

**A Far Cry from Afghanistan: Violation of Human Rights in
Select Works of Khaled Hosseini**

SAKTHE PRIYA C

(20PEN014)

Thesis submitted to

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women,
Coimbatore – 641043.

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

MAY 2022

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Signature of the Supervisor


Signature of the Head of the Department

DECLARATION

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I declare that the thesis entitled “**A Far Cry from Afghanistan: Violation of Human Rights in Select Works of Khaled Hosseini**” submitted by me for the degree of Master of Arts (MA) in English is the record of work carried out by me during the period of December 2021 – May 2022 under the guidance of Dr. (Mrs.) M. Anjum Khan, Assistant Professor (SS), Department of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women and has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or other titles in this university or any other similar Institution of Higher Learning.

C. Sakthe Priya

Signature of the Candidate

CERTIFICATE

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I declare that the thesis entitled “**A Far Cry from Afghanistan: Violation of Human Rights in Select Works of Khaled Hosseini**” submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (MA) in English by **SAKTHE PRIYA C (20PEN014)** is the record of work carried out by her during the period of December 2021 – May 2022 under the guidance and supervision. This work has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or other titles in this university or any other similar Institution of Higher Learning.



Signature of the Supervisor



Signature of the Head of the Department

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CHAPTER I

Chapter I

Introduction

“A right delayed is a right denied”

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Literature is a medium of language that helps to express any kind of personal or social conditions in which the condition may be rare, rife, favorable and unfavorable. In most cases the unfavorable conditions makes sense to humans by providing various issues relevant to our society. Literature depicts the conditions to fictitious world by blending the facts with imagination and through the touch of reality. There are many literatures according to region and country. One of the most famous literatures in Middle East and North Africa is Afghan Literature.

The literature of Afghanistan or Afghan literature is said to be produced in the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. It is written in the language of Dari and Pashto which is an official and native language of Afghanistan. It is also mostly influenced by Arabic and Persian literature. In ancient times the works of Afghan literature were orally transmitted and the writing system of this literature is said to associate with Arabic language.

Historically, Afghan literature is associated with the civilizations of China, Iran and India. In between the 10th and 12th century, during the dynasty of Ghaznavids and Ghurid, the country developed an artistic work where particularly during Timurid dynasty it shaped culture and artistic activities in Islam. Afghanistan has its special literary language and custom which reveal the literature as modern. Afghan rulers such as the Ghaznavids, the Timurids and the Mughal Empire encouraged and supported the writers such as Rumi, Jami, Rudaki, Ferdowsi, and Khwaja Abdullah Ansari for writing in Persian language, and they were also highly influenced by

Persian literature. The poet Rumi is regarded as one of the greatest poets in Afghan literature who shaped Persian literature. Later, his writings were also translated into English.

In 20th century, the capital of the country Kabul became the center for literary figures and publishing. Kabul's first literary newspaper *Seraj al Akhbar* (1911 to 1919) was edited by Mahmud Tarzi who is often known for his contribution for the development of modern literary environment. He was also involved in promoting Pashto as a national language by providing information through this newspaper. A French novelist Jules Verne translated the works into foreign languages and became first writer to publish books printed in independent Afghanistan. The country Afghanistan also produced several literary figures over past decades including Sayed Buhaniddin Majruh and Khalilullah Khalili who is also referred as 'Renaissance man' for his contribution to modern literature.

The history of Afghan poetry and culture can be traced back to the birth of Sufism. Poetry is composed in a variety of shared languages, including Persian, Dari, Pashto, and Urdu, with only a few exceptions. Foreign language poetry, such as English and Turkish, had a significant influence on Afghan poetry. The poetry reflects the country's various spiritual traditions. Many Afghan poets, in particular, have been influenced by mystical and Sufism experiences. The earliest form of literature in Afghanistan is poetry, which has a long written and oral legacy. Poetic expression has been in Afghanistan for ages.

Wasef Bakhtari is an Afghan poet and writer who is well-known in current Persian poetry. Most Persian poets, writers, and linguists in Afghanistan recognize him as a literary leader. He is considered as having his unique style of Persian poetry, having been one of the first to introduce 'Nimaic poetry'. Raziq Faani is a well-

known contemporary poet in Afghanistan, whose poetry has been regarded as mystical, sympathetic, and patriotic. His poetry depicts his people's suffering during decades of war, ruin, and exile.

Parween Pazhwak's modern Persian poetry, short stories, and children's drawings are among her spectacular works of literature. She has produced a total of eleven pieces of art. *Darya dar Shabnam (Oceans in Dew)* and *Negin-ha wa Setaraha (Gems and Stars)* are two of her most well-known works. Afghan poet, novelist, historian, and journalist Abdul Bari Jahani wrote the lyrics for the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's national anthem. Jahani is a well-known Pashtun poet of the twenty-first century. Epic, romance, patriotism, valor, and a message of enlightenment are all the themes in Jahani's poetry. He has scores of poetry books to his credit, as well as translating various Persian poetry books from Persian to Pashto, which is a challenge undertaken by him. Jahani has also translated a number of English books into Pashto.

In terms of language and culture, Afghanistan has a long and illustrious history that not only stretches back thousands of years, but also follows a transnational path in the shape of a Persian literary culture that encompasses Turkey, Iran, and India. Other than Dari and Pashto, the other major languages also take part in developing the wealth of Afghan literature in both oral and written forms. Afghan literature in English appears to be a recent phenomenon. But this ignores the larger literary scenario when compared to Pashto and Dari, not only the language but also the genre of poetry. In fact, poetry and fiction are said to be the dominant forms through which Afghan writers have articulated the themes of violence, terror, displacement, loss, identity and home.

In contemporary Afghan literature, discussion of politics cannot be avoided. So, for this reason, the majority of writers choose English as their medium of

representation especially diasporic writers rather than resident writers. Among them, there are some writers who consciously provide the alternative versions of reading and representing Afghanistan's violence under Taliban rule until it was occupied by the United States of America and transformed into a 'democratic' nation.

There are only few writers who started to write in English such as Khaled Hosseini, Nadia Hashimi, and Qais Akbar Omar etc.,. These writers are born or raised and have left the country Afghanistan for some reasons but they always has a motif to depict the themes of sufferings, culture, happiness, sadness, and torture. Through their writings, the foreign people easily understood about the country Afghanistan. Afghan-American author Qais Akbar in an interview with *The Hindu* says, one good thing about English, is that many people across the world can read it. He also says his reason for writing in English "I tried to write in Dari, but I could not. When I write in English, I instantly translate what we went through in my head from Dari into English. In the process, the pain decreases. And I can write. It is still painful, but I can manage." Women writer Fazilhaq Hashimi in an interview with *The Guardian* says that "I feel so relaxed writing in English. I do not think of ending up with a word that would conflict with the other national language of Afghanistan, nor will I anger my close friends." Thus, English stands to be language that eases the pain of these Afghan writers.

Afghan-American author Tamim Ansary is the author of many books concerning about Afghanistan and history of Muslim community. He lived in Kabul until attending his high school and moved to America. His famous works are *Destiny Disrupted: A History of the world Through Islamic Eyes* and *West of Kabul, East of New York*. The works *West of Kabul, East of New York* is a literary memoir in which he recounts his bicultural perspective on current world crises. With the help of a grant

from the Christian son Fund in 2008, Ansary compiled and published *Snapshots: This Afghan American Life*, a collection of writings by young Afghans.

The Widow's Husband, a novel by Ansary, depicts the British invasion of Afghanistan in the nineteenth century from both an Afghan and a British perspective. Public Affairs published *Destiny Disrupted: A History of the World Through Islamic Eyes* in 2009 and has won award in the general nonfiction category of 2010 provided by Northern California Book Award. The book *Road Trips, Becoming an American in the vapor trail of The Sixties*, contains experiences from Mir Tamim's years as a member of the American counter culture in the 1960s and 1970s. In October 2019, he published the book *The Invention of Yesterday: A 50,000-Year History of Human Culture, Conflict, and Connection*.

Later, few authors also translated their works into English and published them. Likewise, the contemporary author Atiq Rahimi was born in Kabul and shifted to France. He is a documentary film maker and writer. He returned to Afghanistan in 2001 to set up a Writer's house in Kabul in order to support them and offered training to young writers. Many of his works are published in English such as *Earth and Ashes (Khâkestar-o-khâk)*, *A Thousand Rooms of Dream and Fear (Les Mille Maisons du rêve et de la terreu)* and *A Curse on Dostoevsky (Mauditsoit Dostoïevski)*.

Women writers in Afghan literature depict the experiences of women who find themselves repressed in terms of tradition, religion and politics where some journalists also highlight the grim challenges of women in Afghanistan faced in present times. The women author Nadia Hashimi is a pediatrician, turned as novelist to draw the Afghan's heritage. Her works explores the culture of Afghanistan and her stories span from generations and continents. Her writing would involve themes like forced migration, conflict, poverty, misogyny, colonialism, and addiction. Hashimi's

debut novel, *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* was published in 2014. It is the story of two Afghan women who lived a century apart but were linked by a shared history. This novel is a global bestseller and a 2014 Goodreads finalist in the Debut Author and Fiction categories. It has been translated into French, Italian, Norwegian, German, Turkish, and Hungarian. Hashimi's second novel, *When the Moon Is Low* was published in 2015 and became her second international bestseller. Her third novel *A House Without Windows* was published in 2016 and became her third international blockbuster. Hashimi has also written two books for youngsters. Hashimi's novel *Sparks Like Stars*, published in 2021, is also well-known.

Afghan writer who wrote many books including collection of short stories is Homeira Qaderi. She is also an activist and educator and she is known by her best novel *Noqra: The daughter of Kabul River*. She is one among the many who has been awarded Afghanistan's highest civilian honor named Malalai Medal. The novel *Dancing in the Mosque: An Afghan Mother's letter to Her Son* was her first translated work in English which is considered as one of the best non-fiction books of 2020.

Nushin Arbalzadah is a journalist, writer, editor and translator. Her first book is *From Outside In: Refugees and British Society* and her latest novel *Rumor Bazaar: Secret Sub-Cultures, Hidden Worlds and the Everyday life of the Absurd* tells about subculture and the hidden world of Afghanistan. The author speaks about bacha posh girl boys, mole cross-dresses etc. It also deals with the major issues which the author faces herself throughout her life and addresses some of the controversial issues like terrorism, drugs, and the Taliban.

Maryam Mahboob is a well-known Afghan novelist who has written about Afghan migrants and patriarchy in Afghan society. While in exile, Mahboob wrote the majority of her significant fictional works. Her works focus on women's oppression

and marginalisation, as well as a rebellion against society standards and views toward women.

Later, numerous authors who did not originate from Afghanistan began to write about the country. They wrote because of an inspiration or some incidents that compelled them to write. A British journalist Andrea Busfield a reporter for the *News of the World* traveled to Afghanistan to cover the fall of the Taliban in 2001. During her days in Afghanistan, she wrote the book *Born Under a Million Shadows* which is set in Kabul. Jenny Nordberg, a Swedish journalist wrote the book *The Underground Girls of Kabul: In Search of a Hidden Resistance in Afghanistan* which won many awards and honors. It documents the bacha posh of Afghanistan which follows the stories of many women who are or who have been bacha posh. American journalist and author Gayle Tzemach Lemmon is known for her book, *The Dressmaker of Khair Khana*. This story is about a young female entrepreneur who supports her community stuck under the Taliban rule.

Zarghuna Kargar, an award-winning journalist for *BBC World News* produced and presented the BBC Afghan Woman's hour. Her famous work is *Dear Zari, The Secret Lives of Women in Afghanistan* published in 2012. It speaks about the secret lives of women across Afghanistan which allows them to tell their stories in their own words. She has dedicated most of her life to work as journalist and loves to work with Afghan women and writing their stories.

The writer and activist Nemat Sadat is the First Afghan native to publicly come out as gay and work for the LGBTQ rights in Muslim communities around the world. Sadat's first book *The Carpet Weaver*, is released in India in 2019. The story follows Kanishka Nurzada, a young Afghan boy, as he falls in forbidden love with his

boyhood male friend, Maihan, amidst the backdrop of Afghanistan's golden period of paradise and the terrible transition to civil war in the 1970s and 1980s.

One of the contemporary Afghan-American authors writing in English is Khaled Hosseini. He is one of the most widely read novelists in the world. He is an Afghani who shares the experiences of his country men and women, emphasizing their suffering, sorrow, and problems that make their lives a complete misery. He is a man on a mission, a quest to rid his country of all its faults and restore it to its former glory. He accomplishes this by producing beautiful novels with gorgeous scenery that are widely distributed throughout Afghanistan and the Afghan Diaspora around the world. He covers the tale of the Afghan people, including Afghan women, children, and men, who are entangled in a web of religion, politics, and terrorism.

Khaled Hosseini was born on March 4, 1965 in Kabul, Afghanistan. He was the eldest of five children. His father Nasser Hosseini worked as a diplomat in the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and his mother from the family Mohammadzai tribe of Pashtuns worked as a teacher in high school, teaching history and Persian. As a result, Hosseini developed a profound affection for Persian poetry and the non-Islamic, pagan heritage of Afghanistan and the countries surrounding his homeland. His parents are descendant from the town Herat which became ethnicity of both Tajik and Pashtun origin for him. Hosseini spend his childhood for eight years in Wazir Akbar Khan neighborhood in Kabul where he considers his childhood days as privileged and he cannot recall about his sister Raya who has been discriminated for being a female. He also remembers about Kabul where he regularly flew kites with a number of cousins.

In 1970, he and his family moved to Tehran, Iran where his father worked for the Embassy of Afghanistan and in 1973. They returned to Kabul where Hosseini's

younger brother was born in that year of July. In 1976 when Hosseini was eleven years old his father secured a job in Paris. When the family decided to return to their homeland in 1980, they felt difficult to return because of the Soviet invasion in 1979. So the family applied for political asylum in the United States and got permission. They moved to San Jose, California in September 1980. After residing in U.S., he felt difficult to accustom to the western culture.

Hosseini was fifteen years old at the time and did not speak a word of English. They had lost everything on their way to the United States, and the family was penniless. They got by on the government's inadequate welfare payments, and the father and son would go to the local flea market to sell their items. He met a lot of linguists in his first year of school, but he soon got the hang of it thanks to books. His profound and persistent love for literature is reawakened in the United States when he picked up John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. He began writing stories in English, which would subsequently become his medium for creating literature. In *Publishers Weekly* Daisy Maryles says about Hosseini's most important books. He states that:

In *Newsweek* (Jan.14), Khaled Hosseini shares his “five most important books.” In no particular order, they are: *Shahnameh: The Persian Book Of Kings* by Abolqasem Ferdowski (“an 11th- century epic”); *The Qur'an* an (“Hypnotically poetic”); the Bible (“even Harry Potter can't compete with its sales”); *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin (“the basis of modern biology”); and *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoyevski (“No novel captures isolation, guilt, a spiritual unraveling and salvation like it”). (12)

Hosseini then graduated from Independence High School in 1984 and enrolled at Santa Clara University in 1988, where he earned a bachelor's degree in biology. In

1989, he entered the University of California San Diego School of Medicine and in 1993 completes the degree. In 1997, he completed the post graduate training in Los Angeles at Cedars-Sinai medical center. From the year 1996 to 2004, he was an intern and worked as a private practitioner in medicine. He did not return to his motherland until 2001. At the age of 36, when he visited his country he felt like a tourist in his own homeland. He married Roya Hosseini and has two children, Haris and Farah Hosseini. The family lives happily in Northern California.

Hosseini is a Goodwill Envoy for the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). He is also the founder for Khaled Hosseini Foundation and has done some humanitarian works in Afghanistan through this foundation. Khaled Hosseini's writing career began with the novel *The Kite Runner*. When he was practicing medicine in 2001 he began to write the novel and it was published by Riverhead Books in 2003. It became an international bestseller and was sold in nearly seventy countries and holds a name which spends more than a hundred weeks on the New York Times bestseller. It is also produced as an audio book read by the author and has been adapted into a film named 'The Kite Runner' released in December 2007.

The novel, *The Kite Runner* appears to be more special which has strong storytelling technique and melodramatic effects. This novel is set in Afghanistan and California and narrated by Amir who struggles with haunting memories of his past life. It tells the story of two boys being different in social classes Amir (Pashtun) a son of high class father and Hassan (Hazara) a son of low class servant. These two boys grow together in Kabul as friends where Hassan would do anything for Amir but Amir betrays Hassan. After the Russians invade, Amir and his father moved to

America. In the end of the story, Amir returns to Afghanistan which is under Taliban rule to save Hassan's son as redemption.

This novel has received many praises and *Entertainment Weekly* mentions that "The Kite Runner offers a moving portrait of modern Afghanistan, from its pre-Russian-invasion glory days through the terrible reign of the Taliban". *New York Times* says that "In 'The Kite Runner', Khaled Hosseini gives us a vivid and engaging story that reminds us how long his people have been struggling to triumph over the forces of violence—forces that continue to threaten them even today". *Guardian* said that it was "Stunning and heartbreaking in its quiet intensity". Finally these praises demonstrates the popularity of author and the novel.

The novel, *The Kite Runner* gained more popularity and also encouraged him to become a writer. So he left medicine and became a professional writer from 2004. In May 2007, he released his second novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* published by Riverhead books. This novel depicts women abuse in Afghanistan during Taliban regime through two women characters Mariam and Laila. These two girls grow in different places and later their life made them to meet. Mariam an illiterate girl marries Rasheed at the age of fifteen and enters Kabul. Laila, born a generation later grows in Kabul. At one point Laila is forced to marry Mariam's husband Rasheed. The friendship between them grows like the bond between mother and daughter. They face many abuses by their cruel husband and at last Mariam kills Rasheed and punish by Taliban.

This novel also receives many praises from different Journals and authors. *Los Angeles Times* says "What keeps this novel vivid and compelling are Hosseini's eye for the textures of daily life and his ability to portray a full range of human emotions". *New York Daily News* says that "Hosseini's novel is the story of the sacrifices

necessary to sustain hope and joy, and the power of love to overcome fear. Splendid indeed”. These praises promotes the novel’s specialty among people and motivates them to overcome the crises in their life.

Khaled Hosseini’s third novel, *And the Mountains Echoed* is published in 2013 and differs from Hosseini’s previous two books. This novel does not focus on a single character. Rather, the book is structured like a collection of short stories, with each of the nine chapters narrated by a different character. The novel portrays a connection between ten-year-old Abdullah and his three-year-old sister Pari, as well as their father’s decision to sell her to a childless couple in Kabul.

The novel has positively received praises in general, with Wendy Smith of the *Los Angeles Times* praising it as “Beautifully written, masterfully crafted . . . *And the Mountains Echoed* is painfully sad but also radiant with love.” and in *The National* the author Fran Hawthorne describes it as “masterful storytelling, haunting portrayal of war-ravaged Afghanistan and insight into the life of Afghan expatriates”. These praises portrays the novel uniqueness among other novels of the author.

Hosseini remarks that he wants the characters to be more complicated and morally ambiguous. *And the Mountains Echoed* continues the familial theme introduced in his previous novels, *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, by focusing on the relationship between siblings. In addition to Abdullah and Pari, Hosseini creates two more sibling-like relationships: the children's stepmother Parwana and her crippled sister Masooma, and an Afghan-American doctor named Idris andis cousin Timur.

Khaled Hosseini first illustrated book, *Sea Prayer* is published by Riverhead Books in 2018. He wrote this book inspired by a three year old refugee Alan Kurdi, who drowned when trying to reach Europe from Syria and dies. This book appears as

the response to the current refugee crisis. It is composed in the form of a letter, from a father to his son. It also portrays their life in Homs, and Syria, before the war and presents the city's transformation from a home to a deadly war zone. According to *Publishers Weekly* the story "does not dwell on nightmare fates; instead, its emotional power flows from the love of a father for his son". Beside from these works, he and photographer Zalmi collaborated on a photo journal called *The Silent Exodus: Portrait of Iraqi in Exile*. He also contributed to the introduction chapter of Atiq Rehmani's book *The Patience Stone*, edited by Polly MacLean (translator).

Hosseini received several awards and honours for his great pieces of literature. He received his first award Exclusive Books Boeke Prize in 2004 for the novel *The Kite Runner*. For his second novel *A Thousand Splendid Sun* he received numerous awards. In 2007, California Book Award Silver Medal and in 2008, he got two awards such as British Book Awards for Richard & Judy Best Read of the Year and Book Sense Book of the Year Awards. For the novel, *And the Mountains Echoed*, he received Goodreads Choice Award in 2013. He also received the Golden Plate Award of the American Academy of Achievement in 2008.

Hosseini thinks of himself as a storyteller. To tell his story, he has included aspects of literary fiction genre writing. He has always emphasised the fact that his writing style is based on Western prose writing. As he told Farhad Azad, an interviewer:

Afghanistan is full of story tellers, and I was raised around the people who were very adept at capturing an audience's attention with their story telling skills. I have told that here is an old fashioned sense of storytelling in *The Kite Runner*. I would agree it's what I like to read and what I like to write. (2004)

Hosseini's writings are known for their compassionate tone and portrayal of everyday human emotions. His stories delve deep into the human soul, revealing humanity's universal nature and the ideals that distinguish good from bad. Hosseini's works convey a unified sense of basic human emotions including love, hatred, betrayal, revenge, power, forgiveness, redemption, and loss. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the powerful sects create enough harm on a larger as well as individual scale. Laila and Tariq, as well as Laila and Mariam, share a shared feeling of love and intimacy. Rasheed's dominance over his wives demonstrates his strength over the weak and subservient. These occurrences elicit empathy for the social lives of Middle Eastern people. These common feelings foster a sense of belonging to the entire human race. This compassionate tone is repeated in *The Kite Runner*. The protagonist has a close relationship with his servant. However, as he matures and his social standing rises, he ends his relationship with him.

Hosseini's primary objective is to portray the Middle East in a positive light. He also attempts to modify the West's stereotype views of eastern life. In an article, it is mentioned that "Looking for home in the Islamic Diaspora of Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Azar Nafsi and Khaled Hosseini" Rachel Blumenthal says that: "His characters may look, in part, to "the West" for an ideological homeland, but ultimately, Hosseini crafts his novels as generic and para-textual testaments to his characters' inability to locate themselves consistently within a Western or an Afghani homeland" (262). Just as his generic form refuses to settle the United States or the West as a monolithic ideological or textual homeland, the paratextual packaging of his books reminds us that homeland may never be entirely settled in either a western or an eastern location for the Islamic diaspora.

All of his writings, in which he presents the cultural and traditional values of Eastern life in pleasant terms, reflect this battle. The stereotypes of the veil 'burqa' and 'nang' (honour) are examined from the perspective of an abusive spouse in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. These are subsequently tested when a subservient and dependent wife murders her husband in order to free her family from his oppression.

Hosseini uses a sympathetic and disgusted tone in his writing for the main characters as they deal with the violence of the social structure in their daily lives. He does, however, assume a disapproving tone when speaking about society's brutal ruling figures. Furthermore, through the use of imagery and symbolism, Hosseini vividly conveys his tone and views. When Mariam is forced to live with her father, who had long abandoned her, like in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the author utilizes a tone of intense sympathy and sadness for her.

The behavior of characters in Hosseini's novels shows an underlying hope. Even when they are confronted with rejection and failure in their lives, they manage to overcome the obstacles. In *The Kite Runner*, Amir is torn between his poor relationship with his father and his terrible memories of the past. He, on the other hand, is actively attempting to settle his inner and outward issues. Similarly, in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Laila transitions from a traditional conservative family life to a liberal and modern living by overcoming the difficulties that stand in her way.

Hosseini also uses a dialogic form to give his story a more conversational feel. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Nana bans Mariam from going to the movies with her father, and the narration takes the form of dialogues. His works, too, feature visual representations and use vivid imagery to convey his ideas more simply and precisely.

Khaled Hosseini portrays in his writing different themes such as life in war, loss, love, partiality, injustice, male dominance and also political conditions. He

always set his novels in Afghanistan and through his characters the reader can understand how the war has affected the lives of Afghan people. In most of his novels he uses the theme 'life in war'. In the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the character Laila loses her family in a war. After the death of her parents she realizes the importance of survival in a worn torn society and marries an elderly man to survive.

The theme 'loss' appears to be common in most of his novels nearly all the characters lose their family, friends, dignity, and homeland. The author himself has also lost his family and homeland. In the novel, *And the Mountains Echoed*, due to the financial crisis the family loses their daughter and in *The Kite Runner*, the character Amir loses his friend Hassan.

The theme 'love' appears to be more powerful in his novels. He depicts multi-natured relationships of love rather than love between two opposite genders. The love also made the characters to test their vulnerability and boost them to take risk in order to protect their loved ones. In the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the love between Mariam and Laila made Mariam to kill their husband and made Laila to lead a happy life with her loved one.

Another significant theme the author portrays in his novel is 'partiality and injustice'. All the characters in the novel undergo the sufferings due to their insulting husbands, forced marriages, dominant parents and war. Through this theme he teaches people to fight against their victimizers and the negative impacts they face in the society.

The theme 'male dominance' appears to be the most important issue of Eastern society. The character undergoes the patriarchal oppression and male dominance where women are considered as toys and they were forced to workship and work for their husband. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Rasheed treats his two wives as toys and

beats them like an animal. At the end, the first wife Mariam kills him and shows that women are also living beings with emotions. Finally, in all of his novels the reader sees the political condition of Afghanistan. Even though the author does not live there, he is aware of the political chaos. In the novels, *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, he discusses the era of Soviet invasion and Taliban rule.

The novels *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, has been analyzed and examined by several writers and researchers. The first is an article entitled “Depiction of Afghanistan in Khaled Hosseini’s Novels” by Dr. Indu Sharma. The researcher analyses three novels *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *And the Mountains Echoed* in the view of social and historical contexts in which they are written. The researcher interprets Hosseini’s work by placing it in the late-twentieth-century historical and social context. She also says in her article that “His novels showcase the social and historical context of Afghan society in a fictional world” (545). She concludes that in Hosseini’s three novels, he depicts the story of friendship, love, suffering, and, eventually, salvation for his characters. Although his tales are set in Afghanistan, they cover the long span of generations, historical periods, and continents.

An Article titled, “*A Thousand Splendid Suns: Sanctuary and Resistance*” by Rebecca A. Stuhr assumes that Khaled Hosseini provides an overview of the damaged country, which is led by an ideological leader, as well as the war in Afghanistan. Hosseini seeks to show the existence of Afghan women who are controlled by family and society through the female characters Mariam and Laila. “Through his characters, hosseini introduces the reader to an Afghanistan that existed before the war and beyond the media’s twenty-first-century coverage of the country. He paints a picture for his readers of a land of culture and abundance” (54). The outcome demonstrated

that Afghan women had little control over their own destiny. Mariam and Laila, on the other hand, are not depicted as hopeless or passive. They make choices and accept the consequences in order to achieve desired outcomes, both happy and sad. This essay looks at Hosseini's second novel as a story of resistance to the awful tragedy that Afghan women are facing.

An article entitled "An Analysis of '*The Kite Runner*' by Khaled Hosseini" written by Aryan Bammi, focuses on the novel numerous themes and sub-themes that the author has depicted. The writer uses the qualitative research approach, to get better understanding of the novel. The purpose of this research is to use diverse instances to better grasp and comprehend the novel's social and cultural dimensions. From this the researcher has realised the beauty of Afghanistan, the Afghani people, and their culture and traditions. The author concludes the article with the quotes of Hosseini "You can take Afghans out of Paghman, but you can't take Paghman out of Afghan" (Hosseini, 2013). From this quote, the researcher strongly depicts that Afghans are proud of their heritage. The author emphasis on numerous topics and features in the novel *The Kite Runner* is consistent with the lives of the individuals.

Author Ronny Noor gives a review about the novel *The Kite Runner*. In this the author first speaks about the characters and gives summary of the novel. He states that "This lucidly written and often touching novel gives a vivid picture of not only the Russian atrocities but also those of the Northern Alliance and the Taliban" (148). In the end he speaks about the political condition of Afghanistan.

Dr. Deler Singh in his article "Negotiating Ethnic Differences: A Study of Changing Hazara Pashtun Relationships in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*" confirms that war has a profound impact on a nation and brings long-simmering disputes to the surface as a result of strained relations between nations belonging to

various ethnic groups. The researcher also specifies that “In Afghanistan, even today, the relations between the Hazara and the Pashtun factions remain strained because of the ethnic clashes dogging their past” (482). He also says that ethnic and racial conflicts ruin a nation’s peace and unity, as well as inflict significant stress to innocent inhabitants who have been subjected to violence and prejudice for the majority of Afghanistan’s turbulent history.

An article titled “Courageous Women: A Study of Resilience of Women in Khaled Hosseini’s Novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*” is written by four authors: Muhammad Imran Joyia, Umer Farooq, Sohail Ghafoor, and Ammara Gull. This research paper is centred on women's marginalization and subjection in patriarchal societies, particularly in Afghanistan. The purpose of this research paper is to evaluate the characters' attitudes, opinions, and circumstances in which they act or are forced to act. The researchers have used subaltern theory to analyze the female characters and also used Gramsci’s concept of subaltern and Spivak’s theory, ‘Can subaltern speak?’. The researcher says that Afghan women are subjected, but they fight back and avenge themselves. The journey from subaltern to equal gender is explored in the novel. They also prove with the help of each character. They also say that “Khaled Hosseini challenges Spivak’s theory of subaltern, can subaltern speak? She says “NO” but Hosseini says “Yes” and subaltern’s voices are heard” (107). Finally, the researcher hopes that men will reconsider their biased attitude and see women as equal.

An article entitled “The role of women in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini” by Dr. Anuradha Nongmai focuses on the novel’s female characters where they are engaged in severe exploitation and torture. The researcher also shares her thoughts on how sisterhood can be a solution to many of the world's concerns on women. She concludes that “‘Sisterhood’ among women can be a strong weapon to

fight against injustice, violence and atrocities against women in general” (60). She also claims that *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is one of many pieces of literature that speak out in support of women's rights.

An article entitled “Pangs of Oppression: A Study of Women in Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns*” is written by J. Dhivya Silvester. With reference to Khaled Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, this article examines the condition of Afghan women as helpless victims of patriarchy, political changes, war, terrorism, and natural disasters. She also says that “The author, through the character of Mariam and Laila tries to edify the Afghan women to be united and face the challenging life” (509). Finally, she concludes that, women should get together and fight for solutions to their difficulties. Even though Mariam and Laila are Rasheed’s wives, they stand together for each other when he tortures them, and their sisterhood helped them survive in that house. Laila came to Mariam’s rescue after she was abused by her husband. Mariam is so grateful that she killed Rasheed when he tried to break Laila's neck.

In the book *Consequences of Child Maltreatment* by S.P. Gomango it is said that “Human rights are not something a richer person gives to a poorer person; nor are they owned by a select few and given to others as a mere favour or gift. They belong to each and every one of us equally” (137). Human rights in Afghanistan are a source of debate and contention. Despite the Taliban’s reputation for human rights breaches, a number of human rights infractions continue to occur around the country even though The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan’s constitution includes a strong human rights framework.

The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) was founded in 2001 as a national human rights institution to safeguard and promote human rights as

well as investigate human rights violations and war crimes. The AIHRC is established under the Afghanistan Constitution of 2004. While the continued chaos, bloodshed, and reconstruction efforts make it impossible to gain a clear picture of what is going on, NGOs have accused various branches of the Afghan government of human rights breaches in numerous reports.

According to several Afghan media sites, the Taliban reportedly disbanded the Independent Human Rights Commission. They proclaimed the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission defunct and without validity. Earlier, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) claimed in a statement that the Taliban had taken the commission's premises and it had been unable to carry out its tasks for the past month or so. The commission urged the Taliban to oversee the human rights situation, particularly for women and children, in an independent and impartial manner. According to the Independent Human Rights Commission's findings, Afghan civilians require an independent human rights body to which they can denounce human rights violations.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is an international statement enshrining the rights and freedoms of all people adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. It is adopted as Resolution 217 by the United Nations General Assembly during its third session on December 10, 1948, in the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, France. There were 48 votes in favour, none against, eight abstentions, and two no votes among the 58 members of the United Nations at the time.

The preamble explains the historical and social factors that contributed to the Declaration's drafting. The core ideals of dignity, liberty, and equality are established in Articles 1–2. Other individual rights, including as the right to life and the

prohibition of slavery and torture, are established in Articles 3–5. Articles 6–11 discuss the inherent legality of human rights, as well as particular measures for defending them when they are violated. The rights of the individual towards the community are outlined in Articles 12–17, which include freedom of movement and residence within each state, the right to property, and the right to a nationality. Articles 18–21 sanction ‘constitutional liberties’ including spiritual, public, and political freedoms such as freedom of thought, opinion, expression, religion, and conscience, communication, peaceful association of individuals, and receiving and passing information and ideas through any media. Articles 22–27 establish a person’s economic, social, and cultural rights, which include access to healthcare. It defends a broad right to a decent quality of living, with special emphasis on care provided to mothers and children. Articles 28–30 establish the broad ways of exercising these rights, the regions in which individual rights cannot be applied, the individual’s obligation to society, and the prohibition of using rights in violation of the United Nations Organization’s aims.

From the above furnished review of literature, it is evident that the violation of human rights of the citizens of Afghanistan is an area of imperative concern. Especially, the operation of Hazara community and the afghan women in general is existing due to the power politics and politics of religion. This subjugation of individual’s human rights is most relevant and contemporary concern. Therefore, the present thesis, entitled “A Far Cry from Afghanistan: Violation of Human Rights in Select Works of Khaled Hosseini” addresses the theme of human rights with reference to Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. This study examines the violation of human rights for the ethnically subordinate Hazara community and Afghan women.

The main objectives of the present study are: to closely read Khaled Hosseini's novels, *The Kite Runner*, and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*: to understand the socio-political context of these novels; to examine the violation of human rights of the Hazara community with reference to *The Kite Runner* in light of Universal declaration of human rights; to examine the abuse of human rights of Afghan women with reference to *A Thousand Splendid Suns* in the light of Universal Declaration of Human Rights; to consolidate the violation human rights as severe humanitarian crises.

The present study entitled "A Far Cry from Afghanistan: Violation of Human Rights in Select Works of Khaled Hosseini" is divided into four chapters including introduction and conclusion. The first chapter titled, "Introduction" furnishes an extensive survey of afghan literature in general and afghan writing in English in particular. It profiles Khaled Hosseini as one of the most important contemporary afghan writer who writes in English. The chapter provides the detailed account of Hosseini's works and examines his writing style. It ends with a detailed review of literature followed by thesis statement and research objectives.

The second chapter titled "Hazaras, Less Humans" deals with Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. It examines the marginalisation of the Hazara community and violation of their human rights as per the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The third chapter titled "Women, the Weakened Sex" deals with Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. It scrutinizes the subjugation of Afghan women and abuse of their rights as per the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The fourth chapter titled "Conclusion" consolidates and highlights the findings of the research.

CHAPTER II

Chapter II

Hazaras, Less Humans

“To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity”

- Nelson Mandela

The present chapter examines the treatment of Hazaras and elucidate, how they are treated as ‘less humans’. Afghanistan has a diverse landscape. It is located in Central Asia and consists of thirty-four provinces. Kabul is the capital, as well as the capital of the north-east province. The novel, *The Kite Runner* takes place in Afghanistan, America, particularly in Kabul. The tale is intertwined with Afghan history, geography, ethnic groupings, the Soviet invasion, the Taliban's rise, 9/11, and the US invasion.

The novel tells the story of a twelve-year-old boy named Amir, who is born in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1963, and his journey as an Afghan. It also tells the story of Hassan, who lives in Amir's father Baba's house as a servant. In the novel, the friendship between Amir and Hassan are shown to a greater extent where Hassan is willing to go to any extent for Amir, but it is a different story from Amir's perspective. They both belong to different ethnic communities, Hassan is a Hazara and Amir belongs to Pashtun.

Pashtuns have a better social status than the Hazaras, and they are Afghanistan's most populous ethnic group. The minority Hazara is doomed to be discriminated against and oppressed by Pashtuns. In the novel, the Hazara-Pashtun struggle is evident through Amir. He finds a book on Hazaras history on Baba's library, he learns about the history of Hazara subjugation. This historical book on Hazaras, changes Amir's perceptions. The facts in the book contradict everything Amir has read. He learns about the harsh treatment that Hazara has received from his own people

through the book. He also learns of his people's horrific killing of the Hazaras. After reading this, Amir is unable to accept the fact of Hazaras history. It is because nobody had ever informed him about this history, that he always considered the Hazaras as servants to the Pashtun. But he was unaware of the Hazaras lasting subjection and suppression. Amir narrates that:

School textbooks barely mentioned them and referred to their ancestry only in passing. Then one day, I was in Baba's study, looking through his stuff, when I found one of my mother's old history books and was stunned to find an entire chapter on Hazara history. An entire chapter dedicated to Hassan's people! In it, I read that my people, the Pashtuns, had persecuted and oppressed the Hazaras. It said the Hazaras had tried to rise against the Pashtuns in the nineteenth century, but the Pashtuns had 'quelled them with unspeakable violence.'

(Hosseini 8-9)

It is obvious that Hazara was oppressed by Pashtun, and they have been treated in a cruel manner. Another significant factor was that the majority of the Pashtuns was Sunni Muslims, whereas the minority Hazaras was Shi'a Muslims. Because of this, Hazaras were more isolated in society.

The novel also portrays the breakdown of civil society and the violation of fundamental human rights that frequently occurs in such environments - ethnic and racial discrimination, religious intolerance, women and children oppression, war crimes, and the flight of refugees. In the novel, violence plays a significant role in the lives of the Afghan people.

Afghanistan has been tired of the war between the Taliban and the Russian invasion. The common people in Afghanistan fear of these factions because the

governance of any of them would be doomed. In the novel, Amir's uncle Rahim Khan shares his sentiment in the following words, describing how Afghans fear the new Afghanistan, beneath these kinds of religious sects:

The infighting between the factions was fierce, and no one knew if they would live to see the end of the day. Our ears became accustomed to the rumble of gunfire, our eyes familiar with the sight of men digging bodies out of piles of rubble. Kabul in those days, Amir jan, was as close as you could get to that proverbial hell on earth. (Hosseini 196)

Through Rahim Khan's words, it is apparent that Afghan people live in a dangerous condition where many lives are destroyed. Thus the fighting among different factions made them to live under in fear of their life.

The Taliban are described as tyrants by Rahim Khan. According to him, the Taliban are not only bad but also far worse. Rahim Khan also recalls of the city's military authorities constant mistreatment of civilians. While updating Amir about the mischievous of the Taliban, who seize power and expel the Russians from Afghanistan. He claims that when the Taliban came to power they celebrated it, "I told you we all celebrated in 1996 when the Taliban rolled in put an end to the daily fighting" (Hosseini 197). He also says that after Taliban came their happiness only lasted a short time, and they could not tell whether they were living in freedom or enslavement.

Rahim Khan compares the Taliban's cruelty with Northern Alliance barbarism. His expectations, and more broadly, all expectations in the country, have been proven to be meaningless. The failure of Rahim Khan is mirrored in his words, which he says to Amir, "Yes hope is a strange thing. Peace at last. But at what price?" (Hosseini 185). Amir fully grasps the violence perpetrated by the Taliban after listening to

Rahim Khan's speech, and he claims that the Taliban are the ones who rescued from the Russians, but they also want Afghan people to live as slaves under their terms.

Farid, who helps Amir to find Hassan's son Sohrab represents and projects the sufferings of all people to Amir. When Amir returns to Kabul in 2001, on his way from Peshawar to Kabul via road, Amir and Farid have a conversation, mainly concerning the Taliban, which highlights the cruel and terrifying conditions in Afghanistan under Taliban administration. It also reflects Farid's desire for a country with a humane and peaceful administration. Farid inquires about Amir's work in America. Amir responds by stating that he is a writer. He wants Amir to write about the Taliban's inhumanity, as he is choked by their savagery. Amir is also an eye witness, where the Taliban stoned a woman in green burqa and blindfolded man to death.

Hassan as a Hazara in the novel is primarily concerned about the arrival of the Taliban because of their harsh and violent norms of conduct and attitude toward them. As a result, when Hassan learns about the Taliban's rise to power in Kabul from Rahim Khan, he appears to be quite disturbed. When the Taliban launch a campaign against the Hazaras, all of his fears come true. He says to Rahim Khan "God help the Hazaras now, Rahim Khan sahib," he said (Hosseini 197). Through Hassan, the fear of the entire Hazara community is obvious.

When the Taliban seize control of the country and its people, they destroy much of what the country once was. They ban all forms of entertainment in the country, including music, dancing, drinking alcohol, kite flying and other activities. In the novel, kite flying is depicted as a key aspect of Afghan culture. There are multiple kite flying championships held before the Taliban and Russians invaded Afghanistan, and the locals are very excited about them. "A few weeks later, the Taliban banned

kite fighting. And two years later, in 1998, they massacred the Hazaras in Mazar-i-Sharif” (Hosseini 197). Thus Taliban’s actions make Afghan people worry, especially Hassan, who is an excellent kite runner. In *Encyclopedia of Human Rights* by David P. Forsythe, it is said that “The Mazar-i-Sharif massacre was not only one of several during the Taliban regime. In 2001 another major massacre took place in Yakawalang when men were taken from their houses and tortured prior to the execution” (5). From this it is evident that Taliban are so powerful.

Taliban could assassinate a man or woman if they so desired. They hang people and beat them to death in front of large audiences, and they punished innocent women, men and children. In the novel, Hassan, who is innocent, is killed by the Taliban and his wife is also murdered in front of the large audience, where their son is left alone. Women, as well as small children, are used in sex trafficking. The Taliban kidnaps children, and some are even sold. In the novel, the director of the orphanage claims that every two months, a Taliban member will pay him a visit and take a girl child with him, where the Talib would contribute some funds.

Hazara’s, who are a minority, suffered inexorably. They are persecuted in a variety of ways. They have no rights or freedom to conduct their lives as they like. According to Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood” (4). But, Hazara people are not regarded equal by Pashtuns. They are abused and mistreated. The Pashtuns, who believe themselves superior to the Hazaras, look down on them. Scheffler, in the article “What is egalitarianism?” says about equality:

Equality, as it is more commonly understood, is not, in the first instance, a distributive ideal, and its aim is not to compensate for

misfortune. It is, instead, a moral ideal governing the relations in which people stand to one another. Instead of focusing attention on the differing contingencies of each person's traits, abilities, and other circumstances, this ideal abstracts from the undeniable differences between people. It claims that human relations must be conducted on the basis of an assumption that everyone's life is equally important, and that all members of a society have equal standing. (21-22)

Thus equality is more than a distributive ideal, a view point on what each individual should receive. It is an ideal that controls our interpersonal relationships as well as how our social and political institutions treat us. But there is no equality between the two communities. Through the characters of Hassan and Amir, the novel explores Hazara-Pashtun relations in Afghanistan.

Despite being from different ethnic groups, Amir and Hassan formed an uncommon kinship as children. In their interactions with one another, the Hazara-Pashtun interaction takes on many various forms. Amir, the protagonist of the novel, belongs to a wealthy, Sunni Pashtun ethnic group and Hassan, the son of a worker at Baba's workplace, belongs to poor Shi'a Hazara. Amir and Hassan have a brotherly bond in the story, even though they come from different worlds. They are fed by the same mother and grow up together. But, despite the fact that Hassan and Amir spent a lot of time together and play together, Amir never expresses his affections for Hassan since his unconscious mind is filled with statements about human differences and Pashtun supremacy over Hazaras. Amir narrates:

The curious thing was, I never thought of Hassan and me as friends either. Not in the usual sense, anyhow. Never mind that we taught each other to ride a bicycle with no hands. . . . Because history isn't easy to

overcome. Neither is religion. In the end, I was a Pashtun and he was a Hazara, I was Sunni and he was Shi'a, and nothing was ever going to change that. Nothing. (Hosseini 24)

These sentences reveal Afghanistan's strong racial and ethnic conflict relations. As a result, this ethnic view in the Afghan community acts as 'torture' for the inferior Hazara community. They are discriminated by Pashtun and do not receive dignity due to their birth. Thus, Hazara in traditional Afghan society are unable to imagine a place comparable to Pashtun or protest against any injustice.

In the book *Race and Ethnic Conflict* by Fred L. Pincus and Howard J. Ehrlich, they specify about discrimination. They say that "Discrimination refers to actions that deny equal treatment to persons perceived to members of some social category." As Hazaras, Hassan and his father find it difficult to integrate into Pashtun society, they are constantly confronted with difficulties in their life as a result of Pashtun racial discrimination against Hazaras in Afghanistan. Their days are full of stumbling blocks and challenges. In the Pashtun community, they are discriminated against, vilified, distinguished, and excommunicated. They must also suffer any mockery, insults, faulty thinking, and brutal treatment by Pashtuns until the end of their lives. Due to this, the minority community people are pushed to the margins and are denied their needs. According to UDHR, Article 2:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or another opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it

be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty. (6)

Hazaras in the novel are discriminated because of their race and religion, and they are also tormented. Pashtuns tease and humiliate Hazaras because of the shape of their eyes and general appearance. They are also called by certain names based on physical traits that are similar to flat noses and slanted eyes, with the intent of injuring, demeaning, and degrading them. There are some of the names given to Hassan “. . . Mice-eating, flat-nosed, load-carrying donkeys” (Hosseini 9). As a result of their Hazara Mongoloid traits, they are referred to as flat-nosed. Assef also teases Hassan’s father Ali’s appearance and called him by certain names such as, Babalu, or Boogeyman. ““Hey, Babalu, who did you eat today?” they barked to a chorus of a laughter. ‘Who did you eat, you flat-nosed Babalu?’” (Hosseini 8).

Assef is the face of Afghan nationalism in the novel. Afghanistan had always been the Pashtuns in his perspective, and they were the true Afghans. He believed that Hazaras were a disgrace to Afghanistan, as their filthy blood would taint the land. He says, ““Afghanistan is the land of Pashtuns. It always has been, always will be. We are the true Afghans, the pure Afghans, not this Flat-Nose here. His people pollute our watan. They dirty our blood”” (Hosseini 38). Assef says that the Hazaras are illegal immigrants who should be thrown out of Afghanistan like trash. From Assef’s treatment of Hazara, it is clear that Hazara’s are discriminated by Pashtun, and it is clearly understood that racial discrimination against Pashtuns is widespread and difficult to remove. The Hazaras are frequently brutalised by Pashtuns, and many are slaughtered for no apparent reason.

According to UDHR, Article 3, “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person” (8). In the novel, the security of women is said to be in a vicious

state during the Soviets period. When the Soviets invaded the country in 1979, events took a turn for the worst. The country is at war with itself, with each of its many tribes claiming war on the others. Baba and Amir flee from this ethnic horrible place, to the place of total comfort and safety of the United States. The Russians enter and desecrate the country, which Baba considers to be a form of rape. This is demonstrated in a literal instance when a Russian soldier tries to rape an Afghan woman while Baba and Amir are fleeing in a vehicle. Baba saves the woman's honour, but the indicators are not favourable. With the Russian invasion, the country's judicial system essentially crumbled. Baba believes that by attempting to rescue the honour of one woman, he is fulfilling his job and preserving the honour of the entire country of Afghanistan, which he refers to as his own.

When Northern Alliance took over Kabul between 1992 and 1996, there was no safety for people, not just for Hazaras, but everyone in the country was in danger. The sniper shot the individuals and then attacked them by launching a rocket at them. People drilled holes in the walls of their homes to avoid the dangerous streets, and they also used underground tunnels on occasion. As a result, most people stayed inside their homes and hoped to Allah that the next missile would not harm them. From this, it is apparent that there is no safety for people in Afghanistan. The further incident also demonstrates the danger in the country.

When Amir return to Afghanistan, he finds his homeland and his people degraded and humiliated. They have no personal rights. The entire country is engulfed in terror and war. Women, in particular, are tormented and compelled to follow the Taliban's new laws. They are compelled to wear the burqa, which covers their entire body, and they are not permitted to leave the house without a male companion, work, or to attend school. The Taliban justify its actions by claiming that it is only for the

safety and honour of women. Amir also notes that the roadway is filled with beggars who squatted at every corner with mud-caked hands outstretched for a coin. The beggars were largely children, were some of them are older than five or six years old.

Hazaras are used as slaves due to their class difference. It is said that in 1923, King Amanullah Khan formally abolished slavery in Afghanistan, and Hazara was granted equal rights, their confiscated land was returned to them, and they were allowed to serve in the Afghan army with nearly similar pay and rights as the other ethnic groups. Even though they got rights, on the other hand, they were still persecuted.

According to UDHR, Article 4 “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms” (10). But in the novel, the slave treatment is evident. Every Pashtun in Kabul has a Hazara servant. Hassan and Ali are there for Amir and Baba. Hassan works as a slave for his masters since he was a small child. Amir says that “Hassan stayed home and helped Ali with the day’s chores: hand-washing dirty clothes and hanging them to dry in the yard, sweeping the floors, buying naan from the bazaar, marinating meat for dinner, watering the lawn” (Hosseini 26). It is evident that Hazara is treated as a slave. In the book, *Modern Slavery*, slavery is explained as:

For much of human history, slaves were ontologically inferior individuals who were owned by ontologically superior people. The lines between slave owner and slave were always immutable and strictly enforced by law, culture and religion. Slaves did not have the right to exit the relationship unless it was granted to them by their owners and their labor was exerted almost entirely for the benefit of these owners. (Kara)

This is seen in the novel, where Hassan is treated badly by Amir. In order to achieve his selfish objective of obtaining all of Baba's admiration and attention, Amir uses his position as a master to control and manipulate his subordinate, Hassan. Amir continues to believe Hazaras exist just to serve Pashtuns. Hassan is raped by Assef so that Amir can take the prize kite to Baba. Amir narrates:

I ran because I was a coward. I was afraid of Assef and what he would do to me. I was afraid of getting hurt. That's what I told myself as I turned my back to the alley, to Hassan. That's what I made myself believe. I actually aspired to cowardice, because the alternative, the real reason I was running, was that Assef was right: Nothing was free in this world. Maybe Hassan was the price I had to pay, the lamb I had to slay, to win Baba. Was it a fair price? The answer floated to my conscious mind before I could thwart it: He was just a Hazara, wasn't he?. (Hosseini 72-73)

It is clear from this quote that Amir's superiority is the reason he refuses to assist Hassan. Amir persists in his belief that Hazaras exist solely to serve Pashtuns. Hassan's sacrifice is seen as a natural part of being a Hazara, Afghanistan's lowest race. As a result, Pashtuns are prominent in the novel, in which the Hazaras look is derided, and they are mainly positioned as slaves of Pashtuns who are not recognised by the Afghan people.

According to the book on the history of the Hazaras, which Amir reads, the Hazaras, as a minority community in Afghanistan, have been subjected to oppression and persecution as a kind of racial discrimination by the Pashtuns since the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Hazaras were oppressed by the Pashtuns and were treated in an arbitrary and cruel manner. The Pashtuns drove the Hazaras out of their

own country, burned down their homes, slaughtered them, and even trafficked their women. The Pashtuns did all of this to protect their position as Afghanistan's most dominant majority group.

According to UDHR, Article 5, "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" (12). Assef is the one who tortures the Hazara people. He is the one who tortures Ali for the longest time without considering the age. "Of all the neighborhood boys who tortured Ali, Assef was by far the most relentless" (Hosseini 36). Assef, a sadist sexual deviant who is deeply racist, is well-suited to the Taliban's beliefs and hence enjoys high standing inside the group. He also continues to torture Hassan and rapes him because of being a Hazara. Assef's rape of Hassan symbolises Pashtun inequity, brutality, and ethnic hatred of the Hazara. It also represents the Hazara's subservient and degraded condition in Afghanistan.

Assef invites his Pashtun friends Kamal and Wali to rape Hassan, but Wali rejects his offer, because his father said that it is sinful. Then Assef asks Kamal, but he also hesitates to perform. Assef on other hand tries to convince Kamal by saying "It's just a Hazara" (Hosseini 71). But Kamal did not pay attention; instead, he shifts his attention. As a result, Assef starts molesting Hassan as the other two lads are holding him. Amir narrates the incident, "Assef knelt behind Hassan, put his hands on Hassan's hips and lifted his bare buttocks. He kept one hand on Hassan's back and undid his own belt buckle with his free hand. He unzipped his jeans. Dropped his underwear" (Hosseini 71). Hassan does not strive to fight Assef during the rapes, as the passage above demonstrates. Hassan refuses to accept Assef's nasty deed. Assef joins the Taliban as an adult, and he becomes responsible for innumerable murders in Afghanistan.

In the book *Crime against Children* by Arunima Baruah, it is said that “. . . Sexual abuse may also be committed by a person under the age of 18 when that person is either significantly older than the victim or when the perpetrator is in a position of power or control over another’s child” (180). Here, Assef uses his position as the Taliban and rapes young boys and girls, which satisfies his homosexual desires. When Amir returns to his homeland after a long absence, he discovers that Assef, a Taliban member, molests young boys and girls from orphanages and rapes them. He discovers that Hassan’s kid, young Sohrab, is the latest victim of Assef’s homosexual rapist impulses. Assef kidnaps Hassan’s son, Sohrab, and maintains him as a sex slave after Hassan’s death.

Sohrab is given a feminine appearance. Assef and his men would make him dance in front of a crowd and inappropriately touch him. Sohrab is made to dance in a circular motion with closed eyes, and continued until the music stopped. Assef and his friends mock, “‘Bia, bia, my boy,’ the Talib said, calling Sohrab to him. Sohrab went to him, head down, stood between his thighs. The Talib wrapped his arms around the boy. ‘How talented he is nay, my Hazara boy!’ he said. His hands slid down the child’s back, then up, felt under his armpits” (Hosseini 257-258). It is clear from this, how the Taliban physically and mentally mistreat Sohrab.

Assef also explains how he and others break into any Hazara’s home and begin murdering them because they are members of the Hazara community. He says, “‘Door-to-door we went, calling for the men and the boys. We'd shoot them right there in front of their families. Let them remember who they were, where they belonged’” (Hosseini 254). It is evident that Hazaras are murdered in public, ostensibly to set an example for others, and their public executions are designed to scare the people and bring them even closer under control. He also utters:

And ... I'd ... I'd sweep the barrel of my machine gun around the room and fire and fire until the smoke blinded me' 'You don't know the meaning of the word 'liberating' until you've done that, stood in a roomful of targets, let the bullets fly, free of guilt and remorse, knowing you are virtuous, good, and decent. Knowing you're doing God's work. It's breathtaking.' (Hosseini 254-255)

These lines demonstrate how Assef kills people in the name of religion and claims to be completing Allah's task. Assef, who is now the Taliban's leader, have the capacity to commit mass murder. Assef and his people are the cause of violence and destruction, which they believe they are doing for their faith and country, but they are misinformed and break their religion's and community's rules.

According to UDHR, Article 6, "Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law" (14). It is apparent that after the Taliban came into power, there is no specific law according to them. Instead, the Taliban's have created a set of rules and regulations to be followed. They kill many people and do many cruel things which go unquestioned. In the novel, the Taliban kill Hassan and his wife without any proper investigation, and they dismiss the case as self-defence.

Racial discrimination creates changeless for Hazara's and denies them peaceful life in their own country. There is no protection for Hazara's, and no one is concerned when they are killed. According to UDHR, Article 7, "All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination" (16). In the novel, after Assef joins the Taliban, he does many violent actions against Hazaras. He kills the Hazara people and leaves the dead bodies of individuals, killed in the streets, and when any

member of their family tries to collect those bodies from the street, they are killed as well. They are treated like dogs, and Assef states in the novel that those people are rubbish and that they must be removed from their homeland.

There is an incident where Hazaras are not treated equally before the law. When the Taliban learn that a Hazara family lives in a large house in Wazir Akbar Khan, Kabul, they send a pair of Taliban to investigate. Hassan explains that he, his family, and Rahim Khan live in the house. The Talib, on the other hand, called him a thief and a liar and informs him that all Hazara are liars, so they took him out on the street and shot him in the head. They also shoot his wife, Farzana, when she screams and fight them, and they eventually claimed self-defence. In actuality, many people in Afghanistan suffer a similar fate when the Taliban assumed control of the country at the time. Rahim Khan explains the incident:

‘The Taliban moved into the house,’ Rahim Khan said. ‘The pretext was that they had evicted a trespasser. Hassan and Farzana’s murders were dismissed as a case of self-defense. No one said a word about it. Most of it was fear of the Taliban, I think. But no one was going to risk anything for a pair of Hazara servants.’ (Hosseini 203)

The degree to which Afghanistan has sunk into turmoil and disorder is evident as Rahim Khan narrates the deaths of Hassan and Farzana to Amir. Under Taliban leadership, law and order disappear, and prosecutions are routinely rejected on weak grounds. The Taliban murders at will, and racial and ethnic prejudice are common. The fact that no one is willing to put their lives in danger for a few Hazara slaves demonstrates the Hazara’s oppression in Afghanistan. Due to this, many Hazara’s hid their identities to get state identities in order to lessen the impact of discrimination.

Some Sunni religious gurus preached that killing Hazaras was a way to paradise in the late 1970s.

According to UDHR, Article 8, “Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law” (18). In Afghanistan, people are denied their fundamental rights provided by their government because of the Taliban’s rule. Even though women are allowed to speak in public, the Taliban’s create a new law against it. They deny women to speak loudly in public. In the novel, Hassan’s wife is beaten by the Taliban because she spoke loudly. Hassan says to Amir in the letter:

The other day, I accompanied Farzana Jan to the bazaar to buy some potatoes and naan. She asked the vendor how much the potatoes cost, but he did not hear her, I think he had a deaf hear. So she asked louder and suddenly a young Taliban ran over and hit her on the things with his wooden stick. He stuck her so hard she fell down. He was screaming at her and cursing and saying the Ministry of Vice and Virtue does not allow women to speak loudly. (Hosseini 200)

From Hassan’s letter, it is apparent that the Talibans violated the fundamental rights provided by the government, which made women suffer enormously. Afghan people suffer due to the takeover of different fractions. Assef, who is a racist in the novel, says that the communist in Afghanistan detains a large number of people for no apparent cause. They are imprisoned and subjected to torture.

According to UDHR, Article 9, “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile” (20). In the novel, it is said that every night, they choose one prisoner to brutally beat, and the process repeats the next day with another prisoner. Assef says, “Every night the commandant, a half-Hazara, half Uzbek thing who

smelled like a rotting donkey, would have one of the prisoners dragged out of the cell and he'd beat him until sweat poured from his fat face. Then he'd light a cigarette, crack his joints, and leave" (Hosseini 260). Assef and his father are arbitrarily detained, and Assef, in particular, is treated with such brutality. One night, the commandant grabs Assef and brutally beats him. After going through these hardships as a Pashtun, Assef is unable to bear it any longer. Then he makes the decision to join the Taliban.

According to UDHR, Article 11 (1), "Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence" (24). In the novel, the Taliban declare Hassan as a thief and liar who is living in a big house with Rahim Khan. Even though many of the neighbours support Hassan, the Taliban shoot him in the back of the head. It is evident that without proving Hassan as a victim, they kill him in front of the public.

According to UDHR, Article 12, "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks" (26). None of the characters in the novels has any privacy. Taliban interferes with everyone's privacy, including Pashtuns. They treat everyone equally, regardless of their social standing. Baba's orphanage is demolished in the novel, which he regards as an honour, where he spent all of his money to create this orphanage.

This type of brutality makes Afghan people miserable. As a result of the conflict, people are being displaced from their homes and forced to seek sanctuary in another nation. According to UDHR Article 13 (1), "Everyone has the right to

freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.” and Article 13 (2), “Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country” (28). The Taliban in the novel refuse to let anyone leave or enter Kabul. When the country’s civil war breaks out, Amir flees to America in search of a better life, while Hassan is murdered by Talibs for being born a Hazara. He has left with no other opportunity to leave the country. They erroneously accuse him of illegally inhabiting Baba’s home, where he spent his boyhood with Amir. In front of their son, they murder him and his wife.

Amir, on the other hand, dares to leave Kabul with Sohrab in the novel’s last chapter. He finds it impossible to leave the country because the Taliban enacted new immigration and adoption regulations. Amir is asked to provide the death certificates in order to adopt Hassan. But in Afghanistan, they don’t have birth and death certificates. Amir states that ““Death certificates? This is Afghanistan we’re talking about. Most people don’t have birth certificates”” (Hosseini 303). From this, it is apparent that Afghan people don’t have even the most important document, which is essential in day -to-day life.

According to UDHR, Article 14 (1), “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution” (30). In the novel, Amir and Baba move to America and enjoy their life. They become closer than they lived in Kabul. After they move to America, Amir pursues his higher education and gets married. But Hassan, on the other hand, suffers a lot. He returns back to Kabul from Hazarajat in 1986 because of Rahim Khan’s request to look over the house of Baba, which he left to Rahim Khan while moving to America. After moving to Kabul, he does all the work in that house, but at last, he is killed by the Taliban, who accuses him as a thief. When Amir returns to Kabul from America, he comes to know that Hassan is his half

brother. He feels worried about his decision to leave Hassan in Kabul. Like Hassan, most of Hazara's have no option but to stay in that conflict-torn country.

According to UDHR, Article 23 (1), "Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment." And Article 23 (2), "Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work" (48). Hazara's have no choice but to work as servants. Since they have been denied the opportunity to education, they have been forced to serve as servants for Pashtun's. Hassan and Ali are denied their fundamental right to study in the novel and are forced to work as servants for Amir and Baba. They would sleep in a tiny hut at Baba's house. Rather than receiving their pay, they would be given food and housing. As a result, they are constantly dependent on their owners for financial support.

In the novel, there is another case where women are not permitted to work. It is clear from Zaman, the orphanage's director, who describes the plight of children abandoned by their mothers in orphanages. When Farid inquires about the strength of the children who live in the orphanage. Zaman tells the story, "More than we have room for. About two hundred and fifty. . . . 'But they're not all yateem. Many of them have lost their fathers in the war, and their mothers can't feed them because the Taliban don't allow them to work. So they bring their children here'" (Hosseini 233). This shows the pathetic condition of children who are suffering in an orphanage because their mothers are not allowed to work.

According to UDHR, Article 24, "Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay" (50). Hassan and Ali are servants from the moment they are born in the story. They would work nonstop from sunrise to night. They are not allowed to take vacations. Ali

would begin preparing food for Amir and Baba in the morning. Hassan would assist his father with everyday tasks such as sweeping the floors, washing soiled clothes, and so on.

Physicians for Human Rights and many public health leaders have defined about health. They say that it is a state of total physical, mental, and social well-being, not only the absence of disease or infirmity. They also say that there is a necessity of human rights protection and promotion of health. According to UDHR, Article 25:

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection. (52)

In the novel, children also suffer greatly, and they do not have an appropriate level of living. Children are adopted by orphanages when their parents die, providing them with little security. Baba's orphanage is demolished, and only the remains of children can be seen. Further investigation into the status of Afghan children reveals the plight of orphans in Afghanistan. For Sohrab both of his parents are killed in the Taliban raid, and he is taken away, along with hundreds of other orphans, where they live in terrible conditions. These orphans are mistreated, tortured, and assaulted sexually. To safeguard Sohrab from such torment, Rahim Khan requests Amir to accompany Sohrab to America, where he would be safe. He says, "Children are fragile, Amir

Jan. Kabul is already full of broken children and I don't want Sohrab to become another'" (Hosseini 204). Through Rahim Khan's words, the condition of children in Afghanistan is obvious.

Hassan also emphasises the misery of Afghanistan in his letter to Amir, where there has been a complete loss of humanity. He expresses concern that his child will become an orphan. This shows that, despite Islam's unconditional affection for orphans, there were sights of a large number of children roaming the streets of Afghanistan, hungry and vulnerable. When Amir looks for Sohrab in every orphanage, he can find that the children are clad in torn sweaters, that the windows are closed with sheets of plastic, that there is no water heater, that there are not enough beds with mattresses, and that there is no food in one of the orphanages. According to the director of that institution, there are more than two hundred and fifty children whose fathers have gone to war, and their mothers have left their children here to live and say that "This place is better than the street, but not that much better'" (Hosseini 233). He also says that one Taliban member would visit every two months and take a girl child with him. Where the Taliban would provide some money for that, which represents the Taliban's extreme persecution.

R.P. Shukla, in his book *Value Education and Human Rights* speaks about Mahatma Gandhi's definition of education. He says that Mahatma Gandhi defined education, "By education, I mean an all round drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit" (8). Thus the absence of education among a substantial portion of the Afghan population is one of the huddles in the country's rebuilding and growth. Following the Taliban's fall, there was some serious progress in education. According to UDHR, Article 26:

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. (54)

In the novel, Hazara's are denied the right to education. Amir and Hassan's educations are vastly different. The education system was steady and mostly based on religion prior to the Soviet invasion and the establishment of the Taliban. After the invasion of the Soviets and the Taliban, the school system is destroyed for everyone. Hazaras are denied their basic rights, and many of them, like Hassan and Ali, are illiterate due to a lack of education. They have not been educated in order to serve as slaves. They are not permitted to attend school. Despite the fact that they are spouses and mothers, the women also function as slaves. Furthermore, newborns are marked as slaves as soon as they are conceived or born, "That Hassan would grow up illiterate like Ali and most Hazaras had been decided the minute he had been born, perhaps even the moment he had been conceived in Sanaubar's unwelcoming womb—after all what use did a servant have for the written word?" (Hosseini 26). It is evident that the

fate of Hazara is marked before their birth. Thus, Hassan is subjected to illiteracy because of their community.

Hassan, on the other hand, is eager to learn something new. He is constantly interested in hearing Amir's story. Amir would often read Hassan poems and stories taunt him when he didn't know the big word. When Amir narrates him the story of Mullah Nasiruddin, Hassan interrupts him and inquires about the term 'imbecile.' Amir grins, revealing his lack of knowledge. After making a fool of Hassan, Amir would make apologies by giving him his old shirts or broken toys.

In the novel, Amir is astounded by Hassan's knowledge when he recounts him the story of a greedy man who wept into the magical cup and had his tears transformed into pearls. Despite the fact that the man is pleased, he attempts to find ways to make himself unhappy. He also murders his lovely wife. Hassan stops Amir at this point, asking why the man killed his wife when he could smell the onion. This question astounded Amir, who began to doubt Hassan's intelligence. As a result, he whispers, "What does he know, that illiterate Hazara? He'll never be anything but a cook. How dare he criticize you?" (Hosseini 32). This demonstrates that even though Hazara's are denied to study from their birth, they have knowledge by birth.

Furthermore, due to the Hazaras lack of education, they are not permitted to work in the same jobs as Pashtuns. They are allowed to work only in low-paying jobs. The Hazaras have no other option but to serve as servants or maids. They live in poverty, illiteracy, and ignorance as a result of racial prejudice. This action demonstrates Pashtun discrimination against Hazara in the areas of education, economics, and social possibilities. The Hazaras are not permitted to attend school. Furthermore, they do not have the same opportunities as Pashtuns in the workplace.

Finally, Afghan people, especially Hazaras, were pulled to difficult situations and difficult times under Taliban rule. Racism has negative consequences and the most significant of which is exclusion from social participation and, ultimately, exclusion from all human rights, which includes additional bad repercussions of a racist mindset such as oppression, discrimination, and, as a result, societal imbalance. From the description of power dynamics, the reader can illuminate the picture of the real state of life in contemporary Afghanistan, which is typically overlooked in journalistic portrayals of the nation. Throughout the novel, the hegemonic forces of Russia and America over the Afghan people, as well as the devastation of Afghanistan's culture, natural riches, old legacy, and violation of human rights, are powerfully depicted. Poverty, refugee issues, and minority ethnic dominance, as well as ethnic cleansing and other anti-humanitarian situations, are all discussed in the novel as repercussions of the Afghan wars.

CHAPTER III

Chapter III

Women, the Weakened Sex

“If society will not admit of women's free development, then society must be remodeled”

- Elizabeth Blackwell

The present chapter focuses on the degradation and violation of women's rights in Afghanistan. The novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, takes place in Afghanistan during the last three decades, from the communist revolution to the Soviet invasion and to the United States-led fight against the Taliban. In the novel, the author depicts the real perspectives of Afghanistan, both before and after the Taliban's rise to power. Through Mariam and Laila's characters, the novel depicts the struggle against gender inequality. Both of them fight for their rights in life and are bold enough to face a hostile environment toward the women in Afghanistan, particularly at a critical political period under the Taliban.

The novel is structured into fifty one chapters, which are subsequently grouped into four main sections. The story is divided into four parts: the first is about Mariam, the second is about Laila, the third is about Laila and Mariam, and the fourth is about Laila alone. The story covers different aspects, including a friendship between two women, love's salvation, oppression, and the battle between traditional and modern society.

The novel tells the story of female subjugation and marginalization, which explores the plight of Afghan women in patriarchal societies, as well as the sadistic practices, discrimination, and injustices. It depicts how men establish their masculine authority and, as a result, meet their needs by physically and psychologically

exploiting women. On the other side, it depicts how women bear such horrible treatment in a very compelling way.

Men have unlimited authority over women in an Afghan patriarchal system, and whether it is their wife or a stranger on the street, a woman must obey any instruction given to her. If they do not follow commands, they may be subjected to beatings, murder, and humiliation. Mariam and Laila, the novel's two female protagonists, are constantly victimised and oppressed.

The Taliban's reign bring several changes in the life of people in Afghanistan. Taliban imposes strict restrictions on the people, which they are forced to follow. Girls and women have fewer rights under Taliban rule. The majority of women are forced to stay at home. As the Taliban transformed Afghanistan's republic into the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, their rules are based on Islamic law.

Women are treated as second-class citizens by the Taliban. Women are not permitted to leave the house without the company of a male relative. Taliban announces, "*You will stay inside your homes at all times. It is not proper for women to wander aimlessly about the streets. If you go outside, you must be accompanied by a mahram, a male relative. If you are caught alone on the street, you will be beaten and sent home*" (Hosseini 271). From the quotation, it is evident that women were forced to dependent on men. When going outside the house, women should be accompanied by a male relative, or they will be beaten. Under the Taliban's reign, women's only option is to stay at home all the time.

The Taliban has taken away one of the women's most basic rights, namely the right to speak. Women rarely express their opinions since they are not allowed to talk. They don't have an option to say anything they want. As a result of the Taliban's laws, women have fewer options in their lives. Overall, the law enacted by the Afghan

government, known as the Taliban, denies women the right to choose in all aspects of their lives. Women are subjected to assault not only by Taliban soldiers but also by blood relatives and husbands in the novel.

The Taliban deprive the people of Afghanistan of the opportunity to receive formal education, particularly for girls. They are unable to receive any type of education in a school setting. Taliban announces that “*Girls are forbidden from attending school. All schools for girls will be closed immediately. Women are forbidden from working*” (Hosseini 271). Married women must take care of the house while the girls stay at home.

According to the Taliban, common people are not allowed to watch television. People sneak around watching television. People do not have access to television for information, which results in their lack of knowledge. The rule states that “*Writing books, watching films, and painting pictures are forbidden*” (Hosseini 270). It is because of this rules, the country’s people become illiterate. They frequently do not understand simple things, and when a woman questions her husband about something, he does not explain it to her properly. People are not allowed to publish books or see movies under the Taliban regime. In fact, watching films can provide them with education, something they are unable to obtain due to the government’s prohibition.

Women’s rights are taken away by the patriarchal system. Men are in charge of every aspect of women’s lives, even how they dress. Rasheed, husband of Mariam and Laila, emphasises the value of dignity and pride for women in the story by covering their bodies from all males except their husbands. According to him, women maintain their respect and pride by covering their bodies with burqas, which are coverings that cover the entire female body, including the face.

When the Taliban occupies the country, they also impose a law that all women in the country must wear burqas when they leave their homes. They also prohibit women from wearing make-up, jewellery, attractive clothing, or painting their nails. The Taliban rule over women's right to dress up is explained here:

You will not, under any circumstance, show your face. You will cover with burqa when outside. If you do not, you will be severely beaten.

Cosmetics are forbidden.

Jewelry is forbidden.

You will not wear charming clothes.

You will not speak unless spoken to.

You will not make eye contact with men.

You will not laugh in public. If you do, you will be beaten.

You will not paint your nails. If you do, you will lose a finger. (Hosseini 271)

From this, it is clear that the women have no freedom of choice in their life. The Taliban also mentions the consequences for women who break the rules. Women would be beaten for not wearing a burqa, and their fingers will be severed for painting their nails. The rule restricts women's ability to express themselves and be as attractive as they wish.

The novel's opening chapter introduces the term 'harami', which refers to an illegitimate kid. Mariam is the illegitimate daughter of Jalil, a successful Herat businessman with three legal marriages and nine children. Mariam's mother, Nana, works as a housekeeper at Jalil's house, where she has an affair with him, which resulted in Mariam's birth. She lives alone with her Nana in Gul Daman, a village on

the outskirts of Herat and literally an inconspicuous area, to avoid the bullying and animosity of locals since she is a harami. Mariam suffers hardships as an illegitimate child.

According to UDHR, Article 1, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood” (4). In the novel, Mariam is not treated equally. In social, political, and economic hierarchies, she is portrayed as a second-class citizen. In the book *Women, Incarceration, and Human Rights Violations: Feminist Criminology and Corrections*, it is said that “Feminist literature argues that women have long been viewed as second-class citizens.” As Mariam belongs to a lower class gender, she is denied the opportunity to have some control over her life through education, and as a result, she is doomed to a life of slavery and inferior living. She lives in a society that forbids her from wishing for love.

Mariam, as an innocent child, has no idea what the name ‘harami’—bastard signifies. She just interprets it as her mother’s disdain towards her. She is an illegitimate person with no right to the things that other people have, such as love, family, home, and acceptance. Mariam has been subjected to such cruel treatment since she was a child, and it continues throughout her life.

According to UDHR, Article 2, “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”. It also says that “Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty” (6). Nana, Mariam, and Laila

are three Afghan women who live in a patriarchal society. They may have been born decades ago, but they share the same story as Afghan women. Gender discrimination affects them throughout their lives, in various types in which men and women have an unequal relationship and women are expected to be subordinate to men.

Both Mariam and Laila face discrimination based on their gender. Because they have diverse personalities, they exhibit their struggle against gender discrimination in different ways. In the book *Women and Rights*, Caroline Sweetman says that:

“Although women and men are theoretically equal before the law, women’s subordinate position to men is not taken into consideration. In situations where one person’s rights may be in conflict with those of another, unequal power relations between the two may lead to a ruling in favour of the one who has most power” (5). This condition can be seen in the novel. Women in patriarchal societies are unable to make any decisions and are expected to obey their husbands. It implies that women are always placed behind men. Afghanistan can be classified as a patriarchal country since men are considered to be the most powerful and superior beings.

Most Afghan men make their wives wear burqas because they do not want their wives’ faces or bodies to be seen by other men. Men also have the advantage when it comes to deciding who they want to marry and when they want to marry. Women in society are waiting for a proposal from a man. They frequently accept the proposal because they believe they will not have another chance like this.

Women are treated as second-class citizens by the Taliban. Women are not permitted to leave the house without the company of a male relative. It makes women dependent on men. When going outside the house, women should be accompanied by a male relative, or they will be beaten. Under the Taliban rule, women’s only option is to stay at home all the time. In Afghanistan, women face a lack of education and

career opportunities. Women are dependent on men due to the patriarchal system that exists in the society.

Wives are not permitted to see male guests in the house because a woman's face is merely the realm of her husband. If there is a male, the husband will ask his wife to go to her room and close the door. Mariam says "They were all men, friends of Rasheed's. When a knock came, Mariam knew to go upstairs to her room and close the door. She stayed there . . . Rasheed had told Mariam that she was not to come down until the visitors had left" (Hosseini 80). Thus, throughout the novel, Mariam and Laila fight for the right to make their own decisions in society, for equal opportunities in education and job, for equality in marriage, and for equality in the eyes of the law.

In various parts of Afghanistan, many tribes, the men, still refuse to accept equality between men and women. Government cannot manage the situation of women, so they allow women to educate and work because some people consider that women can obtain good education and employment according to their tradition. The following quotation by Laila who recalls about her father Babi's words states that:

No, Babi meant the tribal areas, especially the Pashtun regions in the south or on the east near the Pakistani border, where women were rarely seen on the streets and only then in burqa and accompanied by men. He meant those regions where men who lived by ancient tribal laws had rebelled against the communists and their decrees to liberate women, to abolish forced marriage, to raise the minimum marriage age to sixteen for girls. There, men saw it as an insult to their centuries-old tradition, Babi said, to be told by the government—and a godless one

at that—that their daughters had to leave home, attend school, and work alongside men. (Hosseini 133)

From Babi's words it is clear that there are also some people who are against legislation not allowing women to receive an education and a job. They believe that, according to their custom, women should wear burqas, be accompanied by men, stay at home, and not work. Thus, gender discrimination prevents women from pursuing their fundamental rights to education and employment.

According to Article 3, "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person" (8). In the novel, the Afghan people have no security since it is immersed in a long war that began with the Soviet Union. There was a jihad against the Soviet regime during the Soviet invasion. Many men are forced into jihad, and the majority of them perish in the conflict. The below quotation states the condition of children, "*Children are the intended victims of Soviet land mine campaign.* The article went on to say that the Soviets also liked to hide explosives inside brightly colored toys. If a child picked it up, the toy exploded, tore off fingers or an entire hand. The father could not join the jihad then; he'd have to stay home and care for his child" (Hosseini 121). From the quotation, it is apparent that children in Afghanistan do not have any security.

During the Soviet conflict, the communist government and Russian allies slaughtered a large number of civilians, including women and children. There were also numerous bombs that devastated people's homes and killed a large number of civilians. Due to the blasts, several youngsters lost their hands and during the Mujahideen war, many civilians were killed. The quotation states that "The Mujahideen, armed to the teeth but now lacking a common enemy, had found the enemy in each other. Kabul's day of reckoning had come at last. And when the

rockets began to rain down on Kabul, people ran for cover” (Hosseini 169). There were internal disagreements within the Mujahideen. Many rockets were launched, destroying many homes and killing a large number of civilians.

Afghanistan people’s life is in a horrible state because of the war. It affects a large number of people. There is no liberty for women. The quotation expresses the state of women, “. . . Then they break in, kill their fathers, rape their sisters and mothers” (Hosseini 248). The women are mistreated by the Mujahideen. Many young women committed suicide at that time to avoid rape and forced marriages.

After the Taliban defeated the Mujahideen, the Taliban’s reign brought several changes to Afghanistan's life. Taliban imposes severe laws that must be followed. Most Afghan men make their spouses wear burqas because they do not want their wives faces and bodies to be seen by other men. A burqa covers a woman’s entire body from head to toe. The eyes have a hole, but the rest of the body is covered except for the hands. Overall, the law enacted by the Afghan government, known as the Taliban, denies women the right to choose in all aspects of their lives.

According to UDHR, Article 4, “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms” (10). In the novel, there are many parallels between Rasheed’s treatment of his wives and the treatment of slaves by slave owners. Domestic violence affects both Mariam and Laila. Mariam becomes pregnant seven times in Kabul, but she is never able to take a child. Because of this, Rasheed grows increasingly aggressive toward her. Mariam is subjected to sexual assault and abused at all times.

According to UDHR, Article 5, “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” (12). In the novel, Mariam and Laila undergo harsh treatment by their husband, Rasheed. Mariam is an obedient person

who always obeys Rasheed's commands. Rasheed is harsh and cruel to Mariam. She loses her beauty as a result of Rasheed's actions. He never gives her enough attention. Rasheed, has a habit of kicking, punching, slapping, and acting other violent against Mariam and Laila.

Mariam frequently agrees with her husband's orders in order to prevent his cruelty against them. Mariam is a patient woman who puts up with whatever Rasheed throws at her, but she is critical of the state of her marriage deep inside. She is incapable of tolerating injustice. It occurs when she is unable to give Rasheed a son. Rasheed compels Mariam into having a boy. When Mariam finds out she is pregnant, Rasheed is adamant about his want for a boy because he considers having a son is a source of pride. Mariam mutters a plea through her mouthful of grit and pebbles by her husband. Tears drip from the corners of her eyes. The quotation shows the harsh treatment of Mariam by her husband:

His powerful hands clasped her jaw. He shoved two fin-gers into her mouth and pried it open, then forced the cold, hard pebbles into it. Mariam struggled against him, mumbling, but he kept pushing the pebbles in, his upper lip curled in a sneer.

'Now chew,' he said.

Through the mouthful of grit and pebbles, Mariam mumbled a plea. Tears were leaking out of the corners of her eyes.

'CHEW!' he bellowed. A gust of his smoky breath slammed against her face.

Mariam chewed. Something in the back of her mouth cracked.

‘Good,’ Rasheed said. His cheeks were quivering. ‘Now you know what your rice tastes like. Now you know what you’ve given me in this marriage. Bad food, and nothing else.’

Then he was gone, leaving Mariam to spit out pebbles, blood, and the fragments of two broke molars. (Hosseini 102-103)

Mariam suffers because of degrading treatment, and it also continues till the end of the novel. She also advises Laila to obey her husband’s commands on numerous occasions because they have no one else to protect them. Rasheed also uses violence against his second wife, Laila. Her life, like Mariam, is full of beatings, as demonstrated in the quotation below:

‘*Tectonic*,’ Laila said. It hurt to talk. Her jaw was still sore, her back and neck ached. Her lip was swollen, and her tongue kept poking the empty pocket of the lower incisor Rasheed had knocked loose two days before. . . . Laila never would have believed that a human body could withstand this much beating, this viciously, this regularly, and keep functioning. (Hosseini 315)

Laila has severe physical injuries in her lips, tongue, and mouth. Her lower molar is apparently lost. Rasheed’s cruelty is evidenced by the fact that he beats his victims violently and on a frequent basis, as stated in the passage above. The attacks are so frequent because Laila is frequently the target of Rasheed’s rage when terrible things happen to him. It demonstrates how widespread violence is in a patriarchal country like Afghanistan, where it is employed as a form of punishment. In both domestic and public life, violence becomes a legal punishment for every mistake women make, and it happens all the time throughout the novel.

Violence is committed not only by women's relatives, such as husbands and other family members but also by others in a patriarchal society. In the novel, the Taliban, who are taking over the city from the Mujahideen at the time, target all women who disobey the laws they have established. They attack Laila, who walks alone to an orphanage to see her daughter without a mahram or male relative. The following passage depicts a young Talib abusing Laila, One day, a young Talib beat Laila with a radio antenna. When he was done, he gave a final whack to the back of her neck and said, "I see you again, I'll beat you until your mother's milk leaks out of your bones" (Hosseini 313). The quotation demonstrates how terrible it is to live in a country where all men have the capacity and authority to use violence against women when they make errors.

According to UDHR, Article 6, "Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law" (14). In the novel, the Taliban did not give any opportunity to recognise women before the law. Naghma, Mariam's prison friend, is a woman who has gone through this. She flees with her boyfriend in order to avoid being married off to a man thirty years senior than her. Naghma's lover claims that he has been seduced by her once they are arrested. Naghma is ignored by the legal court, which believes in him. Her boyfriend is released, but she is given a five-year imprisonment.

On the other hand, Rasheed also threatens to seize custody of Aziza, their daughter as he can easily go to the law court and hand Aziza over to the authorities, since the law court will believe his statement over Laila's. Rasheed also threatens to accuse Laila of adultery and report her to the Taliban. He is convinced that the law court would believe his testimony rather than Laila's when the case is heard in court. The law court will nonetheless trust him despite the lack of evidence. And Laila will

be punished harshly as an adulterer. From this it is evident that women are inferior before the law.

According to UDHR, Article 7, “All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination” (16). In the novel, Mariam criticises the Taliban’s law in court. She wishes to argue in court that what she did is not entirely wrong; she claims that Rasheed would have killed her if she had not attacked him first. Mariam wants to emphasise that, as a woman, she has the same rights and is in the same position in court to present her case. Since there is only one male witness in Afghanistan and two female witnesses, the Taliban does not accept Mariam’s explanation.

In the book *The Legal Protection of Women From Violence: Normative Gaps in International Law*, it is said that “Laws are a reflection of what society and nations believe to be important enough to protect or guard against. . . . It is therefore equally true that laws can and do curtail the enjoyment of women's human rights.” From this quotation, it is clear that laws represent what the societies and countries decide is essential enough to protect. As a result, it is also true that laws can and do limit the enjoyment of women’s human rights. But in the novel, Mariam does not get any happiness because of the law; instead, she suffers a lot. She is regarded as a single woman and is not permitted to take the stand. Mariam makes the greatest sacrifice for Laila and the children by accepting responsibility for Rasheed’s death and ultimately suffering the ultimate penalty. Mariam is well aware that her acts against Rasheed are entirely lawful and that her execution is thus a legal means of death. Mariam is ready

to bear the results of her actions as one of the expenses of fighting gender discrimination in her life.

According to UDHR, Article 11 (1), “Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence” (24). In the novel, the law court disregards the assumption of innocence in the case of female suspects. The presumption of innocence states that every defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty through a fair trial procedure. When Laila is caught by the Taliban while on her way to see her daughter, she is never granted a fair trial to assess the extent and reason for her crime.

Mariam kills Rasheed in order to protect herself, Laila, and Laila’s young daughters, Aziza and Zalmai. Mariam's behaviour is not planned and is carried out in self-defence. The law court, on the other hand, does not offer a public defender or take evidence such as the results of the investigation. Mariam is found guilty of murder and is sentenced to death by the court.

According to UDHR, Article 13 (1), “Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State” (28). In the novel, the government prevents women from travelling without a male relative, and it also forbids women from leaving their families. Laila flees her home and attempts to board a bus to Peshawar, Pakistan, with Mariam and her children in order to flee the violence committed by her husband, Rasheed. She looks for a suitable man, informs him that she is a widow, and urges him to pretend to be her cousin in order to avoid being discovered by the Mujahideen administration. She takes so many risks to travel because of the Taliban’s strict rules.

According to UDHR, Article 16 (2), “Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.” and Article 16 (3), “The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State” (34). In the novel, Mariam and Laila are two of several Afghan women forced into marriage with an unwilling suitor at various times and in various circumstances. They are forced to marry Rasheed, a shoemaker who is several years older.

Mariam struggles with the death of her mother. Since she is different from her stepmother, Mariam is not welcome in the house of Jalil. She has no choice but to accept and agree to the plan that has been laid out for her. Rather than supporting Mariam, the step mothers are more concerned about the family’s reputation and removing her. Khadija, Mariam’s half mother discusses about the man she intends to marry her. She says that “‘A *khastegar*. A suitor. His name is Rasheed,’ He’s a Pashtun, from Kandahar originally, but he lives in Kabul, in the Deh- Mazang district, in a two-story house that he owns” (Hosseini 46). Mariam is not allowed to express her choice or a voice, and she is being forced to accept this marriage by her half mothers.

In the book, *Afghan Women: identity and invasion* by Elaheh Rostami-Povey, it is said that “According to Islamic law, women should not be forced into marriage; their consent is always necessary. Where a minor has been married without this, she can ask for her marriage to be annulled on reaching the age of majority.” But Mariam marries at the age of fifteen. She also accuses her father and his wives for claiming that fifteen is a good age for a girl to get married. Mariam also criticises the society, claiming that in today’s society, females are typically married at a young age. Mariam

believes that a girl should not get married at the age of fifteen. She compares herself to her stepsisters, who are the same age as she is and is still studying at Mehri School.

Laila, on the other hand, marries Rasheed because she is orphaned and expecting a child. These circumstances are unsustainable in Afghan's culture since being a woman alone is not an option. Unless she has a mahram or male guardian, she is unable to travel anywhere. The Taliban may rape, torture, and even kill women who walk around the city alone. Rasheed takes advantage of her situation skillfully. Even if he offers another choice, namely allowing Laila to leave his home, this is not a viable solution. Rasheed understands how risky it is for a woman to travel alone, but he refuses to assist Laila. Furthermore, a pregnant lady without a spouse will be punished with death. Laila has no choice; she must marry Rasheed in order to save her life and her child in the womb.

Mariam and Laila are both disgusted by the forced marriage because they would have to spend the rest of their lives with a man they do not love. However, no matter how bad their marriage is, they will be powerless to stop it once reality sets in. Laila's dreams of marrying and living with Tariq are shattered. The situation leads her to marry, which marks the start of a lengthy and difficult relationship with a domestically violent husband.

According to UDHR, Article 18 "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. . . to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance" (38). Afghanistan became the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in September 1996. When it comes to the Islamic religion, Afghanistan has severe laws that individuals must follow. Afghanistan is a predominantly religious country. They are extremists because of their belief systems and customs. The Taliban enacts regulations requiring citizens to worship, "*All citizens must pray five times a*

day. If it is prayer time and you are caught doing something other, you will be beaten” (Hosseini 270). According to Islam’s norms, they should pray five times a day. The Taliban army forces a large number of civilians to pray. Those who do not obey will be considered criminals.

There is no space for people of other religions in Afghanistan, which is an Islamic republic. The law states that *“If you are not Muslim, do not worship where you can be seen by Muslims. If you do, you will be beaten and imprisoned. If you are caught trying to convert a Muslim to your faith, you will be executed”* (Hosseini 270). They cannot worship in a public area where Muslims can see them, or they will be charged with a crime against Islam.

Many buildings associated with other religions, such as Buddhism was destroyed by the Taliban. It is because the Taliban considers the big statue of Buddhas to be a sin, they remove their crevices. Laila says that *“A month before that, Laila had learned that the Taliban had planted TNT in the crevices of the giant Buddhas in Bamiyan and blown them apart, calling them objects of idolatry and sin”* (Hosseini 306). From this quotation, it is apparent that the Taliban consider Islam as their only religion and do not allow any other religion in their country.

According to UDHR, Article 19, *“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”* (40). In the novel, the woman does not have any right to express her opinion under Taliban rule. Since they have no right to speak, they are unable to express their thoughts. The Taliban also prevents women from wearing anything they choose.

Women are unable to select the clothing that they wish to wear. As in the novel, Mariam and Laila are both hesitant to wear burqas since they are uncomfortable inside. It restricts their movement and makes eating difficult for them. When Rasheed wants her to wear a burqa, Mariam cannot express her dissatisfaction with this rule, “Mariam had never before worn a burqa. . . . The loss of peripheral vision was unnerving, and she did not like the suffocating way the pleated cloth kept pressing against her mouth” (Hosseini 71). Mariam, on the other hand, wants to be free to wear whatever she wants in her life. She does not have any option rather than to accept it.

Laila also shares Mariam’s dissatisfaction with the burqa. Laila confesses that it gives her some comfort, but what she really feels is desperation. She is depressed since her lofty ambitions, and lovely dreams have been destroyed and crushed. She unconsciously transforms into someone else while wearing the burqa.

According to UDHR, Article 20 (1), “Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.” and Article 20 (2), “No one may be compelled to belong to an association” (42). In the novel, Mujahideen compel young boys to join their association in order to fight. Even Rasheed is compelled to stay at home for a week. As the result of the violence, he closes the yard door, put booby traps, and locked the front door as well. He also discharges his handgun into the street twice, claiming that he had seen someone attempting to claim the wall and forcing young boys to join their team. Rasheed narrates that:

‘They’re forcing young boys to join,’ he said. ‘The Mujahideen are. In plain daylight, at gunpoint. They drag boys right off the streets. And when soldiers from a rival militia capture these boys, they torture them. I heard they electrocute them—it’s what I heard—that they crush their balls with pliers. They make the boys lead them to their homes. Then

they break in, kill their fathers, rape their sisters and mothers.’

(Hosseini 248).

From Rasheed’s words, it is evident that the Mujahideen yank boys off the streets and torture them. They electrocute them and crush their balls with pliers, and they also force the boys to accompany them to their homes.

According to UDHR, Article 23 (1), “Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment” (48). In Afghanistan, under the Taliban, women’s only option is to stay at home. The rule states that “*Girls are forbidden from attending school. All schools for girls will be closed immediately. Women are forbidden from working*” (Hosseini 271). In Afghanistan, women face the death of educational and career opportunities. Women are dependent on men due to the patriarchal system that exists in society. Women have no other option but to engage in domestic activities. All they can do is serve their husbands or other male household members. Because they are unable to work, women become reliant on men. They simply borrow money from their husband.

Mariam lives in a society where women have a lower status than men. Mariam wishes to have the same opportunities as the majority of women in the city, such as obtaining university degrees, working in an office building, and without having to wear the burqa. Mariam desires equality between men and women, particularly in the culture in which she lives, where gender prejudice still exists.

According to UDHR, Article 24, “Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay” (50). The primary role of women in the home is to serve and satisfy their husband’s wants. They should cook for their husband while also taking care of other

responsibilities. These duties are never done by men in the family. Every work in the house should be completed by women without the assistance of men. Women do not have enough time to rest.

In the book, *Violence Against Women: Issues and Perspectives* by Aruna Goel, Manvinder Ksur and Ameer Sultana, it is said that “They were denied one or more of the following: adequate food, water, bedding, proper medical treatment, concern about their pain or discomfort. . . .Many of them were shouted at, abused and even pushed around, if they complained (138). Women in Afghanistan have a significant challenge when they become ill since they are denied access to health facilities such as hospitals and clinics. Sick women are unable to see a doctor or take medication unless their male relatives buy the medications for them. Women and girls are dying of treatable diseases due to a lack of access to medical care. Laila reacts to the situation. She is enraged by the situation. She is unable to stand it when women are treated unfairly. She shouts at the hospital that she urgently requires medical assistance. According to UDHR, Article 25:

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection. (52)

In the novel, nobody comes to help Nana when she is giving birth to Mariam. Nana has been denied access to a health facility because Jalil has failed to call a doctor, despite the fact that he is aware that Nana requires the assistance of a doctor or, at the very least, a midwife during her delivery. Finally, Nana delivers the infant Mariam herself after two-day labour and cuts the cord with the knife she had prepared beforehand.

Furthermore, a horrible incident involving a woman delivering birth occurs decades later. Author Cook in his book *Women's Health and Human Rights: The Promotion and Protection of Women's Health through International Human Rights law*, says, "Laws that deny or restrict women's access to health services, or make services dependent on the authorization of their fathers or husbands, are pervasive throughout the world." In the same way, it is clear in the novel. Laila lives under the Taliban's rule where women are unable to exercise their rights, even in the most basic of rights, healthcare. Taliban passes a law separating men's and women's hospitals.

Women are unable to obtain even the most fundamental right of healthcare. The Taliban enacted rules and established separate hospitals for men and women. Unless accompanied by a close male relative and particularly male doctors are not allowed to treat women. Kabul's half-million women are confined to a thirty five bed hospital with no running water, electricity, or surgical equipment. In other words, the city's lone women's hospital is in terrible shape and lacks adequate equipment.

In the hospital, Laila, who is about to give birth to her second child, is turned down by a hospital in Kabul because it no longer accepts women. She, like many other women, has a difficult time getting hospital treatment. The hospital's security then informs her that Rabia Balkhi, a women's hospital, is located in Kabul. Mariam and Rasheed are forced to take Laila to Rabia Balkhi because they have no other

option. Unfortunately, the hospital falls far short of expectations. There is nothing in the hospital, not even anaesthesia.

According to the doctor in the hospital Rabia Balkhi, when a non-governmental organization (NGO) sends money, the Taliban uses it entirely for hospitals that treat men. Even though there is no anaesthetic, the delivery should be done as soon as possible because Laila would lose her baby. So, Laila undergoes a caesarean section without anaesthesia. The operation gives her horrible pain. She expresses her dissatisfaction with the state of women's healthcare in Afghanistan, “. . . They won't give me what I need. I have no X-ray either, no suction, no oxygen, not even simple antibiotics. When NGOs offer money, the Taliban turn them away. Or they funnel the money to the places that cater to men” (Hosseini 283). From this, it is evident that in Afghanistan, the Taliban does not facilitate women's healthcare requirements. They are exclusively concerned with the needs of men.

In the book *Constitutional Equality And The Women's Right* by B.R.Trivedi it is said that, “Every woman, man, youth and child has the human right to education, training and information, and to other fundamental human rights dependent upon realization of the human right to education” (75). In the novel, the Taliban prohibits women from receiving both official and informal education. As a result, they have closed all schools and universities, as well as all educational institutions. Except for the Koran, all books, poetry, paintings, television, the Kabul Museum, and monuments have been destroyed. They leave nothing but a story about how education existed long before their employment. The below quotation expresses the state of education in Afghanistan:

The university was shut down and its students sent home. Paintings were ripped from the walls, shredded with blades. Television screens

were kicked in. Books, except the Koran, were burned in heaps, the stores that sold them closed down. The poems of Khalili . . . more went up in smoke. (Hosseini 273)

From this, it is clearly understood that women in Afghanistan are unable to study anything because they have nothing left. If the girls insist on learning, they must do so privately in their own homes because if the Taliban find out, they will beat them and burn all of their books. Boys, on the other hand, can attend school but only have access to a limited number of books. Furthermore, the Taliban has shut down all universities. According to UDHR, Article 26:

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. (54)

Laila is one of the few Afghan females who attends school and receive a formal education before the Taliban's reign. Laila gets a good grade in school to show that she is working hard to further her education. She is one of the top students in her

class. Even though Tariq is her senior in school, Laila frequently assists Tariq with his math assignments. It demonstrates Laila's great desire to get the highest potential outcomes in her studies.

In the book, *Women Education* by R.C. Mishra says that "Education is everybody's human right. This simple fact is at the core of UNICEF's commitment to girls' education. It means that no girl, however poor, however desperate her country's situation, is to be excluded from school" (11). In the novel Laila is full of excitement about what she intends to do with her studies in the future. It is because of the political situation in the society in which Laila lives, she should forgo her idea. She is no longer able to attend school. Laila quits school because the streets are too dangerous for her.

Likewise, Mariam also always has huge ambitions in life. She is a powerful young woman who aspires to greater things for herself than what she can find inside the confines of her small village. Mariam wants to attend a school like her father's other children. She wishes to attend school and university, just like her other stepsisters and stepbrothers. But she does not have access to a formal education in a school setting. Mariam's mother discourages her from attending school, claiming that the only thing a woman can learn is how to survive. She expresses it to Mullah Faizullah, her teacher. Mariam said that she wants to study at school, "One day, as they were walking, Mariam told him that she wished she would be allowed to go to school. 'I mean a real school, *akhund* sahib. Like in a class-room. Like my father's other kids'" (Hosseini 17). Mariam's speech demonstrates her great desire to receive formal education in school.

Mullah Faizullah, her Koran teacher, hear what Mariam says. Mariam asks him to assist in notifying her mother about her will. Nana, her mother, does not want her

to receive a formal education in school. Nana also discusses what society will think of Mariam because she is a harami child. Nana says that “It’s our lot in life, Mriam. Women like us. We endure. It’s all we have. Do you understand? Besides, they’ll laugh at you in school. They will. They’ll call you *harami* ”” (Hosseini 18). Mariam would be able to learn to read the Koran only with the help of her favourite teacher, Mullah Faizullah.

Maya Angelou in her poem, “Rainbow in the Cloud” says, “Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women” (52). Women are marginalised in every manner possible, including personally, culturally, and economically. Women's opinions about gender discrimination can be changed by education. It is one of the tools used to overcome patriarchy. Mariam and Laila have effectively liberated themselves from patriarchal ideology by fighting prejudice.

Finally, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* depicts the causes that have limited women’s opportunity for a meaningful and realistic life in a patriarchal and imperialistic Afghan society. Women suffer alone in the novel, with no opportunities for education, no fulfillment of dreams, no freedom to speak, lack warmth, and are forced to deny their basic desires. The story accurately represents Afghan women’s life philosophy and identity. What Khaled Hosseini conveys in the novel is crucial not only for Afghan women but also for humanity as a whole. Women in Afghan society are suffering and fighting for their life and the right to exist as women.

CHAPTER IV

Chapter IV

Conclusion

“A right is not what someone gives you; it's what no one can take from you”

-Ramsey Clark

The interminable Afghanistan conflict has given birth to an increasing human rights and humanitarian disaster after the Taliban took control of the country. The Taliban unveiled several policies and regulations targets to restrict human rights for people of lower class, Hazara community and particularly for women.

Hosseini's primary characters represent the essence of ethno centric and gender-based Afghan society who is heart breakingly sensitive to their suffering. Minorities around the world have long struggled for survival. Regardless of what else may be at the root of the difficulties, it is the Hazaras and women who ultimately pay the price. Hosseini has given it personality and rendered it in a sufficiently awe-inspiring style by using the essence of multifold marginalisation. The power brokers - the Taliban, Pashtuns, and Mujahedeen - guide the nation - state for their own gain, leaving Hazaras, women, and children in terrible conditions.

In the novel, *The Kite Runner*, Ali, Hassan and Sohrab suffer as Hazaras. The Hazara people, who are a small minority, suffer inexorably. They are subjected to a number of forms of persecution. When Taliban came to power they are treated so badly and tortured to death. Hassan and his family members suffer throughout the novel. It is because of the ethnic difference that Hassan suffers from his childhood to manhood. This suffering continues through generation, where his son Sohrab faces racism.

In the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Mariam and Laila are female characters who face double oppression when the Taliban developed a rule that

restricted women's freedom of movement and choice. Mariam is a woman who grew up in Herat and then married and moved to Kabul. She has been a victim of gender-based violence, her entire life, from conception to childhood, youth, adulthood, and old age. Her husband, parents, and the government commit various forms of violence against her, including verbal, sexual, and physical violence. Laila, a Kabul resident becomes a victim of violence against women only in her late youth and adulthood. Like Mariam, she is also assaulted by her husband and government verbally, sexually, and physically.

In both the novels, the Afghan people are denied their basic rights. The first human right is that all the people in country should be treated equally in their dignity and rights. But in the novel, *The Kite Runner*, the minority community people Hazaras are discriminated and not treated equally with other people. Likewise in the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Mariam is discriminated and not treated fairly because of being a Harami.

Similarly there is one of the human rights that everyone is treated equally regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status. But in the novels Hazaras are discriminated in the category of ethnicity and women's are discriminated due to gender. The theme of racism and ethnicity is prominent and evident throughout *The Kite Runner*, particularly in the early chapters when Amir and Baba are in Afghanistan, as well as in the chapters dealing with the Taliban's reign in Afghanistan. Throughout the novel, Amir describes the unjust behaviour of Pashtuns, as well as the Taliban's severe and awful activities toward Hazaras, who are killed instantly whenever they come into contact with a Taliban member. As a result, Pashtuns are prominent in the novel, in which the Hazaras look is mocked and they

are mainly positioned as slaves of Pashtuns who are not recognised by the Afghan people. It is because of discrimination that Hassan and his community member denies their rights in every aspects.

Likewise in the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Mariam and Laila are subjected to gender discrimination. They express their fight against gender discrimination in a variety of ways due to their distinct personalities. Gender discrimination impacts them throughout their lives, manifesting it in numerous forms in which men and women have an unequal relationship and women are expected to be subordinate to males. Women are unable to pursue their fundamental rights to education and employment due to gender discrimination.

One of the rights in UDHR states that no one should be tortured or subjected to cruel, barbaric, or degrading treatment or punishment. In both the novels Afghan people face different types of torture. In *The Kite Runner*, the torturer of the Hazara people is Assef. He is a sadist sexual deviant who is also highly racist, is well-suited to the Taliban's views and hence has a top position within the organisation. He also continues to torture and rape Hassan because of the reason that he is Hazara. After Hassan's murder, Assef kidnaps Hassan's son, Sohrab, and keeps him as a sex slave.

In the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Mariam and Laila are subjected to harsh treatment by their husband, Rasheed. Mariam is a devout follower of Rasheed's orders. Rasheed has a tendency of kicking, striking, slapping, and abusing Mariam and Laila in various ways and Laila is frequently the subject of Rasheed's anger. Especially when bad things happen to him, the attacks are so frequent.

The Afghan people are denied their basic human rights of health care by the Taliban. Children in the novel, *The Kite Runner*, suffer immensely and do not have a suitable standard of living. When their parents die, orphanages adopt them, providing

them with little protection. Laila lives under the Taliban control in the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, where women are unable to exercise their rights, even the most basic of rights like healthcare facilities. The Taliban approves a law that segregated hospitals into men and women sections. Women are unable to secure even the most basic healthcare facilities. The Taliban implemented laws and established men and women hospitals.

Like the right to healthcare facilities, Hazara and Women are denied the right to education. In the novel, *The Kite Runner*, the educations of Amir and Hassan are completely different. Prior to the Soviet invasion and the Taliban foundation, the education system was stable and mostly based on religion. The school system has been completely destroyed for everyone since the invasion of the Soviets and Taliban. Basic rights are denied to Hazaras, and many of them, like Hassan and Ali, are illiterate as a result of a lack of education. They have not been educated for the purpose of serving as slaves. They were not allowed to go to school.

The Taliban forbids women from acquiring both formal and informal education in the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. As a result, all schools, universities, and educational institutions have been closed. Laila is excited about what she plans to do with her education in the future. Laila is forced to abandon her plan due to the political context in the society in which she lives. She is unable to attend school any longer. On the other side, Mariam is unable to receive an education. She has never had the opportunity to receive a formal education in a school setting. Mariam's mother prevents her from going to school, stating that all a woman can learn is how to survive.

There is also another human rights which speaks about the right to life, liberty, and personal security. In both the novels, it is apparent that there is no safety and

security for people because of the fighting. Their life in Afghanistan is in a terrible state. It has a significant impact on a large number of people. Women's safety is in a dangerous situation in both the novels. In the novel, *The Kite Runner*, the sniper fires shots the individuals at countries people. To avoid the dangerous streets, people bore holes in their home walls, and they also use underground tunnels on occasion. As a result, the majority of people remain indoors, praying to Allah that the next missile would not strike them. It is evident that people in Afghanistan are not safe.

In the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Women do not have the same level of freedom as men. The Afghan people have no security in the novel since the country is engulfed in a long war that began with the Soviet Union. During the Soviet invasion, there was a jihad against the Soviet regime. Many men were compelled to join jihad, and the vast majority of them died as a result of the war. Thousands of civilians, including women and children, are massacred by the communist regime and Russian supporters during the Soviet struggle. Numerous bombs have also been dropped, destroying people's homes and killing a great number of civilians. Several children have lose their limbs as a result of the explosions.

Thus to conclude, the tragic position of a minor ethnicity and women in Afghanistan is an example of how different people live in developing countries around the world. In the novels, individuals of a majority ethnic people and men are depicted as being culturally legitimise to violate the basic human rights of minority ethnic people and women, either directly or indirectly, as Assef, Rasheed and the Taliban do. Ali, Hassan, and Sohrab are the actual representatives of the Hazara people's identity, and Mariam, Laila are representatives of women which is presented as a mixed and hybrid notion in the novel. Their lives are filled with constant intimidation and humiliation. It is very important to safeguard the human rights as

Former UN Deputy Secretary -General Jan Eliasson says “There can be no peace without development, no development without peace, and no lasting peace or sustainable development without respect for human rights and the rule of law”.

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