

**REPRESSIONS OF WOMEN IN AFGHAN SOCIETY AS SKETCHED
BY KHALED HOSSEINI IN HIS A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS****G.KALAIVANI**Assistant Professor of English
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My article focuses exclusively on the portrayal of women, their status and repressions of women in Afghan Society through major female characters in the novel as represented by Khaled Hosseini in his A Thousand Splendid Suns. Repression of women is because of the ideology that exists in the male dominated patriarchal society. The women in Afghan are the victims of patriarchal and colonial dominations. The patriarchal ideology and Soviet invasions demand submission of women. As a result, Afghan women are victimized and are subjected to flaccidity and subservience. Afghan women are doubly tortured and affected by the patriarchal society, colonial power and the entry of Taliban forces in Afghanistan. However, Hosseini's novels speak not of the women who are subjugated and obedient but also highlight the women who challenge the stereotype characters and try to empower and liberate themselves in an exigent atmosphere.

Keywords: Repressions, Subjugations, Flaccidity, Subservience, Patriarchal Ideology.

Hosseini's A thousand Splendid Suns, which was published in the year 2017, explicit clearly the love, hostility and the struggle of Afghan women under the patriarchal dominance. This novel focuses mainly on the struggle for liberation of two women protagonists Mariam and Laila. Both Mariam and Laila hail from different backgrounds. The novel pictures the beautiful relationship of a mother, daughter and friend through the characters of Mariam, Aziza and Laila. These characters are not imaginary but the factual ones who are repressed under various political factors like war, violence and extremism that have been inflicting a great upon the lives of Afghan individuals. A Thousand Splendid Suns is the collective sagacity of issues sensed by Afghan women. Through his characters Mariam and Laila, Hosseini represent the unfortunate Afghan Women who are victimized irrespective of age, life styles, culture and communities. This novel brings about a clear picture of women living in Afghan during the harsh rule of Talibans in Kabul. This article tries to concentrate on two aspects formerly the life of Mariam and Laila in Kabul, secondly how the oppressed women try to liberate themselves from the cringes that prevailed during the tyrant rule.

At the beginning of the novel, Mariam is shown a small girl living in a small village in the outskirts of Herat. She is born for Jalil and Nana. Nana, a servant of Jalil's had begotten an

illegitimate child to him who is a wealthy man in Herat. Nana after giving birth to Mariam was sent out of Jalil's house fearing that it would spoil his reputation. Mariam is portrayed as "Harami", who has no legitimate claim and rights towards Jalil. Jalil showed his love for Nana and Mariam by visiting them every week ends, whereas Mariam is not allowed to go to Herat to meet Jalil neither of his family. Jalil's legitimate children with all good comfort enjoyed good food, education and love. Mariam is devoid of education. However, she is taught religious lessons, life lessons by Mullah whom she admired and adored. Mullah in return showered his love for the little girl Mariam.

Nana and Mullah are everything for Mariam however as a temporary bond she enjoyed a little solace and affectionate love in the arms of Jalil that too only on weekends. This happiness comes to an end with Nana committing suicide. Mariam has no shoulder to bury herself and cry. She went to Heart in search of her father. She was not welcomed and accepted by Jalil's. Jalil gave her shelter for a while. Jalil and his wife Khadija forced Mariam to get married to Rasheed who is a widower and several years elder to her. Mariam, a girl of 15 years is unable to decide anything on her own and her future. Though Mariam is disgusted with the look, attitude and physic of Rasheed, she feels like denying her marriage with him. She fears that this marriage would not last happiness. It is clearly shown that in a patriarchal society the women have no chance to voice out their likes and desires. Neither had they asked about their opinion. This in evident shows that Afghan women are always treated the inferior gender. Mariam's family is the sole representation of Afghan tradition and culture. Women have no choice to make. Moreover parents are the decision makers. Mariam like her other half-sisters has not been given an option to educate, neither had they shown opportunities before her. The walls are closed and forbidden. She is forced to love Rasheed and spare her entire life not knowing whether she would be happy of this relation, affair and marriage.

Marriage is a big deal in Afghanistan. That too for an illegitimate child like Mariam getting married is a big deal. Mariam after her marriage with Rasheed moved to Kabul. Jalil after his daughters's marriage not even a single time attempt to know of Mariam's life and wellness. This shows that Jalil as a father has transformed his liability and responsibility to Rasheed. Rasheed grooms Mariam to be a perfect wife. She involves herself in self grooming project. The perfect women in Afghanistan have to endure all the responsibilities. She needs to be passive and obedient. She cooks, cleans, satisfy needs of the masters from the beginning of dawn till dusk every day. Their works are monitored carefully by the husband. They have a great responsibility in giving birth to children; Reproduction is yet another factor that decides woman perfection in Afghan. If she is not able to beget a child then she will be abused, cursed and beaten.

Rasheed's love for Mariam came to an end when he comes to know that she is not fit of reproduction anymore. She is physically hurt, verbally abused and treated a slave inside her home. It is socially constructed that women should rely on men at different stages but throughout her life. She needs to listen to her father then to her husband and to her father-in-law. She is instructed and monitored by the male society from her breathe till death. The every move of women is decided by women. He has complete rule not only over her body but also the dress code too. Rasheed compels and forces her to wear burqa. In a country like Afghanistan women are allowed to wear only burqa like costumes that cover their entire

body. It stands a symbol of honor and pride for perfect women in patriarchal dominant society. Rasheed believes that women should be subjugated and should follow the norms as laid by the patriarchal society. Mariam expresses her discomfort in wearing burqa all the time. But she is not allowed to. In a highly dominant country women cannot violate the rules neither they voice out to ban such tradition. Mariam is forcibly raped by Rasheed. A weak and fragile girl being raped by her own husband shows that sex is not a part of woman. Rasheed feels that a married man has a complete rule over her body. Her wishes are never matter. On the very next day when she bleeds her pain is not understood by Rasheed. Rather Rasheed makes it a practice every day and forced her lie off. Mariam too get used to her pain. The destiny of Afghan woman is decided by her ability to bear children. The love of Rasheed for Mariam blossoms out when she is pregnant.

The continuous missed pregnancy for more than a seven times made her weak and this irritated Rasheed. Rasheed at a point of time throw her out from his room and made her stay alone. She is treated a slave and not a wife anymore. But Mariam never fails in her duty. She satisfies him with all his needs. She bears all her torments, physical abuses and verbal abuses. It is clearly evident that a woman after her marriage cannot think, react or act on her own that too in a country like Afghanistan after the confiscation of Soviet Union and Taliban forces no woman can walk alone in the streets without any male relative. A woman staying alone in Afghan without a man is punishable crime. Mariam is an ideal representation and stereotype woman who stands an epitome of Afghan womanhood and culture.

Laila another female protagonist of the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* enjoys liberty, freedom, education and other comforts in her home. She is a beautiful, a clever, and a curious girl is born and brought up in a educated family in Kabul. Her father an educated man and a teacher turned labor in a bread factory devotes much of his time after work in teaching her lessons especially math. He wants her to think and act free. He insists the importance of education to a girl. Laila is fortunate enough to have a father who guides and teaches her a lot. He supports her in all ways and insists that knowledge and learning alone can give a promising future for her. Her life like her house is filled with books. With the entrant of Taliban forces in Kabul her promising future gets torn and shattered. Her family is destroyed by a bomb fire. She gets severely injured and is take care by Mariam's.

Laila is nursed by Rasheed and Mariam. Laila was then Sixteen years old. Rasheed expresses his wish to Mariam and forces Laila to marry him. When Laila comes to know that her womb is filled with her relation with Tariq, she is left without any choice. She tries to remain calm and accepts his proposal. However she is not aware that this is a beginning of a tragic. Rasheed cannot make much difference. Mariam and Laila will be the same. Like Mariam, Laila too experiences ill-treatment after her marriage with Rasheed. Rasheed is much older than Laila. Now Rasheed's dominance is doubled as he has two slaves to treat and threaten. Laila and Mariam have become the slaves to Rasheed's household. They cook, clean, satisfy and obey his orders.

Mariam and Laila embrace Afghan culture, beliefs and become the perfect wives. Laila gave birth to a girl child and named her Aziza. Mariam and Laila showered their love to the little child. Rasheed in contrary cursed Laila for giving birth to a girl child. This again is evident through the words of Rasheed that girl children are always a burden to their father. When

Laila gives birth to a boy through Rasheed, he shows all his love and treats him a prince. The boy too feels happy in the warmth and love of Rasheed. With the entry of Taliban forces and continual violence in Kabul stores and shops have been completely devastated by bomb blast. Running a family and feeding family members have become a great challenge to bread winners. Rasheed borrows financial help from neighbors, friends and other shop keepers. Rasheed now decided to send Aziza to orphanage, as he is not interested to take care and feed her. This again shows that female children are always inferior.

Rasheed never takes an attempt to meet Aziza neither had he taken Mariam and Laila to visit her. When Laila comes to know of Tariq being alive her heart leaps with joy. Tariq meets her often at her home and comes to know off her child Aziza being admitted in an orphanage. Tariq's visit is informed to Rasheed through his son. Rasheed beats her and called her "harami". Laila bleeds and Mariam is helpless. Beating, verbally abusing Laila has become a common phenomenon there at home. Mariam has always a soft corner for Laila. She treats her more than a daughter. Mariam couldn't tolerate Laila's painful life. She killed him. They both hide his body. Mariam supports Laila and Tariq to leave for Peshawar with Aziza and little boy. Mariam refuses to accompany them. Laila and Tariq leaves for Peshawar with two children leaving Mariam in Kabul.

Mariam is taken before the court of law. She accepts her crime and is stoned to death. It is evident that men are always privileged and they can commit any crime. It will never be taken before law nor is it considered as crime. But this is not with the case of women. Staying alone, walking alone in the street without man are punishable crime. In such instance, in a country like Afghanistan the law would not left free the women who violate the rules by killing her husband. It should be understood that an innocent, obedient and subjugated Mariam is forced to murder him as he tormented his wives a more. She could bear whatever he did to her but she was not able to tolerate when he tried to assault Laila whom she treat her like a daughter. Laila lives a happy and modest life with Tariq and her two children. She feels comfortable in an alien land. She expresses her wish to move to her homeland and serve people in Kabul. Tariq is ready to support and assist her. Tariq had been a guard, good friend and a well-wisher to Laila. Now more than a friend he serves her a second father and tries to fulfill her desires and aspirations. He being a husband respects her wishes. He assists her to Kabul. They live their happily and Laila serves a tutor teaching lessons to the children in the orphanage where once Aziza was admitted. Here we can witness a shade of belief, hope for Laila through Tariq. Unlike Mariam, Laila is able to come out of her distressed married life. She consoles herself and liberates herself by violating the so called ruled laws. After Rasheed's death, she came out of that place and embraces a new life with Tariq whom she loved right from her childhood days.

Mariam's aspirations and desires are buried with the death of her mother Nana in the small village. But Laila in contrast liberates herself from the closed walls and boundaries and finds a way out to cherish her dreams and fulfill the wish of her father. I would wish to conclude that education can liberate a woman. A nations pride lies in the success of equality and empowerment. There should not be any gender discrimination. Every nation should feel proud that woman is also a part of world's every move and success. Women should be treated equal and girl children should not be abandoned at any cause. Like, Laila everyone should try



to find a way out to make their hopes, dreams and aspirations come true in the liberated soil of Afghanistan.

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