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Endless endurance: A feminist study of Khaled Hossieni's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

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Abstract

"There is only one, only one skill and woman like you and me need in life, and they don't teach it in school. Only one skill. And it's this: *tahamul*. Endure". As we quote from *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini it pulls out our heart strings. Anyone with a conscience can't overlook this poignant tale of feminine struggle. And it could have easily been me, you or any women among us. The pain strikes me harder as a woman. Because after all, every woman in the contemporary world fights for gender inequality. Everyone in the society is familiar with the word "Endure". All women are circled within the confined space of endurance. No woman has her own voice and rights. In the novel, the two protagonists Mariam and Laila project their lives of endless endurance. This made me to end up with the title "Endless Endurance" for my project. Limits of endurance are shown towards the end of the novel, when Mariam took a decision to kill or to hit Rasheed. This is the turning point or the first decision that Mariam took alone in her life without any pressure or force or any influence of men. Feminism is a struggle against social discrimination and a fight for equality among men and women. My aim is to explore social and political injustice directed towards the women of Afghanistan through gender equality and their socio-political activism during tough times. I also bring out the suppressed sufferings of the women of Afghanistan and create a vision of women empowerment through Mariam and Laila. This paper analyses the struggles of women to survive and to free themselves from the suffocating chains of oppression and violence. Both of them are hailed from different backgrounds but they are connected by a tragic twist in their lives. Both of them had a bitter taste of endurance. They are denied all happiness of lives. Constant change of ruling resulted in bitter experiences for women. Women are always scrutinized in Afghan society. This project is a voice against the cruel attitude of patriarchal society. Mariam gained her freedom, power and became self-sufficient only when she had struck her husband. Her death was her heroic reward and her decision gave happiness, strength and a new beginning to Laila's life. Mariam never had a happy ending. And her life is overshadowed by the youthful resilience and hope Laila evolves in the reader. Perhaps if the author had not presented Laila, the story would have been sorrowful to the point of depression. Yet it is Mariam who seals Laila's destiny. In Khaled Hosseini's words "Mariam is in Laila's own heart, where she shines with bursting radiance of a thousand suns. Both of their confidence, endurance and self-determination helped them to break all the shackles.

Keywords: Women of Afghanistan, Endurance, Khaled Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Struggle of Women, Oppression, Violence, Patriarchal Society, Political Injustice, Afghan society

1. Introduction

Gender equality is the longest war that women have been fighting for a long time. Throughout history, women across the world who have fought for gender equality are considered as feminists. Women in Afghanistan have been going through gender equality issues in its severe form for ages. Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* depicts the plight of women behind the walls of Afghanistan during several invasions in the country. In the novel, the issue of feminism and gender equality has been raised through the character of Mariam and Laila. The novel stresses on women who are deprived of their rights and their restrictions of education, choices and liberation that hinder their great potentials in the male-dominated world. Male dominance over the women in Afghanistan is a major concern that relates this novel to a feminist aspect. Forceful marriages, lack of freedom, lack of identity and torture that is perpetrated towards the Afghan women are the issues that are of concern to

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feminists across the globe. Hosseini's novel exposes the cultural, political, religious and social structures of Afghanistan in degrading and devaluing Afghan women. The proposed project aims to explore social and political injustice directed towards the women of Afghanistan via gender equality and their socio political activism during tough times. The project also aims to bring out the suppressed sufferings of the women of Afghanistan and creates a vision of women empowerment through Mariam and Laila, the protagonists of the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

A Thousand Splendid Suns is a 2007 novel by Afghan—American author Khaled Hosseini. It is his second novel, which is set against the background of Afghanistan's recent history. It portrays two Afghan women, born two decades apart, whose lives are brought together through a series of largely tragic events. Khaled Hosseini is one of the best known contemporary writers from Afghanistan. He was born as a Kabuli in 1965 and shifted to the United States in 1980. His first novel *The Kite Runner* was published in 2003 and eventually became an international best-seller. In 2007, Hosseini published his second novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, which also became a best seller. It has been widely admired and valued by critics and readers all over the world. Hosseini

published his third much-awaited novel *And the Mountains Echoed* in 2013. It is interesting to point to Khaled Hosseini's cultural background as it relates to the construction of his views in this novel. Born in Afghanistan, Hosseini's family moved to France and then to the United States when he was a child; they were forced out of their country by the Soviet invasion. Hosseini is thus an Afghan immigrant whose opinions and views are largely formed within the American political and cultural context.

Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* takes its title from a poem written about Kabul by the seventeenth century poet Saib-e-Tabrizi. The novel covers three decades of anti-Soviet jihad, civil war and Taliban tyranny seen from the perspectives of two women. Khaled Hosseini exposes the cultural, political, religious and social structures of Afghanistan in degrading and devaluing Afghan women. The strict Islamic laws undermine women's basic human rights and sabotage their equal participation in human community. This paper analyses the struggles of Afghan women to survive and to free themselves from the suffocating chains of oppression and violence. All the female characters of the novel endure terrifying situations where they are abused beyond human imaginations. Hosseini draws a similarity between the fate of two characters, Mariam and Laila, who hail from drastically different backgrounds but are connected by a tragic twist in their lives. They share the same pain and agony and undergo similar stereo-typical trials of being women in Afghanistan. The author shows how their struggles and trials lead them to fight back and to hope for happiness and a better future. Further Hosseini underlines the parallel of Afghan women's suffering with the fate of Afghanistan. He masterfully weaves the personal narrative of Laila and Mariam into the backdrop of Afghanistan's turbulent recent history. Women's rights have diminished in the society of Taliban authority; they are banned to laugh loudly, to play sports, to even talk or shake hands with non-mahram males, and most

importantly to study in schools or any other educational institutions. In this novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Khaled Hosseini tells about the lives of Mariam and Laila, presenting the heartbreaking reality of women in Afghanistan. Their story portrays some of the major issues in under developed countries such as inequality, poor educational systems, and child marriages. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns* Hosseini seems to undertake the position of an orientalist writer who speaks for Afghan women without having closely lived with the Afghan people. The first Orientalist stereotype illustrated in this novel is that of the misogynist Muslim male. From the very beginning of the novel we can see one of the oldest stereotypes about Muslim people. Jalil is an old wealthy man who owns various houses and other properties, someone who has total freedom to fornicate and marry as many women as he likes. By describing his character as a male with "three wives and nine children, nine legitimate children, all of whom were strangers to Mariam" (5). Hosseini perpetuates the classical Orientalist characterization of Muslim men as prototypes of sexual monstrosity and debauchery. Another male character employed to represent the traditionally stereotyped Orientalist attitudes towards Muslims is Rasheed. Hosseini adopts the same Orientalist strategy by depicting him as a gentle, affectionate and caring husband who is absolutely considerate of his wife's emotions and welfare but who later turns into a sex-obsessed brute. In the beginning, Rasheed is a widower, a poor stone carver desperately in need of a soulmate. He gets married and introduces his new wife, Mariam, to his life in Kabul by taking her on a tour in the city, patiently explaining its architectural wonders. The incident of forced marriage is continuously associated with conventional Orientalist attitudes towards the Islamic social and legal system and its conception of marriage as an institution. Hosseini here generally represents women in Afghanistan as subjects to the male's authority. Only the elder member of the family can decide about their personal choices even when it comes to their lovers or future husbands.

The second Orientalist stereotype which Hosseini perpetuates through his narrative is the debate over the compulsion of wearing a veil. Just a few days after his marriage to Mariam, Rasheed begins to insist that his wife should wear a burka in public. The requirement of wearing burka or 'hijab' is itself orientalized in the sense that it conveys more than what Eastern people associate with it. For the Orientalist this custom signifies fanaticism and subjugation because the burka does not allow women to show their beauty and enclose them inside a black carcass devoid of femininity. For New-Orientalist intellectual women, rights and freedom are intricately connected with the degree of their detachment from cultural practices and formulations such as the veil or the 'hijab'.

The third conventional Orientalist attitude defended by Hosseini is linked to the Muslim preference of the male over the female. Rasheed is obsessed with the hope of having a male heir. When Mariam's first pregnancy ends in miscarriage, Rasheed becomes furious and eventually loses hope after the other miscarriages. Hosseini emphasizes the other savage side of an oriental husband when he depicts Rasheed as totally insensitive to the sadness and pain these miscarriages inflict on Mariam. Within such oriental categorizations, Rasheed is presented as a superior irrational male who cannot accept any possible scientific explanation

for these miscarriages. He continues to blame Mariam for failing to give him a male heir. At this stage Rasheed turns into a brutal monster that simply ignores Mariam and mistreats her by frequently criticizing her ways of cooking and cleaning. The myth of a brutal Oriental man is pushed further when Rasheed finally starts to physically abuse his wife before disposing of her as any other commodity.

The fourth Orientalist stereotype lies in the propensity of Muslim males to dispose of their wives when they prove to be barren. Rasheed is represented as an Oriental man not governed by sublime feelings of love and affection, but rather by egoistic sentiments of personal immortalization of his ancestral line. Women in this sense are mere commodities that a man may discard when they are no longer useful. The introduction of Laila as a substitute for Mariam is used in order to endorse this Orientalist view of Muslim men as being interested only in sexual reproduction. Rasheed easily disassociates himself from Mariam the moment he succeeds in persuading Laila to marry him, as one possible strategy to avert local people's suspicion towards

the presence of another female in the same conjugal house. Rasheed's mind is exclusively preoccupied with having a male heir. Rasheed, overjoyed, describes Laila saying "you...are a Benz. A brand-new, first-class shiny Benz" (216). Another drastic shift in Rasheed's caring behavior towards Laila surfaces when she finally gives a birth to Aziza, a girl who is not his in the first place. A fit of indescribable anger and fury possesses Rasheed when Laila gives birth to a female. Finally, as predicted by an Orientalist attitude, women can only find solace in the company of other women as in all Eastern countries. Laila finds a good companion in Mariam and they form an alliance that helps them to cope with the miserable life they both share in Rasheed's house. The flow of events in the novel brings American readers to sympathize and therefore accept a foreign intervention in Afghanistan.

Feminism is broadly described as a set of movements for deconstruction of gender roles for political, social and economic equality between men and women. It aims at ending sexism and exploitation by establishing equal opportunities for women in education and employment. The axiomatic statement by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* "One is not born a woman, but rather becomes, a woman", implies that distinctions are conventionally drawn between gender and sex. Feminism is a global phenomenon dealing with gender equality. Men and women who fight against patriarchy, dominance, marginalization and degrading rule and regulations can be considered as feminists. Feminism differs from country to country considering the situations and circumstances of the victims. Islamic feminists fight for the equal rights for Muslim women by providing educational opportunities, international human rights and progressive interpretation of the Koran. They raise their voice for justice and equality from within Islamic traditions. Feminism has been waging a war against male chauvinists who have degraded women, but it does not mean that the women have been waging this fight alone. There have been men who have assisted the women in fighting this battle. The women are glorified only as mothers, daughters, sisters and wives in all the relations related to men. She is glorified as someone who has immense patience and who sacrifices her life for the family. In other words women are conditioned by the society to become sacrificial

lambs who could only think about rearing children and looking after their husbands. They were the sacrificial lambs of the society and the society thrived on their sacrifices. It was after the advent of feminism that education was made available to the women. Earlier it was a privilege that was enjoyed by only a few women who belonged to royal or aristocratic families. Rise of feminism as a movement also paved the way for equal status of women in the world. Prior to the advent of feminism women were treated as objects and even as objects they were inferior to the males. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns* Khaled Hosseini portrays how strict Islamic family laws are imposed on women by forcing them to adhere to fundamental values of virginity, marriage and divorce. Hosseini shows the social, cultural, and political structures that support the devaluation, degradation, and violence endured by Mariam and Laila. The novel performs superbly one of the things fiction has done so well and vitally since at least the nineteenth century, with novels like *Oliver Twist* or *Mary Barton*: it puts a human face on systematic failures and abuses, ensuring that abstractions such as 'severely undermining women's human rights' get, as it were, flashed out. The easily identifiable concepts of feminism in the novel are patriarchy, in which men have authority over women, domesticity, which states that women belong at home, and the representation of elderly women as bitter, and resentful. Patriarchy is a social system in which men are the head hold, and dominant over women, and it is plentiful in part one of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The deferential between the rights, privileges and authority men enjoy compared to those women have, is disgusting, in that men have nearly complete control of the women in their lives. Jalil, Mariam's father, for example is permitted to have three wives, while Mariam and her mother are not even allowed to live in the same house as Jalil because Mariam is a bastard child and thus a disgrace to Jalil. Upon marriage, Rasheed, Mariam's husband, become the ultimate authority in Mariam's life. He restricts her to the home, requires her to be submissive, cook, clean, and when he is not satisfied he abuses her as though she is a property. The concept of domesticity is closely tied in with Patriarchy. Tradition basically states that a women's place is at home while men are meant to work in public. Mariam's and Laila's life with Rasheed is a perfect demonstration of this concept. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* indeed as Hosseini reveals is all about how: "love manifests itself in even more various shapes, be it romantic love,... or love for family, home, country..." (Penguin).

The proposed project is divided into two chapters. First chapter illustrates the lives of Mariam and Laila, the two female protagonists of the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Mariam is a 'harami' or illegitimate child of a rich businessman, Jalil and a maid Nana. At the beginning of the novel, we are dropped into the world of Mariam, a young girl living alone with her unmarried mother on the outskirts of Herat. She is a thoughtful child at the start of the book. Both Mariam's and Nana's life are almost completely absent from the public world by living a life based on the decisions of the men around them. This portrays the poor education system the country has provided in Afghanistan. The only quality Mariam learns are the basics of survival and enduring. But she resents her mother's strict ways and the fact that she only sees her father once a week. Mariam's shame at being illegitimate makes her unable to stand up for herself. As soon as her mother suicide, her father forces her

to marry a forty five year old man- Rasheed. She experiences dreadful and vicious behavior from Rasheed. Mariam's life changes with the arrival of Laila, Rasheed's second wife as well as their neighbour. Though Mariam hates Laila in the beginning, later on both are like ying and yang. Laila's inspiration helps Mariam to take control of her own destiny. Rasheed has been an awful, abusive husband to her, but up until this point, she never defended herself. Mariam changes more than any other character over the course of the novel. She kills Rasheed and selflessly takes the rap for the crime so Laila can live on. She never dreams for a better life. But she wants to be free from all the brutality. Mariam is able to become what she thought a 'harami' like her could never be: a mother, a friend, and a hero. She breaks all the shackles and comes out a real, true hero.

Laila, the second female protagonist, is the youngest child and only daughter of Hakim and Fariba. Laila has a strong desire to use her intelligence and education to improve the world around her. As her father is a well-educated teacher, education has always been a priority in Laila's life. She has always received encouragement from her parents to achieve her dreams. Hosseini's energetic narrative speeds on through the political and domestic worlds, as we move through the tragedies that fall on Laila's family. Laila's idealism and independence are challenged when she decides to marry Rasheed in order to give her unborn child a father through Tariq. She represents the hope for the future in Afghanistan, because she is the strong woman who can outlast every evil man who tries to take away the ones she loves and lives for. From then on, she along with Mariam bears the domestic violence and insult from him. Laila undergoes the crudest form of humiliation at the hands of Taliban. Hosseini portrays Laila as a strong woman character in his novel. Her presence and support only inspire Mariam to gain courage to fight back and ultimately kill Rasheed. At the close of the novel, Laila finally, finds the life she has been dreaming. Mariam and Laila find solace and happiness in each other's company. Their bond gives them freedom from pain not only physically but emotionally by trusting each other. The first chapter of the proposed project deals with the inner strength, desires and struggles Mariam and Laila experience in their life and the ways in which they bring out themselves as free, independent women and the ultimate fate that awaited them. This remarkable novel displays the endless courage of Laila and Mariam who never give up fighting the evil forces in a united manner. In the words of Cathleen Medwick: The story, epic in scope and spanning three decades, follows these two indomitable women whose fortunes mirror those of their beloved and battered country... and who find in each other the strength they need to survive. (June 2007) Khalid Hosseini gives an optimistic ending to his novel by showing increased rights of women and depicting that Afghanistan is heading towards freedom, progress and acceptance. The chief concerns of his characters in the novel are universal. They struggle to survive all odds to raise a family and find happiness. He vividly brings home what life is like for women in society in which they are valued only for reproduction. Hosseini describes the unfortunate condition not only of women but of humanity at large in Afghanistan. Afghan women are really fighting for their identity and existence while suffering under the repressive social, political and religious forces. Through his story

Hosseini reflects his concern about the emancipation of women, their education, employment and their exploitation by the male members of family and by the politics of unending war. Amidst all death and destruction, Hosseini describes the rich culture, literature, art and beauty of the country. The novel deeply points out the patriarchal rule over women. Afghanistan considers women as machines to look after their home and children. The women never enjoy freedom. These social norms should be changed and women should get their rights. Hosseini advocates that there is great need for creating a bond of amity between Afghan people and rest of the world and also women empowerment. This project attempts to throw lights on the suppressed sufferings of the women of Afghanistan and creates a vision of women empowerment through Mariam.

In the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Khaled Hosseini portrays the lives of Mariam and Laila, presently the heartbreaking reality of women in Afghanistan. The protagonists and strongwomen of the novel; born a generation apart, both are brought together in war-torn Afghanistan due to unfortunate circumstances. Mariam is a young girl living alone with her unmarried mother on the outskirts of Herat. She is the 'harami'- an illegitimate daughter of Nana and Jalil, the wealthiest man in Herat. This word 'harami' has a lasting impact on Mariam, defining her status in Afghanistan and establishing a life-long struggle with self-worth. Nana frequently refers to Mariam as a 'harami', which Mariam learns, with age, "is an unwanted thing". Mariam seems to be misguided due to her complicated upbringing. The combination of a frequently absent father, and an emotionally damaged mother leaves her with little guidance or love throughout her childhood. Mariam physically describes herself to have dark hair and skin, with a "long face", which is an insecurity of hers. Her physical and emotional anxiety most likely originated from her mother, who constantly brings her down. As a young girl, she wishes to pursue her education and be accepted by her father, but since her early childhood Mariam is rejected by the society for no fault of hers. The less fortunate girls don't go to school. When she aspires to go to school Nana speaks the truth of her condition, "There is only one, only one skill a woman like you and me needs in life, and they don't teach it in school. Only one skill. And it's this: *tahamul*. Endure" (18). Mariam's half-sisters are fortunate to attain education and are now planning to join in University. Despite of her longing for education and better life, Mariam is told that her only potential is to endure. It always remains contrary to her. As raised by a sacrificing but bitter mother, Mariam is taught from a young age that she "would never have legitimate claim to the things other people had, things such as love, family, home, acceptance" (4). Rather than rejecting her mother's negative idea, Mariam simply takes everything in like a sponge and keeps it with for the rest of her life. Her mother attempts to steel her to hardship in preparation for a future of injustice and abuse by men, assuming Mariam's future will be a parallel to her own past.

To have a peep into her past, Nana is arranged to marry a boy from Shindad, when she is fifteen. A week before the wedding date, she has a seizure which is described to be a 'jinn', an evil spirit, where her suitor's family immediately cancelled the wedding. The suitor's family is a typical example of Afghani men finding wives who are healthy for only fertility reasons. Such a circumstances forced her to

take up housekeeping at Jalil's house to earn a living. This brief stint as a maid led to a secret courtship between Jalil and Nana out of which was Mariam born, the unwanted child. Looking through the eyes of the society marrying a woman of her status was inconceivable. Obviously Jalil knew that and feared the outcomes. Naturally, we wonder about the emotional underpinnings behind this event. Did he really love her? As we analyse Jalil's intentions, we realise that Jalil entered into an intimacy with Nana just for the sake of doing it.

Rich man telling rich lies. He never took you to any tree. And don't let him charm you. He betrayed us, your beloved father. He cast us out of his big fancy house like we were nothing to him. He did it happily. (5)

Nana portrays Jalil in dark shades. This is in contrast to Mariam's version, which yields like a fantasy, almost too good to be true. An adorable father daughter relationship. Jalil never called her 'harami', for him Mariam "was his little flower". He was fond of sitting her on his lap and telling her stories. Whenever Jalil talks to her, Mariam listens with enchantment. She admires him for his vast and wordly knowledge. She quivers with pride to have a father who knows such things. Nana always warns her not to be attached with her father. But Mariam always dreamed to be with him in Herat along with her siblings. Nana's life undergoes unfortunate incidents with Jalil thus leading to her suicide. The attitude that women have in these situations is unbelievably obedient. The reaction of the issue seems to be, no reaction. Nana's death confirms to Mariam how lost she really is and she instantly blames the occurrence on herself. For the first time, Mariam heard him with Nana's ears. Now she understands the insincerity that has always lurked beneath the hollow, false assurance. Burdened by grief and guilt after her mother's suicide, Mariam is betrayed by her father, who marries her off to a much older man in order to conceal his own shame. Mariam has absolutely no choice in her life plans and begs Jalil to let her stay but her wishes are disregarded because she is a female.

In Afghanistan, women never enjoy any freedom, especially inferior low class women. Mariam's life is a typical example for this. She never took any decisions in her life by herself. Mariam's half-sisters are unmarried and she is being forced into a marriage. She wonders about her suitor who is twenty years older than her. Forced marriages are continuously associated with conventional attitude in the Islamic social and legal systems. Hosseini describes the character of Jalil as a male with "three wives and nine children, nine legitimate children" (5). Rasheed is also a widower, who is desperately in need of a soulmate. Hosseini represents women in Afghanistan as subjects to the male authority; only the elders of the society can decide their personal choices even when it comes to their lovers or future husbands. Mariam's marriage and the male dominated society she lives in seems intent to prove her mother's statement that "Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman"(7). Nowadays Muslim women in various countries enjoy more freedom to act and choose their companions for life.

Mariam is uprooted to Kabul after her marriage. The world and the people around her are all new to her. She is unfamiliar to this strange world and is reluctant to discover it. Rasheed gives her enough time and space to adjust to this sudden change in her life. She finds it easier to accept his presence in her life and lets him into her heart. When

Mariam becomes pregnant, she starts to show more positive traits, as she feels as if being a mother will bring happiness into her life. Her dreams are shattered, however, when she has a miscarriage. Mariam labels the incident as an "undeserved blessing." "Traacherous daughters did not deserve to be mothers and this was just punishment" (93). This quote exemplifies the stress that still plagues Mariam, and that the containment of her new life has not given her an opportunity to grow away the grief and guilt she faces. After four years of marriage, Mariam officially becomes afraid of Rasheed, and does not make attempts to stand up to him. Rasheed shows brutality and cruelty towards Mariam throughout the narration. Rasheed always proclaims his masculinity and control over her.

I am a different breed of man, Mariam. Where I come from, one wrong look, one improper word, and blood is spilled. Where I come from, a woman's face is her husband's business only. I want you to remember that. Do you understand? (63) He never has a look or sexual relation with her. He is frustrated with her presence. Mariam is forced to face beatings and to literally chew pebbles. She stands as a silent rebel and a broken soul.

Laila is the second protagonist in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. In her life she is physically described as a beautiful girl with green eyes, blonde curly hair and high cheekbones. This name happens to have a deeper meaning regarding Laila's personality. Laila's assertiveness is very unique, especially in a society that undermines the abilities of women. Her traits can be explained through her relationships with other characters. Growing up with Mammy as a mother seems to have forced Laila to become more independent. Mammy is so consumed with her absent sons, whom she refers to as 'sultans', that she neglects her daughter as a result. Mammy's actions give off the impression that she is careless, as she forgets to pick Laila up from school, and does not express interest in Laila's life. Therefore, Laila responds to her mother's neglect with independence, perhaps as a means of masking her true feelings regarding her mother. Laila's father, Babi, on the other hand, respects Laila and takes pride in her intelligence and maturity beyond her years. Her confidence may originate from this positive encouragement. Babi ensures Laila that she will make an impact in the world she lives in, which contrasts with Mammy's impression of Laila's heroic brothers. "You're a very, very bright girl. Truly you are. You can be anything you want, Laila. I know this about you. And I also know that when this war is over, Afghanistan is going to need you as much as its men, maybe even more" (114).

Raised to prioritize education, Laila attends school daily, where she is taught that men and women are equal. In her mind, women are not merely destined for marriage and child raising, but careers. Apart from bookish knowledge, Laila is also taught about life and common matters, by her parents.

The silence. The peace of it. I wanted you to experience it. But I also wanted you to see you country's heritage, children, to learn of its rich past. You see, some things I can teach you. Some you learn from books. But there are things that well, you just have to see and feel. (147) On the other hand her friends Giti and Hasina, are pressured by their families to get married before they reach the age of twenty. But unfortunately Afghanistan seems to be moving in the opposite direction. The war gets so bad that Babi decides to homeschool Laila, and that makes her lose some of her

freedom. In the novel, Laila stresses over the rights women are not given. Laila's restrictions to education, choices and liberation also restrict their great potentials due to the male dominated world. In her life she experiences great potentials in education throughout school, many opportunities and free from everyone's words and ownership. All this soon changed as she grows up and people in her environment consider her a woman and no longer a mere girl. But as she becomes a woman, she also becomes a feminist.

The novel also stresses over restrictions to education, choices and liberation that restrict their great potentials in the male dominated world. It depicts a gradual adherence of women towards the rules and regulations made against them by the society as in the case of Laila. Throughout her life she struggles to obtain freedom from every man and as she grows up and becomes a woman, she slowly sees the position she has in the world. The ideas of women rights are superseded. Laila finally realizes that the world is male dominated but still she doesn't lose hope. Women are considered as properties of men in this world. Laila may be confident and independent, however, her relationship with Tariq, her childhood friend, reveals a more vulnerable side. When Laila and Tariq are a little elder, Laila becomes aware of her feelings for Tariq and is sensitive to his cocky personality. As the war progresses the whole Afghan is destroyed. Many die with open eyes, rotten bodies, blood flood, scary eyes, refugee camps, diseases, starvation, poverty and migrating families are the scenes of war-field Afghan. Tariq and his family shifts to Pakistan. Later Laila's family also plans to migrate. But tragedy strikes, she loses her parents, her home, her belongings and more over she is completely wounded. Despite her education and potential, the war and Afghanistan society doom her to the same fate as Mariam, as the prejudice against women doesn't differentiate based on their upbringing. Rasheed and Mariam take control of her needs and treats her. But Rasheed's intentions are to acquire Laila and in order to do so he employs foul play. Laila's high hopes for the future are trampled when she enters the threshold of Rasheed's house, yet she is determined and hopes to escape and transfers her will to fight to Mariam. Together they endure and even try to ward off the physical and emotional abuses of Rasheed. Stuck (as the second wife) in the same abusive marriage as Mariam, both are forced to unite to survive. At Aziza's birth, Rasheed completely changes his attitude towards Laila. She hides the real truth behind Aziza's birth. Rasheed becomes very cruel and explains very clearly that "A woman's face is her husband's business only" (48). This quote gives an example of a male warning a female, Rasheed to Laila, that he is the owner of Laila. When Rasheed goes through a rough time, Laila's attempt at comforting him is not appreciated nor respected. The day will come when men will recognize woman as his peer, not only at the fireside. As Laila tries her best to satisfy Rasheed, she is nothing but a means of satisfying his physical needs, something Rasheed will pull out and use when needed. Laila is only another piece of property Rasheed uses like a car, a house or a gun. Her only use is granting Rasheed a child. This is considerably the argument stated in which women are only properties to the male superior. This is the case with most of the women in Afghanistan. They are treated as an object not as a human being.

The women in *A Thousand splendid* seem to have very different educational experiences. Mariam is tutored by Mullah Faizullah in the Koran, and she learns how to read and write. Yet, when she asks her mother about going to school, Nana insists that the only lesson that Mariam needs to learn is to endure. This shows the social set up against women who were made to learn endurance since their childhood. While on the other hand Laila's father emphasizes the importance of her education. Hakim diligently works with Laila on her homework and provides her with extra work in order to expand her education. He emphasizes that Laila's education is as important as that of any boy. Women need to be educated in any society. Moreover, proper education for men is equally very important. As a dominant leader in the family of Muslim culture, fathers must have had proper education to support their daughters and sons to take the same path. In most cases of properly educated men, like Laila's father, Babi, and Mullah Faizullah, knows how education can change women to lead to a better country. Babi who is a university-educated man, has also been a high school teacher. Babi makes it clear to Laila from a young age that the most important thing in his life, after her safety, is her schooling. He says that and ensure Laila of the significance.

Marriage can wait, education cannot. You're a very, very bright girl. And I also know that when this war is over, Afghanistan is going to need you as much as its men, maybe even more. Because a society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated. (114) On the other hand, people like Jalil, and Rasheed have no understanding of the significance underneath education for women. Most likely, they would have had no such education on the influence of women in the development of their country. While men like Babi exists, majority of the Afghani culture does not allow such exploration for women. Thus it is crucial for men to equally learn proper information of having equal rights with women. After the streets of Kabul become too dangerous, he insists on tutoring Laila himself. He comments about the importance of women attending universities. Although majority of Taliban ruling has suppressed women in Afghanistan, Aziza is educated by both Laila and Mariam, who contribute what they know in order to educate her. Mariam teaches the Koran, and Laila eventually volunteers to teach at her school. The end of the book feels hopeful in terms of the education of women in that Zalmai and Aziza head off to school together. And Laila's ending of opening a teaching institute gives hopeful insights for the future. It gives a view of how by learning only a little, girls can grow up like Laila, and have the courage to come back and help future generations including boys, to understand the situation.

The novel at one level is a poignant story of two Afghan women who share a very special and powerful bond. The women forge strong bonds despite the efforts of their husbands and the Government to reduce women's power. The author shows how women's struggles and trials lead them to fight back and to hope for happiness and a better future. Further Hosseini underlines the parallel of Afghan women's suffering with the fate of Afghanistan. The bonds differ in nature. For instances, Giti, Hasina and Laila form a bond of girlish friendship, but Mariam and Laila form a much more powerful familial bond later in the novel. The novel suggests that women have a strong ability to find strength and support in one another. The epitome of a

mother's love is the height of the sacrifices and sufferings she endures for her child. What Mariam does to protect Laila from Rasheed is an example of that strong bond between a mother and her child. The struggles they shared, in a house dominated by a man brought them together in the same way that thousands of suffering women found solidarity with each other. Though both are from two very different backgrounds, they are forced into the same miserable house with the same miserable man. The two women who are hostile in the beginning have entwined identities towards the end. Laila and Mariam give each other strength to transcend their limitations and to perform devastating acts of self-sacrifice. They find solace and happiness in each other's company. The common enemy unites them. They endure humiliation and brutality, and finally are forced to fight against the injustices of Rasheed. Another commonality that unites them is their abundant love for Laila's children. We can also see a sharp contrast between Mariam and Laila's life when Rasheed is around and when he is not. Where the distance between Rasheed and his wives grows, the bond between the two co-wives grows unimaginably stronger. Mariam and Laila sharing their housework, washing clothes, taking care of the children reveals their intimacy. They are much happier without Rasheed around and soon find ways to protect each other from the tyrant husband. Mariam soon has a soft corner for Laila and her precious daughter. We see how Laila braids Mariam's hairs, and confides in her details of her past life with Tariq and her plans to escape. She even wants Mariam to accompany her. Laila tells her: "We're leaving this spring, Aziza and I. Come with us, Mariam" (250). Although Mariam is terrified in the beginning, she is also enthralled by the idea of escaping her miserable life and begins to envision a life without Rasheed. For the first time in many years, Mariam begins to hope for a better future. The two women become aware that they are not just victims of war, but also of a rigid patriarchal structure of whom Rasheed is the worst example. Once the two protagonists realize they can become each other's strength and protect each other, they transcend over the role of victims and resist many difficult situations together. Mariam becomes Aziza's second mother and the bond of love between the women is very evident. Their bond gives them freedom from pain not only physically but emotionally by trusting each other. Mariam, who never shows any sign of rebellion against Rasheed and his barbarous beating, gained courage to fight back and ultimately kill Rasheed with the love and respect that she received from Laila and her children. Mariam makes a calculated decision to kill Rasheed as he is in the act of murdering Laila. Mariam makes sure that Rasheed sees her so that he can acknowledge her action. Mariam, who did everything to appease and accommodate Rasheed is able to resist not only his brutal force but her own revulsion of violent action to save Laila,

He's going to kill her, she thought. He really means to. And Mariam could not, would not, allow that to happen. He'd taken so much from her in twenty-seven years of marriage. She would not watch him take Laila too. (340) Mariam makes the ultimate sacrifice for Laila and her children by taking the blame of Rasheed's murder. This murder is Mariam's revolt against the suffocating oppression of her husband and his cruelty and it marks the end of his dominance and control. Mariam's execution symbolizes the illegitimacy of power, authority and control. Mariam does

not lament even while being lead to the Ghazi stadium, to be prosecuted. Instead she labels herself as a person of consequence. Once a drab woman stripped of her femininity and social rights because of her status as a bastard child, Mariam is now a class-breaking rebel. It gives her life a meaning and purpose as she is leaving this world, "as friend, a companion, a guardian. A mother. A person of consequence at last....Mariam thought....This was a legitimate end to a life of illegitimate beginnings" (329).

Male dominance over women in Afghanistan is a major concern that relates this novel to feminist aspects. Throughout the novel the patriarchal norms, orders and conditions are dominating. Women are considered as meek, passive and inferior. The men have authority over women, domesticity, which states that women belong to home and thus represents elderly women as bitter and resentful. Hosseini makes a symbolic use of 'burqa' in the novel. It stands for male-dominance and control by discarding women as an object for sex. It eliminates women as a source of seduction and shame that should be covered. By presenting 'burqa' as a gift to his wives Mariam and Laila, Rasheed pretends to protect them from outer world but hypocritically he exercise his control and authority over them. When Mariam wears it for the first time she feels restricted:

The padded headpiece felt tight and heavy on her skull, and it was strange seeing the world through a mesh screen. She practiced walking around her room in it and kept stepping on the hem and stumbling. The loss of peripheral vision was unnerving, and she did not like the suffocating way the pleated cloth kept pressing against her mouth. (71) Both Mariam and Laila accept the 'burqa'. In the case of Mariam it is the acceptance of stereo-typical roles of women whereas Laila accepts it to hide her embarrassment at being married to Rasheed. When the Taliban takes over the country, 'burqa' becomes a symbol of imprisonment Attention women: You will stay inside homes all times. It is not proper for women to wander aimlessly about the streets...You will not, under any circumstances, show your face. You will cover with burqa when outside. If you do not, you will be severely beaten. (271) Taliban's desperation in the implementation of 'burqa' is evident when even female doctors have to operate their patients while wearing 'burqa', "They want us to operate in burqa," the doctor explained, motioning with her head to the nurse at the door. "She keeps watch. She sees them coming; I cover" (284). Motherhood is a pain of joy that each woman expects, enjoys and experiences in their life. Every woman dreams about boulders and parched hills, with a home of her own, a husband of her own, heading toward one final, cherished province: Motherhood. Hosseini explains the pain and pleasure in a women's life. He sets up pregnancy as a symbol of hope throughout the novel. Mariam's each pregnancy offers her an opportunity to be hopeful for the future despite her bleak living situation. Mariam is impregnated at the age of sixteen with Rasheed's baby. Mariam's baby dies in her womb causing blood to flow down the humam bathhouse. Laila's pregnancy with Aziza allows her to remain positive after she learns about Tariq's death. When Laila is expecting her second baby, it is Mariam who helps her in the pathetic hospital. The issue of health care, especially for women, is apparent to a great extent in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. When Laila is ready to give birth to her son, only one hospital in all of Kabul serves

women. This hospital is severely short of staff and lacking in medicine and anesthetic. It seems extreme to portray a cesarean section without anesthetic, but this is historically correct. Laila was to be operated on without any sort of medication during the time of Fundamentalist regime in Afghanistan. This indicates the hypocrisy of the male dominated society where women are so segregated that sanitary medical conditions, let alone mixed gender hospitals, were denied. The strength these women show during the tough time is magnificent and it shows the activism on their part. Kabul has only one hospital for women, few doctors are working there, and they have little or no medicine or means to anesthetize their patients:

The doctor took a breath, then told Laila that the hospital had no anesthetic....”Then cut me open”, Laila said. She dropped back on the bed and drew up her knees...”Cut me open and give me my baby. (283) These are the circumstances which Afghan women go through during the horrified reign of Taliban. Additionally, the contrast between fertility and infertility has a traditional meaning: a woman's value in Afghan society has often been measured by her ability to bear children, specifically boys. Mariam was abused by her husband throughout her life because she was unable to give him a child. Later on Laila was also abused by Rasheed because she gave him a baby girl as her first child. Aziza and Zalmai thus offer light and joy to a story that is otherwise bleak and dark. Childbirth is painful, and the pain that mothers feel during the various birthing scenes reminds us of the sacrifices that parents make in order to bring new life into the world. The mother's pain is worth the joy and attachment that she feels once the child is born. Mariam's decision to kill the evil Rasheed highlights her role as a mother, who is willing to do whatever it takes to protect her child. Her selfless love is powerful, for she gives Laila a new lease of life. Violence against women and girls is deeply rooted in Afghan customs, culture, practices and attitudes. Women always have limited rights therefore they cannot escape the norms and traditions that dictate their status in society. It is love that draws characters out of their isolation that gives them the strength to transcend their own limitations, to expose their vulnerabilities, and to perform devastating acts of self-sacrifice. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* shows the social and cultural—and, ultimately, political—structures that support the devaluation, degradation, and violence endured by Mariam and Laila. Severely undermining women's human rights, they have to endure everything in the novel and their confessions do not put value with the maximizing of domination. There is a question that male and female both take birth with the same way of pregnancy of their mother while gradually behaviour of gradation starts by the society and the same society starts maintaining the level. Rasheed was brought up in a society towards women that had no respect for women. He is influenced by societal norms and is never taught to value and respect women in general which explains his abusive behavior. However, this does not mean that his behaviour should be excused. An example of this is when he describes about his female customers: I have customers, Mariam, men, who bring their wives to my shop. The women come uncovered, they talk to me directly, look me in the eye without shame. They wear makeup and skirts that show their knees. Sometimes they even put their feet in front of me, the women do, for measurements and their husbands stand there and watch. (69) In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Khaled

Hosseini uses the theme of domestic abuse to highlight the issue of social injustice among women in Afghanistan. The protagonists in the novel are constantly being abused physically and mentally by their cruel husband. With this theme he also explored the inequality among men and women. Hosseini uses his powerful words to describe the horrors that women undergo during their marriage. The theme of spousal abuse also allows the reader to recognize and understand men's superiority in Kabul. Most of the reactions of Rasheed is the culmination of his built up frustration. Instead of finding positive ways to relieve his own tension, he takes his frustrations out on Mariam verbally now. It also shows the disrespect he has for her as his wife and as an individual. Therefore she will never be able to fulfill his desires. Throughout the novel, there are several examples of physical abuse. When Rasheed tries to turn Aziza into a beggar in order to get money for the family. After Laila snaps and said no to Rasheed's idea, Rasheed physically abuses Laila by slapping her across the face to show that she cannot raise her voice at him. “The slap made a loud smacking sound, the palm of his tick fingered hand connecting squarely with the meat of Laila's cheek/ It made her whip around” (267). Laila then strikes back and punches Rasheed in the face. Before Laila knows it, Rasheed is choking her until she is lifted off of her feet. He also shoves his barrel of his gun down her throat. As mentioned in the introduction, physical abuse is tolerated and even encouraged (by the Taliban) in Afghanistan. So in Rasheed's eyes, he believes that he can abuse his wives as much as he wants. Unfortunately, the women cannot report the abuse to anyone because they are not protected under any rights or laws. Constant tormenting seems to be a common trend in the society. It is not fair to say that Rasheed learns to be emotionally abusive on his own. In the novel he mentions to Mariam that his view on women have to do with the way he is raised. It is only fair to infer that Rasheed has developed his characteristics based on how he is raised at home. Mariam cannot speak out against domestic violence because it is considered a taboo subject in Afghanistan. The Taliban enforced laws that extremely limited women's rights. That gives the mentality that men should do the same thing at home. The theme of abuse in Afghanistan is important because it shows the level of inequality the women inhabitants of Afghanistan face every day. The novel provides perspective by zooming into the lives of these women showing both sides of the abuser and the abused in these polygamous marriages. Using the characters Mariam, Laila and Rasheed, it demonstrates the extent of power that many men hold over their wives' lives. Particularly, it expresses how they live to serve their husbands' needs on a daily basis. Their scope of decision-making is considerably limited and when they go to the authorities for help they are rejected and sent back to their abusive husband. For Laila, her two biggest decisions are marrying Rasheed and attempting to leave Rasheed. For Mariam, her only decision was to murder Rasheed in order to end the abuse. The author is displaying how the amount of domestic violence and aggression that happens in Afghanistan can have multiple effects such as emotional, and psychological on the individual's lives. He indicates that it is fairly prevalent in that society as indicated by the fact that the women are sent back to their husbands. For the authorities this is a common occurrence. The novel comes to its climax when Mariam finally takes action. Rasheed is in

the process of strangling Laila into unconsciousness, which forces Mariam to act.

Mariam steadied her feet and tightened her grip around the shovel's handle. She raised it. She said his name. She wanted him to see...Miriam swung. She hit him across the temple. The blow knocked him off Laila. (340) Long-term abuse can have its consequences. One of the consequences is that the victim may finally fight back. The killing of Rasheed by Mariam can be considered as an act of self-defense. She is defending not only herself but also Laila and her children against Rasheed's uncontrollable rage. Both of them, especially Mariam struggles a lot in their marital life. Her self-denial, all the sacrifice, all the sheer exertion it has taken her to live with him for all these years, live with continual condescension and violence, his faultfinding and meanness. Mariam realizes what a fool she has been. She kills in order to save her daughter-like Laila from death. That is for the first time that she decides the course of her own life. As these two women overcome their social differences, they join forces to free themselves from Rasheed's own brand of dictatorship. Although Mariam has long been jaded by Rasheed, Laila still clings to her feminist values. She helps Mariam find her voice and together they both find their freedom again through life or through death. Laila sees now that...Mariam is never very far. She is here, in the walls they've painted in the trees they've planted...she is in children's laughter. She is in the verses Aziza recites and in prayers... But, mostly, Mariam is in Laila's own heart, where she shines with bursting radiance of a thousand suns. (402) Mariam is a modern tragic hero and proves to fit all the criteria enlisted to be one. Mariam is an everyday, normal Afghan person. She also has a natural flaw and this flaw is to be completely and utterly selfless. Throughout her life, she always put others before her self and always did what others told her to do, casting aside her own needs even if the situation isn't in her best interest. Mariam is also a modern tragic hero because she appears nobler as time goes on through the love she shows towards Laila and her kids and the way she protects them from Rasheed, cares for them and puts their needs and wants before her at all time. But her selflessness does eventually lead to her downfall, as she sacrifices herself for Laila and the children's freedom. By Mariam telling the Taliban she killed Rasheed, she is basically committing suicide and does this all to keep them safe. Mariam is also against an unjust, corrupt society. She first struggles against society in her childhood, where she lived in poverty with no one helping her even though her father was a millionaire. In Mariam's adulthood, she struggles against the corrupt government of the Taliban. The Taliban is prejudice and unfair to women, and creates poverty in Afghanistan that ultimately affects Mariam and causes her to struggle while the Taliban is in power. Mariam's misfortune throughout her life is not wholly deserved. When she is a child, her mother treats her rudely, condescendingly, and always reminds her how she is a society-shunned harami. Mariam does not deserve this as she is nothing but kind and obedient to her mother and it is her mother's fault that she is a 'harami'. Mariam also does not deserve the horror of marrying Rasheed. She is a loyal, faithful and obedient wife, and in return Rasheed criticizes, abuses, ignores and condescends her. And finally, Mariam does not deserve her death penalty. Even though she kills Rasheed, it is Laila whom he physically and mentally abuses for years. Also he is about to kill Laila, and what she does in

defense is to save Laila. Furthermore, near the end of Mariam's life she makes a self-discovery. Before she kills Rasheed she says that that moment would be the first time she is deciding the course of her own life. This means, at that moment she realizes that all her life, she's been letting others make decisions for her and push her aside. Finally, Mariam is a Modern Tragic hero because her death does cause a slight disruption in society. Her death leads to Laila discovering and inheriting a large amount of money from Mariam's once-rich father Jalil. A portion of this money goes towards the restoration and renovation of the orphanage that Aziza had to stay in for three months. Also Mariam's death causes a disruption to Laila as after her death Laila is emotionally broken and deeply depressed and it takes her a long time to emotionally recover. Through this detailed analysis, one can clearly see how Mariam fits every aspect of a Modern Tragic Hero. She is a naturally flawed every day women, who is against an unjust society, she does wholly deserve her misfortune, makes a self-discovery and causes a slight disruption in society when she dies.

Laila is another strong character in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Her life is entirely different from that of Mariam. She grew up with happiness, love and freedom. Her dreams are of flying colours. But unfortunately she lives in Afghanistan during one of the toughest times in the nation's history. It's a time when women's rights are being assaulted and survival alone is a struggle. Amazingly, this doesn't stop Laila for a second. She has a healthy skepticism toward authority and a headstrong nature that inspires those around her. Those are rare qualities in the world of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Laila represents the new modern face of Afghanistan. Her father, Babi, is a well-educated teacher who holds progressive views about politics and women's rights. Education has always been a priority in Laila's life, and she has always received encouragement from her parents to achieve her dreams. Laila owes a lot to her parents forward-thinking views on women's rights. The only catch is that Afghanistan seems to be moving in the opposite direction. The war gets so bad that Babi decides to home school Laila, and that makes her lose some of her freedom. Then tragedy strikes: Laila's parents are killed, and life as she knows it becomes totally different. Laila's parents, as Rasheed later observes, created a "precious little shell" in Kabul to protect Laila from those who might oppress her. With her parents gone, Laila is going to be forced to reckon with those forces head on. Laila doesn't even back down when the Taliban beats her on the way to Aziza's orphanage—she "refuse to cave in" and tries a different route. Laila and Mariam are to find consolation in each other, their friendship to grow as deep as the bond between sisters, as strong as the ties between mother and daughter. She always cares for Mariam and all who love her. That's the other admirable thing about Laila: she has the power to spread her positive nature to everyone around her. It wouldn't have been in Laila's nature to stay in Pakistan and relax while others rebuild Afghanistan. She probably remembers Babi telling her that Afghanistan is going to need you as much as its men, maybe even more. Laila simply wants her voice to be heard. She has the opportunity—not to mention the ability—to change many lives. At the close of the novel, Laila finally reaches the place she's meant to be. She chooses to dedicate her life to help the forgotten children of Afghanistan, the young girls

and boys who never received the same encouragement and love that she did when she was at their age. Laila has become a teacher, like her father, and she will spread her determination and intelligence to the people who need it the most.

The oppression of women in Afghanistan is linked to a world of male dominance most significantly associated with the Islamic fundamentalist group the Taliban in the early 1990s. It is during this period that the last signposts of Marxism are torn down, and the rights of women are completely abolished. For Mariam and Laila, the day the Taliban rolled their tanks through Kabul is not their first encounter with repression. It is the final event that would bolster their feminist ideals and lead them on a journey to reinstate the values of gender and class equality that was sorely missed. Mariam is remarkably a resilient woman whose heart and spirit are worthy to be emulated. Mariam's journey from unwanted child towards a belittled and barren wife shows the wretched plight of Afghan women. From a feminist perspective, Mariam's role as a woman and caregiver is penalized by her inability to conceive. Her lack of hierarchical birthright puts her in a lower class. In the text, Mariam assumes the quintessential role of the other. Since she succumbs to this discourse instead of fighting it, she not only affirms bourgeoisie values, but let's fade the little feminism she has left. Secondly, Laila, the younger, more idealistic, more outspoken of the women acts as the antithesis of the bourgeoisie and a prominent force of radical feminism. As a feminist, she retaliates against her allotted discourse as a male-owned object. She also reflects the belief of class equality by maintaining and stimulating a familial relationship with the lower class Mariam.

Women need to have access to and control over all the resources in family and society. She needs to be involved in the intra-household decision-making which may bring slight improvement in women's condition in the male-headed households. Women too need to empower themselves by being strong from heart and think from mind. The way they face daily challenges of life, they should also face the social and family difficulties restricting their empowerment and advancement. They need to learn how to embrace their life with all challenges every day. Women are treated like lesser human beings. They are marginalized, sidelined, humiliated, and kept away from all sources of power and freedom. Most women do not have access to higher education. Even the parents believe that they are destined to end up in the kitchen. Most women cannot claim equal rights to their ancestral property. Most women do not have any role in decision making. Not in their state, village or their family. Most women are not paid well even though they are made to toil for hours like slaves. They are not given any top jobs. Hosseini's novel is stolidly direct, and he tends to explain away not only the political but also the personal, presenting each experience in a wrapper on which the emotions is carefully labelled.

The proposed project notices how and where the position of females, particularly in the public aspect and the framework of a wife are drawn. Through the production in the novel, and further perspective into the characters of Mariam and Laila it is obvious that females are seen as second-class elements in the framework of conventional Afghan community. The level of resistance therefore, becomes a component that involves ideas, activities, emotions and words. There are a result of declining the formation of their

identities by others, namely their community, family members, religious beliefs and objectives. The writing elucidates that the level of resistance is a vital element of an Afghan female's life as a method to find balance in their multitudinous tasks that they play as life. As seen in the project, there is a significant discontinuity between the public identification and the individual sense of self in the lives of Afghan females across background scenes and times. This discontinuity disputes due to withdrawal and frustration on the problems to get the beliefs enforced through the social roles. As a result, level of resistance occurred as a way to deal with the demands and constrains features through this written text that Afghan females illustrate their eccentricity through level of resistance towards the controlling components in their lifestyle that obtain from social roles, tendencies and prejudices in their lifestyle and community. The character's stage of resistance is seen significantly on the psychological stage throughout the growth of their personality in the novel. The expression of their characters signifies the possible interpretation of a stage of resistance in the situation of former Afghan females that were still in a stage, controlled by conventional values, community and way of life.

The strong female bonds, sisterly and even a motherly bond that is formed between Mariam and Laila are soul-stirring. Their bond empowers them to think, feel and overthrow the patriarchal norms. Laila and Mariam work towards a better future not only for themselves but also for their children. Raising the kids together lead to a motherly relationship between the two that lasts an eternity. Mariam indeed is a symbol of courage and selfless love. Mariam giving up her life so the woman she cared about could live truly shows how powerful female bonding can be. Throughout this novel, the bond of love between the two women becomes their strength to resist and endure the ruthless patriarchal tradition and Mariam represents the amazing inner strength of a woman. Women like Mariam give us hope and are among those who strive to make the world a better place for those they truly love. Literature reflects life, and it is indeed true that women can move mountains if they join forces. For Mariam and Laila, the day the Taliban rolled their tanks through Kabul was not their first encounter with repression, but it was the final event that would bolster their feminist ideals and lead them on a journey to reinstate the values of gender and class equality that was sorely missed. Mariam's journey from unwanted child a belittled and barren wife shows the wretched plight of Afghan women. From a feminist perspective, Mariam's role as a woman and caregiver is penalized by her inability to conceive. Her lack of hierarchical birthright puts her in a lower class. In the novel, Mariam assumes the quintessential role of the other. Since she succumbs to this discourse instead of fighting it, she not only affirms bourgeoisie values, but let's fade the little feminism she has left. Secondly Laila, the younger, more idealistic, more out spoken of the women acts as the antithesis of the bourgeoisie and a prominent force of radical feminism. As a feminist, she retaliates against her allotted discourse as a male-owned object. She also reflects the belief of class equality by maintaining and stimulating a familial relationship with the lower class Mariam.

With the passing of time comes Taliban rule over Afghanistan, the streets of Kabul loud with the sound of gunfire and bombs, life a desperate struggle against starvation, brutality and fear, the women's endurance tested

beyond their worst imaginings. Yet love can move a person to act in unexpected ways, lead them to overcome the most daunting obstacles with a startling heroism. In the end it is love that triumphs over death and destruction. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is an unforgettable portrait of a wounded country and a deeply moving story of family and friendship. It is a beautiful, heart-wrenching story of an unforgiving time, an unlikely bond and an indestructible love. The actions of these characters symbolize their strength to endure struggles as they join together in feminist retaliation against the man who has taken away their right to live according to their own choice. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, two generations of characters brought harmoniously together by the tragic sweep of war, where personal lives, the struggle to survive and to raise a family and to find happiness, are inextricable from the history playing out around them. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the story of Afghanistan includes the description of the role and place of women in Afghan society. Khaled Hosseini has keenly examined the condition of women in this novel. Laila is the beloved daughter of her father, but her mother focuses primarily on Laila's brothers. Laila has been forgotten in her mother's grief for the loss of her two sons. Mariam, in contrast to Laila, lives in poverty but has the rough love of her mother and the apparent doting of her father. Both girls' lives change abruptly and clearly for the worst when they become connected to Rasheed through marriage. Both of them are ruled by his wishes and desires and defy him at great risk to their well-being, and in Laila's case, the well-being of her children. It may pass through the mind of the reader to wonder whether Hosseini has overstated his case. Rasheed's treatment of Mariam predates the Soviet invasion and the civil war, and his relationship with both Laila and Mariam predates the Taliban. At no point does it appear that Laila or Mariam have any legal rights. But Hosseini carefully portrays both Laila, whose parents raised her with a greater sense of entitlement and privilege, and Mariam, whose mother taught her to endure by taking control of the conditions under which they lived to the extent that they possibly could and he has very cleverly shown feminism and activism on their part to some extent. The project tries to bring out the difficulties, pain and endurance faced by Mariam and Laila. Their confidence and self-determination helped them to break all the shackles. The project creates a vision of women empowerment through these powerful characters Mariam and Laila.

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