

VICTIMIZATION OF FEMALES IN KHALID HOSSEINI'S "A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS"

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Original Article

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Abstract

The primary source of this research paper is "A Thousand Splendid Suns". The rights of women were seriously examined in this book, especially in the Taliban region. In Afghanistan, women are always considered second sex and brutal victim of patriarchy. Women are "East", and "orient" through the lens of Orientalism. They are "others", colonized and suppressed creatures of the planet Earth. In A Thousand Splendid Suns, women are portrayed as subjugated in a patriarchal society. Hosseini presented two types of women in the novel; traditional and modern. Laila represents contemporary "ladies", whereas Mariam represents traditional women. Despite the difference in representation, both women struggle to end patriarchal tyranny. This piece critically analyses the status of women as "Subalterns" in the book, as well as how the voices of the subaltern are reflected by the novel's characters, and how the term Islam is used to enslave women in the story. Through content analysis and textual analysis, the lens of Spivak and Islamic feminism are used to explore the different types of gender discrimination that women faced in the novel and how this oppression and discrimination affects voiceless women's psychology. Moreover, the resistance of female characters against patriarchy is also explored thoroughly in the paper.

Keywords: Misogynism, Subaltern, Gender discrimination, patriarchy, Muslim Feminism

1. Introduction

Society expresses the acceptance of men and women in their respective gender roles through various forms and patterns of behavior. Although some people believe women and men have equal rights, the majority of people believe men have a higher status than women. Patriarchal ideologies demonstrate this domination of socio-cultural society. Hearty (2011) explains that patriarchal ideology believes that male members of society are superior creatures; they can govern society, culture, and politics. While on the other hand, women are inferior and have no sense and ability to govern these things equally with men. They are placed in domestic areas where men rule over them. Men are structurally and physically higher than women. In short, men are born to rule and women are born to be enslaved. Sugihastuti (2007) believes that cultural construction also promotes men to a higher rank and gives them the power and right to manipulate women in a variety of ways, including via their sexuality, economics, etc.

The contrast between superior and inferior classes does not only present in countries or races, but it is also present within a particular race and culture. It creates a power relation between culture and race. For example, in this war of power struggle, women are always become doubly marginalized, one for being oppressed by authorities and another being subjugated by men. Women of any ethnicity, race, or culture face discrimination at every stage of their life. The social, political,

religious, and culture of any community put a great influence on gender discrimination. In gender discrimination, it is considered that one side is superior and the other is inferior. And in this struggle of gender biases, women always face the neglected inferior position (Burki, 2017). This word describes unequal treatment based on gender. Gender-based violence is not a recent phenomenon. Burki (2017) also mentions that in today's society, no other issue is as contentious and important as gender. Women are oppressed in the cultural, political, as well as in economic spheres. The lack of gender parity is obscured by sexist societal structures, cultural norms, and traditional values that are indifferent to the needs of women. Taylor (1985) mentions in a general World Report that women continue to be treated as second-class citizens and the discrimination against them is still prevalent. Many women are treated unfairly and oppressively in everyday life. They are unable to enjoy freedom. There are less opportunities for them for access to medical care, housing, employment, and most importantly education (Burki, 2017). The traditional norms rule against education for females as it is not needed for household chores. According to the author Rehman and Anwar (2020, p. 116), The female is "born for home duties and domestic work." Women didn't have an identity outside of these presumptive restrictions". Women's participation in the cooperative sector is also considered inappropriate, shameful, and misogynist society believes that it is dangerous for women's chastity and family honor (Burki 2017). These restrictions and obstacles put a great influence on woman's personality, identity, psychology, and even their performance. Essentially, the state of women in society is depending on the will of the male. The culture and community portray them as slaves putting them in a weaker section of society. Thus, the position of women is decided by a male-centered society and women have no right and power to speak significantly against this oppression. They are placed in a weak section since society believes that women need men in every area of their life. The presence of men is necessary for women in leading a normal life.

According to King (2001), the societies which discriminate based on gender significantly suffer in their economic growth. Their infrastructure and quality of life deteriorate, making the government weaker and unstable. Even though women have made great strides in many areas of their social lives, there are still huge gender gaps. While modernization is taking place, social taboos still exist in many countries. Afghanistan ranks first among them in terms of the most hazardous nations for female population (The Express Tribune, 2011). While uttering the word Afghanistan, the first thought that comes to one's mind is gender discrimination. According to Thomson Reuters Foundation (in Khan, 2012, pp. 1-2) 2011 survey, Afghanistan is the most dangerous and unsafe country for women. About 87% of women face violence and abuse in Afghanistan. The social structure of Afghanistan is patriarchal in which men play a subjective position while women reside in objective and subordinate positions. The traditional laws in Afghanistan determine women's subjective position.

In a culture or society where religion plays an important role, their religion is always interpreted by the group of superior class: Male. The male interpreted the religion according to their will, in which they always place women as their slaves. Women are considered inferior through the misogynist lens. In a country like Afghanistan religion plays a significant role. They practice hard-liner Islam in which they believe that women are confined within the four walls of the house and their only purpose is to give ease and benefit to the men. Spivak (1988) says that in a country where religious groups prevailed, women are often positioned as a lower or inferior class. The biased interpretation and ideology of religion create gender discrimination in society. On the contrary, religious ideology has great passion and sensitivity and emphasizes gender equality.

Boggs (1976) wrote that, "ideology is the shared ideas or beliefs which serve to justify the interests of dominant groups." Ideology is a human concept that serves as a guideline for practical action. In fact, on a qualitative level ideology gives a distinct and separate identity to a group of people who shares one idea and logic; the world recognizes them according to their belief and ideology (Thwaites & Mules, 2002). Due to diverse ideologies in the country, Afghan women's social status has brutally suffered. Their rights were damaged and weakened during the Taliban era. They had a vision of a world in which there would be a perfect Islamic community. Moghadam (1997) explores that due to a patriarchal mindset, Afghanistan is unable to achieve gender equality. It is unfortunate that in a religion that guaranteed women equal rights, its followers deny the status and rights of women and consider their state a pure Islamic country. Such incidents of gender oppression cast a shadow over the image of Muslim countries around the world. As stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1987), all human beings have the same rights and must be treated with same human dignity. According to the popular saying in many cultures, Men build houses and women build homes. It seems like an ideal collaborative position, but in the real world, it is not the case (Lasic, 2017; Walker, 2018).

Born in Kabul, Afghani author Khaled Hosseini immigrated to the United States of America in 1980. He wrote *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *And the Mountains Echoed*. All of which have achieved New York Times bestseller status. His work "Thousand Splendid Sun" focuses on women's lives in the misogynist society of Afghanistan. The theme of the novel criticizes the traditional and patriarchal mindset of Afghan people take wives as submissive and as an object possessed by their husbands (Ramphiphatthamrong, 2020, p. 53).

Novel is set in Afghanistan, which is a third-world country; that holds strong patriarchal beliefs and rigid extremist Islamic values (Which they constructed according to their interpretation of Islam). For the past thirty years, foreign powers controlled have Afghanistan. The invasion of colonial power proceeded with the civil war in the country tries between ethnic groups: Najibullah, Mujahideen, and Taliban. Hosseini writes, "The Mujahideen armed to the teeth but now lacking a common enemy, had found the enemy in each other" (Hosseini, 2013, p. 155). Mujahideen and Taliban refer to students who, in the name of their religion, adopted strict Islamic doctrines, such as Sharia law, which is particularly harsh on women. In this situation, women of Afghanistan are always victimized both directly and indirectly. This situation is the background of f novel. The novel narrates the story of two women: Miriam and Laila, who belongs to different generation and class in Afghanistan. Miriam and Laila represent the women of Afghanistan. They both give the picture of an imbalanced relationship between men and women in Afghanistan where women are always positioned as subordinate or inferior. They don't claim any bright sight in their life due to the environment. Even from the religious perspective of Afghanistan, they are considered inferior or useless. The misogynist society of Afghanistan projects Islam as Gender biased or male-centered

There are 51 chapters in the novel, each of which is broken into four portions. The tale is broken into four sections: the first focuses on Mariam, the second on Laila, the third on Laila and Mariam, and the fourth on Laila alone. Through shifting scenes of emotions and characters, the plot is well-connected. The author creates an intriguing plot by creating conflict that is related to the background conditions at the time. Furthermore, the novel contains some intriguing themes, including a friendship between two women belonging to different generations. The conflict between modern and traditional culture is reflected through the character of Miriam and Laila. Mariam is the face of traditional women while Laila represents the modern culture in Afghanistan society.

Hosseini's depiction of Miriam and Laila unveils the sad and brutal condition of women in Afghanistan society. Miriam and Laila are subalterns and live under gender discrimination in society. Afghanistan is an extremist Islamic country where women get limited freedom and are treated as a slave of men. Through his female character, Hosseini narrates the voice of thou of sand voiceless women in Afghanistan.

"A Thousand Splendid Suns" received both negative and positive comments from the public. According to Ahmad, Mehmood and Dar (2019, p. 59), this story tells about restrictions imposed on women i.e., "[...] having their mobility constrained, being barred principally from practicing their lawful, societal and political entitlements". Some researchers conduct their research in A Thousand Splendid Suns on their study. Such as Dina Rezdha Works entitled "A Humanistic Approach on the Main Character, Mariam in the Novel 'A Thousand Splendid Suns'". The current research wants to critically analyze the character "Miriam" using Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs. The researcher analyzes Miriam's character and her needs which are one of the reasons behind her drastic step of killing Rasheed. Another related work was conducted by Laili Agustina entitled "Against Patriarchy in Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns (2007) Novel: A Feminist Approach". The purpose of this study is to unveil the patriarchal norms of Afghanistan Society and analysis them from a feministic perspective. Ni Wayan Agustini worked on a research paper "Feminism: The Cases of Mariam and Laila in A Thousand Splendid Suns". In this research, she discussed the feminist issues of Maryam and Laila in terms of sociological, psychological, and physiological aspects. Dr. Rukhsana Ahmad conducted research titled as "Thousand Splendid Suns: Rhetorical Vision of Afghan Women". The researcher discusses the discrimination against men in Afghan society and how these women struggle against this business over different periods. Priyanka Chaudhary wrote about this novel, focusing on the resistance and Afghan politics on status of women, titled as "Women Resistance and Power Relation in Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns".

This present research will evaluate the Subaltern voice and their discrimination in the novel, while also unveiling the misogynist projection of Islam as gender-biased religion. In this regard, my primary source of Research paper is Khaled Hosseini's novel "Thousand Splendid Sun". The analysis will be qualitative. Content analysis, as well as the textual analysis method, is used to explore the objectives of this research. The feminist perspective of Spivak will be used to explore the voice of women and the discrimination they faced in the novel. I will discuss the Subaltern's notion of Spivak that how women are kept ignorant and their voices remain unheard in a patriarchal society and using the Islamic feminism lens I will try to explore the misogynist interpretation of Islam in Afghanistan. The framework of the research paper will be extracted from the feminist work: "Can Subaltern Speak? By Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak" and "Islamic Feminism". Meanwhile, I will also use different feminist literary criticisms will also be used to support my research objectives.

The objectives of this research were to examine the status of Women as "Subaltern" in the text, to discuss the misogynist project of portraying Islam as Gender biased in the novel, and to analyze gender discrimination faced by women and their attitude toward this discrimination.

2. Women as "Subalterns" in A Thousand Splendid Sun

The novel "Thousand Splendid Sun" depicts two female figures: Miriam and Laila, who both belong to different generations. The character of Miriam represents the traditional generation of Afghanistan. She is uneducated and always dependent on the male member of her family. Her mother always taught her to compromise in front of male dominance. While Laila represents the picture of the conventional woman who is talented and modern. Laila enjoys a happy childhood with

freedom and education. Fate brought both the women together and they become wives of Rasheed, A cruel person who possesses an extremist Islamic ideology and always considers women inferior and slaves of men. Both the women experience multiple oppressions from their husbands Rasheed. Rasheed is superior or “west” to Miriam and Laila. Living a life of an inferior being with Rasheed both the women are silenced but they had a strong desire to escape this oppression. They tried to escape from the pressure but because of an unknown man, their efforts were in vain. Miriam and Laila suffered subjugation both outside and inside of a house due to the male-centered socio-cultural ideology of Afghanistan. By using the postcolonial theory of Gayatri Spivak Miriam and Laila are positioned as “east” in the story. According to theory, the East is submissive; weak irrational, and born to be a slave. Not as wives but also as a woman they are marginalized and voiceless. Rasheed, their spouse, represents the "west" and was an oppressor in their life. Miriam and Laila are subalterns who cannot and do not have the right to speak. Like other human beings, they want to express their desires and hope. They want to speak up for their rights as well as protest against the injustice of a male-centered society, but nobody is willing to hear their voice due to patriarchal ideology, authoritarianism, and feudalism.

Miriam a traditional representation of Afghanistan is a victim of the rigid patriarchal system. Her father can't marry her mother who's a housekeeper. She is a child born out of wedlock (Harami). In Afghanistan, man is allowed to married from multiple women. But Miriam's dad did not marry her mother Nana as he said that it is Nana who approached and tease him. So, it was her mother Nana's fault. In the Patriarchal society of Afghanistan, men are free to choose any woman for sexual pleasure without her. As a child, Miriam only wanted to join Jalil's family, but only for fear of embarrassment, did Jalil leave her. Her mother always warned her about men, believing that men are an index who always stretched her finger to accused women (Hosseini, 2013, p. 20). On another occasion, she said, the man's heart is way more different than a women's womb, the womb will not bleed because it has to protect you and give growth to you (Hosseini, 2013, p. 118). Miriam felt the harshness of society when her mother died and left her alone. Her father forced him to marry an older person just to get rid of him. She felt shame for being an illegal daughter of her father (Harami). She forcefully got married to an elder person Rasheed. Miriam was a domestic servant and a sexual object for her husband whose only intention for having a baby son with her: and when she got pregnant with Rasheed's child. She experienced the most beautiful feeling first time in her life. But after the miscarriage, she felt that it was a punishment for leaving her mother alone, which is the reason for her mother's suicide. Rasheed did not console her as he also believed that it's Miriam fault because she did not protect a baby. Miriam buried her fetus alone.

She could not give any child to Rashid and she accepted this painful fact. Rashid used to make him the target of his anger in every possible way. He abused her verbally, sexually, and physically because he thought it was Miriam's fault for not having a baby. Miriam lost her teeth because Rasheed forced her to eat stones. She lived in constant fear with her husband who considered her a burden. She is a subaltern who has no right to speak and protest against the cruelty of Rasheed. She accepted this as a natural situation for every woman. However, when Rasheed expressed his desire for second marriage, Miriam argued with him a little bit. Since polygamy is allowed and common practice in Afghanistan still Miriam cannot accept it.). This was the first objection Miriam raised in front of her husband. After living several years as a Subaltern, she raised her voice when she was afraid of losing a family. This tells us that Miriam has desires, and hope and she wants to protest against cruelty but she does not dare to speak up in front of her husband. Moreover, nobody is willing to listen to her in a male-centered society. This makes Miriam Subaltern whose only purpose is to bear and listen.

Rasheed married a second time with Laila. At First, Miriam did not accept her but later she accepted Laila because she didn't want anyone else to feel the same pain that she felt. Miriam and Laila protected each other from Rasheed's oppression. They became a team who suffered both from Rasheed and the Taliban (authority).

After bearing so much oppression, the Subaltern breaks the oppression and speaks loudly and firmly. Miriam finally spoke loudly and broke the oppression when he killed Rasheed with a shovel. She released twenty-seven years of anger, pain, and depression. After the murder, she protected Laila and her children and forced her to move to Pakistan for a better future. She accepted the fate of a murderer alone and accepted the death sentence for killing her husband.

This exemplifies how women in Afghanistan are generally treated as second-class citizens with zero power. They are oppressed and unable to express their desires. They would rather prefer to live in prison than in their house. Maryam did not regret it; she was not happy to live a subaltern life but she was satisfied that her immediate action saved someone else's life and now the person is living a beautiful and peaceful life. The life Miriam imagined to live.

Laila is the second female Subaltern who is a representation of the modern generation. She is a symbol of modern education. Her father was a teacher and she came from a different generation from Miriam. She was a beautiful, intelligent woman who had a friend who later become her lover. Her destiny brought her into a situation when she accepted Rasheed's proposal. Her family was killed in an air strike and Tariq reportedly lost her life in a Pakistan hospital and she became pregnant with Tariq's baby. These situations forced her to accept Rasheed as her husband. Although she knew that Miriam was disturbed by her decision yet still, she had no choice rather to Rasheed. Before the birth of their daughter, Laila was a darling wife of Rasheed but after the birth of Azeza Rasheed's attitude changed drastically. According to Ramphiphatthamrong (2020, p.55), "A woman's value in Afghanistan has often been measured by her ability to bear children, especially boys." According to Soraya (2015, p. 86), "Laila is a subaltern who dares to speak [...] Mariam is a traditional figure who is always silent in receiving Rasheed's abusive attitude."

Laila became "east" which was oppressed by Rasheed's oppression. However, Laila is a courageous Subaltern who dares to speak against the resistance. Rasheed became more frustrated after the fight with Laila and he released this frustration on Maryam by beating or torching her because Miriam was a traditional figure who bears an abusive attitude toward Rasheed silently. The resistance of Laila made Miriam's life more hell and torturing, Laila knew that Rasheed released his anger on Miriam and that is why she stops her resistance. "I give up ... I gave up. Do not do this anymore. Please, Rasheed. Do not beat her!" (Hosseini, 2013, p. 294). She cannot see the suffering of Miriam because of her. For the sake of Miriam, Laila stopped resisting Rasheed's oppression and become a Subaltern who bears the oppression silently.

Laila tried to escape with Miriam and her daughter Azzeza but her plan failed due to the custom and misogynist ruling in Afghanistan and after being caught, once again they both faced victim to Rashid's oppression. The oppression became more torturous when she got pregnant with Rasheed's son. She tried to abort the baby but her mother did not allow her to take this step. Her life is hell with Rasheed. She hated him more than anyone but she did not dare to kill his child. Motherhood won in front of violence and hatred. After the birth of their son, the condition became worse. Rasheed spoiled the child and their economic condition deteriorated day by day. Rasheed released all his anger on his wives. They became triply marginalized. Directly from their husband and indirectly from the Taliban and the financial condition caused by war. And when the oppression

became unbearable, Miriam the submissive, quite suddenly became a strong woman when her family was in danger. She spoke as loudly and forcefully as she could. She even dared to take extraordinary steps for the person who loved her unconditionally and whose presence made her feel like a sister. For the sake of her family, she fought until she freed them from oppression. There is no doubt that the presence of love and affection gives the subaltern the power to speak and fight. Miriam forcefully hit the shovel against Rasheed's temple and her action burst the emotional bubble of oppression. After Rasheed's death, they fled to Pakistan and live a peaceful and happy life. But this happiness was not obtained easily. Only Miriam's sacrifice made this impossible thing possible.

Miriam and Laila are subalterns and "east" of the male-centered society of Afghanistan. The culture, norms, and traditions of Afghanistan made the oppression more complicated and brutal. They accepted the oppression silently but for the sake of their family, they spoke and resist. Subaltern could not speak their voice, but when they speak there is always a force behind it and for Miriam and Laila this force is love. Spivak wrote that "subaltern does not remain, subaltern when s/he speak".

3. Misogynist projection of portraying Islam as Gender biased

In today's world, Islam is projected as a male-centered religion. Western supports this misogynist projection of Islam, which inhibit women to live freely according to their own choice. In Afghanistan under the Taliban regime women faced intense subjugation and punishment. Taliban declared that they will build a new law according to Islamic Sharia. The new Islamic misogynist Law strictly put influenced women's basic rights. The law prohibited women from holding any government jobs and wearing a veil and burqa is mandatory. Women were not allowed to leave the house without *Mehram*. If any woman was caught without *Mehram*, the authorities punished her brutally. They considered it as an order of God. Women were not allowed to wear white color not even white shoes or socks since white was the color of the Taliban. Even women were not allowed to open the door of their room. All schools are closed and women are not allowed to go to work. Those who disobey the law were beaten brutally and publically. In the story, Laila was beaten publically by the Taliban government when she visited her daughter without any *Mehram*. Moreover, the human condition in women's hospitals since women were not allowed to work and male doctors treated the women portrayed Islam as a male-centered religion. The brutal and biased religious policy increased abuse in women's life. For Miriam and Laila, the law of the Taliban was more abusive than Rasheed's attitude toward them. The Taliban Islamic sharia rules were announced through a loudspeaker in mosques and trucks. Such as women will always remain within their homes. Women should not be allowed to walk aimlessly around the streets. Under no circumstances they will expose their face. When they are outside, they will wear a burqa. They will be brutally thrashed if they do not comply. Cosmetics are not permitted. Jewelry is not permitted. They will not dress attractively. They will not talk unless they are approached. They will not look guys in the eyes. They will not chuckle in front of others. They will be defeated if they do so. They will not paint your nails, as doing so will result in the loss of a finger. Girls are not permitted to attend school. All-female schools will be shut down immediately. Working is prohibited for women. They will be stoned to death if they are proven guilty of adultery (Hosseini 2008, 248-249).

The above rules depict the oppression of women by using Islamic law, which was a misinterpretation or own interpretation of Islam by the Taliban. The Taliban claimed that this law preserved and save women's honor and further claimed that this restriction protects their deen and Islam. In the novel, Hosseini tried to expose the hypocrisy and evilness of the Taliban government toward women's oppression in the name of religion. Women were abused sexually, physically, and mentally in the name of Islam. Miriam was forced to do things that were against her desires but she

never raised her voice because she accepted that Islam allowed men to beat or control their wives. We can see that in the Taliban regime women were a chief target of their religious policies. They were tortured, brutally beaten, and publicly humiliated in the name of religion. Laila was brutally beaten because of the religious policies again and again. Rasheed supported Taliban ideology because he believed that it is an order of the Koran.

Miriam's execution shows the horrible reality of the Taliban regime. She tried to defend herself that Rasheed would kill her if she did not strike him first but the judge did not believe her statement. The judge was a Mullah and tried to justify himself according to his interpretation of Islam and sharia.

“What frightens me, *hamshira* (sister), is the day God summons me before Him and asks; Why did you not do as I said *Mullah*? Why did you not obey my laws? How shall I explain myself to Him, *hamshira* (sister)? What will be my defense for not heeding His commands? All I can do, all any of us can do, in the time we are granted, is to go on abiding by the laws He has sent for us.”

During the whole period of the Taliban, women were treated as slaves while on the other hand men were a master. He faced neither any kind of restriction nor any kind of subjugation in the Taliban's period. In the novel “Thousand splendid suns” Khaled portrayed the condition of women in the Taliban period. Rasheed approved the stereotypical image of Afghan men. Who considered women's subjugation as a male right? For him, Islam is a motivating religion for such violence and subjugation. Connecting the violence believe to Islam is a misinterpretation of religion by a male-centered society. There is no option for aggression in the Islamic manuscript. The character of Rasheed is a typical face of men in Afghanistan, who encouraged patriarchy and believed that it is the only mode of controlling women. Rasheed thought that the only purpose of women is to serve men; he says “a woman's face is her husband's business” (Hosseini, 2013, p. 47). He showed no pity for his wives beating them in a little matter, torturing them physically, mentally, and sexually. He believed that this is an order of Islam and considered it his duty to fulfill it. On the contrary, he was allowed to involve in any kind of immoral activity. Miriam found some porn pictures and magazines in Rasheed's drawer but she did not ask any questions regarding this matter because it was in her mind that Islam permitted men to carry this type of stuff. Rasheed believed that a woman is a commodity of a man and a legitimate owner who can deal with her in any manner. He was a narrow-minded and typical Afghan woman that once opened Miriam's mouth and forced her to eat stones because the rice was not well cooked. This projection gives an image that Islam is an oppressed and gender-biased religion. The misinterpretation of Islam creates misunderstanding among non-believers.

4. Gender Discrimination in AThousand Splendid Sun:

Thousand splendid Sun is a work of Khaled Hosseini that focuses on the life of women and the discrimination they faced in the patriarchal society of Afghanistan. The female characters faced sexual violence, physical violence, and psychological violence in the novel. According to Bharwani, (2011, p. 237), the novel represents different violence that women tolerate and it makes their life hell unbearable. In the novel, Miriam's mother was raped by her employer and Miriam was born out of wedlock. Laila and Miriam also experienced marital rape by their husband Rasheed. Rasheed was a cruel oppressor who physically abused his wives without any reason. He mocks, threatens, or insults them to maintain his superiority of himself over Miriam and Laila. He believed that violence is a method of controlling his wives.

Men in Patriarchal society put much emphasis on their name and reputation. They will do anything to protect their name and reputation. When Jalil knew that Nana is pregnant with his baby. He quickly shifted Nana to a remote area of Afghanistan just to save his reputation and name in society. He did not care how she will live in a hut that looked like a rat hole. His only concern was to save his reputation in society. Once Nana advised Mariam that, "It's our lot in life, Mariam. Women like us. We endure. It's all we have" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 18). According to Yaqoob (2018), women are not allowed to cross the threshold of their houses. They are confined under the four walls of houses under the clutches of their men. After the death of Nana, she forced fifteen years old Miriam to marry Rasheed who was thrice her age. Mariam was against this marriage. She wanted to make her own decision in life. Hosseini called her "a piece of man's patrimony". De Beauvoir gave the concept of the female entity. According to her, female entity "is losing herself, female is lost" (2011, p.3). Patriarchy crushes the identities of women as, "she doesn't possess anything, female is not raised to the nobility of a man; she is a piece of man's patrimony, first her father's and after that her husband's" (De Beauvoir, 2011, p.93). The forceful marriage brought full of pain and suffering to Miriam's life. She did not have the right to choose the clothes she wanted to wear. Mirzapour and Samadian (2021) state, "the author has tried to introduce Rasheed as the symbol of power and traditional man". Rasheed forced her to wear a burqa. She did not like the stuff but she had no other choice but to wear the burqa in a public. Rasheed once told her, "A women's face is her husband's business only." In Afghanistan culture, the burqa symbolizes the chastity of women. If the women step out of the house without this piece of clothing, she is considered a characterless, immoral woman. Miriam wanted to free herself from this brutal law of society that judges women according to their piece of cloth. This portrayal shows the subjugation of women where they have no control over their life because of a male-centered society.

Laila also showed her struggle to break the norms of Afghanistan culture. It is not considered appropriate for girls to have a friendship with a boy in Afghanistan. Laila had a close friendship with a boy Tariq. Everybody dislikes her attitude but she was a rebellious woman who did not bother in breaking the stereotypes of Afghanistan. Laila's traits as a rebellious person demonstrate that she is free to do whatever she wants as a woman, regardless of how society views her actions. She was raised in a religious society where the mosque, dogmas, and ethical principles value more than any human being. Outside of marriage, Laila had sex with Tariq, whom she loved, even though they had not yet married and it is considered a crime in Afghanistan. But Laila broke the law and culture.

In Afghanistan, women cannot leave the house without any male guardianship. In the Taliban regime, if any woman traveled alone, the Taliban beat them and send them home where she again faced oppression from her husband or any male member. When Laila escaped from the house with Miriam and Azzeza, authorities caught them and send them back to the house where Rasheed brutally beat them. The house is a prison for them where the man is an authority and control the women according to his will and wish.

Polygamy is another way of discrimination when husbands treat their wives unfairly. In Afghanistan, Polygamy is commonly practiced, where husbands' behaviors vary with their wives. Like in the novel Rasheed treated Miriam and Laila differently. Miriam became a servant after Rasheed's second marriage. Laila is beautiful and intelligent and immediately got pregnant after the marriage. This made Miriam's position more insecure. But when she gave birth to a daughter Rasheed's attitude changed drastically. In a patriarchal society, Son is preferred by girls, it is a belief that sons are a blessing and gift while girls are a burden and increase the financial pressure on a family. When Miriam and Laila got pregnant, Rasheed hoped that the boy will be born. But Miriam suffered from

miscarriage and Laila gave birth to a daughter who made Rasheed more frustrated and violent. And when the boy was born, the discrimination between boy and girl can be seen in Rasheed's attitude. He bought new toys, and clothes for his son but scolded the daughter. The preference for son over daughter devalues the self of women in patriarchal societies.

In Afghanistan, women also face discrimination in the health sector. Women are excluded from the health facilities and this important benefit is only for men. In the novel, when Laila gave birth, the hospital refused to give her any service because it was for only men. She delivered a baby without anesthesia and with extreme pain because the hospital which dealt with women did not have medicine or availability of staff. This condition showed the hypocrisy of a patriarchal society where a woman gives birth to a child while suffering from severe pain while men get health services without any suffering and pain.

Patriarchal society engraved its ideology on women. Women are objects who are taught to obey men and accept their fates regardless of what happens to them. Nana accepted the superiority of men, and her perspective on life became a symbol for Afghan women who faced discrimination in their daily lives. Mirzapour and Samadian (2021) argue about the character of Naina that, "she is angry at society and she transfers her fury to her daughter and makes her believe that society does not allow her to flourish." Nana was easily influenced by patriarchal thought due to her lack of education. First and foremost, it is a matter of education. Nana believed that school is unimportant for women.

Nana's belief in women's powerlessness also contributes to her acceptance of discrimination. According to Mirzapour and samadian (2021), "The ideology tries to make the colonized woman the way the dominant group wants in Afghanistan and this is what Nana believes in." She believed that Men are powerful, and they have the right to control women because they are stronger than women. Patriarchal society trained women to believe in the ideology which gives all the power and importance to men. They enforce their misogynist ideology and thinking in women's minds which automatically paralyzes their ability to speak.

5. Conclusion

In light of the above examination, we can clearly understand that the theme of the novel is the status of women in Afghanistan. Hosseini gives the picture of the inner lives of Afghan women and the oppression they faced in the rigid patriarchal society of Afghanistan. The novel shows the inferiority of women through the male interpretation of Islam. The novel demonstrates that religious texts and dominant religious preachers who control democratic countries such as Afghanistan are justifying the inhuman and barbarous treatment of women in society. Many academics have argued that Islam does not allow any kind of oppression of women. Despite criticism of this system of gender apartheid, The Taliban chose the path that distinguishes them from Islam's right path and 21st-century international human rights.

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