



Gender Oppression and Patriarchy in Khaled Hosseini's

A Thousand Splendid Suns

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Abstract:

*The present paper focuses the novel Khaled Hosseini's **A Thousand Splendid Sun** and it talks about the harsh laws and injustices against women in Afghanistan. Khaled Hosseini is an Afghan-born American novelist and physician. He has published three novels. These three novels are partly set in Afghanistan and his novels contain Afghan protagonists. Hosseini addresses the mindset in patriarchal societies whereby women are considered to be belongings and property of their husbands. Through these novels, we clearly understand the insight into the lives of women who have been dominated and treated as the second-rate sex. In Hosseini's second novel, **A Thousand Splendid Suns**, he holds nothing back from patriarchal marriage laws and abusive husbands are brought into the light. This novel centers on two women, Mariam and Laila, how their lives become intertwined after a series of extreme events, and their subsequent friendship and support for each other in the backdrop of Kabul in the 20th and 21st century. In this topic not only express the two lives but also it represents the whole Afghan women during 20th century in Afghanistan.*

Keywords: *Gender oppression, patriarchal society, second - rate sex and abusive.*

Literature has been a careful medium to project the human psyche, human feelings, desires and ambitions, notice and unnoticed communal activities in tangible form. Khaled Hosseini was born in Kabul, Afghanistan. Hosseini did not return to Afghanistan until 2001 at the age of 36, where he "felt like a tourist in [his] own country". Hosseini has pointed out that he views the novel as a "mother-daughter story". The situation for Afghan girls and women leftovers unacceptable. Even though they concentrated efforts to improve their freedom, rights, and quality of life. In 2011 global survey, Afghanistan was named as the "world's most dangerous country in which to be born a woman."¹

After the departure of the communists from the country, the Islamic organization Taliban had taken over the country and had imposed the inhuman and barbaric Islamic law on the country. Under this law, non-Muslims were racially rinsed out, religious racism was institutionalized, gays were killed, and women were tortured and kept under strict and inhuman control of men. Hosseini was watching all of this with pain and disgust. He wanted to tell the world Afghan country not only based on fundamentalism. But the country was taken over by the Taliban. So he writes the novels it based on his experience.



The word Taliban literally means "a student studying the Islam religion". The Taliban force follows a stricter version of Islam. Many believe that the Taliban's interpretation of Islam is false. It is much more intolerant than Islam was intended to be.

In 1996 Afghanistan, the Taliban took control and the status of women was declined:

- ❖ A woman dressed in a burqa (always be covered completely whenever in public)
- ❖ Education for women is not necessary
- ❖ If woman's little skin was exposed, she would be beaten
- ❖ Women who no longer have a living male relative.
- ❖ Banned from accessing healthcare delivered by men (with women forbidden from working, healthcare was virtually inaccessible)
- ❖ Banned from being involved in politics or speaking publicly



Fig 2: A woman dressed in a burqa. Afghan woman and boy walk by a tank in Kabul, 2004.





Fig 1: Taliban religious police beating a woman in Kabul filmed by RAWA on 26 August 2001. This photo is caught from video that was recorded by RAWA in Kabul using a hidden camera. It shows two Taliban from department of Amr bil Ma-roof beating a woman in public because she has dared to remove her burqa in public.

Hosseini's second novel, A Thousand Splendid Suns talks about the lives of two Afghan women Mariam and Laila. And their lives become knotted after a series of harsh events, and their following friendship and support for each other in the backdrop of Kabul, Afghanistan. It is divided into four parts that focus on individual stories, first one is about Mariam, second one is about Laila, third one is about the relationship between the two women, and the fourth part is about Laila's life with Tariq in part four.

The title of the book comes from a line in the Josephine Davis translation of the poem "Kabul", [2] by the 17th century Iranian poet Saib Tabrizi:

*"Every street of Kabul is enthralling to
the eye
Through the bazaars, caravans of
Egypt pass
One could not count the moons that
shimmer on her roofs
And the thousand splendid suns that
hide behind her walls"*

In an interview, Khaled Hosseini explains, "I was searching for English translations of poems about Kabul, for use in a scene where a character bemoans leaving his beloved city, when I found this particular verse. I realized that I had found not only the right line for the scene, but also an evocative title in the phrase 'a thousand splendid suns,' which appears in the next-to-last stanza." [3]

A Thousand Splendid Suns is the story of the women of Afghanistan. It is told through the pains and hardships of two women. Mariam is an illegitimate child, a harami, and she was abandoned her mother because of her mother's death. It tolerates the dishonor of it all her life. She is married to an older man Rasheed. He is thirty years older than Mariam, who revolves out to be a brutal wife-beater. He forces sex upon Mariam and she becomes pregnant, but she cannot carry the child to term and she has a miscarriage. This happens seven times. Rasheed is getting violent and irritated with Mariam over her inability to produce children for Rasheed. And he abusing Marriam.

Laila is a young girl. She was living in neighbourhood of Marriam. Laila's childhood life is beeter one. she falls in love with Tariq, another Afghan boy in the locality. Their love is not possible in Afghanistan. The



attack of Taliban and their family is going on and Laila's and Tariq's families have to leave town. Their separations make them love. Laila thus loses her virginity. It is very sinful in Afghanistan. After that her family decides to leave town but just before leaving a rocket falls on their home and almost all of them die except Laila. She becomes an orphan and Rasheed and Mariam take her into their house.

Laila is recovering from her pains while Rasheed has intended over her. He is thinking of taking a second wife. His first wife is not able to give him any child. Laila meanwhile find out that she is pregnant with Tariq's child. She is a rush; in fright and she marries Rasheed to hide her 'shame'. She gives birth to a beautiful girl-child called Aziza. However, Rasheed is displeased for not having a son. He starts hates Aziza and starts beating Laila too. However, she develops a mother-daughter relationship with Mariam who protects her. They plan to run away but are caught while run away.

Rasheed be malnourished them for days and beats the hell out of them. The Taliban comes to rule. Rasheed falls on hard times financially and as he hates Aziza, his girl child, he gives them away to an orphanage. The Taliban prohibits women from going outside alone, without the company of a male relative. Laila steal away many times, trying to visit her daughter and is severely beaten by the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban fighters many times. Their lives are living hell but then one day Tariq appears at their doorstep. Someone was paid earlier to inform Laila that Tariq had died. Rasheed had taken care to that. But she is now pleasantly shocked to see Tariq. Their meeting is lovely but when Rasheed is told by Zalmai. Laila's son with Rasheed, he beats both women and is about to kill Laila, when Mariam kills Rasheed with a shovel. It is a fundamental sin in Islam for a woman to kill a man, and if he happens to be her husband then it is even worse.

Mariam is ordered by the Taliban to be publicly killed and she is killed in the open. Laila and Tariq can do nothing. They escape to Pakistan along with Aziza and Zalmai. They start building their lives and after some years, after the Taliban is defeated they return to Afghanistan. They decided to run the orphanage and decide to name their unborn daughter Mariam in the memory of the woman who saved them.

Rasheed's brutaliy and Taliban's tyranny over the woman destroy the life of Mariam. Not only Mariam similarly many Afghan women oppressed by male – dominated society. A Patriarchal society consists of a male-dominated power. This power ruled society and the relationship also. Through the novel of Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Sun* explores gender oppression and patriarchy.

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International Conference on Multidisciplinary approaches in Social Sciences, Humanities and Sciences

Sri S.Ramasamy Naidu Memorial College, Sattur, Tamil Nadu, India

(MASHS-18)



14th December 2018

www.conferenceworld.in

ISBN:978-93-87793-61-3

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