



## An Analysis of Gender Discrimination Encountered by Female Protagonists in A Thousand Splendid Suns

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### Abstract

Gender discrimination and inequality are pervasive issues that have persisted across societies throughout history. Gender inequality, the persistent notion that men and women do not have the same rights in societies, has been a longstanding issue globally, including Afghan societies. Afghan women, constituting one of the most oppressed communities, have endured violence and aggression as a daily reality. Afghan male ideology establishes a framework in society which leads to the deprivation of women's voice and self-identity. This study, employing feminist theory and women's issues as a backdrop, seeks to explore various forms of gender discrimination experienced by women in A Thousand Splendid Suns, conducted as a qualitative research with a content analysis method. Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns serves as a narrative illustrating the social, cultural, and political structures perpetuating the devaluation, degradation, and violence experienced by female characters in an Afghan society. This research further seeks to explore the challenges and sufferings faced by women, particularly the major characters like Mariam, and Laila, highlighting the impact of patriarchal culture and standards on their lives.

**Keywords:** A Thousand Splendid Suns, Gender Discrimination, Khaled Hosseini, Patriarchy.

### Introduction

Gender inequality has been a problem among different societies form long past until today. In different countries, even developed ones, women are considered and treated weak and they are not given the right to voice their hearts out. Violence experienced by women, as its side effects are felt directly or indirectly, is an act of gender-based violence (Philip, 2016). Literature has long served as a platform for shedding light on women's experiences and challenging gender discrimination. The literary works offer valuable insights into societal norms and encourage deeper reflection and empathy. Furthermore, they inspire

marginalized women to confront discrimination and assert their rights, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini is one of those literary works in which Afghan women's lives in patriarchal societies are portrayed. Women in Afghanistan have been going through gender equality issues in its severe forms for ages. Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* depicts the plight of women behind the wall of Afghanistan during several invasions in the country. In the novel, the issues of feminism and gender equality has been raised through the characters of Mariam and Laila.

Khaled Hosseini is an Afghan-American writer whose works are deeply and richly rooted in the Afghan culture. He was born in 1965 in Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan. He moved to the United States in 1980, living in northern California now. His first novel, *The Kite Runner* (2001), published in thirty-four countries, remained more than 100 weeks on the New York Times bestseller list. His second novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2009) set in Afghan war, which reveals almost a half-century of miseries and suffering faced by Afghan women. And his recent novel *The Mountains Echoed* a heart-breaking story of a girl who is sold to childless couple by her father and is divided from her beloved brother. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* takes its name from a poem about Kabul by Saib-e-Tabrizi, a 17th-century Persian poet. This poem is written after a visit to the city which leaves the poet impressed and goes like this:

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

In fact, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* depicts the violence and conflict that existed in Afghanistan between 1970s and the 2000s, reflecting the actual events that took place there. Afghanistan endured conflict, tyranny, and poverty during this time. Hosseini describes everything that occurred in his nation, including the hardship, atrocities, and problems the Afghan people faced throughout the fighting. He also cited other war-related damages that were having an increasingly negative effect on the environment. In the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Khaled Hosseini asserts that beneath a burqa, there is a breathing human being: a woman who has emotions, impulses, aspirations and expectations in her life, just like a man has. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) the second novel of Khaled Hosseini, a heart-breaking story of the Afghan women, is not just a story of a few women; it's a sorrowful state of all Afghan women. It shows the lives of two Afghan women, Mariam and Laila, who were born two decades apart, but their lives are brought together through a series of largely tragic events. Through the lives of Mariam and Laila, Hosseini presents the heart-breaking reality of Afghan women. The story of the two women, is a narrative of the major concerns, such as inequality, poor or lack of access to education, and child marriage, in women's lives in under developed countries. "*A Thousand Splendid Suns* shows the social, cultural and, ultimately, political structures that support the devaluation, degradation, and violence endured by Mariam and Laila" (Philip, 2016). Hosseini uses his powerful words to show domestic abuse, and horrors that women undergo during their lifetime. Hosseini's novel '*A thousand splendid suns*' illustrates the struggles of women coping in a patriarchal tribal society, highlighting the prevalent issue of violent against them. Furthermore, the novel focuses on women's lack of rights, restrictions on their access to education, and lack of freedom that limit the realization of women's full potential in a world controlled by men. The key issue that connects the novel to a feminist aspect is the male dominance over the women in Afghanistan. Globally, concerns such as forced marriages, lack of identity, lack of

freedom and torture that are perpetrated towards the Afghan women are the main feminist concerns. "Feminism is a movement that argues for women's right and full gender across all aspects of culture, politics, economics, and even daily life" (Hussein, 2022). Gender equality is the focus of the global phenomenon known as feminism.

"Feminism is a political perception based on two fundamental premises: (1) that gender difference is the foundation of a structural inequality between women and men, by which women suffer systematic social injustice, and (2) that the inequality between the sexes is not the result of biological necessity but is produced by the cultural construction of gender differences. This perception provides feminism with its double agenda; to understand the social and psychic mechanisms that construct and perpetuate gender inequality and then to change them" (Morris, 1993).

In this paper, we delve into a critical analysis of gender discrimination as portrayed in "A Thousand Splendid Suns," exploring the themes of violence, subordination, stereotype, and marginalization experienced by the novel's female characters. Through a feminist lens, we aim to unravel the layers of oppression and injustice faced by Afghan women, drawing insights from feminist theory to highlight the urgent need for gender equality and women's empowerment. Our objectives include raising awareness about the challenges of gender discrimination, educating readers about the nuanced forms it takes, and advocating for social, cultural, and political changes to address systemic inequalities. By examining the experiences of characters like Mariam and Laila, we seek to inspire empathy, empowerment, and a call to action against gender-based injustice. This paper contributes to academic discourse by offering a comprehensive analysis of gender issues in literature, emphasizing the transformative power of storytelling in addressing societal norms and advocating for positive change. Through our exploration of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," we invite readers to join us in the journey towards a more equitable and inclusive world, where every individual, regardless of gender, can thrive and fulfill their potential.

## Material and Method

The current research paper attempts to explore gender discrimination and analyze its various forms within Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* using feminist theory. The novel itself is the primary source supplemented by interpretation and relevant literary theory. Additionally, both primary (the novel itself) and secondary sources such as books and journal articles are utilized to support the findings of this study. The researchers employ a descriptive qualitative method, focusing on content or textual analysis as a means to understand how individuals or groups attribute meaning to social or human issues, following the principles outlined by John W. Cresswell (2009) and Klaus Krippendorff (2003).

## Gender Discrimination

Literary, the meaning of discrimination is an unfavorable treatment to any one based on sex, race, and so on. It is considered as an obstacle for the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Discrimination is recognized as a form of inequality and issue for women around the world. It affects the capacity of women to participate freely and fully in society (Pokharel, 2008). Afghan women have suffered the most among millions of

societies around the globe. To keep women under subordination, men use violence to control them. Women are harassed, beaten, and even killed across the globe. Gender violence is not a new phenomenon. It is one of the primary social factors that confines women to a subservient position. Women always exist as the 'Others' under the clutches of this brutal system that considers them worthless. Although women have achieved many successes in defending their rights, gender discrimination persists across various spheres of life, encompassing cultural, political, and economic domains. This discrimination manifests through verbal abuse, violence, threats, humiliation, and intimidating behavior, both within and outside the home. Perpetuating discrimination can foster feelings of isolation, resentment, and hostility towards other and their circumstances. Despite its detrimental effects, gender discrimination persists due to the entrenched patriarchal system that dictates male dominance. This societal construct normalizes women's subordination, leading many to accept undesirable marriages, and sacrifice personal ambitions for domestic duties. Overcoming discrimination requires immense courage, a trait often elusive for many women. Empowerment is crucial in cultivating this courage, with education serving as a potent tool. Education can instill in women the awareness of their rights and capabilities, enabling them to challenge societal norms and advocate for equality. Educated women, equipped with this knowledge, can also raise educated children, perpetuating positive change across generations. Conversely, women lacking education remain vulnerable to discrimination due to their adherence and outdated beliefs. Women perceive discrimination in various forms and aspects.

### **Types of Gender Discrimination**

The patriarchal system, granting men special privileges, establishes male dominance in society. Men in superior positions wield power over women's lives, influencing their access to opportunities like education, public facilities, and careers. This power dynamic leads to gender problems, commonly known as gender discrimination, where unequal treatment based on gender occurs. Khaled Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* portrays the challenges faced by women in Afghanistan, highlighting the complexities of gender discrimination. The researcher, using feminist theory and women's issues as a backdrop, identifies four forms of gender discrimination in the novel: violence, subordination, stereotype, and marginalization. These discriminations are experienced by the main female characters in the novel, Nana, Mariam, and Laila.

#### **1. Violence**

Gender discrimination is starkly manifested through violence against women, which encompasses tangible form of mistreatment like, rape, kicking, and slapping. Such acts inflict detrimental effects on victims, causing physical, psychological, or sexual harms. The novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* encapsulates all forms of violence – physical, psychological, and sexual (Istikohma, 2015).

### Physical Violation

Physical violation generates physical defects in the victims, such as bodily defect, damage and bodily disability that can be in the form of physical attacks, such as bashing, lashing, kicking, slapping, forcing victims to hear themselves and even killing. In the novel, Mariam and Laila suffer from various forms of injuries. Rasheed uses coercion on his wives. He considers them to be objects that can be beaten at any time. He abuses Mariam violently, inhumanely, and brutally when he is in a bad mood. He is abusive to her, insulting, lecturing, and threatening her. He punches, slaps, kicks, beats and enacts violence on his wives. Once, when Mariam can't cook the meal well, he makes her swallow pebbles. His powerful hands clasped her jaw. He shoved two fingers into her mouth and pried it open, then forced the cold, hard pebbles into it. Mariam struggled against him, mumbling, but he kept pushing the pebbles in, his upper lip curled in a sneer. 'Now chew,' he said (Hosseini 102).

Compelled to grind those stones in her mouth, Mariam experiences bleeding and breaks two molars. This not only inflicts physical harm but also induces psychological consequences, including fear, anxiety, and trauma. The resulting fear diminishes her self-confidence, and she constantly worries about potential blame from Rasheed for any perceived wrongdoing. Throughout the novel, it becomes evident that violence is employed as a legal punishment for women's mistakes in both domestic and public spheres. Laila has also been subjected to physical abuse and threats. She is frequently witness to horrendous bodily injuries. Her lips, tongue, and mouth were injured, resulting in the breakage of her lower incisor. These are all examples of male dominance's brutality, cruelty, and harshness towards women. 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 in the tender place between the lower tip of the breastbone and the belly button. ...

Then she was being dragged by the hair. Her hair was ripped from her scalp, and her eyes watered with pain (Hosseini 261).

### Psychological Violation

Psychological violence, more convert it its nature, profoundly affects women's dignity through intimidation, threats, isolation from loved ones, and actions causing psychological distress. Psychological violence includes verbal abuse, humiliation, threatening, mocking, severely criticizing, insulting, and alienating from social gatherings. When women are psychologically mistreated, their dignity and individual creativity are damaged. This type of violence is also depicted in the novel. Rasheed routinely mocks and insults his wives to demonstrate his superiority over them. For one, this type of violation is demonstrated when Rasheed tries to inform Laila of Mariam's low status in a humiliating manner. "A blessing really, we are all city people you and I. Mariam, have you told her that you are a *harami*?" Victims of this kind of violation suffer from sadness, fear, anxiety, bad confidence, low self-esteem, and even the victim appears to be abusive and aggressive. It wasn't easy tolerating



him talking this way to her (Mariam), to bear his scorn, his ridicule, his insults, his walking past her like she was nothing but a house cat (Hosseini 97).

Even, once, confronting Rasheed not to let him make Aziza a street beggar, Laila was beat and threat with a gun, putting the barrel of a gun into her mouth by Rasheed. Rasheed didn't say anything. And, really, what could be said, what needed saying, when you'd shoved the barrel of your gun into your wife's mouth? (Hosseini 293).

### **Sexual Violation**

Sexual violence is defined as coercive sexual behavior that occurs without the partner's cooperation or consent. Sexual violence, encompassing acts like rape, sexual harassment, marital rape, and incest, is vividly portrayed in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, where female characters endure such trauma. In the first chapter of the novel, Nana, a housekeeper, experiences implicit rape by her employer, Jalil, leading to her pregnancy and subsequent disgrace. After giving birth to the child, Mariam, she was sent to live a *kolba* out of the city by Jalil in order to keep his reputation. And finally, Nana's life was collapsed. She was cast out both by her father and Jalil. Mariam and Laila, the two main characters, endure marital rape at the hands of their husband, Rasheed, who disregards their well-being, coercing them to fulfill his desires regardless of their conditions. The sexual encounters are described as laborious and sickening, with Mariam even feeling relieved when Rasheed marries Laila and spares her. Sex, mercifully, was a closed chapter in her own life. It had for some time, and now even the thought of those laborious sessions of lying beneath Rasheed made Mariam queasy in the gut (Hosseini, 2009).

Similarly, Laila's sexual life becomes a coerced duty, with Rasheed ignoring her postpartum recovery. Ironically, Rasheed blames Mariam for Laila's resistance, subjected her to physical punishment. Seeing Mariam is being tortured, Laila has no choice but doing what Rasheed wants.

"It's your doing. I know it is," he snarled, advancing on her. ...

"What are you talking about?" she stammered.

"Her denying me. You're teaching her to." ...

Stop it, bas!" the girl said. "Rasheed you can't do this." ...

"You win. You win. Don't do this. Please, Rasheed, no beating! Please don't do this" (Hosseini, 2009).

### **Subalternation**

According to Lauai, the notion of the subaltern was first referred to by the Italian Marxist political activist Antonio Gramsci in his article '*Notes on Italian History*.' The subaltern classes refer fundamentally in Gramsci words to 'low rank' person or group of people in a particular society suffering under hegemonic domination of a ruling elite class that denies them the basic rights of participation in the making of local history and cultures as active individuals of the same nation (5). Indian-American post-colonial feminist critic, "Gayatri Spivak coined the term 'subaltern' to refer to those who are marginalized within postcolonial societies. Spivak's 'subaltern theory' is rooted in the idea that the subaltern is those who are

marginalized and silenced by the dominant culture and power structure" (Ghilzai, Batool, & Shahnaz, 2023). Spivak defines the 'subaltern' as individuals who are excluded from decision-making in postcolonial cultures, leaving them voiceless. In the postcolonial world, the subaltern are individuals who lack access to basic human rights, such as education and healthcare. Their opinions are often ignored. Subaltern identities are commonly overlooked in postcolonial studies. Khaled Hosseini's works have delved deeply into this concept. His *A Thousand Splendid Suns* focuses on the persecution faced by subalterns in a postcolonial society. In Afghanistan, it has been a common situation that women are unprotected to discrimination because patriarchy has strongly affected them to be subordinate. The patriarchal system, as the system itself gives more benefit to men, causes gender inequality and oppression toward women. As is clear through the female characters of the novel that they are considered to be born only for domestic chores and household responsibility. And out of these assumed limitation, they have no identity. As Mariam has always, in the novel, been a subaltern; submissive, voiceless, and enduring. From the seven types of women's subordination, two of them will be discussed below.

### **Alienation**

*A Thousand Splendid Suns*, presenting three generations of women whose lives are influenced by war and patriarchal oppression in Afghanistan of 1960s to 1990s, brings to the fore women's search for love, real family and caring relationships. However, when they are treated as objects by family relations, they feel alienated from all relations. The concept of alienation has roots in philosophy, economics, psychology, sociology and literary theory. Alienation refers to feelings of being an 'alien' or detached from oneself, others and so on. Alienation is characterized differently in different disciplines of knowledge and may be referred to as estrangement, detachment and isolation. In the novel, when Jalil discovers Nana's pregnancy with his illegitimate child, he goes to great lengths to preserve his reputation, expelling Nana from his home without concern for her life or emotions. Similarly, Nana's father abandons her due to sense of disgrace, prioritizing his own reputation over his offspring. Jalil's reprehensible decision to alienate Nana for the sake of his reputation is particularly egregious. Rather than taking responsibility for his actions, he victimizes the woman he raped by rejecting her, refusing to marry her, and disowning their daughter. Subsequently, Nana and her child, Mariam, find themselves isolated in a remote clearing far from Herat. Jalil, seeking to distance himself from the disgrace act, builds a meager dwelling for them. The isolated location ensures that Jalil's shameful actions remain hidden.

### **Forced Marriages**

Early and forced marriage is common in many Afghan societies where, due to lack of education or low economic level, they are married at a young age; 18 or under. The reason why they cannot refuse this early and forced marriage is that their family has the final say and decision. These kinds of marriage will never be a messenger of a good fortune. As the

Mariam's marriage to dreadful-tempered Rasheed turns into a significant physical and psychological punishment for her body and soul.

"And do you want, Mariam jan, accept this man as your husband?"

Mariam stayed quiet. Throats were cleared.

"She does," a female voice said from down the table."

"Actually," the mullah said, "she herself has to answer. And should wait until I ask three times. The point is, he's seeking her, not the way around."

He asked the question two more times. When Mariam didn't answer, he asked it once more, this time more forcefully. Mariam could feel Jalil beside her shifting on his seat, could sense feel crossing and uncrossing beneath the table. There was more throat clearing. A small, white hand reached out and flicked a bit of the dust off the table.

"Mariam," Jalil whispered.

"Yes," she said shakily. (Hosseini, 2009).

Mariam and Laila are two of many Afghan women facing forced marriages, having made to spend their entire life with a man they never love. It can be the portrayal of women's subordination where they have no control over their own lives. Mariam's forced marriage results from her illegitimate status, leading to rejection by her father's family after Nana's suicide. And Laila's is due to being orphan and pregnant. Despite Mariam's initial refusal at fifteen, her resistance proves futile as Rasheed and her family proceed with the marriage, underscoring the insignificance of women's lives in society. The forced marriage evokes disgust for Mariam and Laila, compelled to spend their lives with unloved partner. Despite the grim nature of their marriages, they lack the power to resist. Laila's will to marry Tariq is crushed, marking the beginning of a harsh life with a domestically violent husband. This portrayal vividly illustrates women's subordination, highlighting their lack of control over lives in the face of powerful men.

### **Being Treated Unfairly in Polygamy**

Polygamy in Islamic states is a common phenomenon whereby a man can marry more than one wife. As state, Afghanistan allows its people to do polygamy with up to four wives in the condition that a husband has to be able to deal justly with their wives (Saboor, 2005). Polygamy occurs both in rural and urban settings, encompassing individuals from various socio-economic backgrounds, including the affluent, educated, illiterate, and so on. However, in reality, this legal practice perpetuates gender discrimination as many husbands fail to treat their wives equitably, frequently abandoning their initial wives upon marrying additional wives. "In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Rasheed's practice of polygamy is depicted as a blatant form of gender discrimination, stemming from his inability to meet the legal requirements outlined in the country's law. According to Article 77 of Civil Code of Afghanistan, marital consent is a fundamental condition for marriage, rendering any union void if one party expresses unwillingness. Hence, prior to engaging in polygamy, a man must seek approval from his existing wife" (Istikomah, 2015).

"It's not your decision. It's hers and mine" (Hosseini, 2008).



The above-mentioned quoted sentence illustrated the time when Mariam firmly refuses Rasheed's plan for the second marriage with Laila, but her refusal does not change anything, because Rasheed considers her opinion unimportant. Following his marriage to Laila, Rasheed displays bias in his treatment towards Mariam and Laila. Despite Mariam's loyalty and dedication, she endures frequent insults, while Laila receives constant praise. Mariam is often derogatorily referred to as a '*harami*' or bastard and a '*dehati*' or village girl, whereas Laila is lauded as a '*malika*' or queen. Rasheed's comparison of Mariam to a Volga and Laila to a luxurious Benz further underscores his unfair treatment.

"If I am away and you need something urgently, I mean absolutely need it and it cannot wait for me, then you can send Mariam and she will go out and get it for you. You've noticed a discrepancy, surely. Well, one does not drive a Volga and a Benz in the same manner. That would be foolish, wouldn't it?" (Hosseini, 2009).

The analogy of Mariam and Laila to cars highlights Rasheed's unequal treatment towards them, with him explicitly stating the perceived disparity between driving a Volga and a Benz. Rasheed instructs Laila to send Mariam out when needed, assigns all household chores to Mariam, and orders Laila to do nothing, despite both women contributing equally. This disparity exemplifies the injustice inherent in polygamous relationships. Furthermore, Mariam's perceived inferiority to the younger and more beautiful Laila shifts her position within the marriage. Mariam's inability to conceive a child further diminishes her worth in Rasheed's eyes, resulting in neglect and favoritism towards Laila. Rasheed essentially reduces Mariam to a servant of Laila, rather than affording them equal treatment. Rasheed's failure to treat Mariam and Laila fairly underscores the gender discrimination perpetuated by his polygamous marriage, with Mariam bearing the brunt of its injustices.

## **Stereotype**

Labelling and stereotyping women represent facets of gender discrimination in a patriarchal society, often overlooked by the majority. In a male-dominated world, women's stereotyping tends to be predominately negative, as positive traits are typically attributed to men. Society often portrays women as weak and less intelligent, contrasting men as strong and smart. Stereotyping has significant negative impact on women, paralleling the effect of other forms of gender discrimination. "In *A Thousand Splendid Suns* the society considers women as foolish and submissive" (Istikomah, 2015). In patriarchal society, women's stereotypes shape their self-perception and outlook. Many women strive to meet societal expectations, believing that adhering to these norms defines their womanhood. Additionally, stereotypes exert a powerful influence, compelling women to conform to perceived behaviors despite the inherent disadvantages.

## **Being Seen as Foolish**

In patriarchal society, the belief in male superiority leads to the unjust stereotype that women lack intelligence. This pervasive notion influences people's perspectives, particularly men, causing even highly intelligent women to be perceived as foolish. The damaging stereotype not only restricts women's educational opportunities, but also allows

men to insult them for perceived ignorance. Rasheed humiliates Mariam when she inquires about communists, reinforcing the stereotype that constructs women, like Mariam, as intellectually deficient. However, questioning of lack of knowledge in women does not equate to foolishness, as Mariam's curiosity stems from a genuine lack of information, not inherent foolishness.

"You know nothing, do you? You are like a child. Your brain is empty. There is no information in it" (Hosseini, 2009).

### **Marginalization**

Gender discrimination begins with women's marginalization. Marginalization is a form of oppression that excludes individuals from participating in social life. Certain people are marginalized from social life due to their differences and no authority. They are people; women living in Afghan societies, living in an unequal society and are referred to as dependents. Marginalization is the most destructive type of oppression as it prevents women from participating in public life. According to Istikohma (2015), "marginalization of women can occur in the work field, marriage, society, or culture" (20). Or in another words, patriarchy is the other influential factor that keeps women subjugated and marginalized.

### **Marginalization from Education**

One form of marginalization faced by women in the novel is exclusion from education. Getting education by everyone is considered the basic right without considering the gender, but education for women is being denied because of the perspectives of the society that consider education for women unimportant. Initially, in the novel, there is no outright prohibition for girls to attend school. However, not all girls have the opportunity to pursue education. But after the 1996-takeover occurs in Afghanistan, girls are banned from attending schools.

Girls are forbidden from attending school. All schools for girls will be closed immediately (Hosseini, 2009).

As furthermore Hosseini highlights, during the takeover, the closing bookstores and eradicating various forms of knowledge, including books, poems, painting, television, the Kabul Museum, and statues.

men wielding pickaxes swarmed the dilapidated Kabul Museum and smashed pre-Islamic statues to rubble – that is, those that hadn't already been looted by the Mujahideen. The university was shut down and its students sent home. Paintings were ripped from walls, shredded with blades. Television screens were kicked in. books, except the Koran, were burned in heaps, the store that sold them closed down. The poems of Khalili, Pajwak, Ansari, Haji Dehqan, Ashraqi, Beytaab, Hafez, Jami, Nizami, Rumi, Khayyam, Beydel, and more went up in smoke (Hosseini, 2009).

this obliteration leaves women in Afghanistan with limited opportunities for learning. The deterioration of education in Afghanistan, marked by limited facilities for boys and the marginalization of women from education, persists until the end of the first takeover in 2001. But again, on March 23, 2022, when the second takeover occurs in Afghanistan on August

15, 2021, girls above the sixth grade were forbidden to attend school as well as banning female students from attending universities on December 21, 2022, having already banned girls from middle schools and high schools. This banning from schools and universities has been continuing until now in 2024.

## Conclusion

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* serves as a poignant portrayal of the challenges and injustices faced by Afghan women in a patriarchal society. Through the characters of Mariam and Laila, Khaled Hosseini exposes the harsh realities of gender discrimination, including physical, psychological, and sexual violence, subordination, stereotyping, and marginalization. The novel not only depicts the struggles of individual women but also reflects broader societal issues related to gender inequality and oppression. By examining these themes, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities of gender discrimination and underscores the importance of advocating for women's rights and empowerment worldwide. It is imperative that societies work towards dismantling patriarchal structures and fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment where all individuals, regardless of gender, can thrive and fulfill their potential.

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## Data Availability Statement:

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## Conflicts of Interest:

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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