual relationship with her childhood lover Tariq before he immigrates to Pakistan. Still, Laila could not shake the overwhelming sense of shame and guilt before the enormity of their deed (Ibid 30). “Laila saw three drops of blood on the rug, her blood [...] and now shame set in, and the guilt, and upstairs, the clock tickled on, impossibly loud on Laila’s ears. Like a judge’s gravel pounding again and again, condemning her” (Hosseini 165).

In the context of pre martial sexual female engagement such as Laila’s. Rahimi asserts” female sexuality is at the very core of patriarchal discourse. With respect to premarital relationship between boys and girls there is no dating system among Afghans, whether rural or urban. A minor suspicion of love affair between a boy and a girl may endanger their lives. It must, therefore be kept secret until they are engaged” (11).

The latter quote explains, that women in some over protective societies have to maintain their purity and virginity for their husbands only. Also, it is well known that these societies live by religious and social ideologies such as honor and shame when it comes to female sexuality. Hosseini demonstrates this idea in the novel, when Laila's mother advises her to be cautious for what society might say about her relationship with Tariq. "He Tariq is a boy, you see, and, as such, what does he care about reputation of a girl, especially one as pretty as you, is a delicate thing Laila. Like a mynah bird in your hands, slacken your grip and away it flies" (Hosseini 146).

Despite all these hard times, struggles and sorrows that Laila endured in her entire life, all the sacrifices she offered made her stronger and powerful to resist all the difficulties and continue her life as a great and an affectionate mother (Serir 30).

### **2.2.1. Education and Raising Awareness**

Feminists throughout history had identified education as a critical arena for their emancipation and for social justice (Purvis 137). Education. Is essential in every one's life. However for women, it helps them to be apparent and non-passive agent in the society.

According to Nurul, "Women's consciousness is the second important factor that influences women to struggle against the discrimination. A consciousness of being discriminated will build a will and strength for women to struggle against discrimination (qtd.in Yahi 53).

In the novel, Hosseini portrays Mariam as an unintellectual woman who is not aware of her rights. The only knowledge she has is how to endure oppression and how to be completely obedient to the unjust laws of her patriarchal society. Whereas he describes Laila as a well-educated woman who totally refuses oppression and gender inequality and

any kind or form of unfair violence that she has been exposed to, and that is coming from her consciousness that leads her to perform against patriarchy.

If so, few female geniuses are found in history, it is because society denies them any means of expression (De Beauvoir 297). Szczepaniak claims that Unequal access to education for women has existed nearly as long as society itself, which was imposed by cultures worldwide, however, a lucky select group of young women who had access to quality education and were able to promote themselves above their circumstances to advocate for the equal treatment between men and women (Qtd in Doolittle 1).

However, Laila is one of the luckiest girls who could go to school due to her father, who made sure that she gets proper education rather than getting married at a young age, “I know you’re still young, but I want you to understand and learn this now, he said. Marriage can wait, education cannot [...] a society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated, Laila no chance” (Hosseini 114).

A rough war started between the soviets and the mujahedeen. Therefore, Laila’s father disallowed her to go to school anymore because of the unsafe circumstances in Kabul. However, hakim was very concerned with Leila’s education he decided to teach her himself at home. “Laila went to into his study every [...]as Hekmatyar launched his rockets at Massoud from the southern outskirts of the city [...] Babi taught her to derive the quadratic equation, showed her how to factor polynomials and plot parametric curves (Hosseini 174).

Women are as inquisitive, intelligent, and inventive as men however they are bound by societal expectations of patriarchal philosophy. Hence, they are not able to lead completely self-actualizing and fulfilling lives. Therefore, the writer could successfully transmit the message of how education is important in raising awareness and

consciousness, and how education can be a solution to end gender discrimination. It gives insight to people about equality between men and women. It shapes men's mindset not to discriminate women and it influences women's attitudes to struggle against discrimination

### **3. Husband to Wife Aggression**

One of the key elements of patriarchy is violence. It performs in many forms which harm women physically and psychologically. For example, in a patriarchal society, men tend to refer to physical as well as verbal violence as a way to dominate women and keep them under their control (Istikomah 56-57). However, sexual abuse is another outward kind of violence which can be clarified within gendered social relations.

#### **3.1. Sexual Aggression**

Helicon tackles the issue of sexual violence by saying, "within feminism, sexual violence encompasses rape, sexual assault, and childhood sexual abuse, but locating experience within structural and gendered inequalities demands the addition of a range of oppressive sexualized behavior such as forced marriage, sexual harassment and stalking, trafficking and sexual exploitation, crimes of honor and female genital mutilation" (4).

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns* all major female characters are rape victims either in the form of rape or marital rape. In the first chapter Nana is raped by her employer, Jalil. It is told that "Nana had been one of the housekeepers. Until her belly began to swell" (Hosseini 6).

Jalil puts the blame on Nana and eventually leaves her alone in the outskirts of Hirat. Nana tells Mariam, "You know what he told his wives by way of defense? That I forced myself on him. That it was my fault. Did I? You see?" (Hosseini 7).

Indeed, in a toxic male dominant society, men have the ultimate rights to harm and to victimize women that have been victims of their rape. In supporting this notion, Alison Helicon states that, “Hegemonic masculinity necessitates the subjugation of the other epitomized in sexual violence and becomes re-inscribed in practices that affirm and reproduce dehumanization of the rape victim” (Helicon 27).

Marital rape has been largely overlooked in the rape and domestic violence literatures. The experience of marital rape has been invalidated for its victims legally, culturally, and professionally. As a result, the proliferation of invalidation continues to have serious treatment implications for the victims of this crime (Qtd in Bennice and Resick 288).

Hosseini states, “His hand was on her right breast now, squeezing it hard through the blouse [...] the pain was sudden and astonishing. Her eyes sprang open. She sucked air through her teeth and bit on the knuckle of her thumb” (44). It is clear in the novel that for Mariam and Laila sexual contact is nauseating, especially Meriam who felt grateful after the second marriage of Rasheed, she was released that she will not be raped by this cruel creature again, “but it was inevitable that they would run into each other [...] queasy in the gut (Hosseini 215).

In these accounts, marital rape and sexual abuse is majorly permitted within the patriarchal context, and that appears severely in the novel. In where Hussein managed to picture, the scars and the damages left on the female characters either and psychologically or emotionally. Which resulted in losing their identity.

### **3.2. Psychological Aggression**

Psychological aggression is broadly defined as acts or threats that humiliate or control the victim. Examples might include withholding information and denying

resources, or deliberately diminishing, embarrassing, or isolating the victim. Such acts symbolically hurt the partner or involve threats to hurt the partner. Endorsement rates of psychological aggression tend to remain high over time, likely because psychological aggression is defined by a wide range of heterogeneous acts (Qtd in Salis et al. 83).

Within the novel female characters Mariam and Laila often endures verbal violence by their husband Rasheed, whereas he insults, mocks or even threaten them, to a point where it became unbearable the way that he is treating them with.

It wasn't easy tolerating him talking this way to her, to bear his scorn, his ridicule, his insults, his walking past her like she was nothing but a house cat. But after four years of marriage, Mariam saw clearly how much a woman could tolerate when she was afraid. And Mariam was afraid. She lived in fear of his shifting moods, his volatile temperament, his insistence on steering even mundane exchanges down a confrontational path that, on occasion, he would resolve with punches, slaps, kicks, and sometimes try to make amends for with polluted apologies and sometimes not. (Hosseini 97-98)

The latter quote shows how, Rasheed's violent attitudes towards Mariam, has brought uneasiness and fear to her. His moving temperaments and unsteady disposition continuously panic Mariam. Rasheed's second spouse, Laila, also gets to be the question of his insuperable, derides, and dangers. He regularly expresses his outrage on Laila. He finds blame with her, the way she smelled, the way she dressed, the way she combed her hair, her yellowing teeth, and numerous other things.

After Rasheed lost his job and became in a bankrupt state, his ill-tempered mood got worst, to a point where he told, Laila that he wants Aziza, to be a street beggar. When she refused his insane idea, he pulled a gun to her face. His threat is a form of psychological violence that results in fear and anxiety for Laila. Even though psychological violence is dangerous, it has great negative effects on the victims' lives (Istikomah 72).

Moreover, Lying is considered as a form of emotional and verbal abuse. It often precedes violence, and since it is hard to recognize, Mariam didn't recognize her father's lies about the stories he narrates about taking her to the green wheat fields of Herat and to the tree of pistachio (Bekakra 38).Husseini demonstrate that in Nana's saying: "Rich man telling rich lies. He never took you to any tree. And don't let him charm you. He betrayed us, your beloved father. He cast us out. He cast us out of his big fancy house like we were nothing to him. He did it happily" (Hosseini 5).

Mariam loves her father a lot, thus, she did not believe Nana's saying, and she was never convinced that her loving father would ever lie or abandon her. As Yawari says that "Mariam during her childhood always doubted Nana's sayings. She thought that Nana doesn't want her good because she didn't let her even talk about going with her father. Nana always said that don't believe Jalil, he is lying and he won't let you live with his family." (107).

Furthermore. Mariam, is the perfect example of being a victim of emotional abuse. She witnessed it from her childhood till her adulthood. First, when she was growing in a kolba with Nana, she always called her a "Harami". Then, the curse followed her throughout her life. Till where Rasheed tells Laila of Mariam's status when comparing their families during dinner. He says: "...have you told her, Mariam, have you told her that you are a "Harami" (Hosseini 118). By saying that, he emotionally degrades her. Every time he intends to use it in context, it acts as reminder to her for her real status (Bekakra 33).

### **3. 3. Physical Aggression**

Violence against women occurs in every country among all social, cultural, economic, and religious groups. At the societal level, violence against women is most

common within cultures where gender roles are strictly defined and enforced; where masculinity is closely associated with toughness, male honor, or dominance; where punishment of women and children is accepted; and where violence is standard way to resolve conflicts (Jewkes 329).

Physical viciousness is exercised through physical aggressive actions such as kicking, biting, slapping, beating, or even strangling .Within the novel, the female Heroines regularly encounter physical viciousness conducted by Rasheed. He attacks Mariam when he is in a terrible disposition. The author demonstrates one of the numerous physical attacks Rasheed does to Mariam,” Get up," he said. "Come here. “He shoved two fingers into her mouth and pried it open, then forced the cold, hard pebbles into it, urged her to chew it” (Hosseini 104).

Istikomah discusses the quote above saying that being forced to chew those pebbles, Mariam’s mouth bleeds and she breaks two molars. Not only does it leave physical injuries on Mariam, but it also causes psychological effect, such as fear, anxiety and trauma. The fear she has leads to the loss of self-confidence (58).

Not only Mariam was experiencing abuse. Laila also endured all kind of physical abuse by Rasheed. As it is demonstrated in the novel, “Her jaw was still sore, her back and neck ached. Her lip was swollen, and her tongue kept poking the empty pocket of the lower incisor Rasheed had knocked loose two days before. [...] this viciously, this regularly, and keep functioning “(Husseini 234-235).

Yahi explains the later quote “Laila suffered from terrible physical injuries on her lips, tongue and mouth. She also lost her lower incisor. Rasheed’s cruelty is described clearly in the quotation above that the beating happens viciously and regularly. The attack occurs that much because Laila often becomes the target of Rasheed’s anger towards bad



things happens to him. What happens to Laila shows how powerful men are in the society that they can conduct violence as a way of expressing anger” (46).

One might say that women have repeatedly stressed by men’s domination and invasions which have always negatively impacted their identity and their struggle for rights and equality. In a nutshell, the female characters in Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns* endure a severe violence that affects their psychology and leads to an equivalent violence. In other words, male violence brings about female violence (Bekakra 37).

#### **4. Sexist law: Taliban Oppressive Regime against Women**

The pre-Taliban era was a tragic period for women of Afghanistan. They faced physical, psychological, sexual violence in addition to the double standards of men. Soon, the situation changes. Rosemarie Skaine in *The Women of Afghanistan under the Taliban* (2005) relates that In September 27, 1996, “the ruling members of the Afghan government were displaced by members of the Islamic Taliban movement” (qtd. in Ghosh 89).

The political circumstance changed upside down and so the condition of women got decline. It is women who were continuously victimized in a political turmoil circumstance. The Soviet withdrawal come about within the power struggle between different bunches within the nation that at last finished with the Taliban rule. Women in war-torn social orders confront particular and devastating shapes of sexual viciousness, which are now and then deployed efficiently to attain military or political objectives.

Hosseini support the latter idea. “There was looting, murder, and, increasingly, rape, which was used to intimidate civilians and reward militiamen. Mariam heard of women who were killing themselves out of fear of being raped, and of men who, in the name of honor, would kill their wives or daughters if they’d been raped by militia” (Hosseini 247).

Furthermore, when Mariam and Laila arranged to elude from their dictator spouse, they were caught up by the police who accused them of voyaging alone without a biological male relative. The strict laws upheld by the Taliban donate men a benefit to ill-treat and mishandle, women. Rasheed gives an account of the Taliban with an adoration for them. As Khaled Hosseini supports the idea by stating:

They were a guerrilla force...made up of young Pashtun men whose families had fled to Pakistan during the war against the Soviets. Most of them had been raised – some even born – in refugee camps along the Pakistani border, and in Pakistani madrasas, where they were schooled in Shari'a by mullahs. Their leader was a mysterious, illiterate, one-eyed recluse named Mullah Omar, who... called himself Ameer-ul-Mumineen, Leader of the Faithful". (Husseini 266)

Aneeta Sebastian declares, "The regime of Taliban (1996-2001) gave nothing but traumatizing experience for the women. They used religion as a weapon to control the women and imposed many restrictions on them. Taliban interpreted Koran in such a way that they could implement their rules and laws easily. They used burqa to cover up the very existence of women and treated them only as objects that tempt men. Taliban encounters the women folk with a list of forbiddances "(56).

This is the case with women in the novel. The laws of Taliban are indeed more extreme than Rasheed's has been. These rules are told to the individuals through boisterous speakers in trucks, on mosques and radio and through pamphlets tossed on each road. The rules for women are as follows:

Attention women: You will stay inside your homes at all times. It is not proper for women to wander aimlessly about the streets. If you go outside, you must be accompanied by a Mahram, a male relative. If you are caught alone on the street, you will be beaten and sent home. You will not under any circumstance, show your face. You will cover with Burqa when outside. If you do not, you will be severely beaten. Cosmetics are

forbidden. Jewelry is forbidden. [...] Listen. Listen well. Obey. (Husseini 271)

The above quote from the novel shows how Hosseini tries to expose the evil doing of the society and the government towards women in the name of religion, how the Taliban oppressed women by forcing them to live according to their own Sharia Laws and their own interpretation of Islam. The Taliban claim that their goal is "preserving women's honor' and further claim that "the restrictions on women are for their own protection." (Shakil 7).

Rasheed tells Laila that they are enforcing the rules followed by the South, the East and tribal areas of Afghanistan on What according to him is the real Afghanistan, Rasheed of course supports the Taliban's anti-women stance as the directives of the Koran. He explains the implications to Laila (Yahi 48). "Let me explain" he said. "If the fancy should strike me [...] I would be within my rights to give Aziza away [...] or I could go to the Taliban one day, just walk in and say that I have my suspicions about you. That's all it would take" (Hosseini252). Laila is stunned, not essentially since of Rasheed's saying but since she knows that every word Rasheed had articulated was real and it might literally happen.

The rule shows clearly how the Taliban violates women's right to get education. They will readily beat women, who are caught attending school. Since then, no girl dares to go to school, including Laila's daughter, Aziza.

When things could not get any worst for women at that period, being ill may be a huge issue to women in Afghanistan since they are prohibited from wellbeing offices such as healing center and clinics. Sick women cannot see the doctors and take a pharmaceutical unless their male relatives purchase them the medications.

Taking the example of Laila, who is almost to give birth to her first child, is rejected from a clinic in Kabul since the healing center does not serve women. She and many other ladies battle to urge the treatment from the hospital. The guard of the hospital at that point illuminates her that there's a women hospital in Kabul, called Rabia Balkhi.

In the Rabia Balkhi hospital Laila was given a caesarian operation without having anesthesia this point to the terrific condition of discrimination against women by Taliban” (Aneeta 57). The doctor says that when NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) offered money, the Taliban gave it all for hospitals that treats men.

You think I want it this way?" she said. "What do you want me to do? They won't give me what I need. I have no X ray either, no suction, no oxygen, not even simple antibiotics. When NGOs offer money, the Taliban turn them away. Or they funnel the money to the places that cater to men." "But, Doctor Sahib, isn't there something you can give her. (Hosseini 283)

The dialogue above shows that in spite of the fact that there is no anesthetic, the delivering ought to be done promptly since in case not, Laila will lose her child. Laila afterward faces the cesarean without anesthetic. Without a doubt, the operation goes greatly difficult. It is the Taliban who have made the decision that hospitals for men and women are isolated.

Afghan women later on effectively as detainees. Incapable of leaving the house on their own, she must be accompanied by a male guardian. Taliban consider traveling alone as dishonorable. This rule unquestionably limits women from getting what they require to accomplish careers outside the. In other words, education and freedom of mobility might warrant the female subaltern a “chance at hegemony” (Spivak 81).

Certainly, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* demonstrates how afghan women are brought to the center of socio-political debates in which the religion of Islam is the promoter of

oppression and cruelty. Taliban's endorsement of the myth of patriarchal family as a sacred institution including other acts of violence against women became the face of Islam (Azzi, Belkhiri 52).

## **5. Oppression under the Shadow of Religion**

Khaled Hosseini depicts how religion is being used inaccurately to discriminate against women through the character of Rasheed. Rasheed was eager to control and cover his wives (Sebastian 54). Hosseini says, "Where I come from, a woman's face is her husband's business only" (Hosseini 69). He believes a woman is an object that shouldn't be visible to others, they are ought to be covered up (Sebastian 54).

He also claims that, men who allow their wives not to wear the burqa have no pride and honor, "He refers to other women who come to his shop He believes that those women are immoral because they come without burqa [...] [men] don't see that they're spoiling their own nang and namoos, their honor and pride". (Hosseini 69).

Rasheed tortures Mariam and Leila in the name of Islam he claims to be good adherents to God's word but his actions demonstrate the opposite (Azzi and Belkhiri 48). He does not observe any of the Islamic rituals properly like Ramadan, even though Islam teaches the importance of observing them. We find him sore and angry at the time of Ramadan (Sebastian 57). "Except for a handful of days, Rasheed didn't observe the fast" (Hosseini 45).

Rasheed's hypocrisy becomes obvious when Mariam finds pornography magazines in his drawers. She did not understand the paradoxes in her husband, the fact that he was ordering her to cover herself while he was watching other women's private parts of their bodies exposed, "Why did Rasheed insist that she cover when he thought nothing of looking at the private areas of other men's wives and sisters?" (Hosseini 82).

Hosseini goes further to portray Rasheed's hegemony forcing his sexual desires on his wives. He forces Mariam to serve him regardless to her state or circumstances (Azzi and Belkhir 60). Rasheed act as a beguiling patriarch who uses religion to enforce his wishes over the powerless women in the fiction. He forces himself on Mariam and excuses himself (Sebastian 57), "There is no shame in this, Mariam," he said, slurring a little. "It's what married people do. It's what the Prophet himself and his wives did There is no shame "(Hosseini 46).

## **6. Gender Inequality**

Gender discrimination is a term to describe an unequal treatment which is based on gender (Istikomah18). Son preference is a massive type of gender discrimination used in the novel of a *thousand splendid suns*, it merges due to the belief that sons are considered to be blessings and pride of the parents while girls are more likely to be burden to the family (Istikomah 64).

When Mariam and Laila were pregnant, their husband, Rasheed, really hoped the baby will be a boy. On Mariam's first pregnancy, he says, "What about Zalmai?. He said it's a good Pashtu name. What if it's a girl? Mariam said. I think it's a boy. Yes. A boy. If it's a girl. Rasheed said, and it is not, but, if it is a girl, then you can choose whatever name you want" (Hosseini 49).

This happened again with Leila's first pregnancy, "It's going to be a big boy. My son will be a pahlawan like his father"(Hosseini 123). The essence of attitude towards women could be clearly seen in the relationship of the family after the birth of a female baby. Such a birth was considered and judged as an unpleasant event and unfortunate for the entire family, both in a settled and a nomadic population (Rahimi 11). The birth of a

female baby, particularly in those cases where the mother gave birth to several girls, was, and still is, the main cause of contracting a second marriage (Ibid 11).

The birth of a girl in a peasant and nomad society is considered unfortunate. This event makes all members of the family and other relatives sad. Fathers do not appear to have real warmth towards baby girls and act as if they are strangers to them (Rahimi 9). This reveals in both characters Aziza. When Aziza is being horribly treated by Rasheed,” He looked down at the ground, noticed Aziza at his feet. "Get off my heels!" he snapped, making a shooing motion with his gun. "Stop following me! And you can stop twirling your wrists like that. I'm not picking you up. Go on! Go on before you get stepped on "(Hosseini 133).

Pasha claims that male gender preference is deeply embedded in the culture of some countries (qtd in Qadir 1) .Boys carry the family name, can continue the family trade, and are expected to provide for their parents in old age in the novel (Qadir 1) .Rasheed’s different treatment between Aziza and Zalmai clearly appears When Zalmai was born,” Rasheed had moved [Zelmai] into the bed he shared with Laila[...] He'd paid for new clothes, new rattles, new bottles, and new diapers, even though they could not afford them and Aziza's old ones were still serviceable” (Hosseini 152).

Philip views that gender equality is the longest war that women have been fighting for a long time. Throughout history, women across the world who have fought for gender equality are considered as feminists. Women in Afghanistan have been going through gender equality issues in its severe form for ages (791).

## **7. Mariam from a Victim to a Victor.**

Long-term abuse can have its consequences. One of the consequences is that the victim may finally fight back as Foucault asserts that there always remain the possibilities of resistance, disobedience and opposition” (qtd in Akhtar 115). As mentioned before

Mariam's misfortune starts with her illegitimate beginning as a harami, she never had the right to take any decision in her life, she was forced to live in the kolba, to marry Rasheed and accept a new wife in her house.

Jack says resisting silence is commonly used by women who grew up in socio-cultural and religious communities and families where silence is stereotyped as "good" femininity (qtd in Chisale 20). Mariam always did as she was told "to be obedient and submissive", even to the cruelty and brutality she faced after her marriage, she followed his orders and endured his physical and mental violence in silence "(Hosseini 36). And according to the quote above this is the only type of resistance Mariam had practiced. The resisting silence.

Chisale mentions that some feminists such as Cruz and Lewis agree that silence is not an indication of submissiveness, subservience and obedience but rather a hidden transcript used by women for survival in a patriarchal society (21). According to Lewis "[T]he women's understanding and use of silence not as a self-internalized expression of submission but as a means of resistance has allowed them to experience a sense of freedom and liberation. They interpret their silence as disagreement and as resistance to the treatment they receive (Ibid 21).

First Mariam and Leila ignores each other, however when time passes, they discover that they suffer the same miserable life under Rasheed's tyranny (Bekakra 45). Sebastian states that Mariam hated Laila for losing her husband to a little girl. They used to abuse each other calling each other many names until they realized that they are undergoing the same tragic fate under this abusive man and then they started to realize each other and started to share their strength of endurance to each other. (57).

Hans Toch states in *Violent Men* "Violence, ironically, creates harmony among otherwise warring elements" (qtd in Akhtar 33). As Nigam and Dutta assert, Mariam's



happiness, awareness and resistance are later on revealed after she socializes with Laila- “Mariam is for the first time, a woman with negativity towards a person. However, this marriage turns out to be Mariam’s salvation. Soon she finds herself a friend to Laila” (qtd in Bekakra 45). “I know it's chilly outside, but what do you say we sinners have us a cup of chai in the yard?” (Hosseini 131), the two women find comfort and support in each other.

Istikomah says that educated women can also empower others, as Laila raises Mariam’s awareness and empowers her to struggle against it. In that context, Hooks affirms that in her book *Feminism Is for everybody*, where she states that education is an underlying theory which shapes people’s thought and practice in their fight against patriarchal system (qtd in Istikomah 104). Eventually, their relationship becomes as strong as that between mother and daughter. Mariam creates a strong bond of affection with Laila and her daughter and renovates herself into a prototype gallant mother (Akhtar 116). This is revealed in the novel when Mariam answered Leila’s doctor, “you're the mother?” “Yes,” Mariam said “(hosseini149).

In Mariam, Laila finds not only maternal support to raise her children, but all the love a mother could offer to her family, Indeed, it is this great love that pushes Mariam to take a decisive action to kill Rasheed as he is in the act of murdering Laila (Azzi And Belkhiri 68). “He is going to kill her, she thought. He really means to. And Mariam could not, would not allow that to happen. He’d taken so much from her in the twenty-seven years of marriage. She would not watch him take Laila too” (Hosseini 340).

Mariam could not watch Leila being killed in front of her eyes .Her love for Laila has made her stronger and took her out of the passive zone .She had never fought for anybody not even herself however her love to Leila changed everything .Hosseini describes this in the novel ,” Mariam claws at Rasheed and beats him[...]But they remained tightly clamped

around Laila's wind pipe[...] Mariam grabbed the shovel [...] raised it as high as she could[...] she gave it everything she had “ (Hosseini 339-341) .

As Sindhu states Mariam who never shows any sign of rebellion against Rasheed and his barbarous beating, gained courage to fight back and ultimately kill Rasheed by love and respect that she received from Laila and her children. Mariam makes a calculated decision to kill Rasheed as he is in the act of murdering Laila. Mariam makes sure that Rasheed sees her so that he can acknowledge her action. Mariam, who did everything to appease and accommodate Rasheed is able to resist not only his brutal force but her own revulsion of violent action to save Laila (qtd in Bekakra47).

Ramamurthy says that Through Mariam’s spirited actions thereafter, Mariam proves that: A woman is a being. She is not an appendage of man. A woman is not the other. She is not an addition to man. She is an autonomous being, capable of, through trial and error, finding her own way to salvation” (qtd in Akhtar116).

Akhtar mentioned that Herbert Marcuse, in his essay entitled “Essay on Liberation” termed this inevitable killing act of Mariam as a certain degree of radical social change. He considers oppression, victimization and gender exploitation the main reasons for social upheavals which occur when one cannot tolerate domination and humiliation any longer (16). Marcuse says: Freedom would become the environment of the organism which is no longer adaptable to the competitive performances required for well-being under domination, no longer capable of tolerating the aggressiveness, brutality, and ugliness of the established way of life (qtd in Akhtar 116).

When Mariam was sentenced to death by the Taliban Hosseini says:

Mariam wished for so much in those final moments. Yet as she closed her eyes, it was not regretting any longer but a sensation of abundant peace that washed over her. She thought of her entry into this world, the harami child of a lowly villager, an unintended thing, a pitiable, regrettable accident. A weed. And yet she was

leaving the world as a woman who had loved and been loved back. She was leaving it as a friend, a companion, a guardian. A mother. A person of consequence at last. No. It was not so bad, Miriam thought, that she should die this way. Not so bad. This was a legitimate end to a life of illegitimate belongings. (361)

Yawari marvels by Mariam's reaction saying," [...] Especially Mariam re-emerges as a brave and dignified woman. Mariam's transformation from a silent, submitted and obedient woman into a brave and independent woman highlights that it's with women to learn from the hard days" (qtd in Bekakra 37). In the novel female-subaltern speak through resistance and revolt. Khaled Hosseini challenges Spivak's theory of subaltern, can subaltern speak? She says "NO" but Hosseini says "Yes" and subaltern's voices are heard (Joya 107).

### **8. Leila's Unique Sense of Survival- Female Bonding**

Dwivedi asserts that in the novel of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* narrates the story of the subaltern female subject. It scrutinizes the struggle of afghan women to survive in a patriarchal society and under the dominant rule of Taliban. The novel focuses on the characters Mariam and Laila. It portrays how their lives intersect and their fates intertwine creating a strong female bond. Such strong bonding highlights the relationship between women as it provides a deep meaning to sisterhood (20).

Indeed, women bond to regain their voices and rights that are gone under patriarchal culture. Bell Hook states that "Feminist sisterhood is rooted in shared commitment to struggle against patriarchal injustice, no matter the form that injustice takes. Political solidarity between women always undermines sexism and sets the stage for the overthrow of patriarchy" (Hooks 15).

In these over throwing contexts, the idea mentioned above is exemplified in the novel, through the two female heroines. Coming from two different generations and cultural backgrounds, Mariam was born and raised into subalternity whereas Laila is enforced into it by circumstance. It is clearly seen that the most noteworthy distinction between the two female characters is mirrored in the way each one of them identifies subalternity. While Mariam and Nana passively endure discrimination As Spivak describe “doubly in shadow” (84).

Laila cannot stand living in the confinement of Rasheed’s house and desires to run away from it. As an intellectual, Laila believes in the obligation to act so that she changes her situation. The following quotation shows Laila’s firm determination to run away from Rasheed’s grip, “We’re leaving this spring, Aziza and I. Come with us, Mariam” (Hosseini 256).

Yahi, argue that it is actually Laila’s idea to run from Kabul and move to Pakistan. Before asking Mariam to come with her, Laila has prepared this plan alone for about one year. After giving birth to Aziza, Laila steals money from Rasheed’s pocket when he is not around. Laila steals a little money in order not to make Rasheed doubtful (60).

Then, in spring morning in 1994, Mariam, Laila and Aziza leave the house. When Rasheed is working, they pack things, get out of the house and stop the taxi to bring them to the Lahore Gate bus station. Mariam was in the doorway. Laila could tell that she hadn't slept either. She wondered if Mariam too had been seized all night by short time of joy. The day, they both feel joy of getting a new better life. Laila cannot even sleep a night before they leave (Ibid 60).

By trying to escape from Kabul. Mariam and Laila have proven themselves as liberated women. It is because the essence of being liberated women is the process of

struggling itself instead of the result of the struggle. At the same time, their effort also shows that sisterhood influences women's struggle towards liberation. If they never meet each other, they would not be able to do such a risky thing. Their sisterhood is so powerful that it can strengthen Laila and change Mariam to be a brave one (Istikomah104).

Their plan is not successful for they soon get arrested by Taliban members and are returned to an even greater violence and death threats from Rasheed. "You try this again and I will find you and when I do, there isn't a court in this forsaken country can that will hold me accountable for what I will do" (Hosseini 272).

In the context of rebelling and resisting .Bekakra mentions in *Patriarchy, Oppression and Resistance in A Thousand Splendid Suns* "Laila is a vivid example of the resistant and the powerful woman. She endures the abuse and cruelty of Rasheed just to keep her dearest persons live peacefully and not to be in danger. Rasheed is merciless when sending Aziza to an orphanage and keeping her far from her mother. But since Laila cannot be patient because her dearness is far from her, she takes the risk of going to visit her in the orphanage despite the Taliban's beatings" (43). As John states: "Laila chooses willingly to suffer herself for protecting her loved ones. Because Rasheed never appreciates the birth of Aziza and often scolds her" (3).

Bekakra further discuss how Mariam and Laila are so resistant characters. However, their resistance is different from one another. That is to say, Mariam is defenseless so, she resists all Rasheed's beatings and bad deeds silently. Whereas, Laila is defensive so, she is aggressive when facing Rasheed's cruelty and abuse (54). According to Wulandari, "Mariam and Laila are holding out the oppression with patience, how strong they are to endure themselves against such an oppression. While in dealing with it from Rasheed, Mariam tends to be defenseless, in the other hand, Laila is apt to defend and resist" (10).

Furthermore. Chandra Mohanty asserts that what really binds third world women together is not their shared powerlessness and inherited inferiority as it is portrayed in western representations, rather it is the “sociological notion of the sameness of their oppression that strengthens their bond and escorts them towards breaking the silence casted upon them (337).

Living in the same house and imprisoned by a one jailer, Laila’s brave attitude towards Rasheed’s dictatorship empowers Mariam and leads her to the awareness she had shortage of ever since she was born. At some point in the novel, Mariam is left in awe while Laila “lurched at him. She grabbed his arm with both hands and tried to drag him down...She did succeed in slowing Rasheed’s progress toward Mariam” (Hosseini 216).

Azzi and Belkhiri further examine the image of resistance “that it is quite remarkable that in gaining support and strength from each other, Mariam and Laila develop new personalities. They are able to take control over their lives and fight against domestic violence. In the novel, when Rasheed asks Aziza to be a street bagger, Laila opposes to the idea. Rasheed slaps her for doing so but Laila takes her turn in punching him as well” (71). “Then Laila punched him. It was the first time she'd struck anybody, discounting the playful punches she and Tariq used to trade... It made a sound like dropping a rice bag to the floor. She hit him hard. The impact actually made him stagger two steps backward” (Hosseini 292).

As they experience many things together, the bond between them grows stronger. Mariam and Laila learn a lot from each other. Mariam, on the one hand learns the truth behind the patriarchy from Laila and on the other hand, Laila learns so much about endurance from Mariam. Mariam gets the awareness that she is subordinated and is discriminated by Jalil. Being together, they gain their strength and gather their efforts to struggle against discrimination (Yahi 62).

Sindhu views that Mariam and Laila have taken strength from each other because they were closer to each other. The bond that established between Laila and Mariam gives them strength to transcend their limitations and to perform devastating acts of self-sacrifice. They find solace and happiness in each other's company. Their bond gives them freedom from pain not only physically but emotionally by trusting each other (7). "Laila sees ... that Mariam is never far. She is here, in these walls they've repainted, in the trees they've planted, in the blankets that keep the children warm, in these pillows and books and pencils. She is in the children's laughter" (Husseini 366).

Now .It is clear that any unjust patriarchal society or any rough political turmoil, would not stop women from revolting and resisting against these toxic philosophies and traditions, in order to restore their natural rights of a decent and an equal life.

## Conclusion

Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* novel exposed the reality of numerous brilliant women that were subjugated behind patriarchal walls and male dominant society restrictions. Indeed, patriarchy was an unjust ideology that women have suffered from. However, it was also the reason through of which they found their voices and had the urge to fight the society in order to be heard.

In the monarchy period women's rights have been misused by distinctive groups for political gain, sometimes being improved but frequently being abused. Women were lost again under the soviet invasion. Indeed, it was the perfect time to be a woman however, modernization was not a choice for them, they were imposed to westernize. Until Mullahs and tribal chiefs revolted against the soviet but the victim was always women, they were killed and punished for being westernized. Women found themselves put at the middle of a struggle between western concepts of modernization and tribal codes of traditionalism.

In 1996 the Taliban regime brought the country into a disaster with their extreme fundamentalism, this period was the graveyard for women, they almost had no right to exist. All types of oppression, violence and discrimination were practiced in a very brutal way until 2001.

Women in Afghanistan reacted differently towards the dual oppression they faced from the male patriarchy and colonization. Women who lived in the urban areas were more aware of her rights. They refused to give up to any type of patriarchy due to their educational awareness unlike the subaltern women who were ignorant and raised by the patriarchal traditions to be to be silent and passive and obedient.



In the novel Patriarchy affected the mind of women in several ways, it permitted men to feel their supremacy over women while women felt nothing but marginalization, according to Khaled Hosseini, patriarchy had destroyed women's lives like Nana and Meriam, who always believed that their only skill in life is endurance of the cruel society. However, patriarchy also created a sense of rebelliousness in women like Leila who wanted to destroy this brutal restraints and fight for their own rights. Women had used their struggle as weapons to restore their identity and.

As mentioned earlier, chapter two is mainly devoted to highlight the dual struggle that major female characters have experienced throughout the novel. Starting with, toxic male hegemony to a political mistreatment and abuse, and eventually, demonstrating how they managed to resist and to grow that sense of sisterhood and solidarity. Through the two subaltern female characters Mariam and Nana, Khaled Hussein has depicted various forms of patience and endurance of women, Mariam and Nana's standing to these abuses and mistreatment was only with silence. And that is because they cannot detach themselves from their cultural roots because the repressive environment in which they grew up teaches women to be passive rather than rebellious. As Nana told Mariam once, the only lesson you need to learn is endurance. Their mind set is completely affected by patriarchy in which they feel they are inferior to men and there is no need to fight back.

On the other hand, the novelist demonstrated the character of Laila as a free-spirited woman whose liberal upbringing, education and consciousness reinforces her desire to rebel against the rigid gender stereotypes society ascribes for her. Unlike Mariam and Nana. Laila was forced into subalternity, Not raised in it. On the contrary Laila had a supportive father who was insisting she get proper education despite all the bad circumstances the country was going too her education awareness raised her consciousness' about her rights and how she needs to be acknowledged in the society.

One of the key elements of patriarchy is violence. It is performed in many forms which harm women physically, mentally and psychologically; Men tend to abuse women verbally and physically violence as a way to dominate women and to keep them under their tyranny. Afghan women experienced all sort of violence and aggression that is justified within gendered social relations. Starting with sexual aggression, Nana, Mariam and Laila, also experience marital rape or a rape of a wife by her husband. Rasheed, their husband, always forces his sexual desire against their will and no matter what their conditions were.

Moving to another sort of violence Female characters witnessed. Psychological violence it was more insidious than other forms of violence especially since women are affected in their dignity. It included threatening isolating by all male surroundings. In addition to psychological violence, physical violence is presented even in the novel. One might say that women have repeatedly stressed by men's domination and invasions which have always negatively impacted their identity and their struggle for rights and equality.

The political circumstance changed upside down and so the condition of women got decline. It is the women who were continuously victimized in a political turmoil circumstance. By the Taliban seizing in power. Women were clearly and proudly been marginalized in all ways possible. They have limited their freedom of mobility, they forbidden their access to education and even excluded them from a decent health care. In other words, The Taliban regime has violated women's rights, as they are using religion to promote oppression on them and to enslave them forever.

In addition, the novelist purely states his sense of worry towards the cultural traditions that he believes are damaging rather than helpful to the overall progress of his country. Hence, this thesis examined the overlapping religious, social and traditional codes such as honor, shame, reputation, chastity and how they are manipulated by hegemonic

powers for the sake of oppressing women under the shadow of religion. That eventually resulted in, degradation, inferiority complex, guilt.

This dissertation notes how a subaltern victim characters changes to be a resistant character breaking all the norms of patriarchy. By that, hope and brightness are always there for afghan women and all the oppressed woman around the world. It motivates them to act bravely against any unjust hegemony and to rebel so their existence, rights, voices, are acknowledged.

Indeed, the bounding of two different women have played a crucial role against patriarchy women have created strong bonds despite the efforts of their husbands and their government to reduce women's power. The novel thus shows that women have a strong ability to find strength and support in one another. Mariam never would have gained the strength to fight Rasheed if she had not gained confidence and love from Laila. Whereas, Laila could never find happiness if Mariam hasn't made the sacrifice for her.

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This poem was written in the 17th Century by Saib-e-Tabrizi

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## المخلص

تعكس رواية خالد حسيني ألف شمس ساطعة بشكل مثالي تاريخ بلده أفغانستان التي انتهكتها سلسلة من الأيديولوجيات المختلفة والحروب العديدة التي فرضت على البلد بالقوة. يلقي الكاتب الضوء على قصة امرأتين مريم وليلى، كلتا الشخصيتان في الرواية امرأتان من جيلين مختلفين لهما حياة مختلفة، مريم هي طفلة فقيرة غير شرعية تعيش في الضواحي، بينما ولدت ليلي لأبوين متعلمين وتعيش في وقت جد حضاري في تاريخ كابول، لكن كفاحهما وحد مصيرهما بشكل غير متوقع. وبالتالي، فإن هذا البحث هو محاولة لتصوير اضطهاد وقهر النساء في المجتمع الذي يسيطر عليه الذكور في أفغانستان، من خلال تحليل رواية ألف شمس ساطعة ما بعد الاستعمار التي صورت كيف تحددت النساء ظروف الحياة الصعبة وجميع أنواع الوحشية في ظل المجتمع الأبوية، باستعمال نظرية النسوية بعد الاستعمار، وكيف انتهى بهم الأمر إلى إيجاد طرقهم للنجاة. ينقسم هذه العمل إلى فصلين؛ الأول يبحث في كيفية تغير وضع المرأة الأفغانية خلال التاريخ المضطرب للبلد، ويسلط الضوء على العناصر الاجتماعية والسياسية والثقافية والتقليدية التي تلعب دورا حاسما في تهيش المرأة الأفغانية. بينما يسعى الفصل الثاني إلى دراسة الصراع المزوج الذي تعيشه الشخصيات النسائية الرئيسية في جميع أنحاء الرواية. بدءا من الهيمنة الذكورية السامة إلى سوء المعاملة والانتهاكات السياسية، وفي النهاية أظهرن كيف تمكن من المقاومة وتنمية هذا الشعور بينهن بالأخوية النسوية والتضامن.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التهميش، المجتمع الأبوي، المقاومة، الاضطهاد، التمييز بين الجنسين.