

A STUDY OF OPPRESSION ON FEMALE IN KHALID HOSSEINI'S NOVEL "A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS"

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ABSTRACT: *This research article describes great efforts of Khalid Hosseini to highlight oppression on female in patriarchal society of Afghanistan. It is descriptive qualitative research, employing content and textual analysis method. The data is collected by two sources; the primary source of data collection is a critical study of the novel A Thousand Splendid Suns (2007) and the secondary sources of data collection are some library books, websites and articles which dealt with oppression on women and social conflicts in Afghan culture. A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khalid Hosseini was published in 2007 by Riverhead Books, New York and its story was set against a backdrop of tempestuous events in Afghanistan from the fall of monarchy through the Soviet Military intervention. There is message for all women who are facing oppression that they should stand against oppression in order to get their rights and status.*

1: INTRODUCTION

1.1: Background

Oppression is as old as the history of mankind. When mankind was existed on this earth, oppression was also started and it is a part of human nature. Oppression can be seen in whole world from east to west, north to south, in every country, culture, society and in every corner of the world. In recent era, the worst victim of oppression is woman, especially in third world countries, women are considered very inferior race and they are not given equal rights to men. The male dominant societies make such laws which are strictly against females. The word "Oppression" derives from the Latin word "Oppressus" it means "to press against", "to squeeze", or "to suffocate". Oppression creates hopelessness and anger among individuals. The tyrants control the lives of innocent people and seize their freedom of action. Women do not deliberately become subordinate of men, they are compelled by social laws, customs and religious restrictions that they remain under male members of society. Egidisus (2007) nicely expresses his views about oppression as he mentions four conditions of oppression when a person is oppressed by an oppressor. He also defines oppression as: "Oppression is an enclosing structure that, by way of institutional practice, harms members of a social group, while members of another, or other, corresponding social groups' benefit from the harm suffered by those oppressed" (p. 08)

In European countries, women work side by side the men and they participate in every field of life, there is no difference between men and women in modern states. The men and women both have equal status in European and American societies while in third world countries situations are totally opposite, women have very low status. They are compelled to stay at homes and deprived to participate in different social activities. These types of restrictions are very big hurdle in the way of progress and women cannot participate in the development of country. It is very hopeless situation for women in backward countries where women are still deprived to achieve their rights. Women are badly influenced by rape, bride burning, circumcision, inheritance system and religious restrictions in third world societies. Rahimi (2009) truly elaborates the male power and

right of parenthood in Afghan society. He explains painfully that Afghan girls are married against their will and choice which is another kind of oppression. So, females are bound in every step of life and have no decision power in Afghan society (p.63)

1.2: Statement of the Problem

In the history of Afghanistan, it has been seen that the women were mostly deprived of their basic rights in early 1990s. When Taliban took control of Afghanistan, they made the life of women very miserable. They have targeted women for extreme repression, punishment and oppression. No doubt, oppression is a social issue, the people who oppress others they snatch the basic rights of living from other human beings. In the selected novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), Khalid Hossaini expresses the story of Afghan culture where men are considered superior to women. Women are punished if they commit unconsciously something wrong. Even then, they have no right and freedom in their life. Afghan woman is oppressed in every field of life such as; in social, economic, political, physical and psychological spheres of life. Khalid Hossaini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) deeply discusses female oppression and highlights the problem of oppression on females before the whole world so that basic rights of women can be restored. In Afghanistan, it is impossible for women to survive but Khalid Hossaini describes the characters of Mariam and Laila in his master piece *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) to demonstrate that resistance against oppression is necessary to get equal rights. Hossaini shows that determination of Mariam and Laila prove that women are not victims but survivors and can punch back those men who oppress them physically, socially, mentally, politically, economically and psychologically.

1.3: Author and Text Selected for the Study

Khalid Hossaini (Afghan based American novelist) was born in Kabul in 1965. His mother was teacher at a Girls' High School in Kabul. His father was a diplomat for Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry and when he was posted to Afghanistan's embassy in Tehran, the family moved with him. At last, Khalid Hossaini's family settled in U.S.A and he got his early education from San Jose California and completed graduation in 1984. He earned a degree in biology from Santa Clara College, and then went to study medicine at the University of California, San Diego, completing his residency at Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles. In his literary career which was started in 2003, Hossaini has written three novels. All three of his novels became bestseller, such as: *The Kite Runner* (2003), *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) and third novel by Khalid Hossaini was *Mountains Echoed* published in 2013. Stuhr (2009) argues that *A Thousand Splendid Suns* deals with the issues of feminism, war, abuse or good and bad family relations. He further praises Hosseini's work and says that nobody describes the theme of female oppression as good as we observe in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007). The real purpose of Khalid Hosseini's work is to highlight Afghan culture and female oppression. He wants to restore basic female rights in Afghan society (p.81). *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) is the second novel of Khalid Hossaini which describes the story of two Afghan women, Mariam (an illegitimate child) and Laila (an orphan), their lives intertwine when forced to marry the same abusive man. Rasheed, against the backdrop of Afghanistan's destructive political situation and rise of Taliban role; they endure hardship together. At last, in the end of the novel, Mariam hits

Rasheed twice with a shovel and killed Rasheed. After his death, Laila and Tariq left the town and began a new life with their children in Pakistan.

1.4: Objectives of the Research

Therefore the objectives of the study are following:

- (i) To find out female oppression in Afghanistan as described by Khalid Hossaini in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) and attitude of Afghan women against oppression.
- (ii) To elaborate main causes and effects of female oppression as described in Khalid Hossaini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007).

1.5: Research Questions

In the given study, the researcher discusses the answers of the following questions:

- (i) How does Khalid Hossaini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) elaborate female oppression in Afghanistan and the attitude of Afghan women against this oppression?
- (ii) How far does Khalid Hossaini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) depict the causes and effects of female oppression in Afghanistan?

1.6: Significance and Scope of Research:

The given research paper is the best struggle to raise voice of Afghan women against patriarchal society of Afghanistan. Khalid Hossaini provides basic information about female oppression and gender discrimination in Afghanistan. This research will be fruitful for those students and researchers who are interesting in feminism school of thought. It will also motivate other researchers to conduct further researches about female issues. The major importance of this research is that it motivates the women to fight for their rights because every human is born with the same rights either a man or woman. This research especially focuses on woman oppression in Afghanistan, its causes and effects on Afghan women and their attitude against these circumstances. To dig deeper the problem, the researcher deeply analyzes the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) and completes this research with the special references which deal with woman oppression in Afghanistan

2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This research basically focuses on female oppression and human suffrage in Afghanistan as expressed by Khalid Hossaini in his great novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007). The phenomenon that is related to the given study can be seen almost in every part of Afghan society. The selected novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) highlights female oppression, sexual violence, subjugation and harassment through males in Afghanistan is very common thing. The main characters i.e. Mariam and Laila are the heroine of novel, Hosseini expresses oppression and other feministic issues in Afghan society through these characters. They also represent whole women of the world who are seriously affected by oppression in male dominated world. In the end of novel, both female characters got their rights but they have to face great hurdles in this regard. Afghanistan and especially third worlds are inherently oppressive and have male dominated societies and power structure that is responsible for oppression and inequality between males and females. The following review of literature explores gap to work on the current study.

Singh (2013) deeply analyses Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) and highlights the problems of feminism, gender equity and socio-political issues in Afghanistan. She sadly explores that gender equity is a longest war which has been fighting by the women of whole world since centuries. Women in Afghanistan have been facing severe resistance, depriving their basic rights and subjugation because of male dominated society. She further expresses that Khalid Hossaini truly draws the picture of Afghan society in his novel where the basic rights of women are not given i.e. women are deprived of education, personal choices in marriage, health facilities. Singh wishes to improve female conditions in Afghanistan and she raises the sound of females before us and remarks in her reservation article as: *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) depict the plight of Afghan women behind the walls of Afghanistan during several invasions, in the country. The issues of feminism and gender equity have been raised through the characters of Mariam and Laila. Both of their fates are connected through a tragic twist of circumstances. However, because of status of women with in the society, their decisions are forced on them (P.89)

Shameem (2014) has elaborated in his article about the conditions of conflict and female oppression in Afghanistan. He exclaims with sorrow that female faces dual subjugation in third world countries like Afghanistan i.e. oppression inside and outside the home. Afghan women are oppressed on the basis of class, ethnicity and gender inequity. Moreover, Shameem puts examples from Khalid Hossaini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) where the characters of Afghan females are described in a very realistic manner. The gender issues and war like environment has badly influenced human life and destroyed whole system in the country. Shameem sums up that long conflict incidents and violence have deep impact on Afghan women to push them in unbound pain and suffering.

Silima (2013) comparatively discusses the characters of women in Khalid Hossaini's and Arundhati Roy's novels. She seriously highlights the unjust or prejudicial treatment of society with women in the patriarchal social systems of Afghanistan. She highlights that social, cultural traditional and religious aspects of societies are responsible of female oppression in the world. Silima further elaborates that female characters in the whole world are suffering in subjugation and subordination and they are under male's control which is not a fair thing. All women characters analyzed in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) and *God of Small Things* i.e. Ammu, Mariam, Laila, Mammachi, all stands against the hegemonic forces of the male oriented societies. Silima critically remarks: "The most stringent form of subjugation of women folk is a norm in religion dominated countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and India" (p.459)

Shapiro (2010) elaborates that *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) and *The New York Times* truly highlights Middle Eastern women issues. Moreover, he examines *A Thousand Splendid Sun's* thematic similarity in regard to news coverage of Middle Eastern women's issues. He painfully exclaims that male domination in Afghanistan decreasing progress and leading women toward physical and mental abuse. In the end of his research work, Shapiro concluded that *The New York Times* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) cover the same issues which are the source of information about Eastern women for the American women. This kind of fiction can be helpful to resolve Eastern women issues in future and bring progress and improve female rights in the whole world.

Sultana (2010-11) gives theoretical analysis about patriarchy and woman's subordination in her research work. She critically expresses that Middle Eastern countries are male dominated where priority is given to men and woman's rights are limited. The European countries are making progress rapidly because men and women enjoy equal rights in society. No nation can progress without the help of women. Sultana further analysis the women in Bangladesh are mostly the victims of exploitation, oppression and violence. She remarks: Women are the victim of subordination, they are treated unequally and given low wages, tortured sexually and oppressed in the whole world. Besides above issues, girls are sold like animals, they are given no preference; they are considered burden for family, not given freedom for mobility, given no education, use wrong interpretation of religion for women suppression in Afghan society (p.14).

Kazemiyan (2012) identifies fantasy themes such as; sufferance, self-sacrifice and inferiority of women in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007). Mariam and Laila show frequent response against their sufferance and inferiority in the form of their fight against their husband. He further analyzes that male domination in Afghanistan is creating inferiority complex and females are suffering day by day. Kazemiyan deeply analyzes the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) and draws the attention of western readers that war culture, patriarchal system, forced girls' marriage, racial terrorism, baseless blames on women and male ownership in Afghanistan are main sources of oppression.

Yawari (2011) comparatively describes the characteristics of female characters in Khalid Hossaini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. He demonstrates that females have inner strength and abilities which are enough to solve the problems in third world countries. Actually, Yawari wants to give golden rules to all women of the world so that they will be able to become free from male's domination and lead a happy and free life. He critically analyzes *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) and *The Color Purple*, thus he finds out that woman should recognize their self-dignity, self-respect and inner strength in order to get their status. Yawari further testifies the similarities between the heroines of both novels. He finds out that main reasons of female sufferings in both novels are sexual torture, problems of racism and narrow thinking but these tough conditions make both heroines self-confident and dignified and they become able to fight for their rights.

Muaddatunikhmah (2016) in his research article observes female characters as discussed in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) through applying theory of subjectivity. He attracts attention of his readers on a very sensitive and serious topics in the novel especially related to gender inequalities in Afghan society, condemning life under Taliban rule, rape of females, and separation of children from parents, discrimination with females, and war against super powers. The Afghan women visualized as the epitome of inferiority complex. He further elaborates Marxist perspectives in the novel where socio-political activism is very apparent, there are finding missing values of gender and class equality, as for Mariam who is related to a very low rank because of her false birth. He is not satisfied to gender inequality in the novel, he dislikes Afghan society where men have complete control over women, there is not found justice and respect for women.

Silvester (2017) transmits painful emotions, unfortunate situations, terrorism against women and natural distress of Afghan women. Through his research paper, he tries

to capture the attention of super powers toward very low status of women in Afghanistan where females are considered best in the four walls of house or grave. Those women who do not follow their husbands are considered worth little because they are killed by their husbands. The women in Afghanistan are regarded to be loyal, honest, respectful, and lovable for their husbands and women should be fully moral because the standard of morality is measured by women in Afghan society. Silvester throws light on another scale to measure the women status in Afghan culture; those women are valuable who give birth more boys. Silvester critically observes *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) and describes that female oppression is a common thing in Afghanistan because it is very trifling to slap, bit, and kick and beat a female by stone or stick in Afghanistan. Rasheed is described as a best example of tyranny in the novel who expected male children from his wives i.e. Laila and Maryam and punished them without any mistake. (Pp.505-506)

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This research is based on descriptive and qualitative research method using content and textual analysis approach. The researcher has used two ways for data collection; the primary source of data collection is the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) by Khalid Hossaini and secondary sources of data collection are related material i.e. library books, articles and websites which are related to female oppression in Afghanistan. Khalid Hossaini expresses reality based oppressive events in his novel which are painful and unbearable in ideal society.

3.1: RASHEED'S OPPRESSION ON HIS WIVES

Rasheed is the undeniable villain of the novel who proves a big oppressor for his wives; he injured his wives not only physically but also mentally. The character of Rasheed appears as a rigid man of forty-five who lives in Kabul and he was shoe-maker by profession. He has a big shop of shoes in Kabul and becomes a successful businessman but things were changing rapidly in Afghanistan after 1972. Suddenly, his shop was destroyed by Russian army's bombing and his business was ended up. He was very conservative, willful, materialistic and a selfish person, he remains a permanent source of psychological torture for his wives. Mariam (illegitimate daughter of Jalil) was second wife of Rashid, there is no respect for illegitimate children in Afghan society so Mariam felt it shameful for herself. After marriage, Rasheed started to beat and torture her by different ways. As we can observe in textbook, Rasheed addresses Mariam as: "You're shaking. Maybe I scare you? Do I scare you? Are you frightened of me?" (p. 36)

These words are clearly showing the Rasheed's behaviour with his wife. He never missed any chance to hurt Mariam; he used to beat Mariam in order to make her frightened. Rasheed imposed many restrictions on her; the first restriction Rasheed imposed over Mariam is to wear burqa which covers whole body from head to toe. Mariam does not like to wear burqa because it causes suffocation for her. One day, Rashid's mood was very aggressive and he was irritating in hunger. Mariam prepared dinner a few minutes late but he didn't wait and started eating bread with radish. Even she put a delicious food in front of him after just a while but he didn't eat it. His attitude was full of anger, hate and revolt so he started to beat Mariam. Rasheed finds fault with everything which belong to his wives

because his purpose was to give pain and tough time to his wives. Once Mariam cooked rice and Rasheed ate the food, he feels somehow stiff. He blamed her that she did not cook well; he shook rice angrily and pushed the plate away. He went out of room and brought pebbles in his hand. Meanwhile, Mariam was pale and shivering with fear, he caught her both hands and dropped a handful of pebbles in her mouth. He forcefully clasped her jaw and put them in her mouth and closed it violently. He bellowed to chew; she struggled against it but in vain. Her eyes were full of tears and back of her mouth was cracked. Rasheed abuses her and says: "Now you know what your rice tastes like. Now you know what you've given me in this marriage, bad food and nothing else" (p. 59)

When Laila (third wife of Rasheed) gave birth to Aziza, Rasheed got infuriated to know about a baby girl because he wishes for son. Laila could not sleep with her daughter he wanted to get rid of her when Aziza was 8 years old she was sent to an orphanage. Just after some weeks of Aziza's birth, he insisted Laila to have sex with him. Actually, nothing was important for Rasheed except his own happiness and satisfaction. He was proved a bad father as well as a worst husband in the novel. When Laila asked Rasheed for Aziza's dress, he said that she should use those dresses which he bought for his son. Rasheed blamed that Mariam corrupted Laila for not obeying Rasheed. He mostly used to beat Mariam and Laila with his belt, Mariam tries to resist but Laila cannot stop him. She remained still and he beaten her bitterly, she pleaded but Rasheed did not stop, as she remarks: "You win. You win. Don't do this. Please, Rasheed, no beating! Please don't do this" (p.127)

Rasheed treated with his wives like a dictator he mended their lives according to his own ways. Mariam and Laila are the true embodiments of oppression by Rasheed. They could not take breath without his consent. He was a dominant man and a cruel master who treated them like slaves. Moreover, he threatened Mariam by these words: "I'm on to you, he said, slinging the belt over his shoulder. I'm on to you both. I won't be made an ahmaq, a fool, in my own house" (p. 127)

Mariam and Laila had fed up by the oppressive behavior of Rasheed, both decided to run away and reached at Kabul's bus station. They came to know that border of Pakistan had been closed as it is already burdened with two million Afghan refugees. Suddenly, Laila found a man with a kind face and thin eyes. She talked to him and told about her misfortune for seeking his help. He was agreed to help them but he deceived them and informed religious police about them. They were caught and taken to police station. They were brought home by the driver of police. Rasheed was waiting for their arrival at home, when they reached at home, he suddenly grasped Laila and dropped her on steps. When she was standing she favored Mariam and said that it was my own planning to flee Pakistan and Mariam is innocent in this matter. One moment she was talking and on the other she was down on floor in the feet of Rasheed. He became wide-eyed and red faced; she has become puzzle and furious, she was being beaten on hip and belly by Rasheed.

At last, he seized Mariam from her neck and locked her in a room. It was a dark and impenetrable room, he filled the cracks between boards with something, even something had been stuffed in key hole and doors were filled with large and immovable objects so no light came from it. They were hopeful and satisfied that their husband will feed them. They could not estimate the passage of time with their eyes. Aziza became too weak with thirst and hunger, Laila was saying following words to her daughter that your

father will give us milk soon. He is in full anger but we should be patient. It was second day but Rasheed did not give them any food. There was much heat because it was summer season and Aziza was crying badly. Laila was trying to make her understand that everything will be fine. That day Laila banged her hands at the door for several times, but no one listened to her and no one came with food and water. On third day, suddenly a flood of light came in and Rasheed entered the room and warned them: "If this again you try and I will find you. I swear on the Prophet's name that I will find you. And, when I do, there isn't a court in this god for sake country that will hold me accountable for what I will do. To Mariam's first, then to her, and you last. I'll make you watch. You understand me? I'll make you watch" (p.142)

We can observe in the novel that oppressive atmosphere makes them brave; Laila became more brave and strong with the passage of time. Rasheed gave his wives food, clothes, shelter and protection but still their life was suffocating and depressing because of their husband. Country was fighting a war against Russian invaders but Afghan women had been fighting a war against male dominated society. Rasheed was a filthy man, Aziza was sent to an orphanage because of starvation. He wanted to make Aziza a street beggar because his income was too low and the expenses of them were too much. Laila protested against it and he slapped her so hard that her face turned red. But after this slap, Laila got courage because she could do everything for her children. Rasheed went out of the room and came back after a while with his gun and shoved the barrel into her mouth with a grinned face. A fight is started between Rasheed and Laila as in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) is described:

"And then he was on Laila, pummeling her chest, her head, her belly with fists, tearing at her hair, throwing her to the wall. Aziza was shrieking, pulling at his shirt; Zalmai was screaming too, trying to get him off his mother. Rasheed shoved the children aside, pushed Laila to the ground, and began kicking her. Mariam threw herself on Laila. He went on kicking, kicking Mariam now, spittle flying from his mouth, his eyes glittering with murderous intent, kicking until he couldn't anymore. I swear you're going to make me kill you, Laila, he said, panting. Then he stormed out of the house" (p. 157). In end of the novel, Rasheed beat Laila so badly that she was bleeding from everywhere and Rasheed tried to suffocate her. Meanwhile Mariam went out of the room and she brought a shovel and she hit on Rasheed's head and killed him, as he was about to kill Laila. Laila and Tariq went to Pakistan, because Mariam insisted them to start a new life.

3.2: Talibans' Oppression On Afghan Women

In 1990, Taliban came in Afghanistan as a reformer and later on they imposed strict laws on Afghan people. They ceased Afghan women from every kind of freedom and modern education. Afghan women were compelled to wear burqa in public places because it was considered very necessary to control vulgarity in public. Hospitals of women where male doctors were working closed; schools, colleges and universities for girls were banned. A woman could not go outside without permission of male companion. If a woman would find doing adultery, she will be stoned to death. She could not go to markets as well as she

could not do job. Many incidents are described in the given novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), as Laila and Mariam eloped with Aziza to go Pakistan and they were caught at bus station and were badly punished by religious police.

When Taliban started working in Afghanistan; they smashed pre-Islamic statues to rubble. Television screens were kicked off. All universities were closed and students were sent back to their homes. The great poetry works or literature of their country was spoiled and used oppression, bloodshed, heavy strike in the whole country, Hossaini remarks about Taliban's oppression in his novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) as: "Laila heard the men were dragged from the streets that skipped prayer. She learned that a great restaurant named Marco polo, near Chicken Street was turned into an interrogation center. Sometimes she heard screams which was coming behind its black painted windows. Everywhere a beard patrol was roamed to catch clean-shaved ones. They shut down all cinemas, projections rooms were ransacked and all the reels were set to fire. All music ghettos were made silent. All musical devices and instruments were trampled upon. Even they did not spare the dead ones; they went to the grave of Tariq's favorite singer, Ahmed Zahir and fired bullets into it. He has been dead for almost twenty years, Laila said to Mariam. Isn't dying once enough?" (p. 146)

3.3: The Soviet War And Oppression In Afghanistan

The Soviet army occupied on Afghanistan in December 1979 and immediately gained complete military and political control over Kabul and large portions of the country. Afghan government was unable to resist Russian army because lack of trained army and proper equipment. The Soviet-Afghan war lasted after ten years; it was started from December 1979 and ended until February 1989. If we deeply analyze the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), we come to know that all country was much suffered by the hands of Soviet Union. Tariq is a handsome young boy, lived in Kabul with his parents and was very happy with Laila. They flee to Pakistan due to the dangerous condition of Kabul. He did not want to leave Afghanistan but he had to leave country due to Soviet oppression. Later on, he lost his parents and became an orphan just because of Russian oppression. There is another character Laila who is a charming girl of fourteen and living with her parents in Kabul happily. The conditions of Kabul were becoming dangerous day by day. They were thinking of fleeing to Pakistan that a drone attack killed her parents. The Russian army not only destroyed business places of Afghanistan but also killed millions of people. Mariam's father was a wealthy business man and had a large family with three wives and nine children. His business was disturbed badly and his children or wives lived a miserable life. Mariam's father was also killed by Russian army so we can say that war in Afghanistan is causing oppression and dreadful environment in the country.

4: ANALYSIS OF DATA

The researcher has used following steps to analyze the data; firstly, researcher applied the method of reading and re-reading on *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) for better understanding and examining the novel. The researcher has used highlighter in order to highlight the relevant incidents from the novel. Secondly, data is divided into two types i.e. events full of female oppression in Afghanistan and the causes or effects of oppression

on Afghan women and its effect on national progress. Thirdly, the data is divided into two types i.e. the relevant data and irrelevant data. Thus, researcher has interpreted related lines and data according to Khalid Hossaini's point of view and then his own point of view. The irrelevant data is excluded from the research paper.

4.1: The Causes And Effects Of Oppression On Females In Afghanistan

Khalid Hossaini has beautifully delineated Afghan women and their problems in his great work *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007). He also elaborates in detail about the causes and effects of female oppression in Afghanistan and its effect on the progress of country. The main theme of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) revolves around feminism. Khalid Hossaini throws light on a very sensitive issue of oppression on female in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007). In Afghanistan, men are oppressing and women are being oppressed by them throughout centuries. In Afghan society, the men are trained from their early childhood that women are inferior and men are superior. This training imposes a deep effect on males' psychology and they keep women under their supervision. The major cause of oppression in Afghanistan is lack of education. The literacy rate in Afghanistan is very low and illiterate nations not only remain backward but also destroy their social life. The people of uneducated society cannot recognize the importance of females for society and it causes a severe clash between female and male genders.

Hossaini has delivered a positive message through his novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) that women are equal to men and they should become brave and fight against male dominant world to get equal status in Afghan society. A woman should not accept oppression silently because silence further increases her sufferings. There are many causes of oppression in Afghanistan but there are discussed only those main causes of oppression which have been mentioned in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) Such as:

- Taliban's reign is a main cause of oppression.
- Wrong interpretation of religion causes oppression.
- The Afghan culture and patriarchal society is very oppressive.

4.2: The Effects Of Oppression On Afghan Women

No doubt, women are oppressively treated and placed at backward position in Afghanistan. Khalid Hossaini rightly discussed the issue of female oppression in his master piece *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007). Female oppression is leading the county toward destruction and anarchy. Women play a very important role in the strength and progress of a country. Men and women are two main pillars of a society and if one pillar is crippled then society is also crippled. Women of Afghanistan have lost their confidence because of prevailing atmosphere of oppression and male domination in the country. The biggest effect of women oppression in society is that women have psychologically depressed and lost their senses. A depressed mother will reproduce a coward nation; it means the continuity of oppression in Afghan society is leading the whole nation toward destruction.

In Afghanistan, Women have become physically, mentally, socially and psychologically sick. Afghan culture compels women to lead a life of subordination and slavery under the male members of society. Historical incidents give arguments that Afghan women have been facing oppression since last thirty years.

The oppression on female has become a custom of Afghan society which has deeply rooted in Afghan culture and it is impossible to root out it from society. Fahmy (2004) argued that Taliban had strictly applied their laws on Afghan women by the dint of power. Afghan women wear burqa which means they have accepted subordination of Taliban. The western media represents Afghan women always in veil and western people think that burqa or veil is the symbol of subordination. In Afghanistan, about ninety-nine percent women consider that it is their husband's right to hit or beat them without any reason. The oppression on women has become a main reason of social conflicts in Afghanistan and pushed the country toward destruction.

5: CONCLUSION

It has been proved by this research that Afghanistan's culture is poisonous for females and its society has become male dominant society. There is no status and respect for women because women are considered a property of men. The men are basically deprived of the training to respect women. This is a chain process which has been continuing since centuries in Afghan culture. The main reasons of oppression in Afghanistan are foreign invasions, Taliban's strict rules and social customs based on patriarchy. All the system of Afghan society is controlled by men. Moreover, women do not enjoy equal rights and education because fathers do not allow their daughters to get education. Women themselves are also the reason of oppression because they do not try to maintain their self-respect and dignity in Afghan society. They do not raise their voice against oppression and men become stronger to oppress them. Hossaini represents Mariam and Laila as role model for other women who raise their voice against masculine power. The war culture prevailing in the whole country has displaced and widowed many women. It has become very dangerous for women to seek education, health care services, employment, or in some cases even to leave their homes. Taliban and other armed groups kill those women who speak out for their rights, go out for education and employment. Female oppression in Afghanistan has become a challenge not only for national progress but also for the peace of whole world.

Finally, it is suggested to improve women status and basic rights which are very important for national progress. If women get respect in a society they become successful as well as beneficial for society. There is much need to improve confidence and dignity in Afghan women so that they can tackle the problems in tough circumstances. Afghan women have suffered from inferiority complex and lack of confidence due to oppression. Afghan government should create more job occasions for females, in that way a woman can support her family. She can fulfill her needs easily and she will not be dependent on men. Secondly, women should not tolerate with oppressive treatment of men and they should raise their voice against it. Not only Afghan women but also the whole oppressive women of world should raise their voice against oppression and follow the examples of Mariam and Laila to get their rights. Thirdly, Afghan women should recognize their own

identity and status, the foremost action is their own resistance against inequality and oppression. The women should get awareness about their actual place in society. They should not become victim of male oppression; they should know their worth in society.

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