

AFGHAN WOMEN'S CONDITION AS PORTRAYED IN "A SPLENDID SUNS," KHALID HOSSEINIS NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to examine the challenges faced by Afghan women as depicted by writer Khaled Hosseini in his novel A Thousand Splendid Suns. The artwork highlights the pervasive sexist problems in Afghan society. Afghan women live in a sociocultural framework characterized by a robust patriarchal system, in which the prevalent norms of patriarchy and patrilineal impose significant constraints on them, ostensibly upheld by religious and cultural precepts such as Pushtunwali. The book presents Afghan women as commodities and objects of desire. Legislative efforts by successive Afghan administrations to promote women's independence have been impeded by men. Because of their dominating nature, males misuse their authority over women by robbing them of their rightful rights. To maintain the existing social order, they apply stringent regulations, frequently referred to as Sharia norms. According to the present report, healthcare and educational institutions designated exclusively for women have been set on fire, young girls have been forced into marriages against their choice, and Afghan women have either been killed or severely beaten. Throughout history, males have continuously abused and taken advantage of women. The research claims that Afghanistan has a deeply embedded sexist society as well, and the country's continual conflicts make matters worse for Afghan women.

Keywords: Afghan women, Women's rights, Patriarchy, Social issues, Feminism

INTRODUCTION

The term "literature" has been defined in a number of ways in academic discourse. The word "literature" refers to a wide range of written and spoken expression, including works that are more technical or scientific in nature as well as artistic writing. But it mostly concerns creative works that take readers to new areas of human experience. People's feelings about literature are diverse and might include curiosity, excitement, optimism, regret, fear, pity, and laughter, among other emotions. As a result, literature provides a fundamental framework for understanding and objectively gaining information. Literature may be divided into four main categories, according to Robert and Jacobs: nonfiction writing, theater, poetry, and prose fiction. Fiction describes stories that are imagined and manufactured rather than entirely based in truth. The novel is a type of prose fiction meant to shed light on the complexities present in the world of everyday human experience. Novels are used to illustrate and shed light on a variety of facets of society and human existence. They frequently include characters that defy accepted societal mores (V. Roberts, 2006). The goal of this study is to provide light on the difficulties Afghan women encounter, as depicted in the book "A Thousand Splendid Suns" by Khaled Hosseini.

It introduces readers to a civilization where ongoing violence has little effects on the general public, but has a disproportionately negative impact on the most vulnerable groups—women, children, and the elderly. Afghanistan is a country that has been severely damaged by war and has always been in a state of turmoil, with its people always living in fear of death and violence. Large-scale battles have occurred on Afghanistan's territory throughout history as a result of the main world powers' constant attention to the country (Chaudry, 2014). Numerous invasions, including those by the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and other ethnic groups like the Mujahideen, have occurred in this region. Furthermore, since the events of 9/11, the Taliban's existence and the US's subsequent action have not been successful in bringing about enduring peace. The previously described incident made the existing disarray in

Afghan society worse (ZiaZarifi, 2021). Countries that endure protracted periods of civil conflict and terrorism face a multitude of social issues. The degradation of people's inalienable rights profoundly disturbs society, especially the most vulnerable groups—women, children, and minorities. Afghanistan has seen a turbulent transition over the past fifty years, leaving it saddled with several ongoing socioeconomic difficulties. According to a Trust Law report, gender specialists have identified Afghanistan as the nation where women face the greatest degree of danger worldwide. Afghanistan is at the bottom of the list for women's safety due to its ongoing conflict, high rates of violence, widespread poverty, and poor health care and well-being (Ullah, 2018). Because of a number of circumstances, including political dynamics, religious fanaticism, military operations, patriarchal structures, and insurgent aggressiveness, the situation for girls and women in Afghanistan remains dangerous. One major barrier impeding the advancement of restoration and development initiatives is the existence of radical religious and socio-cultural elements. These limitations and obstacles have a profoundly negative impact on women's and girls' well-being in Afghanistan, resulting in a marked deterioration in their general standard of living and, in some situations, a reduction in the life expectancy of women (Kristensen, 2017). Even with the coordinated efforts of Pashtun monarchs, governments, and outside parties to improve the condition of Afghan women concerning their rights, freedom, and general well-being, the situation is still appalling. The dangerous circumstances that women in Afghanistan must endure are a result of long-standing cultural customs, ongoing hostilities, and NATO bombings. In addition, a woman in Afghanistan who aspires to voice her thoughts or take on public roles finds herself up against highly ingrained gender standards that dictate proper conduct for women, whether or not she works as a news anchor or a police officer. She is often intimidated by her own mortality (Chassy, 2007).

The possibility of women suffering tragic consequences after childbirth is shown by the fact that Afghanistan has a maternal mortality rate of about one in eleven. In addition to being denied basic human rights, the person in question has endured a disturbing rate of maternal mortality, poor access to and subpar quality of healthcare facilities, protracted periods of violence, and total lack of economic rights (NBC, 2012). Women's rights and liberties in Afghanistan are still marginalized in many ways, even if the world community is becoming more aware of them. As a consequence, their condition remains dire (News, 2011).

In his literary masterpiece, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Hosseini skillfully amplifies the voices of Afghan women, giving proper regard to the various acts of brutality and tyranny they endure. The work spans a sizable amount of time and documents the difficult path and difficulties experienced by Afghan women. The stories of the three major characters—Mariam, Laila, and Nana—provide a narrative description of the harsh abuse of Afghan women. The author exposes the pervasive and deeply ingrained sexism while giving a summary of the appalling conditions that Afghan women must endure. Afghan women think that males are dominating and manipulating them, according to Akbar (2011).

“He caught her, threw her up against the wall, and struck her with the belt again and again, the buckle slamming against her chest, her shoulder, her raised arms, her fingers, drawing blood wherever it struck” (Hosseini, 2008).

After reading the above extract, the reader might feel uneasy, however there's something to be said for the fact that most Afghan homes view the scenario that is described as normal. Instead of being acknowledged as unique people with inalienable

human rights, women in Afghan society are frequently seen as commodities and possessions. Numerous political issues are covered in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, including as women's status, the effects of war, socioeconomic inequality, and sociological issues pertaining to women's roles in Afghan culture. By modifying her conduct and appearance to suit the tastes of men, the Afghan woman complies with social expectations. The opinion of Afghan men largely shapes the assessment of Afghan women (Meheidli, 2009). The Afghan-American writer, Khaled Hosseini, has beautifully sketched the crooked and painful image of women of Afghanistan. Through the medium of his masterpiece, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Hosseini embraces the story of a mother-daughter, who are related not by a bond of blood but surely of emotions and eternity. The 'Patriarchal Despotism' where women are agonizingly dependent on father, husbands and especially sons have been focused upon. Hosseini also talks about the plight of women belonging to every age, their survival, exploitation and eventually gendered categorization. This novel also highlights the strengths and desires of women who struggle endlessly against patriarchy and become iconoclasts. It displays how women become the objects of gender discrimination, experience educational deprivation and are forcefully rendered powerless, which results in self-destruction. Thus, the marginalization and subordination of women of Afghanistan has been vocalized in the novel. It has been found that women belonging to any Nation, Religion or Culture have to face different sorts of oppressions that vary in degree. Some women are courageous enough to stand against the colossus of societal toxicity, others adjust within the overarching framework and accept this cruelty as their own destiny. When we discuss the Afghan culture, we observe that in order to tame the body, you must be smart enough to tame the brain. It becomes extremely easy when you dilute the recurring and revolutionary ideas and grab the mental strength of a person. This is the art which leads the women to believe that they are incapable, servile and born to obey men. Women not only become the victim, but are genuinely trained in such a way that they also become the part of the phenomenon of repression of womanhood. Fanaticism seeps down into the roots in such a way that it leads to the self-realization of inferiority which has been deliberately injected in almost each and every woman's mind.

Discrimination, irrespective of any particular field or object, is in itself a very unscrupulous entity that creates a huge gulf between anything. Gender discrimination comes in various forms and incarnations. The women of Afghanistan are persecuted over and over again. This goes unnoticed, as this trend has become the part and parcel of the social structure. Availability of freedom is almost null and to mention here, the orthodox traditions add to the already existing bigotry. Men become the oppressors, who are benefited by the helplessness of women in their country. "God has made us differently, you women and us men. Our brains are different. You are not able to think like we can. Western doctors and their science have proven this. This is why we require only one male witness but two female ones" (Hosseini 355). Women, consistently face discriminations and they accept everything easily. They are marginalized, subordinated and subjected to violence. Most of the women accept all of this silently, yet there exist some extraordinary women who choose to fight back and struggle against this discrimination. Everything that happens to Mariam can be traced back to the psychological abuse inflicted upon her by her mother Nana, her father Jalil and even by the society once she falls pregnant with an illegitimate child. Another form of direct violence is that which occurs when one of the partners do not give consent for any sort of act. Violence remains one of the most obvious forms of

gender discrimination. It includes thrashing, kicking etc., leaving behind negative impacts on the victims that can be physical, psychological or sexual. “If she was lucky, she was given a tongue-lashing or a single kick to the rear, a shove in the back. Other times, she met with assortments of wooden clubs, fresh tree branches, short whips, slaps, often fists” (Hosseini 313). In the novel, the female characters experience rape and marital molestation. Rasheed is the most abusive character. He is also the extremely authoritative character in charge of both Mariam and Laila, two of his wives. He abuses them physically, verbally and mentally in the novel which occurs innumerable times. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* portrays two such kinds of women, who design their own fate by choosing two different paths. On one hand, Maryam's mother Nana faced patriarchal discrimination and she accepted this without showing any problem. But Maryam and Laila opposed this, struggled against the evil and freed themselves from the clutches of gender despotism and discrimination.

Education shapes the thoughts and ideas of human brain required specially by women in today's scenario in order to stand strong and fight for their own needs. It boosts up confidence, regenerates women to start believing in themselves and increases the consciousness about equality that exists between men and women. Hosseini emphasizes the importance of education in women. Education is directly proportional to the endurance of women. Education highlights the rights and proper uses of the strength that is deliberately crushed by the patriarchal society and its norms. Thus, education is the strongest weapon which can be used against the epitome of discrimination. In the novel, Hosseini mentions the aspect of education in a very just and beautiful manner. He uses Laila's character to prove that education never goes in vain. Laila's father taught her about the significance of education for women and its social impact. Marriage can wait, education cannot. 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. Because a society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated, Laila. No chance. (Hosseini 114)

The power of education as well as the difference education can make for a society is sketched in the novel. Education not only stands as one of the most promising solution to the problems but also a way to prevent many of the problems from ever happening again in the future. The constantly recurring theme is the lack of education in females and also the societal discomfort caused due to this gulf. Educated women can also empower others. Laila raises Mariam's awareness and motivate her to struggle against the abuses that had been bestowed upon her by her husband. Later on Laila volunteers to teach in an orphanage. By fighting against the injustices of Rasheed, Laila and Mariam eventually freed themselves from sufferings and by becoming a teacher, Laila provided a better life for future generations of Afghanistan. Hosseini depicts a hopeful portrait of Kabul as shown through the state of the orphanage, Laila's role as a school teacher and her pregnancy. The orphanage symbolizes the changes which might become the embodiment of the bright future of Afghanistan's female counterparts. ***“Laila passes beneath the sign and enters the classroom. The children are taking their seats, flipping notebooks open, chattering”*** (Hosseini 401).

Afghanistan's society lacks proper medication facilities especially for women. From the beginning of the text, we find that Maryam's mother Nana suffered pain and had to give birth to her child on her own and without any assistance.

When the pain got bad, I'd bite the pillow and scream into it until I was hoarse. And still no one came to wipe my face or give me a drink of water. And you, Mariam jo, you were in no rush. Almost two days you made me lay on that cold floor. I didn't eat or sleep, all I did was push and pray that you would come out. (Hosseini 11)

Even Maryam herself faced such situations, wherein she had miscarriages and no proper care or health facilities were provided to her. Laila, while giving birth to her second child was rushed to the hospital, but unfortunately there was shortage of anaesthesia and the medicines required by a pregnant woman. Laila had no other choice, so she underwent the surgery without becoming unconscious. "Tell me what's going on!" Laila said. She had propped herself up on the elbows. The doctor took a breath, then told Laila that the hospital had no anaesthetic. ***"But if we delay, you will lose your baby". "Then cut me open" Laila said. She dropped herself back on the bed and drew up her knees. "Cut me open and give me my baby" (Hosseini 283).***

The amount of agony which she had to encounter is unmatched and can never be explained. The condition and status of the women of Afghanistan has been portrayed through the characters and situations narrated in the novel. This is not fictional as reality says that health is not prioritized. Women are not allowed to be treated by a male doctor rather women are left behind to die without any proper treatment. Hospitals have been distorted by the horrible effects of war, and the leftover staff and doctors are so less in number that they cannot take care of every single person. ***"This hospital no longer treats women" (Hosseini 278).*** A country like Afghanistan, which has been torn by war, suffers the after effects that are again maximized for a woman. These creatures are forced to inflict pain upon themselves and remain bound to their fate that breaks them through all sorts of means available in the society.

The strength and courage that was shown by Mariam and Laila to struggle against the different kinds of discriminations was not easy to be carried on those feminine shoulders. Their consciousness, education and sisterhood in combination encouraged them to fight against the giant monument of patriarchy. The educated Laila actually influenced Mariam and on the contrary, the patience shown by Mariam helped Laila. Afghan women such as Nana, Mariam and Laila represent the women who suffer from complex gender discriminations. An unjust patriarchal system has strongly influenced most women to be submissive, accept oppression by keeping their tongues tied in silence and become an embodiment of pain and abuse.

Liberation can only become possible if the suppressed mentality of women gets replaced by hope of obtaining freedom. The subjugation and deprivation of females has a very vivid portrait in the novel. The clutches of patriarchy hold women strongly and capture even the ideas which deal with their freedom from slavery and abuse. Women are often referred to the designation of being second citizens who need to follow the rules set by the superior male patriarchs. One of the best examples of this male patriarch is Rasheed. He constantly inflicts pain and mistreats both of his wives, Mariam and Laila. Forces them to follow his orders, cover themselves, cook properly for him, even make love whenever he demands.

"Lying beneath his cold sheets that night, she watched him pull the curtains shut. She was shaking even before his fingers worked her shirt buttons, tugged at the drawstring of her trousers. He was agitated." (Hosseini 214)

If these rules are not followed properly, he thrashes them badly. The only way to freedom is patience. This has been successfully and undoubtedly proved by Mariam and Laila. The deeply embedded differences are extremely difficult to be diminished.

Afghanistan as shown in the story falls in the emergency wherein the society faces a desperate requirement of being educated and women need to be empowered in order to detach their composure from such chaos. The study and analysis of the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, carries the readers to a very realistic world and the deteriorated condition of the psyche of the deprived personalities of women in Afghanistan. A huge number of problems have been enlisted which need to be highlighted and discussed in order to find solutions for the sufferings and inhumane conditions of women. Education turns out to be the most important tool that definitely promises a complete end to the mental torture and bondage of the mind. The belittled feminine composure has been due to the underlying reasons which must not be ignored. Thus, the lost and repressed identity of innumerable women in Afghanistan can be saved from torture.

OBJECTIVES

This study's primary goal is to evaluate how Hosseini portrays the difficulties Afghan women encounter in his book *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Second, it inquires as to whether Pushtunwali, the unspoken set of laws that Pashtuns abide by, is the basis for Pashtun society's male-centeredness and limitations on women. Furthermore, it illustrates how an Afghan woman is not viewed as a person but rather as something to be "objectified and commodified".

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What aspects of Afghan women's situation, social status, and discrimination under various regimes are shown in Hosseini's book?
2. Is Pashtun culture patriarchal, patrilocal, and patrilineal, and does it restrict the rights of women?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Analytical and descriptive research approaches were used to analyze the data acquired from interviews because this study is qualitative in nature. Primary data were gathered through semi-structured interviews using a purposive sampling technique that is non-probability sampled. Using a theme analysis technique, the novel's topics were scrutinized and evaluated.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Throughout the interview process, some individuals were embarrassed while answering questions on verbal, sexual, and domestic abuse. Still, a large proportion of people were able to recollect their events with ease.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

One respondent showed hesitation while describing the abuse she receives in her home, in line with Hosseini's investigation of the problem of domestic violence in Afghan society. Nevertheless, the subject told the researcher about the times she suffered physical violence at the hands of her substance-addicted partner. By her own account, the person stated that her mother-in-law is her paternal aunt and that she is very kind. For the benefit of her mother-in-law, she therefore puts up with her violent husband. She also claims that when her husband overindulges in narcotics to the point of unconsciousness, she will ask him to do things like get groceries, and he will always react negatively to her demands resulting in aggressive behaviour. The person who made the claim stated that her husband drives a rickshaw and uses the money he makes from it exclusively to buy drugs. He doesn't have enough money to provide for us. She said that my mother-in-law and I sew clothes together in order to make money to pay for our rent and buy groceries. The spouse's periodic incapacitation stems from the debilitating consequences of drug usage, which causes them to occasionally miss

work-related duties. As so, he abuses her physically, mistreats his mother, and begs them for money so that he may continue doing drugs. My spouse has threatened to murder me several times and shoved me against the wall. However, it is against my culture for me to divorce my husband (Ranrra, 2022). The male participant shared a viewpoint on domestic violence that is somewhat in line with Khaled Hosseini's emphasis on the subject, although he blames women for the violence rather than men. The participant stated that even in situations when they have committed faults or blunders, Afghan women are still subjected to physical violence (Zardan, 2022).

VERBAL VIOLENCE

Regarding verbal abuse, one of the participants revealed that women in Afghan society face verbal abuse for very little reasons, such not being able to conceive, not having male children, and not following their husbands' instructions. She said that when a woman does not have a son, she might go through such much psychological pain that she loses interest in her husband's decision to marry other people. Her acceptance of her husband's decision to be married again demonstrates the goodness of her cooperation. She gives in without a word, motivated only by the need for peace and self-preservation (Hajra, 2022). Living in a combined household with three married brother-in-laws, a mother-in-law, and their kids causes verbal and physical abuse, claims another responded. They have a large family to feed, clean, and take care of. The responded stated that her mother-in-law manages every aspect of the household and their social mobility, including going to their parents' house, the health centre, the market, and so on. In a household this size, there is never enough food. Every woman residing in the house had grievances with their mother-in-law. They added that since she reports to her boys, they endure physical and verbal abuse. The responded went so far as to say that she feels unhappy sharing a residence. The respondent went so far as to say that she is unhappy in a mixed family because she finds extended families to be harsh and depressing. She went on to say that she could never imagine living apart from her in-laws, even with all the issues that come with joint families (Gul, 2022). A significant proportion of the participants maintain the viewpoint that they frequently come across incidents of verbal abuse. The data clearly shows that the verbal abuse that Khaled Hosseini's characters—Maraim, Laila, Aziza, and Nana—suffered is a true reflection of the social status of women in Afghanistan in relation to verbal abuse. These people believed that verbal abuse is not considered a form of violence by men in Afghanistan. Sexual Abuse In reference to the questions raised by Khaled Hosseini on the subject of sexual assault committed against women in Afghanistan, some people described him as an American. Some critics claim that he exaggerates his portrayal of women in order to harm Afghans' reputations. Advocates of Hosseini's viewpoint contend that women experience dehumanizing behaviour when they leave their homes, as they are met with objectifying looks and disparaging remarks about their physical appearance. In addition, he claims that most married men have extramarital affairs by exploiting poor women and paying them little money in exchange. It is depressing to note that some people show a want to protect their own female relatives, but do not extend this concern to the welfare of women beyond their own familial circles (Munir, 2022).

Due to the tragic events of their fathers, brothers, spouses, and sons becoming victims of terrorist attacks, a considerable proportion of Afghan women were left homeless, further compounding their vulnerability. In the absence of male breadwinners, many turned to prostitution since they had already experienced sexual assault and had no other options for employment. In wartime, local warlords were observed breaking into

homes without permission and robbing young ladies who appealed to them sexually, regardless of whether or not they were married. Then, in a blatant violation of their human rights, these women were forced into marriage against their choice could unlawfully enter residences and forcibly abduct young women who they found visually alluring, disregarding their marital status. These women were then coerced into becoming wives against their will, a flagrant violation of human rights (Saira, 2021).

The responses validate the topic of sexual assault as presented by Khaled Hosseini through his characters, Nana, Maryam, and Laila. The respondents' prevailing opinion is that, aside from men's sexist actions, one other element that has contributed to women's susceptibility to sexual assault and harassment is warfare. Due to the aforementioned situations, families are now lacking caregivers and financial providers, which makes early marriages to older males necessary. In addition, prostitution has been a need for certain people in order to survive. Evidence of virginity Since the Pashtun community has cultural traditions that prohibit discussing sexual things with males, it was difficult to have open discussions about this topic, especially among the participants. One important theme that Khaled Hosseini deftly illustrates is virginity, a taboo topic that is typically ignored in public conversation. Despite the sensitive nature of the topic, a tiny percentage of participants provided correct information and showed no hesitation in sharing the truth. One of the respondents agreed that it is still common practice to check a bride's virginity in the modern era. According to Sarmad (2022), a considerable proportion of brides in Afghanistan have either been killed or had to return to their parents' home because of acts of violence perpetrated against them on the grounds that they had sex before marriage. Saweera highlights how important it is for Afghan women to show their virginity on their wedding night. There are several cultural situations where it is believed that a bride must bleed on her wedding night.

There have also been cases of severe violence that have led to the premature death of the bride in circumstances when the husband or in-laws had doubts about the bride's virginity. As is usual, the older ladies who live in the bride's home take turns changing the bed linens in the morning.

Saweera (2022) reports that a considerable proportion of young women are pursuing medical intervention in order to regain their virginity prior to getting married. This behaviour stems from their dread of possible repercussions, such the possibility of deadly violence if their infidelity is found out. The views on female virginity that Pashtun males from Afghanistan have to offer are astounding. One member shared their viewpoint, stating that a woman cannot remain virgin if she leaves her home to pursue more education or career. It becomes difficult to determine if she is still a virgin because of her encounters with male coworkers and classmates. The person goes on to say that these kinds of women are under Allah's curse and will never get married since it is the divine punishment that is assigned to them. She is required to produce proof of her virginity in order to be viewed as a lady of moral fortitude; failing to do so might have dire repercussions, including the death penalty. Additionally, the person maintains the view that a woman's domain is limited to her home and her death. This viewpoint holds that any woman who hopes to go beyond these boundaries will unavoidably lose her virginity and her condition of purity. Anwarullah (2022) was adamant that all girls who were like this had secret connections.

CONCLUSION

The volume covers the historical events that took place in Afghanistan between the year 1961 and 2004. Hosseini gives readers a comprehensive understanding of Afghanistan's socio-political environment before the Soviet invasion, as well as the communist regimes that followed, the Taliban's rise to power, and the eventual US invasion. With a focus on the expansion of women's rights and opportunities, the country saw a significant cultural transition in the later part of the 20th century toward one that was more progressive, inclusive, and accepting. When opposed to the current situation, people used to have a lot more autonomy and rights. Before the Soviet invasion of 1979, women had become free to choose whether or not to wear burqas, had been permitted access to education, had coeducation instituted, and had even been given the option to work. Afghanistan's current situation is mostly the result of several violent battles. Women experienced a deep feeling of sadness after the Soviet invasion, as Khaled Hosseini skilfully illustrated via the portrayal of his characters. The author provides an insight into the chauvinistic culture that is common among his readers, illuminating the control that Afghanistan's patriarchal system has on its female populace. As a result, people experience domestic abuse and violence, which has a variety of effects on both the individual and society levels.

The purpose of this study is to examine how patriarchy is portrayed in Afghan society in the book *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The environment that the author presents to readers is one in which women are totally reliant on male family members, especially sons. As a result, having a male child becomes the only way for a woman to achieve social recognition. The female protagonists in the novel encounter the pervasive violence that is a part of Afghan society. Women must embrace the trajectories that men have selected for them. Surviving in a patriarchal society characterized by male dominance, when men employ violence against women because they think they are inferior to them and even while laws are in place to protect and promote gender equality. Women in Afghanistan face ongoing marginalization and persecution. They are also commonly sold as belongings and turned into commodities. Hosseini has determined that a primary factor contributing to their unfavourable circumstances is conflict. The issue has had a major and ongoing influence on women's lives. The fight caused immense destruction to every aspect of civilization. Afghans began to descend into poverty when they were forcibly taken from their homes, sent to abandoned areas, and lost everything. A large number of the women engaged in the trade of sex services either voluntarily or involuntarily turned to it as a means of making ends meet since these people had to face significant challenges in order to maintain their own life. Rasheed, the story's antagonist, tells Mariam that brothels in Peshawar are eager for women that resemble Laila to arrive. In addition, women have experienced various forms of exploitation due to armed conflicts, which have also hindered their prospects for work, compromised their access to healthcare, and prevented them from obtaining an education. The tight application of Sharia law and the adherence of Pashtunwali ideals about women dominated the social space that was accessible to society during the brief period of calm that followed the Taliban government. After the Taliban rule collapses, Hosseini concludes his story with hope for a more affluent and hopeful Afghanistan. Nevertheless, the US fell short of its pledge to protect women's rights in Afghanistan.

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