

An Outcome of Gender Subjugation: Analyzing Major Female Characters in Khaled Hosseini's, 'A Thousand Splendid Suns'

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To Cite this article: Humagain, S. (2025). An outcome of gender subjugation: Analyzing major female characters in Khaled Hosseini's, 'A Thousand Splendid Suns'. *International Research Journal of MMC*, 6(4), 141–154. <https://doi.org/10.3126/irjmmc.v6i4.85303>

Submitted: 31 August 2025 **Accepted:** 8 September 2025 **Published:** 30 September 2025

Abstract

This research explores the women's roles, their position, and the men's attitudes towards them in the Afghan society as reflected in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) with reference to the political disorder, the socio-cultural structures and the exercise of the male- supremacy in the family. It exposes the patriarchal manacles over the female characters, their journey from the subjugated status to the realization of being stereotyped and making revolutionary stage. Based on the qualitative approach, the feminist tool has been applied for the textual analysis. By enduring the various obstacles contradictory to the feminism such as the sexual maltreatment, the banishment, the early marriage, the polygamy, the political anarchy, Taliban dogmas, the male atrocities, the research findings justify the repressive condition of the Afghan women, and how eventually they succeed to unshackle themselves through uprising, struggle and harmony.

Keywords: Afghan society, feminism, patriarchal manacles, suppression, Taliban, women

1. Introduction

In the novel '*A Thousand Splendid Suns*', one major character, Mariam begins to undergo the gender subjugation of her husband, Rasheed, who threatens her, "A woman's face is her husband's business"(Hosseini 69). The women are made powerless. They avoid taking pleasure in authority, chance, advantage and acknowledgment in the same way as men. They are occupied owing to limitations forced by customs and culture (Kondemo 1). In order to subjugate the females certain socio-cultural stereotypes are created and power is centered on the male and females are made powerless. "The closer you get to the higher spheres of power, the worse the situation: women are conspicuously underrepresented. Hosseini describes the sure-to-be condition of Mariam after she enters the house of Rasheed as the spouse. Her marital life looms before her just like "a cloud that draped the face of the moon like a wedding veil" (76). Not to mention that there are still too many women under the mark of gender stereotypes on the choice of the study and subsequent career opportunities"(Piano, Gerino and Marino 10). Such kind of power is exercised upon the female since the long.

While exercising patriarchal power females are represented with certain kind of images and metaphors, which are always negative. The male has the sole authority upon the female. "Authority is a relational rather than as an one-sided exercise of power, and [...] this relation exists for the benefit of the one subject to authority rather than for the benefit the one who exercise authority" (Heaner 143). Domination of male authority is clearly seen. In the novel Nana teaches Mariam of the prejudicial exercise of the power against the women? She advises her that, "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" (7). Females are considered as the weak and meek creature "These relations of domination and the existence of gender relations themselves have been concealed in a variety of ways, including defining women as a question' or the 'sex' or the 'other' and men as the universal (or at least without gender)" (Flax 175). As this statement says males are considered as superior and females as inferior. The women are represented as helping hand of the male and represented as secondary beings.

The feminism advocates the equality for women and men and move their topical focus and assumptions away from men's experience and viewpoint. "As long as she thinks of a man, nobody objects to a woman thinking" (Woolf 6). The political and cultural movement tempts to establish equal rights and opportunities for women by shining light on legal protection for women and social problems that they suffer from as said by Whedon:

Equality is not a concept. It's not something we should be striving for. It's a necessity. Equality is like gravity. We need it to stand on this earth as men and women, and the misogyny that is in every culture is not a true part of the human condition. It is life out of balance, and that imbalance is sucking something out of the soul of every man and woman who's confronted with it. We need equality. (169)

Feminist authors and abolitionists made an endeavor to find solutions and issues that are misidentified by the historically male dominance within a society such as insistence on working and expanding women choices to develop their human interest, and their freedom of thinking and working and being equal with men in all domains. Consequently, for the abolitionists, this latter should be done to push for change in order to increase gender equality as advocated Richin the essay "Claiming an education":

Responsibility to yourself means refusing to let others do your thinking, talking, and naming for you. It means that you do not treat your body as a commodity with which to purchase superficial intimacy or economic security; for our bodies to be treated as objects, our minds are in mortal danger. It means insisting that those to whom you give your friendship and love are able to respect your mind. (Rich 610)

The poet's feminist prose Rich also related her opinion to the famous Victorian novelist Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre: "I have an inward treasure born with me, which can keep me alive if all the extraneous delights should be withheld or offered only at a price I cannot afford to give". Accordingly, Adrienne Rich insists on the responsibility of the self by the woman to be sure of her and not be shallow to admit any easy solutions or domestic activities like:

Marrying early as an escape from real decisions, getting pregnant as an evasion of already existing problems. It means that you refuse to sell your talents and aspirations short...and this, in turn, means resisting the forces in society which say that women should be nice, play safe, have low professional expectations, drown in love and forgets about work, live through others, and stay in the places assigned to us.(Rich 610)

In the novel, Rasheed compels Mariam to wear burqa. He wants her to be limited inside the veiling. He falsely cajoles her by saying “You’ll get used to it. With time, I bet you’ll even like it” (71). Domestic activities were denied and other meaningful tasks were the principles of feminism at its starting revolt: It means that we insist on a life of meaningful work, insist that work be as meaningful as love and friendship in our lives. It means, therefore, the courage to be "different"...The difference between a life lived actively, and a life of passive drifting and dispersal of energies, is an immense difference (Rich 610). She totally rejected the passive way in being responsible. Concerning this scenario, Mariam also objects to involve in the household drudgeries in Rasheed’s home. She bolsters herself and says, “Do you hear me? I won’t be your servant”(219). After the second marriage of her husband to Laila, she can’t stand her subjugated stance inside the home.

The research reflects the gender issues from different perspectives and theories, not focused enough to represent them as the socio-cultural victim, rebel and pursuer of the freedom altogether. The study focuses on a minute analysis of stereotypical reflection of the major female characters through the hide-bound patriarchy, male- dominated concepts and the masculine supremacy, not covered by the previous researches. The research explores the major female characters as the prey of the patriarchal prejudices alongside the political changes from the flexible to the severest rules, bad to the worst conditions in the Afghan society.

1.1 Literature Review

1.1.1 Theoretical Review

Feminism is a doctrine related on images and ideas advocating women’s rights for the equality of sexes, identity and freedom. Feminism tries to the reconstruct women’s activities, works and aims from female- centered perspective. It is concerned with disregarded culture as patriarchal culture, examine the experiences of women from all areas and classes, rejection of the marginalization of women, voice against constructed issues like a ‘secondary position’, "a second sex" ‘submissive’ ‘docile’ other etc. It seeks to liberate women creating new society in such a way that patriarchy is eliminated. Feminist thinkers regard feminism as different form the mainstreams as innovative, inventive and rebellious.

The misrepresentation of female is still practiced in this postmodern era too. Women, indeed, have been treated like animals, objectified or evilized, relying on the historical age. (Piano, Gerino and Marino 12). The women have been prejudicially categorized by describing them with negative attitudes. While exercising patriarchal power females are represented with certain kind of images and metaphors, which are always negative. "Authority is a relational rather than as a one-sided exercise of power, and [...] this relation exists for the benefit of the one subject to authority rather than for the benefit the one who exercise authority” (Heaner 143).

Females are considered as the weak and meek creature “These relations of domination and the existence of gender relations themselves have been concealed in a variety of ways, including defining women as a question’ or the ‘sex’ or the ‘other’ and men as the universal (or at least without gender)” (Flax 175). Women should be nice, play safe, have low professional expectations, drown in love and forgets about work, live through others, and stay in the places assigned to us.(Rich 610)Women subjected by ignorance to their sensations and only taught to look for happiness in love, refine on sensual feeling and adopt metaphysical notions respecting that passion, which lead them shamefully to neglect the duties of life, and frequently in the midst of these sublime refinements they plump into actual vice (Wollstonecraft 398). According to her, every man asserts his freedom and transcendence and considers women doomed to immanence. She states that the female entity" is losing herself, female is lost"(3). The patriarchal norms bypass the female identity at the extreme extent,"

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" (Beauvoir 93). As Beauvoir in her famous work, *The Second Sex* says, "One is not born a woman rather becomes a woman" (295). The women have been completely dependent on the male members in the family specially father and husband. The patriarchal mind-set demotes women to the state of subordination and vulnerability as the "victims of all types of violence" (Yaqoob 11) .

1.1.2 Textual Review

In the novel, '*A Thousand Splendid Suns*', the story begins with the word "Haram" which means 'bastard' and it encompasses the stigmatic existence of the lives of the two female characters, Mariam and Laila. Silima views, "Mariam is delineated as an outcast who is a source of disappointment and shame to her mother whom she renders as a social outcast" (456). Yidiary and Nejat study the oppressive and traditional Afghan society where women characters in the novel try hard to gain freedom in their capacities as much as conditions allow them to (57) .

In the novel, Mariam and Laila stand for typical Afghan women who are victimized and tend to be treated as the possession, the objects or pets. The Afghan law is quite biased against them and practiced male dominance as a lawful system of the country (Dhakal 232). According to Bharwani, the novel reflects a variety of violence the women undergo and it covers their lives with an account of perpetual violence. In addition, it also explains union of a common identity is constructed by the women to fight the violence that they encounter mutually (237). Young asserts that a systematic violence occurs when members of a group learn to live with fear of attacks with no intention but damaging, humiliating or destroying the person (61).

This novel does not only focus on the catastrophe of Mariam's life. Instead, it is an inevitable fate of lots of women. A woman is oppressed high and low" (Jana 134). Souissi represents the views of Hosseini that he "draws the human face of the country that has been rarely portrayed before" (492). His characters with unique and stark features illustrate the ordinary, but real Afghans. In an interview, Hosseini says, "I found myself thinking about the resilient woman over and over. There is no woman that I met in Kabul inspired either Laila or Mariam; faces or stories were always with me, and a good part of my inspiration for this novel came from their collective spirit"(Maurya 327). Hosseini imagines of the bitter reality of the Afghan women and their experiences of discrimination creating the fictional characters relevant to the society.

Patriarchy burdens the males with the rights but the females are deprived of them. According to cultural critic Hooks, "Patriarchy is political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence" (2). Sebastian views, "*A Thousand Splendid Suns* closely depicts the strong imposition of patriarchy in which women were marginalized, abandoned, betrayed, covered up, abused and punished"(52). These women characters were treated unjustly by all of the men including the Taliban. The power of patriarchy is rendered through illegitimacy, marriage, and gender discrimination. Illegitimacy is used as a weapon to slaughter the very essence of self-respect of the female characters (52).

The female characters, from the mothers to the young daughters, are the victim of the patriarchal supremacy and the governmental tyranny. But, all of them do not want to be subservient in front of the brutality of the men against them. For example, Laila and Mariam initiate the fire of revolution against such unfair issues in their society.

2. Methodology

This research is based on the qualitative research. It has followed the norms, criteria and rules of qualitative research to analyze the chosen text. The research studies the raised issues through the feminist ideology taken from the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini, the qualitative research turns out to be the supportive to analytically verify that how the female characters are stereotypically represented in the above-mentioned novel. As the primary sources of the information, the research makes a minute interpretation of the textbook, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini written in the fiction genre, i.e. the novel. To justify the given topics, the research has required the secondary sources of information from the different topic related articles, the researches, theses, books taken studied in the library and the internet. The research has been accomplished by accompanying the systematic processes and duly citing the resources to verify the above mentioned the topic and construct the new ideology and argument.

3. Discussion

The study predominantly reflects the male brutality over three characters: Nana, Mariam and Laila. The study primarily reveals the constant subjugation of Rasheed against his wives, Nana and Mariam. Because of the forces of Soviet military, during the Afghanistan war people highly suffered. After the war, the condition of women exacerbated in Afghanistan. When a large number of the Afghan people undergo the Taliban regime, women endure evident, remorseless and over and over brutal misfortune, including the defiance of fundamental human rights, veiling, isolation and severance (Skaine 7). The women are severely victimized under the issues like loss of identity, forced marriage, physical torture as well as mental torture given by their own male partner. Afghan women were not allowed to do anything without the acknowledgement of their husbands.

This novel can be illustrated as a window to a society where the system undervalues equality, autonomy, and civil rights in order to support hierarchy, grip, and oppression (Null and Suellen 125). The novel shows the deprivation of the female rights, inferiority of their roles and status and the plight of the domestic violence exerted by the male supremacy towards them.

Nana informs her daughter, Mariam about her nearest marriage in the past. But the relatives of the suitor desert to proceed ahead the marital ritual due to her illness, jinn as reiterated by Nana. Concerning this situation, Sundaresan, Sumathi and Kolappadhas view that her illness, perhaps epilepsy, or as she names it, her Jinn, occurred to her obviously prior to the engagement was accomplished and the suitor's family forsook her. This abandonment was a humiliation that Nana communicated with the daughter to her death (499). At that time also, Nana is treated as the discarded lady. She is considered to be of no use for her family.

In one of the incidents, Mariam, the daughter of Nana happens to drop the sugar bowl down. Then, Nana scolds at her by gritting her teeth and says, "You are a clumsy little harami. This is my reward for everything I've endured. An heirloom-breaking, clumsy little harami" (Hosseini 4). Akhtar and et al. sketches the characterization of Mariam by stating that the mother describes Mariam as an exile and the product of her mother's unhappiness, consternation, dissatisfaction and disgrace (115). Mariam understood that 'harami' means "an illegitimate person who would never have legitimate claim to the things other people had, things such as love, family, home, acceptance" (Hosseini 4). This focuses on the fact, from the commencement, Mariam was not a preferred child, in addition, she became a girl, and the girl represented a distinct powerlessness.

Nana reminds her daughter of being rejected from Jalil's house after conceiving the baby. "You know what he told his wives by way of defense? That I forced myself on him. That it was my fault. Didi" (Hosseini 7)? Nana confesses her mistake in front of Jalil's wives

though she was made to have a forced intercourse by Jalil. Mathew vividly reflects in her article that the situation of the female subaltern is the extremely atrocious of all tyrannical circumstances. They possess a depravity of consciousness with reference to their rights as individuals and often surrender obediently to being the sufferers of the dominating power exercise and life of oppressive service(194). The same condition, as mentioned above, looms in the life of Nana. Nana alerts her daughter that the society tags the women as the guilty one instead of the men. Nana said, "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 7). Nana reflects the bitter reality of the condition of the Afghan women who are always blamed as the guilty ones instead of investigating the case and exonerating them.

As Bijaya states in her article women are compelled to endure male ferocities as life partners and daughters. They undergo in train of their men's savageries in a social reality which endorses their low-grade stance (93) . The women are thought to tolerate each and every situation though it is the severest one in front of the male ferocities. Beauvoir expresses her views that how a woman is treated in the male dominated society " A free and autonomous creature like all others , a woman finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the other and reduce her to the status of the second sex"(391).

Nana was treated like the weed that needed to be uprooted from the house. She means to say that she was unnecessary burden for Jalil and his other wives. So, they decided to remove such hangover from the home. "Woman? Very simple, say those who like simple answers: She is a womb, an ovary(Beauvoir 41). Women are never treated as companions; instead they are treated as male's property. "To Jalil and his wives, I was a pokeroor. A mugwort. You too. And you weren't even born yet... A weed, Nana said. "Something you rip out and toss aside."(Hosseini 8). Nana remembers having undergone agony at her pitiable condition after she conceived Jalil's baby. She was banished from the family and left to remain valueless, down and out and isolated from the entire society.

Nana refers to the misery of the Afghan woman who should have the power to endure the ill-treatment of their male partner. "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".(Beauvoir 93) . Nana is here represented as docile and submissive victim of the male supremacy of her father and her husband. Similarly, Istikomah remarks that the system of patriarchy has audaciously supported women's inferiority to men in entire spheres of life. As a result, all the supremacy and power within the family, the society and the state turn out to be under complete grips of men. Meantime, women are only the substandard group of people(16).

The women are considered in the patriarchal society to be the subsidiary and subordinate to the males in the society. "Nana demands that the main lesson that Mariam needs to learn is to persevere. This demonstrates the social set up against ladies who were made to learn perseverance since their youth"(Sundaresan and Kolappadhas 497). Nana discloses to her daughter about the misfortunate condition of the women in Afghanistan. The women are subject to perseverance. Nana keeps objecting to the nature of Jalil:

Let me tell you something. A man's heart is wretched, wretched thing, Mariam. It isn't like a mother's womb. It won't bleed, it won't stretch to make room for you. I'm the only one who loves you. I 'm all you have in this world, Mariam, and when I'm gone you'll have nothing. You'll have nothing. You are nothing.(Hosseini 27)

Nana clarifies the role and status of the Afghan women under the male domination. She says that no one will care and love her after her death. The value of the daughter turns out to be nonentity after the death of the mother.

After Nana's suicide, Mariam is taken to Jalil's house. Mariam has been tagged as the cause of embarrassment to the entire family. Mariam is forced to marry to the man, Rasheed double of her age. The haphazard surroundings inside the home provoke her to recall the misery happening to her life and make her feel uprooted displaced, like an intruder on someone's life. Rasheed once talks about the superstitions. He blames the women for thinking over the superstitions. "In his opinions, superstitions were largely a female preoccupation"(Hosseini 63). Mariam is here tagged as superstitious woman as blamed by Rasheed. Rasheed deliberately underestimates Mariam putting her into the category of illiteracy only clinging to the outdated obsessions.

Singh presents the pitiable condition of the Afghan women in her article regarding the hide-bound view of them below that this is notably the argument expressed in which women are just possessions to the male superiority(Singh89). Thus, the Afghan women are just deemed as the puppet of submissiveness, docility and entertainment. Rasheed glaringly gives menace to Mariam and wants to confine her to act as he desires. Rasheed brings a burqa and helps her to put on it. Mariam feels quite strange wearing it for the first time:

The padded head piece felt tight and heavy on her skull, and it was strange seeing the world through a mesh screen. She practiced walking around her room in it and kept stepping on the hem and stumbling. The loss of the peripheral vision was unnerving, and she didn't like the suffocating way that the pleated cloth kept pressing against her mouth.(Hosseini 71)

Here, Rasheed has forced her to wear the burqa with an intension to isolate her from the watch of the public, block her conversation with others and to keep even other females to be around her. "He wants to be officious to limit her in the vicious circle" (Choudhury 214). Rasheed circumscribes her to be hidden from the public contact. Mariam is treated as an isolated, mute and untouched from others.

Rasheed fully controls over the wife. Subsequent to the cycle of miscarriages, the days of Mariam loom ahead dark, miserable and contemptible. She begins to undergo the hardships in Rasheed's home. Not only this derogation, does he degrade her to the extent of the childishness and vapidness. She is valueless nonentity in front of Rasheed, "You are nothing, do you? You're like a child. Your brain is empty. There is no information in it ...It wasn't easy tolerating him talking this way to her, to bear his scorn, his ridicule, his insults, his walking past like she was nothing but a house cat (Hosseini 98)." Rasheed always considers a woman as an object that meets the satisfactions of the males and produce children. After the marriage, he always ignores expectation of Mariam and provides her no time to settle down in an unfamiliar place (Yeasmin 385). He shows his abusive nature when his expectation of being the father of the son goes failed from the second wife Mariam.

Chaudhary views about the life of Mariam after the failures that subsequent to her marriage to Rasheed, Mariam is taken away to Kabul where he identifies her as an object for pleasure, domestic brutality, sexual desire and reproducing device just for the wish of a son and gets severe for her successive miscarriages(5457). She cannot fulfill the patriarchal desires of her husband to deliver the male child. Then, she is ignored by her husband. Tilwani says that women in this society are expected to give birth to boys only(30). A mounting plenty of domestic tyrannies she underwent let them fade away(Li and Liu 1921). All these changed behaviors of Rasheed make Mariam feel burden to him and out of the use. Actually, Rasheed locks her in the category of no value or importance for he can't meet his selfishness of having the son.

Not only this, Rasheed keeps reacting to the cooking of Mariam in a terrible way. He roughly flings the foods all over the room. "He flounces out of the room banging the door loudly" (Hosseini 102). Then he enters the kitchen again with the handful of the pebbles. He forcefully opens her mouth agape. His powerful hands clasped her jaw. He shoved two fingers into her mouth and pried it open, then forced the cold. She just keeps bearing his mood shifts and blows one after another in such a way that:

"Good," Rasheed said. His cheeks were quivering. "Now you know what your rice tastes like. Now you can know what you've given me in this marriage. Bad food and nothing else." Then he was gone, leaving Mariam to spit out pebbles, blood, and the fragments of two broken molars.(Hosseini 103)

Mariam puts up with the torrents of pains, punishments and resentments wreaked upon her. Mariam is terrified by the volatile natures of Rasheed. Li and Liu illuminate that a plentitude of domestic brutality she underwent let them fade away. In such a context, Mariam can merely be heedful to manage everything. She was scared with her unimportant blunders to explode his extreme fury (Li and Liu 1921). Mariam becomes the victim of her husband's maiming. She becomes burden to his life.

As consequence of the bombards in Kabul, Laila gets isolated from her parents after their sudden demise before preparing to flee to Pakistan. Now, Laila is in the home of Rasheed and Mariam who succor her to recover from the lethal injury. Rasheed tries his best to cajole her into his infatuation. Actually, he wants to make up his dissatisfaction with Mariam from Laila. So, he butters up Laila to fulfill his desires unfulfilled by Mariam.

It was the staged delivery. Like a performance. An attempt on his part, both sly and pathetic, to impress. To charm...Mariam understood with a dread that was like a blinding whack to the side of her head that what she was witnessing was nothing less than a courtship.(Hosseini 207)

Despite the incessant reprisals and protests of Mariam, Rasheed insists on legalizing the relation with Laila by getting married to her. Rasheed gainsaid to her "What of it? What? She's too young, you think? She's fourteen. Hardly a child. You were fifteen, remember? My mother was fourteen when had me. Thirteen when she married" (Hosseini 208).In this situation, Rasheed repeatedly advocates the early marriage and polygamy of the women. In front of Rasheed's hypocritical nature, Mariam falls the victim of the polygamy. Rahimi expresses her views that the entire Afghan ethnic group has polygynous status. It exemplifies that the social norms of Afghanistan conventionally allow men to marry more than one wife(12) . Even the society also advocates the polygamy, which has ignored the value of the woman.

Laila wants to assure him of her virginity before the sexual intercourse with Rasheed. Otherwise, they become the victim of their hatred and banishment. Likewise, Bijaya states that the focus on virginity is pertinent only to women in a society of patriarchy (92). It is no matter for the men how many women they have slept with but the women's single sleeping partner should be the single one. "Sometimes she could smell Rasheed on her. She could smell his sweat on the girl's skin his tobacco, his appetite"(Hosseini 215).Regardless of Laila's teenage and her prematurity, Rasheed only intends to meet his desire by forcefully making her sleep with him. Laila becomes the means of his sexual fulfillment.

Rasheed butters up Laila outwardly. Raheed also compares both of his wives to different cars- Mariam to Volga and Laila to Benz (Hosseini 216). Mariam is now of no use to him because he has got to use the new means of facility like the car. After the delivery of the child, Aziza, Mariam and Laila become close friends. They co-operate and support to each other. But, Rasheed grows irritated with their attachment and detests their union. "I should have known that you'd corrupt her," Rasheed spat at Mariam. He swung the belt, testing it against his own thigh. The buckle jingled loudly (Hosseini 235).Laila begs him not

to beat her but he keeps pouncing over her. He terrifies Mariam so that “she is too stunned to do anything”(Hosseini 235). At this time, Rasheed pours torrents of his fury on both of them. “I’m on to you,” he said, slinging the belt over his shoulder. “I’m on to you both. I won’t be made an *ahmaq*, a fool, in my own house.” He threw Mariam one last, murderous stare, and gave the girl a shove in the back on the way out (Hosseini 235). Rasheed starts exerting the physical brutality upon both females. He makes both of them prey of his attacks.

The impact of political turmoil keeps on occurring in Kabul in the leaps and bounds. Mariam doesn’t sleep at one night. She keeps watching the scenes outside: snow falling soundlessly. Mariam is unknown to the consequence of the wars like murders, rapes etc.

She had passed these years in a distant corner of her mind. A dry, barren field, out beyond wish and lament, beyond dream and disillusionment. There, the future didn’t matter. And the past held only this wisdom: that love was a damaging mistake, and its accomplice, hope, a treacherous illusion intolerable. (Hosseini 250)

Mariam seems to cling to the memory about despair of her life which she has been undergoing for years. She sees the same misfortune in the life of Laila and Aziza. Despite all his brutal treatment, Mariam applied only one advice that her mother inculcates her to endure. (Rani 668). Anyway, she seeks to console her suffering heart through the growing relation with them.

But this concept escapes beyond from the hide-bound concept of Rasheed. He never treats positively with the wives. After coming home, Rasheed turns furious like the monster and starts his recurring habit of wreaking physical punishments upon both of the wives, even terrible torments on Aziza, too.

Laila didn’t see the punch coming. One moment she was talking and the next she was on all fours, wide-eyed and red-faced, trying to draw a breath. It was as if a car had hit her at full speed ...she realized she had dropped Aziza, that Aziza was screaming ...Hair was ripped from Laila’s scalp, and her eyes watered with pain...he let go of Laila’s hair, and she felt the toe of his shoe connect with her left buttock. She howled with pain as he slammed the door shut. A key rattled in the lock. (Hosseini 262)

Laila has been mercilessly captivated in the room with small daughter, Aziza. Then Rasheed reaches Mariam and starts beating her to the extreme extent.

Downstairs, the beating began. To Laila, the sounds she heard were those of methodical, familiar proceedings. There was no cursing, no screaming, no pleading, no surprised yelps, only the systematic business of beating and being beaten, the thump, thump of something solid repeatedly striking flesh, something, someone hitting a wall with a thud, cloth ripping. (Hosseini 262)

Likewise, Ramphipattamorg and Wasuwat view that the situations of the Afghan women are fully influenced by the patriarchal principles deep-rooted into the Afghan society and supposing the women as inferior to men (287). Regarding the nature of his incessant violence against them, Hawke views that when the violence occurs within the home, more frequently, the abuse is efficiently disregarded by the implicit silence and the submissiveness exhibited by the government and law-making mechanism(2). Rasheed pays no attention to the mourning, beseeching and writhing of the women inside the imprisonment. He becomes cruelest towards them.

During the Taliban’s rule, severe Islamic laws were reinstated in Afghanistan. The instructions issued to women reveal the atrocious prejudices perpetrated on women. The Taliban regime threatens the women. Rasheed takes the privilege from the strict rules

prescribed for women by the Taliban to oppress his wives. The Taliban released a list of laws for women to follow:

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 caught alone on the street, you will be beaten and sent home. You will not, under any circumstances, show your face. You will cover with burqa when outside. If you do not, you will be severely beaten... Listen. Listen well. Obey. Allah-u-Akbar (Hosseini 270-271).

The menacing and harsh rules of the Taliban confine the state of the women in the darkest cave, completely derailing them from the citizenship to the subservience. Regarding the extremist dogmas of the Taliban, Choudhury states that the men of the Taliban who analyzed life only in the gloom of the very old Sharia rules had created such illogical laws which brought about one of the severest gender discriminations in Afghanistan(271).

On this despicable condition of the women under the Taliban regime, Williansyah also says that in spite of the fact that Rasheed has no proofs, the law of the court will continue to trust him. Laila is sure to be condemned mercilessly as asexual treachery revealed in Rasheed's metaphorical inquiry that what she thinks they will prosecute against her (42). After this threat, Rasheed compels her to conceive another baby despite unwillingness of Laila. Laila becomes the victim of conceiving baby unwillingly.

Rasheed adopts the repressive and ideological structures in order to do violence against the women. Regarding his violence- oriented nature, Williansyah states that the suppressive structures advocate his brutal actions when the ideological mechanism merely holds up his acts of brutality for the time being, relying on the existing government and policies(85). Rasheed frequently misuses the harshness of the male –prioritized Taliban rules. With reference to the governmental dogmas, he terrifies both wives.

Despite the unwillingness of Rasheed to go to see Aziza, Laila dares to visit on her own in spite of the torrents of the tortures of the Talibs. The women must always be accompanied by a mahram, a male relative. But, the rule is not followed by Laila. She undergoes the severe punishment perpetrated by the Talib. "I'll beat you until your mother's milk leaks out of your bones." That time, Laila went home. She lay on her stomach, feeling like a stupid, pitiable animal, and hissed as Mariam arranged damp clothes across her bloodied back and thighs.(Hosseini 313) The Talib lashes out her callously without any listening her issues. The women become the double victim, one from the husband and other from the government.

Laila feels as if she has been treated like an animal by the Talib. She is severely lashed and maimed. But, she can't speak against the brutality of the Taliban regime. Similarly, as Mohanty argues that women have always been victim insecurity inside the boundary of the nation so that they are at all times unreasonably victimized by war, coerced shift, starvation, and other kinds of societal, political, and economic chaos(Shameem 63). The women never feel relieved in the throes of the harshness of the prejudicial political exercises one after another.

The Taliban regime depicts the despicable situation of the education system of Afghanistan during the Taliban regime. Pertaining to this stark reality, Skaine states that one of the devastating impacts of the Taliban's impositions on women working is that an age group of children are budding up illiterate since most of the Afghan teachers belonged to the women(9).The Taliban policy depriving the women of the right to work as the teachers is really a nightmare life for the entire Afghan community in the education sectors.

The course of Laila's life retrieves again as previous when her love, Tariq appears casting the sunshine upon her mundane life. She secretly keeps on meeting him. But, the

innocent boy, Zalmai tells his father her covert meeting with Tariq. This resumed affair maddens Rasheed with fury to the highest extent. Then, Rasheed fiercely starts whipping her out to the climax:

Rasheed swung the belt again...He caught her, threw her up against the wall, and struck her with the belt again and again, the buckle slamming against her chest, her shoulder, her raised arms, her fingers, drawing blood wherever it struck.(Hosseini 338)

Laila again pays the price for the date with her former lover. Her daring counts much. At this time, Rasheed intends to kill her by throttling her. Mariam tries her best to uncurl his hands from the throat of Laila. But, her effort turns vain. Mariam also foretells that he might kill both of them. "Had Mariam been certain that he would be satisfied with shooting only her, that there was a chance he would spare Laila, she might have dropped the shovel. But in Rasheed's eyes she saw murder for them both." (Hosseini 340). Then, she decides to hit him with the shovel and save Laila from his murder. Mariam strikes back to the severest assault of Rasheed.

In the imprisonment, a woman Naghma is sentenced to stay there only for the elopement with the man. But during the trial, the man blames Naghma for having seduced him in return. Then, she is sentenced to the prison for five years, whereas the man is released. Correspondingly, Ayalew states that:

This is a complete unfairness. . . In this case, son of the mullah and Naghma are the couple who are supposed to be in affair and thus planned and dared to elope, failed though. But we observe the patriarchal prejudice that it absolves the male from the same 'misdeed' they involved in and instead convicts the woman so that she has to spend five years of incarceration. This reveals the law is sightless toward women.(38)

Not only is this imprisonment, Naghma also threatened by the father to kill her as soon as she gets freed from the jail. "It was just as well, she said, her being here in prison. Her father had sworn that the day she was released he would take a knife to her throat" (Hosseini 354). The male dominated Afghan society unreasonably condemns and charges the women without any further exploration of the actual case. The men get exoneration from the law. Even the law is also prejudicial to the women.

With compliance to this situation, Williamsyah says that the law court also advocates the sexual offence by acting the role of dual standard between men and women, or supporting men rather than women"(41) Ayalew also reveals the state of partiality even in the time of investigation that the novel reveals amazing injustice prosecuted upon the women . . . she feels proud to tell him that she dared to do. However, he is failed to identify how and why she dares to explain to him that (38). Here, even the officials also present themselves as the irresponsible ones at the serious matters of the females. They insist on blaming on them and reek of having superior positions above the females. "God has made us differently, you women and us men. Our brains are different. You are not able to think like we can. Western doctors and their science have proven this. This is why we require only one male witness but two females ones"(Hosseini 355). The stake holders also espouse the partiality, bias and injustice dictated upon the women.

Concerning this bitter reality, Ayalew further complains to the treatment of the women by saying that this is a sign of the outlook Muslim men possess of Muslim women. As fictional works are the manifestation of social life, we are able to gain knowledge of this event that women get maltreated in such a way in courts where their cases are forwarded for verdict(68). The decree of the court is also riddled with the male – supremacy by distinguishing the men from the women.

4. Conclusion

Through the perspectives of stereotyping, the research has come to find out that in the Afghan society, primarily the patriarchy brought out such kind of stereotypes and restricted the females within the four walls of the limited area. The tag of subordinated womanhood, wifehood and motherhood was created to confine the women and these stereotypes have placed women in the state of the inferior beings. The patriarchal stereotypes constricted the women within the house and family. In order to keep the females within the house at first the patriarchy seized away the women's inevitable rights. For example, the major female characters in this novel like Nana, Mariam and Laila are sequentially deprived of their rights in the case of living their free life, wishing to get education, choosing their life partners, walking out freely without male partners etc. They have become the victim of the illicit intercourse, early and forced marriage, reproducing unwanted babies, second marriage, recurring domestic violence etc. The female characters are depicted as the inferior, docile and submissive beings just as the means of the males.

This research has scrutinized excessive religious, societal and conventional dogmas such as prestige, self-respect, fame, chastity and how they are commanded by hegemonic authority for the sake of depriving the female body and hindering their expressive freedom. The public demonstration of the female characters in a candid way is negatively considered in the Afghan society. They come to undergo alienation and exile all over their surroundings. In addition, denying an enforced wedding is over and over supposed as the violation of the native culture. Similarly, the females who fail to give birth to a male inheritor to hold up the family's name make women undergo a several kinds of violations such as physical, sexual and emotional brutality. Thus, the female characters have adopted the various ways of resistance and presented their attitudes towards the subjugation. The female characters mainly Nana, Mariam and Laila have exhibited varied attitudes such as inactive resilience to humiliation, lowliness, guiltiness, sacrifice, self-banishment, physical rage, female union, silence and even suicide.

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