

## LAYERS OF DISCOURSE AND GENDER RELATION IN KHALED HOSSEINI'S *A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS*

Priyanka Chaudhary

Department of Languages, School of Humanities & Social Sciences, Manipal University Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.  
Email: priyanka.chaudhary@jaipur.manipal.edu

Article History: Received on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2020, Revised on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2020, Published on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020

### Abstract

**Purpose of the study:** The research explores the gender relation and coercion on the marginalized section—women primarily due to socialized stereotypes in Hosseini's bestselling *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The paper deciphers discrimination among the Muslim society of Afghanistan. It leads to how the filial and societal norms, which women are expected to upkeep, gradually develop revulsion and motivation for resilience to bring peace in filial relations.

**Methodology:** In the context of postcolonial and feminist literary debates, this research is framed by Discourse Analysis of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Karl Marx, and Foucauldian theories on 'Othering,' alienation, and power relation.

**Main Findings:** It is found that the inflexible gendered roles in conventional Afghan society instigate the oppressed to cultivate insolence against cultural hierarchy. The female characters, three generations apart, an embodiment of Afghan women, show resilience against the discourses. Women, being more prone to being triply marginalized in the regimes of phallogocentric norms—Taliban dictatorship, and western ideologies of Soviet and American government.

**Applications of this study:** The novel is chosen to discuss this problem as it demonstrates Afghan women's conflicts through the heart-rendering portrayal of their positions and roles in the community. The protagonists develop a sisterhood to raise voice against the cultural institutions to seek peace in filial relations.

**Novelty/Originality of this study:** The novel is thoroughly examined under discourse related to gender relations and under feministic criticism, which is far apart when we talk about the women in third world countries. They try to gain their space and share not by keeping themselves in the centre similar to Eurocentric feminism; rather, they are more concerned with filial welfare instead of the 'self.'

**Keywords:** *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Afghan Women, Hierarchy, Khaled Hosseini, Gender, Resilience.

### INTRODUCTION

Bestselling diaspora writer Khaled Hosseini is an American physician who was born and raised in Afghanistan, one of the third world countries where Islamic extremists were upholding patriarchal values. Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* portrays men-women relationships, the societal cultural institutions, and the history of Afghanistan. Afghan society for standing with conventional norms does not give space to its females. It represents four Afghan women Nana, Mariam, Laila, and Aziza, to illustrate almost all age group experiences in conventional Afghan society, who were raised three decades apart and gathered in a series of largely tragic events. Penned by one of the most famous contemporary diasporic writers, Khaled Hosseini, who is widely acclaimed for his debut masterpiece *The Kite Runner* painting father-son relationship.

During the wars in Afghanistan, the condition of women has become increasingly miserable. The challenges of Afghan womanhood and miseries like forced marriages, no freedom, loss of identity, the limited room in each sphere, and domestic violence are clearly portrayed in diasporic writings like Nadia Hashimi and Khaled Hosseini. Afghan women have seldom freedom of thoughts and expression of their wills. The novel also seeks a hope for the dream of women empowerment against the repressed suffering of Afghan women through the character of Mariam and Laila. Khaled Hosseini through his female characters wants to narrate the plot by giving the voice to the voiceless and unheard thousand splendid women who can be the future and hope of Afghanistan.

"I had been entertaining the idea of writing a story of Afghan women [...]. I went to Kabul, and I recall seeing these burqa-clad women sitting at street corners, with four, five, six children, begging for change. I remember watching them walking in pairs up the street, trailed by their children in ragged clothes, and wondering how life had brought them to that point...I spoke to many of those women in Kabul. Their life stories were truly heartbreaking...When I began writing *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, I found myself thinking about those resilient women over and over. [...] and a good part of my inspiration for this novel came from their collective spirit." (Hosseini, 2013)

"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir, 1949) states dissimilarity between gender and sex. Sex, on the other hand, is biological while gender is socially and culturally structured. The female is taught to be submissive, mild, to look attractive, and only to please the males. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* exhibits the stereotypical gender roles where women are supposed to act as they are asked to do by their father, brother, and husband. Deep-rooted religious and cultural citadels are part of the chief plot which hinders to bring forth sensitivities for the generations to come. The objectives of the study are to divulge the men-women relationship and the comportment of oppressed women in Afghan

society under suffocating patriarchal norms when they put their family at priority and on what grounds a docile and submissive woman transforms herself into a perpetrator and killed her husband. For many decades, women in Afghanistan have been struggling for the most serious issue of gender equity and equality and through the lives and characters of protagonists—Mariam and Laila, these questions of feminism and gender relation are created.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researches have been carried out on Hosseini's writings as he, unlikely, writes about the problems and issues that are prevalent in his homeland and refrains to write about the host country, identity in a foreign land, and feelings of nostalgia for the native land. [Lindsay B. Shapiro](#) found the thematic similarity between issues of Middle Eastern women like male domination and physical, mental, and sexual abuse that are covered in the bestselling novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and the journal articles in *The New-York-Times* (2010). In 2011, [Stuhr](#) found that the similarity between the condition of war-ridden Afghanistan and the Afghan women which seek safe shelter with hope (pp. 63). [Soraya in 2015](#) states the oppressor-oppressed dichotomy in the men-women relationship in the novel (pp. 87). "In his presentation, Hosseini seems ambivalent and reluctant. His *Suns* describes the story in a subjective manner that looks adding strength to Western discourse about Oriental stereotypes, rituals, and practices" ([Qamar & Shakeel, 2015, pp. 63](#)). In 2016, [Chona R. et al.](#) found "When it comes to leadership quality and level of education, a belief in men as superior to women within and outside the home is comprehensively apparent" (pp. 1). [Muhammad Joyia et al. \(2017\)](#) states "To be a woman is not bad, but to be a coward woman is really bad" and shows the suppression of women in Afghan society" (pp. 106). [Al-Dagamseh & Golubeva in 2017](#) comprehend the meddling of external powers in the internal affairs of Afghanistan which clears that "When talking about *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, elements of the neo-Orientalist and the child rescue discourses influence the Western masses into being more lenient towards the military invasion of Afghanistan (pp. 9).

Under the frustration-aggression and drive model, [Neupane & Khanal, 2017](#), found the Taliban's women confinement and unfavorable social and individual conditions like loss of son and wife impregnate Rasheed's aggression which ultimately leads spousal bitter relations (pp. 123). Apart from many other issues of Afghanistan, [Ashishkumar V. Patar in 2018](#) emphasizes on the problem of gender issues (pp. 1053). [Shu Hong, 2018](#) deliberates upon Hosseini's narrative capability by taking into consideration the focalization of Gerard Genette 2018 (pp. 6). Another in the series "the existence of noises such as patriarchy and the atrocious Taliban prevents the listener from getting the message. These noises lead to the failure of interpretation which prevents the voice of the subalterns from being heard". ([Kenas, 2019, p. 779](#)). [Suharni & Ekalestari, 2019](#) discusses the journey of the protagonist as the wife of a bad husband on the theory of struggle of Flexner and Fitzpatrick (pp. 44). [Muntian & Shpak, 2020](#) provide gender distorted structures of discursive practices in Afghanistan and portray the rural Muslim women active participant rather passive sufferers (pp. 217). In the study by [Rüsse & Krasnova, 2020](#), women like Mariam and Laila are studied as tricksters who continuously act to improvise the society by denial of the typecasts (pp. 556-576).

Being a diasporic writer, Hosseini, according to [Spirovska \(2020\)](#) found the narration of memory and homeland in his three novels as an autobiographical touch through protagonists Amir, Pari, Abdullah, and Laila (p. 30). [Mirzapour & Samadian \(2020\)](#) ends on an urge to take a societal step to change the status of women in the postcolonial era. It is not only the women who can change the norms but with them, the support of the dominant sex is the need of the hour (p. 30). The plight of marginalized women characters is explored by [CEVIK \(2019\)](#) in context with the third world feminist ideology and found them at the periphery. Matta (2019) emphasizes on the mimetic approach taken by Hosseini in his novels. He used the sociological theory of literature by Alan Swingewood in which he found the similarity between historical documentation and the portrayal of narration of events in the novel (pp. 145). In 2015, [Sam Naidu](#) stated, "contemporary literature among neo-Orientalist representations of the Middle East and the Muslim world. It notes on the contribution of the Euro-American intervention in military and cultural identities of Middle East Orientalists." (pp. 51). [Mgr. Pondelíková \(2019\)](#) informs the development of Afghan society (from the 1960s to the beginning of the millennium) as depicted in the novel and about intercultural differences of East and West cultural industry and found some similarities. It is not enough to understand, but it is also necessary to be open and tolerant of the "otherness." (p. 192). [Sundaresan et al. Laila \(2018\)](#) "additionally mirrors the conviction of class equity by keeping up and fortifying a familial association with bringing down class Mariam. (pp. 500). [Nayebpour & Varghaiyan \(2020\)](#) talks about the "Hazaras' violent and humiliating suppression" and "humiliating and uncompromising dominant sociocultural perspective towards the Hazaras. Representing the Hazara people as one of the victims of ethnic cleansing in the modern history of Afghanistan, Hosseini's narrative all in all fails to recognize a desired ethnic identity and dignity for the minority group." (p. 293) and the same thing has also been said by Naik through the lens of Carl Marx theory of social conflict. [Naik & Tiwari \(2018, p. 3\)](#) comments "people experience their lives against the backdrop of their culture, Hosseini wisely steers clear of merely exoticizing Afghanistan as a monolithically foreign place [...] for long what might differentiate Afghans and Americans." Transgression, ultimate transvaluation, and redemption is the ultimate theme in Hosseini's novels which is a sign of humanity in an ethnic tension era ([Khadawardi, 2017, pp. 90](#)). One study focused on the polyphonic nature of the characters as they are from different ethnic backgrounds. It showed "novelist's choice of the characters with their respective voices and the roles assigned to them are political, ideological and somewhat biased." ([Khan & Qureshi, 2018, pp. 387](#)). Afghan women, as [Benzahra](#), found in 2017, in the paternalistic society are vulnerable to the authority. Comparing Hosseini's women to that of Farah's women in *Links*, it

is concluded women across these cultures are devoid of rights and face religious and racial discrimination in the brutal hands of the Taliban (pp. 63). [Verma \(2018\)](#) considers the diasporic study in Hosseini's writings about memory, which remembers the trauma of his homeland rather than the host country (pp. 186). [\(Shihada \(2019\)\)](#) talks about women's rights and how a boy child is preferred to a girl child in developing countries. According to him, "peace and stability cannot be achieved in Afghanistan without the restoration of women's human rights and violence against them is eliminated." (pp. 38). "Against the backdrop of fractured milieu, the strong factor that gives strength to the characters is the bond of love and loyalty as reflected in Hosseini's texts" ([Nanda & Shokeen, 2014, pp. 39](#)). [Naidu & Shabangu](#) explores in 2015 the facets of Hosseini's novels as neo-Orientalist interpretations of the Middle East and the Muslim world by giving commentaries on the contribution of the Euro-American mediation in the military and cultural identities of Middle East Orientalists (pp. 40). From these works on Hosseini, it is clear that he is a master in portraying the filial relations and also the political regimes of his homeland.

## METHODOLOGY

The article uses literary theoretical and critical approaches in analyzing the texts and contexts taken for this study. Practical approaches to these theories are used in understanding literary texts. The descriptive and analytical approach is adopted for a deep understanding of the texts in connection to the social norms and contextual analysis. The critical analysis based on the feminist perspective of developing and third world nations and Discourse analysis is used to evaluate the novel.

## FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Soviets intended to wipe out Islamic fundamentalism prominently the atrocities and oppressive acts on women like a veil—a sign of modesty, piousness, and devotion in Islam. Soviets also advocated freedom and atheism, which perplexed women more in their roles. Women are offended in all the situations of colonial and anti-colonial or nationalism discourses. Hosseini writes, "The Mujahideen armed to the teeth but now lacking a common enemy, had found the enemy in each other" ([2007, pp. 155](#)). The mujahedeen— 'holy men' led by Massoud and the Taliban, encouraged young men to join the group in the name of savior of religion, but the aftermath they turned synonymous to rape, murder, and loot to own Afghan people. Taliban or Talib means a student who endorsed strict Islamic doctrines in the name of religion—*Sharia* law mainly on women. This is a misinterpretation of the *Koran* by *Ulamah* and *Mullahs*. Women consented to these shifting ideologies in the name of religion or intimidatingly or for the sake of peace and shame. Ideology, according to [Marx's \(1973\)](#) infrastructure and superstructure, base model, is the unreal fantasy world which is accepted gradually by the *proletariat* and generated by *bourgeoise*, and are the unknowing means of oppression.

Shame, according to [Scheff \(2000\)](#), a psychologist, "Shame and the Social Bond," is a fundamental emotion which is gradually built by the society. Everyone is afraid of social disconnections, as said by Sociologist Helen Lewis. Afghan women are continuously stricken by fear of social disconnect, fear of 'homelessness,' and 'shame' as Mariam always concerns and tries to please her father, Jalil, and later her husband, Rasheed.

Taliban regime also imposed fake fundamentalism over 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 male relative. If you are caught alone on the street, you will be beaten and sent home. You will not, under any circumstance, show your face. You will cover it with a burqa when outside. If you do not, you will be severely beaten. Cosmetics are forbidden. Jewelry is forbidden. You will not wear charming clothes. You will not speak unless spoken to. You will not make eye contact with men. You will not laugh in public. If you do so, you will be beaten. You will not paint your nails. If you do so, you will lose a finger. Girls are forbidden from attending schools. All schools for girls will be closed immediately. Women are forbidden from working. If you are found guilty of adultery, you will be stoned to death. ([Hosseini, 2007, pp. 278](#))

Thus, the Taliban run-down women from expressing desire and finally led them to voiceless, deaf, and dumb puppets as told Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak in her essay, "Can the subaltern speak?" (further [Morris, R., 2010](#)) Afghan women are subalterns and mute who are unable to speak for their rights and their voices won't be heard if they speak. The women of third world countries are doubly marginalized, firstly, by the colonizer and second, by the patriarchal society. Afghan women are exploited by diversified power structures in the name of religious warlords, Taliban, Soviets, and Americans intersecting marginalities. The incident of 9/11 in America strengthened the Western feminists to ponder on gender equity, equality, and liberation of Afghan women from religious fundamentalists' oppression and set on a mission for liberating brown women from brown men, mainly Muslim women. Another mission 'war on terror' proclaimed by Bush as a parallel civilizing mission for Asian Muslim nations. Although the first world nations, feminists do not have any lived personal experiences of brown women, and thus, no sisterhood can be here due to varied social, political, cultural, and religious ideologies. The western feminist concern and civilizing mission only established stereotypes and dominance over brown women without experiencing their situation. The idea of the universality of female expectations are also challenged by Gayatri Spivak. Western critical discourse speaking for the peripheralized lead them to mutism due to the non-existence of their participation.

Colonialism, patriarchy, and ethnocentrism work on the same model of oppression by using power, hegemony, and ideology. The weaker sex is controlled and colonized by their own phallogocentric society in their domestic circle and then by the “white men saving brown women from brown women” (Guha et al., 1988, pp. 297) as a civilizing mission further pushing back to the powerless subservient peripheral group. “Ideology is the shared ideas or beliefs which serve to justify the interests of dominant groups.” Gramsci’s (2011) ideological hierarchy keeps the dominant and powerful group in supremacy by manipulating the infrastructure.

Gandhi (2019) says that postcolonial discourse and resistance are mainly male-oriented, and women are bound in tradition and modernity. Postcolonial feminism invokes continuous debate between oppressive male-centric orthodox society and Western ideologies of the civilizing mission. Stereotypes and archetypes for women are set by the patriarchal group which defined boundaries within which women will be ideal, domicile, docile. Men, on the contrary, embrace liberty even for the evils like polygamy. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* portrays the incidents underneath conservative Islamic dogma and the Orientalist colonial rule. The compliance of womanhood, motherhood, wifehood is linked with only women. Power is structured on the basis of cultural ideology, which is only a construct of Afghan society and further women suffer the marginalization like Mariam as a child is accustomed to Nana’s and his wives’ abuses. With the nation going under the control of colonizer military forces, female characters are losing their blur identities.

The discriminatory and brutal patriarchal control, which is represented in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* from 1970 till 2003 and the victimization of females, is still pertinent today. Nana, deceived by her fiancé Jalil, an upper-class representative (bourgeoisie), and dejected by her father for being pregnant out of wedlock and bringing shame to the family name. Consequently, Nana is ordered to leave the house for a remote solitary place to give birth to an illegitimate child. Eventually, Nana turns a bitter and cruel woman, even towards her own child. “It was a relief to your father having me out of sight” (Hosseini, 2007, pp. 9) Nana says. Mariam is rejected by her father and this leads to her spent a night “On the street like a stray dog” (Hosseini, 2007, pp. 35) and has to endure the atrocities of a forced marriage to a man who is thirty years older: “there was no cursing, no screaming, no pleading, no surprised yelps, only a systematic business and being beaten” (Hosseini, 2007, pp. 268).

Laila, another protagonist, agrees to marry Rasheed, a man of her father’s age as she has no place to go and is expected to procreate a son. She endured a caesarian operation without anesthesia as women’s care and cure is restricted under Taliban rule and suffered beatings of Rasheed and the Taliban “one day a young Taliban beat Laila with a Radio antenna” (Hosseini, 2007, pp. 321). She showed resistance and fought back against Rasheed and endangered her life by going against the Taliban meaningless biased constraints. Aziza, Laila’s daughter, is rejected by Rasheed simply because of being a girl and sent to an orphanage home by Laila, and this act turned Aziza reserved, mature for her age, and seeks to be loved. Under the Taliban rule (1996-2001), women were not allowed to sing, dance, game, jewelry, cosmetics, nail polish, going out without burqa and male relatives. Afghanistan from 1960-70 was a modern society; the Soviet entered in 1970, the US government and Mujahideen rebel groups rose against the Soviet Union in 1980, the worst condition of women was in the decade 1990-2001. 2001-14, US interference.

The colonial powers controlled Afghanistan for more than thirty years, starting with the invasion of the Soviet Union. Women in Afghanistan often suffer directly or indirectly in a colonized nation. Two protagonists from two generations, Mariam and Laila, the former lives in a hut away from the town together with her mother, Nana. Mariam is a metaphorical child whose roots are always revealed in various versions of the history of Afghanistan related to the situation of women and phallogocentric society. Nana, the housekeeper in the Jalil Khan’s family, impregnated by Jalil later. Although customs allow men to marry many women under the same roof as Jalil has three wives at a time and had extramarital relations with Nana. Jalil decides not to formalize his connection with a maidservant, Nana, as he is a bourgeois male and can do anything for his enjoyment. Nana is marginalized in the hands of Jalil, his wives, and as a servant at Jalil’s house, which turns Nana talk in a negative tone to Mariam about Jalil. Nana repeatedly suggests that women are only sex objects for men and women must always show *tahammul* or perseverance.

In Herat, Mariam always wants to visit Jalil’s house and meet other siblings, but she is denied coming. As she celebrates her fifteenth birthday, eagerly waiting for Jalil’s visit, failing to it, she ignores the ban goes to Herat alone on a long journey. But Jalil and his family’s bitterness makes her understand her mother’s words. As Mariam comes back to her house, she discovers the lifeless body of her mother. Yet, her presence is not liked by Jalil’s family and she’s obligated to marry a rough old widower soon. Mariam is brought to Kabul after marriage to Rasheed, who perceives her as an object for lovemaking, domestic violence, lust, and procreating device just for the sake of a son and turns bitter for her consecutive miscarriages. If Mariam errs, no escape for her from severe corporeal whippings. Laila, on the other hand, a neighbor of Rasheed and Mariam, is portrayed as a young, intelligent, modern, and well-educated woman, love interest of a lame Tariq. The family of Laila is a farsighted, modern, and future-oriented family. Laila’s father, Hakim, is an extended reformer and educator. The transition from the reign of the Soviet Union into a civil war in Afghanistan between Mujahideen and Najibullah brings many families free. A rocket that destroys the building also killed Laila’s parents and, subsequently, learned that Tariq died. Laila loses all she loves at the age of fifteen and pregnant with Tariq’s child. Rasheed’s only wish for a son leads him to entice Laila for the marriage trap by taking the wrong advantage of her circumstances.



As the economy deteriorates due to civil war, the mindset of Rasheed becomes more and more temperamental. Tariq being announced alive, coming back to Kabul and is searching for Laila, as a result, making Rasheed furious and he starts deadly persecuting Laila. Mariam finally determines to kill him, who couldn't stand Rasheed's attitude anymore. Eventually, for the sake of Laila and her parents, Mariam is sentenced to death. It is based on the real situation of Afghan women. They are fighting for their identities and rights even today. It's therefore important to explore the struggling past of oppressed women from a man's perspective and the manner in which Khaled Hosseini's effort to give a voice for the subaltern women. This study shows a tool to know the subordinate voice in order to use it for any postcolonial research approach.

### Postcoloniality and the Discourse of Resistance

Females in postcolonial Afghanistan are facing indignity, loss, alienation, displacement, and hybridity in the literary world next to resistance. [Deepika Bahri \(1996\)](#) states the mix of politicization and Postcoloniality and political powers impose agency over weaker ones. Anne McClintock notes: "Nationalism is constituted from the very beginning as a gendered discourse and cannot be understood without a theory of gender power" [\(1992, pp. 355\)](#). Postcoloniality, thus, is synonymous with power hierarchy and gender issues.

Bell hooks argues, "for contemporary critics to condemn the imperialism of the white colonizer without critiquing patriarchy is a tactic that seeks to minimize the particular ways gender determines the specific forms oppression may take within a specific group" [\(hooks, 1994, pp. 203\)](#).

The resistance degree manages the fundamental element of postcolonial literature. The written discourse offers the impetus and vocabulary for the postcolonial writers to suggest opposition to their colonial values and to establish them. The indictment [Yahya \(1994\)](#) estimated the above factors mainly in literary works, which are important factors of the writing voice. It underlines the need for postcolonial writers not only to re-examine the arguments of the colonialist discourse but also to reproducing genuine identity and leading the world of the colonized people to the forefront [\(Yahya, 1994, pp. 11\)](#). This is also dictated by the colonizer and colonized "interweaving backgrounds" [\(Said, 1978, pp. 259\)](#). The difference between Western and indigenous cultures is obvious. Resistance rates can be taken into account from two viewpoints of feminist literature. The first to question the authority, the identity of women were dominated by the masculine or patriarchal literary practices. The second is the reconstructing women's selves, which puts the debate between women in the glare of male discourse non-existence or silence.

[Stephen Slemon \(1997\)](#) points out that in pedagogical and literary practice, these classes often disagree with the type of resistance. He created the first sense of resistance, as "an act or set of acts to release the people of its opponents and introduced the experience of living under domination and pressure so thoroughly that it becomes an almost independent principle." [\(Slemon, 1997, pp. 77-78\)](#). Act of resistance is determined by the female characters in the text with the help of their attitudes, behavior, and ideas in reaction to the physical and mental atrocities. An inescapable bias, incompleteness, and irresistible ambiguity of the literature, or any contradictions, or disputed acts employing the media of the First World to represent the Third World Resistance [\(Slemon, 1997, pp. 78\)](#) must be recognized by a theory of literary resistance. There, by considering the patterns for reflection and growth of the Third world, the extent of opposition to the influential entity that is the First World is calculated. In both examples, the literary resistance level is highlighted as a form of device or mechanism for showing the idea that it is not embraced or produced by dominant power to impose established positions or pictures. In the postcolonial conception, the main influential entity of the First Globe is perceived as per a replication of male-controlled society and values in the Afghan nation, reflecting the exploitation of women character in the text.

[Parry \(1997\)](#) developed a system for ways of showing resistance in the postcolonial context in her "*Resistance Theory / Theorising Resistance and Two Cheers for Nativism*." (pp. 84-101) One of its causes, however, is called nativism as it uses Reverse Discourse as a way of showing the degree of resistance. Reverse speech concerns the disclosure of the colonist's knowledge structure, which considers subjecting the colonized and consequently changing this framework, suppressing its dominance, and challenging its ethics [\(Parry, 1997, pp. 87\)](#). This phase reconstructs the current framework of a dominant discourse, which contributes to liberation by revealing its vulnerabilities and overcoming its negative patriarchal values. Parry's last aspect of the theory of resistance is a discourse, which is seen as the connecting aspect of postcolonial as well as feminist approaches. The gender debate, which focuses on issues related to gender in postcolonial experiences, is concerned with a decolonization process that undermines Western /masculine/colonized/feminine patriarchal assumptions. The patriarchal constructs were established in this approach through the reconstruction of the identity of women and the promotion of gender and female concerns as the fundamental aspect of post-colonialism.

At this point, the debate seeks to illustrate the context of Afghan women's situations, reflecting on the definition of a female limit on a conventional orthodox structure. The category attracting the convictions is mainly that of the Afghan style of life and culture with its emphasis on the traditional structure in this particular novel how the roles of women in Afghanistan are influenced by patriarchal feelings, as shown in many circumstances by the patriarchal social system of women in Asia and the Third World, as defined before the research is underlined. This is the explanation for Afghan women's pictures and beliefs, mainly from the traditional faith that influenced the younger generations. The role of a

slave to her husband and her family members is only the acceptable image of a good wife and daughter portrayed in the novel.

A good woman like Mariam must be her husband, who is considered her boss at all angles. In relation to her job and even thoughts, he controls her. To order to satisfy their partner, a woman must instead spend her entire life and wish him well in the way of his life. Hosseini demonstrates several specific components of the ideal characteristics of females that are accepted in Afghanistan as a default in their lifestyles. It demonstrates how the dominator's experience and patriarchal lifestyle inside the Afghan community's cultural/religious region are designed. This data has been approved as an Afghan women's ethos and has been approved as the ideal attribute of dominant female Afghan women. Therefore, the husband, like Rasheed, represents a master's figure about his wife.

The value of husbands in traditional society in Afghanistan is to recognize the identity of women so excellent that they do not have identification without the common definition of a man in a woman's social life. It is illustrated by women, such as Maryam and Laila, who struggle for their individual identity after the battle. Such roles are slowly managed to fit their husband's positions as ideal women. Such women are always a little motivated, in spite of the husband's shortcomings and misery, to spend joy and pleasure for their husband and not for their own. This represents a woman's purpose and situation as a simple means to replicate her husband, in addition, to being a slave to her and her close relatives and, ultimately, worthless if she cannot fulfill this task. It demonstrates the idea that joy and satisfaction can be found for a good Afghan wife in her husband's gladness. Therefore, in order to have the perfect picture of the wifehood for female afghans, she has to retrain her happiness and personality in order to offer herself to her husband, his needs, and pleasure her entire life.

The first aspect of this study of the *Thousand Magnificent Suns* that is Afghan women show how their roles are perceived, particularly in the general public and the woman's context. With the development in the novel and the further insight into the characters of Nana, Mariam, Laila, and Aziza, it is clear that women are treated in the traditional Afghan culture as second-class elements. Thus, the resistance level becomes an integral part of the development of other peoples' own identities, vis-à-vis societies, family members, religious beliefs, and goals, which implies ideas, events, emotions, and words. All women depict the act of resistance, especially their transgressions of standards and aims, epitomizes the distribution and individuality that unifies them as resisting bodies. As can be seen from the research, there is a major discontinuity in the life of Afghan women through context scenes and periods between community identity and individual self-consciousness. This discontinuity disputes because of the elimination and resentment of the issues in the social role of the beliefs. This culminated in a degree of resistance to the conditions and limitations of Afghan women's ecocentrism in this written text by the degree of resistance to the restrictions that arise from social roles, attitudes, and biases of lifestyle and culture.

The horrific plague of war, where individual lives, the struggle to survive, to create a family, and to seek happiness, are inextricably interwoven with history unfolding around them, brings two generations of personal characters together. Mariam realizes, in the end, what a fool she is. She kills to save Laila from death, her daughter. She chooses her own way of life for the first time. Laila or Mariam do not seem to have legal rights at any stage. Yet Hosseini carefully depicts both Laila, who raises her to a greater sense of entitlement and rights by her family, and Mariam, whose mother taught her how to survive, taking control of the conditions they were living to the extent possible. The tale of Afghanistan includes in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* a description of women's role and status in Afghanistan society. The condition of women in Afghanistan and women in general in this novel was very sympathetically and sensitively discussed by Khaled Hosseini.

Hosseini's work is written in a social, cultural context of third world nation where the gender roles are determined and prone to predominantly by social, religious, cultural, and political ideologies in which females have to render their consent mutely to their own oppression. The dominant patriarchal structure in Afghanistan still exists. It seems taking birth as a female in Afghanistan is the worst thing. The female characters show resistance varying from Mariam as child bearers, abusive language by Nana, changing attitude of Mariam towards her father and husband Rasheed, benevolent sacrificed wife, developing female consciousness, sisterhood between sufferers, guilt, shame, mutism, elopement, and finally murder. Women are represented as an object of surveillance where pious concerns are attached to their bodies like a thing and men are the protectors. Women characters are found to be chained in filial relations and showing resilience towards suffocating oppressive marks simultaneously. Consequently, the dehumanization, mystifying, othering, alienation, trauma, physical abuse of the female body, and soul by male chauvinism are decoded in this article.

## CONCLUSION

By analyzing the status of the female characters—Nana, Laila, Mariam, and Aziza, the power relation between binaries—bourgeoise and proletariat, dominant and oppressed, masculine and weaker sex, colonizer and colonized, center and fringes, and men and women—as stated by prominent critics is justified, and the latter is lacking. Women in Afghanistan are doubly peripheralized and objectified like puppets both by men and colonizers. The cultural ambience during Laila's upbringing is supportive of her to decipher resistance to oppression while Nana and Mariam lived in the state of the repressive environment from birth and unable to rebel. However, when Mariam develops sisterhood with Laila due to their common sufferings and fate, starts resisting and murders her husband Rasheed. Thus, through this

research, we observe how codes of social conduct, misinterpretation of the holy book *Koran* are deployed by dominant groups to mystifying, othering, subservient and alienate female body for their own sake for example rejecting a forced marriage and giving birth to a girl child rather than a male heir of the family lead to corporeal and mental trauma. Thus, it is analyzed that all Hosseini's women do not show any audacity even in the suffocating patriarchy and consciously tries to bear with these social ties to ensure peace at home but they turn rebellious only when their loved ones are in danger. Consequently, to shield their loved ones, they have to break their mutism and the imposed norms of a good woman by showing much courage and they leave behind the idea of peace.

## LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

This study only analyses the power relation in the men-women dichotomy portrayed in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* but does not explore the narrative techniques of Hosseini. Other perspectives like a psychoanalysis of the unconscious, narrative procedures, spatiality can be put forth for further exploration of the text.

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author declares that no conflicts of interest exist.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We thank our Dean, Prof. N.N. Sharma for his continuous motivation and convey our gratitude for the critical review made by the anonymous reviewers which for sure improves the quality of this article.

## REFERENCES

1. Al-Dagameh, A. M., & Golubeva, O. (2017). Khaled Hosseini's a thousand splendid suns as a child-rescue and Neo-orientalist narrative. *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 19(4). <https://doi.org/10.7717/1481-4374.3057>
2. Ashishkumar V. Patar. (2018). Gender Discrimination in Khaled Hosseini's Novels. *Smart Moves Journal IJELLH*, 6(4), 1049-1054. <https://ijellh.com/OJS/index.php/OJS/article/view/3702>
3. Bahri, D. (n.d.). *Feminism and Postcolonialism in a global and local frame*. Open Edition Books. <https://books.openedition.org/iheid/6321>
4. Beauvoir, S. D. (1949). *The second sex*. Random House.
5. Chona R. Echavez et al. (2016). *The Other Side of Gender Inequality: Men and Masculinities in Afghanistan*. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit.
6. Dasarath Neupane & Ramnath Khanal. (2017). Reasons behind Spousal Aggression in A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini. *Journal of Advanced Academic Research (JAAR)*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.3126/jaar.v4i1.19525>
7. Gandhi, L. (2019). *Postcolonial theory: A critical introduction* (2nd ed.). Columbia University Press.
8. Gramsci, A. (2011). *Prison notebooks*. Columbia University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003116714>
9. Guha, R., Research School of Pacific Studies Ranajit Guha, & Spivak, G. C. (1988). *Selected subaltern studies*. Oxford University Press.
10. Hooks, bell (1984). *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press. — 1994. *Outlaw Culture*. New York: Routledge.
11. Hosseini, K. (2007). *A thousand splendid suns*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
12. Kenas, T. (2019). Gender subalternity in Khaled Hosseini's a thousand splendid suns. <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2019.09.84>
13. Khaled Hosseini (2013, July 2). *An interview with Khaled Hosseini*. Interview. [https://www.bookbrowse.com/author\\_interviews/full/index.cfm/author\\_number/900/khaled-hosseini](https://www.bookbrowse.com/author_interviews/full/index.cfm/author_number/900/khaled-hosseini)
14. Lindsay B. Shapiro. (2010). *Middle Eastern Women's Issues: An Analysis of A Thousand Splendid Suns and The New York Times [Master's thesis]*. [http://etd.fcla.edu/UF/UFE0042591/shapiro\\_1.pdf](http://etd.fcla.edu/UF/UFE0042591/shapiro_1.pdf)
15. Marx, K. (1973). *Karl Marx on society and social change: With selections by Friedrich Engels*. University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226173788.001.0001>
16. McClintock, A. 1992. The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonialism'. *Social Text* 31/32: 84-98. <https://doi.org/10.2307/466219>
17. Morris, R. (2010). *Can the subaltern speak? Reflections on the history of an idea*. Columbia University Press.
18. Jovia, I., Farooq, U., Ghafoor, S. & Gull, A. (2017). Courageous Women: A Study of Resilience of Women in Khaled Hosseini's Novel A Thousand Splendid Suns. *Language in India*, 17, 98-108. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321267627>
19. Muntian, A., & Shpak, I. (2020). Gender discourse of "A thousand splendid suns" by Khaled Hosseini. *Transcarpathian Philological Studies*, 2(14), 213-217. <https://doi.org/10.32782/tps2663-4880/2020.14-2.40>
20. Parry, Benita, (1997). 'Resistance Theory/theorising resistance or two cheers for nativism', 'in' *Colonial Discourse, Postcolonial Theory* Eds.' Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen. Manchester, Manchester University Press.
21. Rüsse, P., & Krasnova, A. (2020). Pro-social Trickstars in Khaled Hosseini's a thousand splendid suns. *Interlitteraria*, 24(2), 556-576. <https://doi.org/10.12697/IL.2019.24.2.21>

22. Qamar, S. & Shakeel, R. K. (2015). Representation of Afghan Institution of Marriage in Khaled Hosseini's And the Mountains Echoed and A Thousand Splendid Suns: A Cultural Study. *International Journal of English and Literature*, 5(1), 57-64. [http://www.tjprc.org/view\\_paper.php?id=4485](http://www.tjprc.org/view_paper.php?id=4485)
23. Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism: Western conceptions of the Orient*. Penguin UK.
24. Scheff, T. J. (2000). Shame and the social bond: A sociological theory. *Sociological Theory*, 18(1), 84-99. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0735-2751.00089>
25. Hong, S. (2018). Focalization in A Thousand Splendid Suns: on the Highlight of the Theme and Characterization. In 2018 4th International Conference on Economics, Management and Humanities Science (ECOMHS 2018) (pp. 6-10). Francis Academic Press, UK. [https://webofproceedings.org/proceedings\\_series/article/artId/2960.html](https://webofproceedings.org/proceedings_series/article/artId/2960.html)
26. Soraya, S. (2015). The subaltern voice in a thousand splendid suns by Khaled Hosseini. *Lingua Cultura*, 9(2), 81. <https://doi.org/10.21512/lc.v9i2.827>
27. Stephen Slemon (1997), "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World", in Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader
28. Stuhr, R. A. (2011). A Thousand Splendid Suns: Sanctuary and Resistance. Retrieved from <http://repository.upenn.edu/>
29. Suharni, A., & Ekalestari, S. (2019). Motives of struggles in Khaled Hosseini's novel a thousand splendid suns. *Journal of Language*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.30743/jol.v1i1.1121>
30. Yahya, Z. (1994). Resisting colonialist discourse. Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
31. Spirovska, E. (2020). Memories and stories of returning home in khaled hosseini's novels the kite runner, and the mountains echoed, a thousand splendid suns. *Folia linguistica et litteraria*. XI. 27-37. <https://doi.org/10.31902/ll.31.2020.3>
32. Mirzapour, N. & Samadian, A. (2020). Embodiment of Gender Discrimination in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner and A Thousand Splendid Suns. *Semnan University Journal*, 9(1), 29-35.
33. ÇEVİK, Y. (2019). The plight of marginalized women in Khaled Hosseini's A thousand splendid suns in 'The third world feminism. *Journal of International Social Research*, 12(66), 56-64. <https://doi.org/10.17719/ijisr.2019.3559>
34. Naidu, S. (2015). The First World's Third World Expert: Self-Exoticization in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner. *The Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies*, 3(1), 40-52. <http://jpcpsonline.com/contents/ns-v03n1.html>
35. Pondelíková, M. I. (2019). Reflection of muslim culture in literature. *Radomskie Studia Filologiczne*, Radom: UTH: 9(2), 177-192.
36. Sundaresan, S., Sumathi, K., & Kolappadhas, P. (2018). Literature review on Khaled Hosseini's "The kite runner" and 'A thousand splendid suns' novel. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, 3(4), 493-502. <https://doi.org/10.22161/ijels.3.4.3>
37. Nayeypour, K. & Varghaiyan, N. (2020). The unresolved ethnic conflict in khaled hosseini's the kite runner. *Atatürk University Journal of Faculty of Letters*, 64, 293-309. <https://atif.sobiad.com/index.jsp?modul=makale-detay&Alan=sosyal&Id=w1H2bXMBu-adCBSEsIiW>
38. Naik, N. & Tiwari, A. (2018). Multicultural Themes in Khaled Hosseini's Novels: A Critical Analysis. *International Journal on Arts, Management and Humanities*, 7(1), 1-3. <https://www.researchtrend.net/ijamh/pdf/1%20IJAMH-1097-FA YAZ%20AHMED%20NAIK.pdf>
39. Khadawardi, H. (2017). Superego guilt, redemption and atonement in Khaled Hosseini's the kite runner. *International Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.0402009>
40. Khan, R. N., & Qureshi, A. W. (2018). The politics of voice in the stereotypical representation of the pashtuns: A critical study of Khaled Hosseini's novels. *Global Social Sciences Review*, III(II), 385-399. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2018\(III-II\).22](https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2018(III-II).22)
41. Benzahra, S. (2017). Adverse Elements of Culture: In Nuruddin Farah's Links and Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner [Doctoral dissertation]. <https://dspace.univ-adrar.edu.dz/jspui/handle/123456789/3763>
42. Verma, R. G. (2018). Home No/w/here: Study of Diasporic Dilemma in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner. In Ajay K. Chaubey & Asis De (Eds.), Mapping South Asian diaspora: Recent responses and ruminations. Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publication, 182-194.
43. Shihada, I. (2019). Revisiting Women's Rights in Khaled Hosseini's A thousand Splendid Suns. *International Journal Of English: Literature, Language & Skills*, 7(4), 25-40. <https://www.ijells.com/volume-7-issue-4-january-2019/>
44. Nanda, S., & Shokeen, N. (2014). Bond of love in the novels of Khaled Hosseini. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19(3), 10-13. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-19321013>
45. Naidu, S & Shabangu, M. (2015). The First World's Third World Expert: Self-Exoticization in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner. *Journal of Commonwealth & Postcolonial Studies*. 3. 40. vital:26358, <http://hdl.handle.net/10962/53922>, <http://jpcpsonline.com/contents/ns-v03n1.html>