

## **I. Political World of *A Thousand Splendid Suns***

This research analyzed Hussein's novel *Thousand Splendid Suns* from the perspective of third world feminism. In the novel Hussein presents women as the source of hope and happiness although there are some legacy of tradition and norms which confined women in a certain boundary. The main focus goes on how and why writer presents Mariam as the source of hope and happiness. Hussein presents the life of educated women of Afghanistan during the time of Afghani civil war when there was banded schooling for women. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the title that comes from a 17th century poem "An ode to the city of Kabul". Hussein tells the story of two girls who grow close as women unlikely friends who are brought together in the chaos of war. The novel opens with the introduction of Mariam, an Afghan girl growing up in a small village on the outskirts of Herat. She lives with her mother, Nana, an embittered woman who is frequently resentful towards her daughter whom she bore out of marriage. Mariam busies herself with lessons in reading and writing from Mullah Faizullah, an elderly kind-hearted cleric, and weekly visits from her wealthy father, Jalil.

Mariam wisely presents herself and encourages everyone to solve the problems which her family has been suffered for a long time. Her overall activities and behavior shows her strength although there is some controversy of presentation which is similar with third world feminism. In third world, particularly in Pakistan and India, women's role has been determined with the necessary of her. In Indian culture most of the time image of women is related with myth of mother goddess although there is no freedom for them to participate in all the social activities. In Hussein's novel female character were affected by same kind of problems. Mariam takes interest in politics as well as education but she was hunted by Taliban law which is confined women inside house. In

this regard, Trembou States, “Afghanistan is a country where women have made significant progress but only compared with a comprehensively oppressive past. There are now about 2 million girls in school, when six years ago only a million children were in school” (23). It shows hardship of women in Afghanistan when Taliban was in rule. At that time women were harshly treated by man and they made girls education as political issues which occasionally appear in third world as political issues which occur in Afghanistan also. The situation is mentions, “Afghanistan is also a nation where girls have had acid thrown in their faces while walking to school and female police officers and public officials have been targeted for assassination” (*Post Reviews*).

Mariam and Laila, Educated women of Afganistan have confined in limited space during the time of Taliban so they involved politics to bring certain changes in their life as well in the nation. Women strike out a strong bond to meet out the exclusive politics in Afghanistan. Giti, Hasina, and Laila form a bond of girlish friendship, but Mariam and Laila form a much more powerful familial bond later in the novel. Nana finds strength from her daughter Mariam, and Mariam finds an admirer when she arrives in a Taliban-controlled prison. The novel thus suggests that women have a strong ability to find strength and support in one another. Mariam never would have gained the strength to fight Rasheed if she had not gained confidence and love from Laila. In this proposed research it will analyze why and how women empower themselves in difficult situation.

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* recounts the experiences and emotions of Afghani women, mainly Mariam and Laila, whose lives become entangled with the history of recent wars in their country. Mostly bleak and heart-rending, their story does offer the promise of hope and happiness in a land ravaged by warfare, gender conflicts, and poverty

In this novel, Hussein tells the stories of Mariam and Laila with unstable political and cultural situation of Afghanistan. Through his story telling, he describes a changing Afghanistan, a country of social, culture and economic diversity, a country that has undergone descriptive political upheaval a country of beauty and history, and a country of dislocation and deprivation. Through Babi, Laila's schoolteacher father, Hussein stands. Babi takes Laila and Tariq to see the two giant Buddhas in Bamiyan. Many readers may be familiar with the story of these ancient structures, but Hussein makes sure that the reader knows that there was a living history associated with this status. They are not mysterious remnants of past like the Sphinx, their purpose and use are known. They represent religious tolerance, hospitality to the stranger, and a place of learning.

The narrative of *A thousand splendid suns* alternates between Mariam's stories. The novel opens with five years old Mariam waiting for her father, Jalil and climaxes with her death. In the opening chapters of the novel, it is introduced to Mariam's family and close neighbours. Mariam seems to be a happy child, eagerly waiting the days of her father's mother. She was working in Jalil's household until she was forced to leave after becoming pregnant with his child. Nana has remained unmarried.

The novel is divided into four parts. The first part focuses exclusively on Mariam, the second and fourth parts focus on Laila, and the third part switches focus between Mariam and Laila with each chapter. Mariam lives in a Kabul on the outskirts of Herat with her mother. Jalil, her father, is a wealthy man who lives in town with three wives and several children. Because Mariam is his illegitimate daughter, she cannot live with them, but Jalil visits her every Thursday. On her fifteenth birthday, Mariam wants her father to take her to see Pinocchio at his movie theater. When he does not show up, she hikes into town and goes to his house. He refuses to see her, and she ends up sleeping on

the porch. In the morning, Mariam returns home to find that her mother has hanged herself out of fear that her daughter has deserted her. Mariam is then taken to live in her father's house. Jalil arranges for her to be married to Rasheed, a shoemaker from Kabul who is thirty years her senior. In Kabul, Mariam becomes pregnant seven successive times, but is never able to carry a child to term, and Rasheed gradually becomes more abusive.

In the same neighborhood, live a girl named Laila and a boy named Tariq, who are close friends, but careful of social boundaries. War comes to Afghanistan, and Kabul is bombarded by rocket attacks. Tariq's family decides to leave the city, and the emotional farewell between Laila and Tariq ends with them making love. Laila's family also decides to leave Kabul, but as they are packing a rocket destroys the house, kills her parents, and severely injures Laila. Laila is taken in by Rasheed and Mariam.

After recovering from her injuries, Laila discovers that she is pregnant with Tariq's child. After being told that Tariq is dead, she agrees to marry Rasheed, who is eager to have a young and attractive second wife, and hopes to have a child with her. When Laila gives birth to a daughter, Aziza, Rasheed is displeased and suspicious, and he soon becomes abusive toward Laila. Mariam and Laila eventually become confidantes and best friends. They plan to run away from Rasheed and leave Kabul, but they are caught at the bus station. Rasheed beats them and deprives them of water for several days, almost killing Aziza. A few years later, Laila gives birth to Zalmai, Rasheed's son. The Taliban has risen to power, and there is a drought, and living conditions in Kabul become poor. Rasheed's workshop burns down, and he is forced to take jobs for which he is ill-suited. Rasheed sends Aziza to an orphanage. Then one day, Tariq appears outside the house. He and Laila are reunited, and their passions flare anew. When Rasheed

returns home from work, Zalmai tells his father about the visitor. Rasheed starts to savagely beat Laila and Mariam kills Rasheed with a shovel. Afterwards, Mariam confesses for killing Rasheed, in order to draw attention away from Laila and Tariq, and is executed, while Laila and Tariq leave for Pakistan with Aziza and Zalmai.

The main objective of this study will analyze the empowering roll of Afghani women who are succeed to create hope and happiness in damage country. Mariam and Laila both women are the representative ideology of the third world feminism because their struggles were different from the struggle of women living in Europe and America. They fight against the ideologies which develop in south Asian socio economic situation. Mainly in Muslim countries, educated women develop their own strategy to reset patriarchy. Mariam struggle with traditional values of society by taking interest in public affairs in opposite Laila got married and produce which also determine her space in her society. There found the controversy or way of resisting patriarchy. One develops mother images and another introduced her as woman of taking interest in her nation and people. Both angles are different from universal feminism which is basically related with the issue of right and liberty. Third world women have different experiences of life which is different from first world women so their demand and necessity also different from the women of first world. In this regard, Spivak states, "Third World" was initially coined in 1955 by those emerging from the old world order the initial attempt in the Bandung Conference (1955). She further clears:

To establish a third way neither with the Eastern nor within the Western block in the world system, in response to the seemingly new world order established after the Second World War, was not accompanied by a commensurate intellectual effort. The only idioms deployed for the

nurturing of this nascent Third World in the cultural field belonged then to positions emerging from resistance within the supposedly old world order anti-imperialism, and/or nationalism. (270)

Women living in different socio economic context have different problems so women living out of Europe and America have different problems and prospects which could not assimilate classical idea of feminism. Mariam and Laila express their experience which reflects the socio economic status of Afghanistan.

During the time of transitional after the fall of the Taliban, Laila and Tariq return to Afghanistan. They stop in the village where Mariam was raised, and discover a package that Mariam's father left behind for her: a videotape of Pinocchio, a small pile of money and a letter. Laila reads the letter and discovers that Jalil regretted sending Mariam away. Laila and Tariq return to Kabul and fix up the orphanage, where Laila starts working as a teacher. Laila is pregnant with her third child, and if it is a girl, it is suggested she will be named Mariam Nana has been forced from her employment in Jailil's household, Jalil provides job for Mariam. He operates the local cinema and it is lure of the cinema that leads to the initial crisis in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. All Mariam wants for her birthday is to go to the cinema which her father; he is unwilling to be seen with her birthday a promise he does not keep. Mariam is strong willed, and when Jalil does not appear, she goes against her mother's wishes and walked and when Jailil does not appear, she goes against her mother wishes and walks in to heart to find him.

Although she is Hussein's pandering to the Western audience and his reinforcement of many stereotypes about Muslims betrays the brave Afghani people, many of whom I reckon are everyday "normal" human beings. He also talks about the longing of Laila's father to perhaps come to America. There is nothing in the story that refers to the many

civilians killed in American bombings. So, where is the balance? Also, the betrayal of Mariam and Laila by a trustworthy-looking Afghani for money does not represent the nature of Afghans who will give up their lives for loyalty and honesty. In this regard, Sheila argues:

I don't doubt that many Rasheeds and Jalils existed and still exist in Afghanistan... but there are an equivalent number of Joes and Mikes in the Western societies who beat up their wives and/or have mistresses. However, when you are as famous as Hussein, then it becomes ever so important to portray a balance, so that people who have never read anything else about Muslims don't come off saying, "well Hussein is a Muslim and he said so and so about other Muslims [...] so this must be the way typical Muslim society works. (35)

In the foundation of Islamic law and tradition educated women of Afghanistan perform their role very sensitively and proved them as the source of hope and happiness. Laila change herself as source of happiness because she is succeeding to bring happiness in the family. In the same way Mariam presents herself as the women who bring hope among women. She commits to bring certain changes in her life as well as in the nation. She resists Taliban rule and share the torture of time.

Different critics and writers argues on the novel in this regard, Siegel, Tatiana writes that "*A Thousand Splendid Suns* a little too melodramatic and sentimental for their tastes"(21). Plot of the novel seems as melodramatic which reflect the scene of Afghanistan since ancient to modern the land was famous for freedom, harmony. The narratives are concentrated on the war and destruction which had happened in the name of culture and nationalism. Narrative encircled on the cynical history of Afghanistan. In

this context , she further says “These reviewers started cynical but were entirely won over by the end starting the book in the evening and waking up before dawn to finish it, reading by fading flashlight as the sun rose and the pages blurred through the tear” (21). Whole stories have been concerns on visit and revisit of the Afghanistan which has been related with the issue of women and their role in public and private space. It presents extra ordinary scenario of Afghanistan where the situation of women determined by socio political events of the society. Stella Algoo Baksh one of them describes *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as a haunting and quite extraordinary first novel by Khaled Hussein, an Afghan medical doctor now residing in the United States. According to Baksh, the novel:

Launches readers into the realities of Afghan society, using the political events of Afghanistan from the 1960s to 2003 to foreground a touching and memorable story of the friendship women of differing social class and ethnic backgrounds. It foregrounds the complexity although it help explore the self. (143)

The role of women has been determined by various factors although they are inferior to men. Mariam and Laila role in this society is different from the idea of Manu. Hussein presents the situations of women on which are rigid although women play vital role to resist patriarchy which is different from western style of resistance. Mariam and Laila crates hope and happiness family resisting patriarchy Grossman, Lev:

Characters express their individual hopes. For instance, when Mariam asks Mullah Faizullah if she may attend school, her journey of hope begins. For Laila, hope lies in Tariq and an attempted escape from Rasheed. Most characters walk into such events with high levels of hope for the future,



but once reality sets in, a character's hope is crushed. Not only do these waves of hope provide the reader with suspense and emotional attachment to the characters, but this cycle appears to reflect the cycles of hope and dashed dreams that Afghani women suffer, time and time again. The personal stories of hope, moreover, are mirrored in the political hope of the Afghan citizens. With every new ruler, people express their convictions that finally. (11)

Lev discusses on the issue of Afghani political movement which develop on the hope of path but end in the same line which has been repeated since long time. The family relationship of Laila has been compared with rigidity which similar with the idea of Manu. In this regard, Nanavutty writes, "The relegation of women to a subordinate role came much later with the formulation of the 'Laws of Manu' (Baig 135). Indian sub-tenant is influenced by the idea of Manu which has been reflected by the nature of Rasheed who is an ugly, cruel man. He punished Laila . He tries to break her spirit with his abuse and was forced to wear a burqa against her wishes. Laila is an attractive girl who lives just up the street. She was born to educated, liberal parents and enjoyed the freedoms but Mariam was restricted from women's rights and liberty.

Third World is not only designated specific geographical areas, but imaginary spaces. According to Sangari, "Third World is a term that both signifies and blurs the functioning of an economic, political, and imaginary geography able to unite vast and vastly differentiated areas of the world into a single 'underdeveloped' terrain" (217). Sangari is critical of the way third World is used by the West to indiscriminately lump together vastly different places. Feminism appears in third world with different form

although some critics take it as geography. Yardley, Jonathan analyzes the geographical references of the novel and its impact on characterization. In this regard, he argues:

Many characters express their feeling of connection to the geographical place that is Afghanistan. Hakim quotes poetry. Fariba does not want to leave the land for which her sons have died. Despite the escalation of war in Afghanistan, many characters refuse to leave due to their connection to the physical country as their home. Other characters return to Afghanistan after the dangers of war have subsided. Laila feels an urge to return to Kabul and contribute to the restoration effort. (43)

Relation between male and female determine with certain legacy of the society as well as demand of time. In this novel, Hussein fictionalizes the historical events and search female role in this event. Simply it seems records of violence against women. In this regard, Amnesty report states:

Women suffered violence not only from the Taliban forces, but from their biological relatives and their husbands. This violence was only reinforced by the powers in authority. Often militia forces would contribute to the violence. "In some instances, female members of the family have a role in upholding patriarchal structures, and may also commit violence. (Amnesty

Record highlights the worst situation of women in Afghanistan during the time of different war occurred in Afghanistan. If they failed to provide this testimony, they faced flogging or even stoning in the case of adultery the fall of the Taliban brought hope to many in Afghanistan that the situation would improve for women. However, violent acts toward women have perpetuated in Afghanistan even after the Taliban's reign had ended. Hussein's narratives capture all these events and fictionalize this event from the

prospective of family relationship of the women. In this regard, Ellis argues, “ The war and the chaos that comes with it has crippled the health care delivery system[...] women who are trained and could be of use largely forced to remain at home. Although some women are permitted to provide health care for other women” (45). Situation of women in Afghanistan has been presented in different perspective during the time of Taliban ruled which this novel tries to fictionalize the events from the prospective of women.

## II. *A Thousand Splendid Sun* as a Feminist Text

This research explores the issue of Afghani women and the process of empowerment in the surrounding of Muslim environment. Hussein presents the life of educated women of Afghanistan during the time of Afghani civil war when there was banned schooling for women. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the title that comes from a 17th-century poem "An ode to the city of Kabul", Hussein tells the story of two girls who grow close as women unlikely friends who are brought together in the chaos of war. The novel opens with the introduction of Mariam, an Afghan girl growing up in a small village on the outskirts of Herat. She lives with her mother, Nana, an embittered woman who is frequently resentful towards her daughter whom she bore out of marriage. Mariam busies herself with lessons in reading and writing from Mullah Faizullah, an elderly kind-hearted cleric, and weekly visits from her wealthy father, Jalil. The issue which writer tries to raise is based on the concept of third world feminism which Mariam and her friend tried to follow in their life. Women living in third world face many problems which is different from the issues which western European and American white middle class issues. So Hussein interpret the history of Afghanistan and makes link up with basic assumption of third world feminism. In this study it analyzed how Hussein present the life of third world women in his novel *Thousand Splendid Suns*. Diane Brydon clears the idea of third world feminism, "Now that the marginal is being revalued as the new voice of authority in discourse, it is tempting to accept the imperial definition of the colonized as marginal" (23). The problems faced by third world women mainly in Muslim countries and resisting way of these women is different which develop the new dimension of feminism, based on multiple culture, rituals ethnicities etc.

Women strike out a strong bond to meet out the exclusive politics in Afghanistan. Giti, Hasina, and Laila form a bond of girlish friendship, but Mariam and Laila form a much more powerful familial bond later in the novel. Nana finds strength from her daughter Mariam, and Mariam finds an admirer when she arrives in a Taliban-controlled prison. The novel thus suggests that women have a strong ability to find strength and support in one another. Mariam never would have gained the strength to fight Rasheed if she had not gained confidence and love from Laila. In this proposed research it will analyze why and how women empower themselves in difficult situation.

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She said she wouldn't live in her father's empty house either, in the village of Gul Daman, which sat on a steep hill two kilometers north of heart. She said she wanted to live somewhere removed, detached, where neighbors wouldn't stare at her belly point at her, snicker, or worse ye assault her with insincere kindnesses. (9)

Women living in Afghanistan during the time of Civil war were not so passive like traditional Muslim women they resist patriarchal hegemony and struggle for social security as well as individual freedom. Many critics and writers have been written about different aspect of the novel, Siegel, Tatiana writes that "*A Thousand Splendid Suns* a little too melodramatic and sentimental for their tastes"(21). She further says "These reviewers started cynical but were entirely won over by the end - starting the

book in the evening and waking up before dawn to finish it, reading by fading flashlight as the sun rose and the pages blurred through the tear” (21). Contemporary socio political situation develop the consciousness among Afghani women which compelled them to resist Muslim patriarchy.

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But more than a touching and memorable story of friendship, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is a story of hope and happiness of the friends which bond of different characters. Mariam’s bitter experiences of life enforced her to do something for her, in this regard she asserts “Suspended in the air, Marim would see Jalil’s upturned face below her, her wide, crooked smile, his window’s peak, his cleft chin a perfect pocket for the tip of her pinkie his teeth, the whitest in a town of rotting”(21). Mariam is aware of the situation and mentally prepared for out coming result which creates individual hope on her. In this regard, Grossman, Lev asserts:

Characters express their individual hopes. For instance, when Mariam asks Mullah Faizullah if she may attend school, her journey of hope begins. For Laila, hope lies in Tariq and an attempted escape from Rasheed. Most characters walk into such events with high levels of hope for the future,

but once reality sets in, a character's hope is crushed. Not only do these waves of hope provide the reader with suspense and emotional attachment to the characters, but this cycle appears to reflect the cycles of hope and dashed dreams that Afghan women suffer, time and time again. The personal stories of hope, moreover, are mirrored in the political hope of the Afghan citizens. With every new ruler, people express their convictions that finally. (11)

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Yardley, Jonathan analyzes the geographical references of the novel and its impact on characterization. In Kabul, Mariam begins adjusting to her new life as the wife of a man she barely knows. Mariam soon becomes pregnant, and Rasheed, having lost his own son in a drowning accident years earlier, hopes for a boy. When Mariam suffers a miscarriage, her marriage takes a turn for the worse; Rasheed is no longer cordial to her, but verbally and physically abuses her. Certain hope and desire lead her on this situation. In this regard, he argues:

Many characters express their feeling of connection to the geographical place that is Afghanistan. Hakim quotes poetry. Fariba does not want to leave the land for which her sons have died. Despite the escalation of war in Afghanistan, many characters refuse to leave due to their connection to the physical country as their home. Other characters return to Afghanistan after the dangers of war have subsided. Laila feels an urge to return to Kabul and contribute to the restoration effort. (43)

Certain degree of Afghani concept has been reflected in above line which is always against women and their personal freedom. Miscarriage is unimplemented policy of the nation which aborts due to the different event and consequences like Mariam situation of miscarriage.

At first she did not know anything about the circumstance after that she acquired certain knowledge about socio- political situation of the country. In Muslim tradition women were not allowed to come from home. She resists patriarchal hegemonic situation of Muslim culture. In this regard, she states, “The time Marin did not understand. She did not know what this word Husseini bustard meant. Nor was she old enough to appreciate the injustice to see that it is the creators of Husseini who are culpable, not the Harami, whose only sin is being born”(4). Mariam is suppressed by male dominated culture which she resists by using new concept of thought which is much related with third world feminism. Third world feminism is guided by certain socio economic factors which is different from western feminism.

On her fifteenth birthday in 1974, Mariam wants her father to take her to see Pinocchio at the movie theatre that he owns. When Jalil fails to show up, Mariam decides to travel to Herat for the first time in her life and go to her father's house in person. Jalil refuses to see her, and she ends up sleeping outdoors on the porch. In the morning, Mariam returns home to find that her mother has hanged herself out of fear that her daughter has deserted her. Mariam is taken to live in her father's house, where she feels isolated and spends most of her time alone in her room. Jalil and his wives quickly arrange for her to be married to an older widower named Rasheed, who is a middle-class shoemaker in Kabul. In this regard, She says, “Nana had Almost married once, when she fifteen. The suitor had been a boy from Shind and, young parakeet seller. Mariam knew



the story from nana herself, and though Nanadis missed the episode, Mariam could tell by the wistful light in her eyes that she had been happy (9). Mariam fight for her personal freedom and tries to establish self image in changing socio political scenario of the Afghanistan. In Kabul, Mariam begins adjusting to her new life as the wife of a man she barely knows. Mariam soon becomes pregnant, and Rasheed, having lost his own son in a drowning accident years earlier, hopes for a boy. When Mariam suffers a miscarriage, her marriage takes a turn for the worse; Rasheed is no longer cordial to her, but verbally and physically abuses her. In this regard, it is relevant to quote the following lines:

But after four years marriage, Mariam saw clearly how much a woman could tolerate when she was afraid. And Mariam was afraid. She lived in fear of his shifting moods, his volatile treatment, his insistence on steering even mundane exchanges down a confrontational path that on occasion, he would resolve with punches, slaps, kicks and sometimes try to make amends for with polluted apologies and sometimes not. (98)

Mariam resists traditional Islamic concept of marriage and family which is almost similar with the concept of Indian feminism. There are, however, a large number of passages in Sanskrit literature, both religious and secular, which are of an opposite nature and cast serious reflections upon women's role and their character. Of course, the ancient law-giver, Manu had chanced upon a strong sentence on the woman's dilemma. Pilo Nanavutty writes, "The relegation of women to a subordinate role came much later with the formulation of the 'Laws of Manu'" (Baig, 135). According to Manu, woman was created for the propagation of the species and to minister to man's wants. She had no existence outside of man. When married, her husband was her god, and she yielded to his every wish. Hers was the passive role, her greatest virtue the worshipful adoration

she accorded her husband. Rey E. Baber observes Manu's views thus: "There is no other god on earth for a woman than her husband. The most excellent of all the good works that she can do is to seek to please him by manifesting perfect obedience to him. There should lie in her sole rule of life" (76). Noteworthy is the use of word 'god' to refer to the husband. A woman's husband is her lord, and it is her religious duty to see that he is happy and comfortable by yielding to every wish of his.

The very concept of patriarchal ideology practices in Muslim communities which Mariam denies to follow and resists this very ideology. In this regard, he asserts, "He helped Mariam watch over the girl that first week. One day, he came home from work with a new blanket and pillow. Another day, a bottle of pills"(194). Contradictory nature of south Asian feminism has reflected through the foregrounding of Taliban movement. These line further clears, "Sometimes he talked too. Half the time, I couldn't make out what he was saying, but I caught enough. He described where he'd lived. He talked about his uncle in Ghazni. And his mother's cooking and his father's carpenter, him playing the accordion"(202). After the fall of Taliban new socio-cultural background establish in Kabul which redefines the gender relationship. In this regard, Mariam asserts, "She knew that what she was doing was dishonorable. Dishonorable, disingenuous and shameful and spectacularly unfair to Mariam. But even though the baby inside her was no bigger than a mulberry, Laila already saw the sacrifices a mother had to ask. Virtue was only the first" (213). Certain dishonorable condition has been developed in Afghanistan which is different from western feminism. Western feminism provoked certain feature which developed individualistic concept of life. This paradigm could not properly work in the ground of socio economic background. Western feminism evokes the images of women in patriarchy are fraught with contradiction: woman is sublime, perfect, and

beautiful; she is awful, stupid, and contemptible. Beauvoir discloses the ambivalence of man's nature towards woman as he calls woman a Muse or Goddess on the one hand while he associates her with demon, death, cruel stepmother or the other. Woman is the mother of God as well as Traitor of the Garden. As Sheila Ruth claims, "This bifurcation of images is called the Mary/Eve dichotomy: Woman is represented as being at once a manifestation of the divine and an incarnation of evil" (87). Role of Mariam is not similar with the concept of western feminism. She performs her role in her society which is not clear with western feminism although she resists the tradition paradigm.

In the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* there is chronological description of the war of Afghanistan which brings certain changes in the life. In this regard, she asserts, "The night, all during the meal, Laila watched Mariam push a cube of meat around her plate. Laila was there when Rasheed sprang the news on Mariam in a high dramatic voice Laila had never before witnessed such cheerful cruelty. Mariam's lashes before witnessed such cheerful cruelty." (234)

Laila performs her role which is different from the traditional Muslim women. Although she could not totally follow the norms of western tradition. She lives in down street the beautiful, bright young daughter of ethnic Tajik parents - a progressive-minded high school teacher and a mother who mourns the loss of her two sons, who were mujahideen fighting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. In this regard she says, "This was Laila's first time out of the house in weeks discounting the short trip to the pawnshop the day before where she had pushed her wedding ring across a glass counter, where she'd walked out thrilled by the finality of it knowing there was no going back" (252). During the time of Soviet attack many Afghani women fight for cultural identity and defeat the communist from Kabul when Tajik lost his two sons although it would not

bring certain change in the life of people. The women were in the same position. The situation is described in this way, “You do realize, Hamshira, that it is a crime for a woman to run away. We see a lot of it. Women travelling alone, claiming their husbands have died. Sometimes they’re telling the truth, most times not. You can be improved for running away, I assume you understand that?”(259). Laila has a subtle romance with Tariq, a boy from the neighborhood who lost a leg as a small child to a land mine explosion. War comes to Afghanistan, and Kabul is bombarded by rocket attacks. Tariq's family decides to leave the city. The emotional farewell between Laila and Tariq culminates in a clandestine tryst on the living room sofa. Laila's family also decides to leave Kabul, but as they are packing, a rocket destroys the house and kills her parents. In this regard, she says:

Some nights, Mariam overheard them arguing. She tiptoed to their door, listened to him complained about the baby always the baby the insistent crying, the smells, the toys that made him trip, the way the baby had hijacked Lalila’s attentions from him with constants demands to be fed burped, changed, walked held. (231)

The woman is defined primarily in relation to her husband and her household, and her interest and active participation in domestic matter is expected.

In this novel, there is certain tension between traditional and modern concept which hunts Afghani women during the time of Taliban period. Taliban force them to follow the traditional Muslim patriarchy. However, after the Civil War when the Taliban came to power in 1996, they instituted a system of gender apartheid which put women in a state of constant house arrest unless accompanied by a male relative. Women's progress in education and employment was crushed with the harsh laws imposed by the Taliban.

"Under Taliban rule women have been stripped of their visibility, voice, and mobility" (34). In addition to restricting the advancement of women, the Taliban enforced laws that any windows of a woman's house that were visible to the public must be painted black. Women could not leave the house without a burqa, which covered their bodies entirely, leaving only one mesh area in order to allow the woman to see (PBS). Women's health care was also put into jeopardy during the Taliban's reign, as women were prohibited from seeing male physicians. Yet, the majority of female doctors were prohibited from going to work, except for a select few who were stationed in women only wards (Feminist Majority Foundation).

Additionally, women were no longer in control of their life decisions. The Taliban encouraged girls under the age of 16 to enter into marriage. "Amnesty International reported that 80 percent of Afghan marriages were considered to be by force" (20). The Taliban appointed a violent religious police force, who often would beat women who violated the Taliban code which regulated the behavior of women. Some of the violations which warranted a beating included a woman exposing her ankles, laughing too loud, wearing shoes that made noise when walking, and/or wearing the wrong type of Burqa. No due process was followed when these violations were punished, and the beating often occurred on site as soon as the police officer recognized the violation. In this regard, amnesty report asserts:

Women suffered violence not only from the Taliban forces, but from their biological relatives and their husbands. This violence was only reinforced by the powers in authority. Often militia forces would contribute to the violence. In some instances, female members of the family have a role in upholding patriarchal structures, and may also commit violence. (23)

When alleging rape, women found it extremely difficult to convict a suspect. As a plaintiff, a woman had to find four male witnesses to provide testimony corroborating the story of the woman. If they failed to provide this testimony, they faced flogging or even stoning in the case of adultery. In this regard, Mariam states:

Mariam had the impression that the baby too was examining her. She was lying on her back, her head tilted sideways, looking at Mariam intently with a mixture wondered if her face might frighten her, but then the baby squealed happily and Mariam knew that a favorable judgment had been passed on her behalf. (237)

Mariam expresses her attitude on family and marriage which is wonderful and unique in itself although she might frighten with fundamentalist. Her wonderful face seemed horrified because of the pressure of ongoing Taliban government. In this context, she asserts, "The boys sat the stream and waited as Mariam and Nana transferred the rations to the Kabul. They knew better than to get any closer than thirty yards, even though Nana's aim was poor and most of the rocks landed well short of their targets"(14). Most of the time, she wandered in to the land where political movement is going on that effect on the life and perception of women living in Afghanistan.

The perception of third world feminism is guided by the certain principle of myth which is guided by religious scripture. Hindu scripture guided by women and their space which is similar with Muslim Feminism. Perception of Hindu feminism is mentioned in this way,

Manu would not allow woman to be independent in any state. Ranjana Kumari quotes Manu to show his views towards woman as: "In childhood a female must be subject to her father; in youth to her husband, and when

her lord is dead to her sons. A woman must never be independent"

(Chatterji 8).

The dependence of women on man is total and absolute, and if they dare break through these bonds of control, they are severely punished. Manu even allows man the liberty of beating his wife if she dares disobey him. Manu advances the extreme views that the wife's marital tie and duty do not come to an end even if the husband were to sell or abandon her. The same idea is reiterated in *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*. In a woman's case, her traditional task is strictly to help a man accomplish his duties. So while his emphasis is on spiritual life, to a woman her husband is her lord. Manu's diction can be seen as prevailing in many quarters even today, and women are seen as helpless non-choosers.

In a certain geopolitical circumstance third world female resists patriarchy and searches for a self image in a certain geography which reflects on the life of Laila and Mariam. After recovering from her injuries, including a slight deafness in one ear, Laila discovers she is pregnant with Tariq's child. To avoid the stigma of being an unwed mother, Laila arranges to marry Rasheed, who is only too eager to have a young and attractive second wife, and immediately consummates the marriage in hopes that she can pass the child off as his. A man stops by the house to tell Laila that he met Tariq at a hospital, and that Tariq was now dead. In this regard, she argues,

Nana made no secret of her dislike for visitors and, in fact people in general but she made expectations for a select few. And so there was Gul Daman's leader, the village Arab, Habib Khan, a small-headed, bearded man with a large belly who came by once a month or so, tailed by a

servant, who carried a chicken, sometimes a pot of Kichari rice, or a basket of daybed egged, foramina.(5)

Habib Khan and other male character presented in this novella as controversial and weak character that has not succeed traditional patriarchy as well as masculinity. They could not be clear about their situation because multiple forces affected their life which she describes, “Laila gives birth to Aziza, a daughter. Rasheed is unhappy and suspicious, and he becomes more abusive” (24).

Certain changes have been brings in socio political environment of Afghanistan. Changes have been made to increase the rights of women in Kabul, but the rest of Afghanistan has not seen much change in the way of women's rights. Fawzia Aminiy, head of department for legal affairs at Afghanistan’s Ministry of Women’s Affairs, is working towards an ambitious Millennium Development Goal on gender equality by 2020. However, she remarks that a 50-year plan would be far more realistic. In this context Mariam states, “Mariam could hardly believe that she was here. Her heart was battering with excitement. She wished Mullah Faizullah could see her now. How daring he would find her. How brave! She gave herself over to the new life that waited her in this city” (30). Mariam expresses her female identity among her friends and relatives. Empowerment has been reflected through the issues of human right and it was became one of the agenda of development.

Most of the time third world feminism has interrelated with agenda of human right and sustainable development. Husseini presents this issue in this novel through the narratives of two women who have experiences of war, destruction as well as of the violation of the human rights.



Overall circumstances has been describes through the perspective of adult women and their persona carried out certain element of south Asian feminism , mainly Muslim feminism. In this context Mariam speaks, “Two days before when Mariam could think of nothing in the world she wanted more than to walk in this garden with Jalil felt like another lifetime. How could her life have turned upside down so quickly, Mariam asked herself?” (38). When her father was in jail Mariam bold faced the problems and identified her as protest woman.

In the novel, *A thousand Splendid Suns* there found urged which is related with freedom and progress. These are only possible if female had got equal right with man, “Two days before when Mariam could think of nothing in the world she wanted more than to walk in this garden with Jalil felt like another lifetime. How could her life have turned upside down so quickly, Mariam asked herself?” (38). Mariam easily solved her problems and established her as the bold women. For that she could not think any more about traditional patriarchal hegemony. During the time of civil war of 1980 certain environment creates in Afghanistan which Husseini clearly fictionalized in this novel. The town is known for its artists, especially its poets. Mariam, one of the main characters, lives in a small house with her mother. Jalil, Mariam’s father, lives in a large house inside the town limits. When Mariam marries, the setting changes to Kabul, the largest city of Afghanistan and its capital. Here live various types of people, ranging from the most modern who are highly influenced by the West to the most traditional.

There have been three major waves of Muslim feminist expression--first wave is an expression gender consciousness individual feminist writings, second wave is everyday activism including individual innovations in daily life, and third wave is an

organized movement activism, which is highly visible and more confrontation. In the novel, Husseini tries to address these three phases. In this regard, she asserts:

The women in this part of Kabul were a different breed from the women in the poorer neighborhoods like the one where she and Rasheed lived, where so many of the women covered fully. These women were so many of the women covered fully. These women were what was the word Rasheed had used? “Modern” Yes, modern Afghan women married to modern Afghan men who did not mind that their wives walked among strangers with makeup on their faces and nothing on their heads. Mariam watched them cantering uninhibited down the street.(74)

Afghanistan is a patriarchal society where it is commonly believed that men are entitled to make decisions for women. These decisions primarily include engagement and marriage. Arranged marriages are common for women in Afghanistan and they are done mostly for political and economic reasons. A girl’s father has the ultimate authority over who he believes his daughter should marry.

It is not uncommon for girls to be engaged even before they are born. Girls are often married off at a very young age to wealthy men who are much older than themselves. Some reports even indicate that in the rural Afghanistan, the areas that are most struck by poverty, families sell their daughters too much older men in exchange for food. The two families must sign an engagement contract that both parties are socially and culturally obligated to honor. After this contract is signed, the bride is forbidden to marry another man. If the bride dies before the marriage, her family is required to give her sister as a bride or find another desirable replacement. It is common among low income families in most areas of the country for the groom to pay a dowry to the bride's

family. The price is negotiated among the heads of the family. The bride is not included in the negotiation process. The bride price is viewed as compensation for the money that the bride's family had to spend on her care and upbringing. There have been many instances where a family is so stricken by poverty that a father will betroth his daughters to multiple men and collect the dowry from each of them. Cases like these all went to court and more often than not they ended up in violence. Girls are sometimes also bartered in a traditional method of dispute resolution called Baad that proponents say helps avoid violence between families, although the girls themselves are often subject to considerable violence both before and after marrying into a family through Baad.

Once a girl is married she becomes the property of her new family and continues to have little to no control over her situation. When it comes to family, the girl's mother-in-law and her husband have the most control. It is the mother-in-law. During the wars of the 1980's and 1990's, a rocket destroyed Laila's home with her parents in it. This tragedy and an unexpected pregnancy forces Laila to become Rasheed's second wife. After an initial rivalry, Mariam and Laila become best friends. In this context, she states, "You're afraid, Nana, she might have said. You're afraid that I might find the happiness you never had. And you don't want me to be happy. You don't want a good life for me. You're the one with the wretch heart" (28). Situation made her much horrified although she resists the traditional values of society. Mariam help her and urged not to be horrified on that situation, "Suspended in the air, Mariam would see Jalil's upturned face below her, her wide, crooked smile, his window's peak, his cleft chin a perfect pocket for the tip of her pinkie his teeth, the whitest in a town of rotting"(21). Hardship of life enforces her to be bold and struggle for basic human right. Jalil Khan, one of the characters of the novel helps her and shows liberalism toward role of the female. Mariam introduce him in this way:

“I’m Jail Khan’s Chauffeur, “he said, not unkindly.

His what?”

“His driver. Jail Khan is not here.”

I see his car,” Mariam said.

He is away on urgent business.”

When will he be back?”

He didn’t say” (32).

The curiosity new man and asking various question is challenging task for Muslim which had happened in the life of Mariam. It clears the freedom of love and loyalty of stranger which is one of the significant markers of women liberalization in Afghanistan. Educated women of Afghanistan resist Muslim diehard situation of women. In this context, she states, “She climbed the stairs, and though she could spot Jalil out of the corner of her eye walking parallel to look out the window. She made her way down the aisle to the back; here Rasheed sat with her suitcase between his feet” (55). Love relationship between Rasheed and Mariam shows the certain degrees of freedom which follow the certain degree of freedom of women. Marians describes the situation in this way, “One night, they were sitting in the living room listening to the radio. Wither was passing. The stiff winds that plastered snow onto the face and made the eyes water had calmed. Silvery fluffs of snow were melting off the branches of tall elms and would be replaced in a few weeks” (93). Using western material and studying in western school bring new wave of thought in Afghani although their situation is in confusion which one of the main feature of third world feminism. In this regard Mariam argues:

Mariam regretted her foolish youthful pride now, she wishes now that she had let him in. What would have been the harm to let him in, sit with him,

let him say what he'd come to say? He was her father. He'd not been a good father, it was true, but how ordinary his faults seemed now. (302)

Mariam feel pride on her youth and beauty which is not match with her socio political understandings. She could not think her situation and foolishly participated fault activities. She further asserts her idea; something tells me you are not wicked women, hamshira. But you have done a wicked thing. And you must pay for this you have done. Sharia is not vague on this matter. It says I must send you where I will soon join you myself" (357). The vague matter creates problems on the life of third world women which is interred connected with socio political foregrounding. Mariam and her friends challenged the Sharia law and established new concept of thought among educated Muslim women, "She was dimly aware, too, of Mariam, a presence beyond the face, of her first straining down. Above them was the ceiling, and it was the ceiling Laila was down to, the dark marketing of mold spreading across it like ink on a dress"(342). Educated Muslim women threaten the veil wearing tradition and bring new concept in wearing which mostly found in third world women. Laila express her idea and make the clears, "for me, it ends here. There's nothing more I want everything I'd ever waded for a little girls you've already given me. You and your children have made me so very happy. It's all right, Laila jo. That is all right. Don't be sad" (350). The issue of human right and women right is one of the major issues of Afghani political movement which Marian and Laila reflect in their conversation and monologue. In this regard, she says, "Some nights, Laila awakens finds on the edge of their bed, rocking, his undershirt pulled over his head. The headaches began in Nasir Bagh, he says then worsened in prison matter of unmarried couple living his hotel sryeed is not at all as Laila had pictured in ruddy faced and pea

eyed”(365). Laila expresses her idea on the subject which is much related with third world feminism. In this regard, Foley, Milton states on third world feminism:

Asia is the birthplace of all major religions in the world. Living in this enchanting world of gods and goddesses, Asian women theologians recognize the need to address the issues of religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue. We can only speak about our Christian identity in relation to, and not in spite of, these indigenous traditions of our motherland. We are happy to know that these are not just our parochial issues, for many leading theologians in the West, including some feminist theologians, have recognized religious pluralism as a crucial theological issue. (20)

Most of the time third world feminism appears with the certain nexus of religions. Religion based ideology control over women although Marriam and her formed beak in this novel.

In the novel there is some symptom of suppression of educated woman because of certain assumption of love and marriage as well as hegemony of patriarchy. In this regard Mariam asserts, “That day, a thick, suffocating heat fell on them. The room turned into a pressure cooker Laila dragged a dry tongue over her lips, thinking of the well outside, the water cold and fresh”(263). Although her father feel prove when she was born, “My father, may he rest in peace, was so very fond of her,” he say at last. He was the one who sang asinine her ear when she was born” (386). Her father fights for the freedom and liberty so he was not barrier to her but whole society and traditional value create problems in their life. Due to political changed they get certain write in certain foregrounding, “Note of women I Mariam’s cell were serving time for violence crime

they were all there for the common offense of running away from home.” As a result, Miriam gained some notoriety then, became a kind of celebrate” (344). Her political upliftment creates certain problems in traditional society which made her victim of ongoing Taliban culture. She was in suffocating in the situation. In this regard, she says, that day, a thick, suffocating heat fell on them. The room turned into a pressure cooker Laila dragged a dry tongue over her lips, thinking of the well outside, the water cold and fresh”(263). Muslim culture again tries to collapse the freedom and threaten her. In this regard, she says “She heads toward the mountains, toward the weeping willows, which she can see now, the long drooping branches shaking with each gust of wind. In her chest, her heart is drumming” (387).

In short, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* there is certain hope and recreation of freedom and equality. Hussein artistically presents the scenario of Afghanistan and the situation of educated women. In this regard, she says, “*A Thousand Splendid Suns* is very dear to me. It has been a labor of love and I hope that it doesn’t sound too pretentious if I say that I think of it as my modest tribute to the great courage” (412). While Mariam involved in politics her family and friends criticize her although she creates hope among her friends and family. In the same way Laila performances duties as traditional women although she resists strong male dominated patriarchy. So Hussein fictionalize the history of Afghanistan and search the space of women by using narratives. Narratives is used to resist patriarchy which is related with third world feminism because third world feminism focuses on the narratives of women and recreates the space of women. Same thing happen in this novel and presents women as the source of hope and happiness.

### III. Conclusion

In the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, *Husseini* fictionalizes historical events of Afghanistan and presents this event from the prospective of women. An overall story of the novel touches the issue of third world feminism which reflects the role of women in different socio political and cultural platform. Mariam and Laila two educated women resist male dominated Afghan culture and succeed to present themselves as source of hope and happiness.

The narratives of the novel are related with Mariam and Laila's stories which reflect history of Afghanistan. Two educated women share the experiences with her friends and families member. Mariam wisely presents herself and encourage everyone to solve the problems which her family have been facing long time. Her overall activities and behavior shows her strength although there is some controversy of presentation which is similar with third world feminism. In third world, particular Pakistan and India women role has been determine with the necessary of her. In Indian culture most of the time image of women relate with myth of mother goddess although there is no freedom for them to participate all the social activities. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* recounts the experiences and emotions of Afghani women, mainly Mariam and Laila, whose lives become entangled with the history of recent wars in their country. Mostly bleak and heart-rending, their story does offer the promise of hope and happiness in a land ravaged by warfare, gender conflicts, and poverty.

Mariam lives in a Kabul on the outskirts of Herat with her mother. Jalil, her father, is a wealthy man who lives in town with three wives and several children. Because Mariam is his illegitimate daughter, she cannot live with them, but Jalil visits her every Thursday. On her fifteenth birthday, Mariam wants her father to take her to see Pinocchio



at his movie theater. When he does not show up, she hikes into town and goes to his house. He refuses to see her, and she ends up sleeping on the porch. In the morning, Mariam returns home to find that her mother has hanged herself out of fear that her daughter has deserted her. Mariam is then taken to live in her father's house. Jalil arranges for her to be married to Rasheed, a shoemaker from Kabul who is thirty years her senior. In Kabul, Mariam becomes pregnant seven successive times, but is never able to carry a child to term, and Rasheed gradually becomes more abusive.

The issues which writer ties to raises are based on the concept of third world feminism which Mariam and her friend tried to follow in their life. Women living in third world face many problems which is different from the issues which western European and American white middle class issues. So Hussein interpret the history of Afghanistan and makes link up with basic assumption of third world feminism. In this study it analyzed how Hussein present the life of third women in his novel *Thousand Splendid Suns*. Diane Brydon clears the idea of third world feminism, "Now that the marginal is being revalued as the new voice of authority in discourse, it is tempting to accept the imperial definition of the colonized as marginal" (23).

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* recounts the experiences and emotions of Afghani women, mainly Mariam and Laila, whose life become entangled with the history of recent wars in their country. Once women decided to throw themselves wholeheartedly into the fight for political independence, their success in other fields was assured. Hussein presents the struggle of third world women which is different from western feminism although it is powerful to resist male domination. Third world feminism is related with a new dimension of resisting of male ideology take new account with unique experiences of women from third world countries.

In short, this study analyzed the novel from the perspective of third world feminism which critically examine the role of women in geo-political and social circumstances of Changing Afghanistan Hussein fictionalizes all the accounts of Afghani history and present these accounts like melodrama and search the position of women inside these narratives. Resisting way of women is different although the role of them is important and valuable which create hope and happiness in community.

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