



THE OVERSHADOWING PRESENCE OF TOXIC MASCULINITY AND A CALL FOR REDUCING SEXISM IN KHALED HOSSEINI'S *A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS*

Md. Shahjahan Kabir*

English Discipline, Khulna University, Khulna-9208, Bangladesh

KUS: 21/22: 051121

Manuscript submitted: November 5, 2021

Accepted: January 3, 2022

Abstract

The nexus among toxic masculinity, sexism, and patriarchy; and women's oppression as an upshot of these have been potential issues stirring the interest of the researchers for centuries. The researches done on Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* are not exceptional than those works. As the novel blatantly exposes the plight of womenfolk amid an excessive masculine setting, Hosseini's covert signal towards the male characters' poignant situation due to their toxic masculinity has been an unaddressed issue. This article aims at studying the detrimental consequences of toxic masculinity in the characters' personal, familial, and social life showing the utter helplessness of male characters who have to comply with the stereotyped notion of gender roles of real men. Because of the male characters' vague notion of masculinity, the relationship with their partners becomes toxic; Jalil does not get forgiveness from his daughter Mariam when he asks for and Rasheed's life ends horribly. Demonstrating the poignant aftermaths of toxicity, the researcher calls for reducing sexism for establishing a healthy relationship where partners will have love, respect, and trust between or among themselves.

Keywords: Chauvinism, helplessness, hypermasculine, oppression, sexism, toxic masculinity

Introduction

Khaled Hosseini in his second novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) voices the story of devastations, exploitations, and sorrows of Afghan people, especially Afghan women whose lives are controlled by patriarchy. In conjunction with the boundless miseries of women, this novel reconnoiters the impalpable pains of men's life. Hosseini rationally sheds light on the secret world where men suffer, tolerate, and scuffle into desolations. Through his classic story, Hosseini attempts to convey the destructive effects of toxic masculinity in men's life. His two major male characters: Jalil and Rasheed never get any compassion from the characters in the novel as well as from the reader even when they suffer, because they have been fierce to women. Their tragedy lies here. Their quasi notion of masculinity carcasses their self, encumbers their thinking power, and militaries them to deny their weakness. This incapability to express innermost agony internally plagues them with enormous mental pains. They become captive in their peculiar rules and cannot escape the trap of chauvinism. The objectives of this paper are to explore the chauvinist attitude of the male characters towards female, simultaneously to investigate their silent victimization and pains in the novel. By focusing on the

*Corresponding author: <drkabir.ku@gmail.com>
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53808/KUS.2022.19.01.2122-ah>

harmful effects of toxic masculinity on both female and male characters, this study calls for a hale and hearty world where no sexism will be subsisted.

Theoretical Framework

In the present culture, the word toxic means a group of attributes that negatively affect a person or people's belief, behaviour, and activities; and masculinity refers to "a set of practices, norms, and behaviours associated with the idea of being male, believed to stand in opposition to femininity and women" (Waling, 2019, p. 2). In academia, toxic masculinity is considered orthodox, dogmatic, hegemonic, unhealthy, etc. It indicates 'toxic practices' of masculinity bolstering oppression, violence, and exploitation of women and trans-genders (Connell, Messerschmitt & de Boise as cited in Waling, 2019, pp. 4-5). Toxic masculinity upholds the issues that make men like machines—it depersonalizes them and makes them stigmatized. Chaplin and Aldao in "Gender differences in Emotion in Children: A Meta-analytic Review" (2013) express that; adolescent boys express less anger than adolescent girls. But as the boys grow up, they have to shoulder the attributes expected by society and culture which are usually patriarchal. It deteriorates men's mental health and causes hopelessness, anxiety, lack of confidence, etc. Brown in 2017 tells that, relationships between or among partners become toxic when they "engage in a set of psychological, sexual/financial, and/or physical practices of abuse that can lead to a number of negative and harmful outcomes to someone experiencing the toxicity" (as cited in Waling, 2019, p. 4). Toxic masculinity refers to the belief that manliness prolongs domination and aggression. It upholds toxicity. E.H. Thompson and J.H. Pleck in "The Structure of Male Norms" (1986) identify three core components of toxicity:

1. Toughness: The belief that men are strong and aggressive in behaviour and emotionally uncaring.
2. Antifemininity: Men do not possess emotions that are considered feminine like being weak, sympathetic, emotional, etc.
3. Power: It is the belief that if men can obtain power, they can earn status.

A study done in 2019 found that men who endorse toxic masculinity do not assist or console a victim (Ingram et al.). The pressures of toxic masculinity met by men have drastic consequences. There are not many rudimentary differences in the behaviour between young boys and girls. But toxic masculinity shapes men's behavior and makes them believe that a real man does not have any sensitivity. Thus, throughout their life men have to shelter the myths of patriarchy which force them to hide their authentic self and inward sentiment.

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Khaled Hosseini reveals the persecuted condition of men whose anguishes are always unobserved by the social order as well as academic researches. Through his representation of Jalil and Rasheed, Hosseini reveals the veiled truth of men's lives and their silent sorrows. Their belief in toxic masculinity and offensive behaviour alienate them from their loved ones. They cannot express their feelings because of the stereotyped rules of the society. This paper will problematize these issues and try to provide a message for reducing sexism.

Literature Review

A good number of researches have been done on *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. In "A Legitimate End to Illegitimate Beginning: A Critical Analysis of Mariam's Character in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*" (2017), Akhtar et al. discuss the struggle of Mariam who tries to attain her distinctiveness fighting against the identity that society has bestowed upon her. Through close textual analysis, the researchers dig deep into the journey of Mariam from an illegitimate child to a legitimate one. The study tells that this novel is one of the finest examples of women's subjugation and oppression in a typical Taliban setting. The text shows the horrible truth of a society that makes a child illegitimate if the father refuses to provide legitimacy. Mariam is fated to be born as a harami and leads a life devoid of self-respect. The deprivation haunts her so much that she decides to resist. Her resistance shows that she cannot tolerate it anymore. Though she faces the death penalty, her resistance makes her a vigorous feminist. Her death symbolizes "the most credible decision to get away from the precarious

assault of the Soviet Union, the tyrannical regime of the Taliban, or an offensive husband" (Akhtar et al., 2017, p. 116).

In "Feminine Power as Represented in Khaled Hosseini's *The Thousand Splendid Suns*" (2016), Aneeta Sebastian discusses how Afghanistan has been a horrible place for women centuries after centuries. In Afghanistan, women have been subjugated thrice: "socially, politically and culturally" (Sebastian, 2016, p. 52). In the beginning, the researcher introduces the author of the novel. She admires the author because in the case of Hosseini, gender does not work as a hindrance to describe the plight of another gender. He skillfully narrates the touching story of womanhood. While talking about the cruelty of patriarchy expressed through illegitimacy, deprivation, discrimination, child marriage, violence, etc. in the novel, Sebastian refers to the report about women released by The United Nations Statistics Division (2016):

- Afghanistan is one of the most challenging places in the world to be a woman.
- Many women die in pregnancy and childbirth: 460 deaths/100,000 live births (2010)
- 85% of women have no formal education and are illiterate. (as cited in Sebastian, 2016, p. 52)

According to Sebastian, as the novel's setting is Afghanistan, Hosseini portrays the real scenario of the country. Patriarchy decides the fate of the women folk—what they will do, eat, wear, or whom to marry. Sebastian reads the novel from a feminist point of view and she claims that the author advocates for reducing gender violence.

Stefani Amanda Anggi Riany in "The Impact of Oppression toward Women Seen through Two Women Characters in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*" in 2016 analyses Mariam and Laila's poignant sufferings and how the miseries impact their attitude and behaviour. The researcher studies the oppression faced by Mariam and Laila using five faces of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence theorized by Iris Young in 1992. Riany has found that in both Mariam and Laila's cases, oppression leads them to resistance.

Azam Kazemiyan in "A Thousand Splendid Suns: A Rhetorical Vision of Afghan Women" (2012) tells that, though Afghan women vividly came to the notice of the world as the victims of war and violence after the occurrences on the world trade center, very few popular narrative fictions represented the difficulties of Afghan women. Kazemiyan like many scholars believes that western media misrepresented Afghan women and their struggle. As media is a strong source of information for those who do not have firsthand experience of Afghan women, U.S. media intentionally presented women as passive, oppressed, victimized to legitimize grounds for U.S. involvement and imperialist domination in Afghanistan. The researcher studies the situation of women in urban and rural settings and finds that in rural areas women contributed much in economy. In the city areas, girls were educated, wore burqas according to their wishes. From 1919 to 1929, the reforms made by King Amanullah advanced the condition of women. In 1953, when Daoud Khan came to power, women actively took part in government and the workforce. In 1978 Soviet Union took hold of power and women's development was the chief priority then. But during the Mujahidin and later in the Taliban rule, there were many restrictions on women. The researcher intensively studies the available resources and finds that Afghan women were not only passive sufferers of the war or the state; they were also makers of societal revolution. Kazemiyan argues that Khaled Hosseini's depiction of Afghan women goes in line with U.S. media that presented Afghan women as subjugated to legitimize U.S bombing in Afghanistan. The novel is not an innocent attempt to improve the situation of women. The author supports imperialism through his projection of women as helpless.

G. Iynisha & Dr. K. Shanthi in "Masculinity: A Gamut in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*" (2018) study *A Thousand Splendid Suns* from the perspective of the fluidity of masculinity telling the boundary of manliness is not fixed, for the characters often go beyond the expected norms of gender. They discuss varied perspectives of masculinity and find masculine traits in the female characters. They explain that the author presents caring

masculinity along with hyper masculinity. Hakim, Zaman, and Tariq are representatives of caring masculinity. Jalil and Rasheed symbolize hyper masculinity who think their pride is associated with domination and violence. Nana blurs stereotyped gender roles by giving birth to Mariam alone, showing anger and mistrust of Jalil openly. Mariam and Laila also expose masculine vigor in their resistance.

Yeasmin in "Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns: A Saga of Afghanistan" (2020) links Afghan history and the history presented in the novel using New historic approach. She says that the novel recounts three decades of Afghan social, economic, cultural, and political history. She studies the historical documents about Daoud Khan's regime, the time of the Soviet Union, the Mujahedeen, and the Taliban rule; and analyses the textuality of history in the novel. She finds that Afghanistan had a rich cultural heritage but "The cultural landscape of Afghanistan underwent a radical change because of the nasty play played in the name of religion" (Yeasmin, 2020, p. 383). Hosseini also presents religion as the key determiner of controlling the fate of the people in Afghanistan bolstering "upheavals, destruction, violation, war, exploitation and loss" (Yeasmin, 2020, p. 383). The author recreates political upheavals, child marriage, gender discrimination, the resistance of women through the story of Mariam and Laila. The researcher concludes that Hosseini authentically draws the picture of worn-torn Afghanistan and hence the novel turns into a saga of Afghanistan.

Yeasmin & Islam study a different issue in "The Concept of Parenthood in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*" (2021). They explain the protagonists' plight that culminates in their sense of parenthood. In the novels, they find the supremacies of human relationships—father-son, and mother-daughter—that do not always need blood connection. Hosseini in the novels provides a new outlook to comprehend human bonding that is based on love, trust, and responsibility. In Amir and Mariam's cases, their sense of hollowness, deprivation of love, and craving to attain a status for curing their bloody souls lead them to involve in the journey to rescue Sohrab and Laila; and in this way, they get the ultimate bliss in their lives; they become parents to Sohrab and Laila.

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, exploitation of patriarchy, female subjugation, identity formation, war, loss and imperialism are the issues that have been researched by the researchers. No research has been done on the concept of toxic masculinity and its severe impacts on men's psyche. The victimization of men to meet up the norms of male chauvinism has been an ignored issue. No research urges for reducing sexism. This article will try to address these issues and fill up the gaps.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative research. So, the researcher has followed content analysis method to write this paper. It is concerned with the victimized condition of men whose sufferings are often unnoticed by the society. It aims at analysing how toxic masculinity intoxicates men's psyche and makes them violent, unemotional and sexually aggressive. This study is based on two types of sources of data: Primary source and secondary sources of data are used to write this paper. The text of Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is used as the primary source of data and related journals, articles, books, criticisms and web pages are used as the secondary sources of data.

Discussion

The discussion on *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is divided into three parts. In the first part, the consequences of Jalil and Rasheed's toxic masculinity on the lives of women are described. In the second phase, the pitiable situation of Jalil and Rasheed as the victims of their toxic masculine values is explained. And in the third phase, the researcher eagerly appeals for the reduction of sexism to create a healthy relationship which is crucial for establishing a healthy world.

Toxic masculinity in 1 with the toe of his shoes.

“You were ashamed of me.”

“I’ll visit you,” he muttered. “I’ll come to Kabul and see you. We’ll—”

“No. No,” she said. “Don’t come. I won’t see you. Don’t you come . . .

He gave her a wounded look. (Hosseini, 2007, p. 55)

Jalil’s incapability to express his love and affection shows the level of his helplessness. No one can understand the inner agony that hurts him. His heart is broken into pieces, he feels the pains of loss but due to his masculine mask he can’t cry, he can’t scream, he can’t tell that his heart is flouting:

She (Mariam) could hear him (Jalil) following her. When she reached the hydraulic doors, she heard him behind her.

“Mariam jo.”

.....

She did not turn to look when Jalil’s palms pressed on the glass, when his knuckles rapped and rapped on it. When the bus jerked forward, she did not turn to see him trotting alongside it. And when the bus pulled away, she did not look back to see him receding, to see him disappear in the cloud of exhaust and dust (Hosseini, 2007).

Likewise, Rasheed also fails to express his anguish and passion. Whenever he faces woe, gets hurt, feels passion, he suffers silently because the man-made law does not permit him to show any feeling except to his male child. Rasheed does not express his emotion to Mariam because if it happened Mariam could think him a weak man. In the novel, Rasheed lost his first wife and son. This loss creates a sense of emptiness in his mind. He marries twice and after marriage, he takes Mariam to show her Kabul city, restaurant, throws a party when he knows Mariam’s pregnancy. Mariam gets the honor and care that she desired. But after several miscarriages, his expectation for having a male child is lost, he becomes morose and finds fault in everything. In Afghanistan, “fertility and motherhood are considered as shields, a resistance mechanism” (Azzi & Belkhiri, 2019, p. 44) to attain value in domestic space. This chauvinistic notion about fertility leads to sexual assault and domestic violence. In Rasheed’s case, he turns into a dominant, vicious, and hostile husband like other typical husbands in the country.

Rasheed’s sense of masculinity teaches him to be uncompromising in any situation. He is adamant to retain his masculine pride by all means. Rasheed remarries to have a son. Though he takes advantage of Laila’s helplessness, it is unavoidable that he saves Laila from further adversities. He tells Mariam the cause of his decision to marry Laila, “But I suspect she won’t get far. No food, no water, not a rupiah in her pockets, bullets and rockets flying everywhere. How many days do you suppose she’ll last before she’s abducted, raped, or tossed into some roadside ditch with her throat slit?” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 209). Even though Rasheed has the hidden agenda to have a son through Laila, one thing should be acknowledged that he provides Laila, “A home and a husband” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 209) or else Aziza would be regarded as a *harami* from her childhood. Marrying Laila, he tolerates a lot; he tolerates Aziza who is not his child. He hears rumors about Laila and Tariq’s affair. After Aziza’s birth, he gets more suspicious and becomes sure through Laila’s several activities. Aziza is a female child, and he doubts the identity of Aziza. Hence, he is not even-tempered to Aziza. He gets totally unbending knowing Laila’s extramarital relationship. It hurts his masculine pride and proves him weak to society. Something is happening behind him that defiles his house and raises questions in his son’s innocent mind. It is unpardonable to him. He realizes that Laila just marries him to provide a secure fate for her child, Aziza. She has never been loyal and devoted to him. As chauvinistic laws teach him to exert control on women, he is unwilling to compromise and decides to end their lives who insult his masculinity.

Being a man, he suffers silently. He is not able to share his aches with anyone: he has lost his first wife and son, witnessed many miscarriages of his second wife, and remains childless for many years, his third wife is not loyal, he is rearing a bastard child in his home. He suppresses his inner pain and behaves like a strong man to show that man has no need and is not bothered by woe.

Patriarchy and Toxic Masculinity

Toxic masculinity forces men to shape their life according to the laws of patriarchy. When men use the patriarchal rule to dominate women, ironically, they themselves also fall into their own traps. Like women, they also become the victims of toxic masculinity. Jalil and Rasheed suffer silently, they can't show their feelings. Toxic masculinity intoxicates their inner self, snatches, and makes them masculine puppets who can only perform the roles of strong men. Jalil and Rasheed's unseen pains and sufferings silently drive them to their psychological destructions.

Jalil's letter to Mariam which is read by Laila after his and Mariam's death shows how much Jalil loved Mariam. Though he had not legalized Mariam when she craved for him, he repented a lot afterward. He went to Mariam to seek forgiveness, but he failed. In his letter he expressed his fatherly affection for her, "*I miss you. I miss the sound of your voice, your laughter. I miss reading to you, and all those times we fished together. . . You were a good daughter Mariam jo, and I cannot ever think of you without feeling shame and regret*" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 393). He apologized for his inability to welcome Mariam into his home. He understood the reason why he was a coward then; he did that behaviour for the "*Fear of losing face? Of staining my (bis) so-called good name?*" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 394). Now, after experiencing many touches of melancholy he understood the futility of all his pride—the pseudo notion of masculinity, "*Perhaps this is just punishment for those who have been heartless, to understand only when nothing can be undone*" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 394). Because of his toxic chauvinism, he died with the ache of an undeserving father.

Rasheed's life also ends horribly for his toxic masculinity. As "Human behaviour is determined by society and environment" (Riany, 2017, p. 1), his behaviour is also affected by patriarchal rules and regulations. He is born and brought up in a strictly patriarchal setting where males are always supreme, and women are their subjects living in the periphery. Males are masters at home and outside. These norms legalize bullying and aggression. Rasheed is also violent to his wives. However, he is not a solely brutal man devoid of the warmth of his heart. He is never miserly to show his love and care for his son, Zalmai. He buys toys, clothes, diapers, gargets often beyond his reach. He takes Zalmai to his shop, if he does any mistake; he scolds him softly and calmly. They come back in the evening, even at that time he is not tired. Zalmai bounces him, he sits beside him. They play private games, "*His patience with Zalmai was a well that ran deep and never dried*" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 289). Until Mariam's proven infertility, he is not so ill-tempered. In the case of Laila, until she attempts to escape Rasheed is not violent in his behaviour with her. Sometimes he criticizes her for not caring for him after the birth of Aziza and he does not show affection for Aziza. But Laila is an escapist from the beginning of her marriage. When Laila dupes Rasheed by giving the news that she is conceiving his child, Rasheed says prayers, cares for her in every means but he does not get the return, "*Rasheed, anxious and overtly attentive, was holding her elbow, directing her across the yard like a traffic policeman.*" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 229). Sometimes he mentions, "*You're safe with me, my flower, my gul. No one tries to harm you; I'll rip out their liver and make them eat it.*" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 224). However, when he becomes aware of his wife's extramarital relationship and another wife's support in this matter, his sense of toxic masculinity moves him to take the vehement decision ever—he decides to kill his wives. He dies at the hand of his wife, Mariam, who resists all the cruelties he has done on her to exert his masculinity.

A Call for Reducing Sexism

In a social milieu, normally, males and females are in binary oppositions and the gender roles are 'subjugating' and 'subjugated' (Sebastian, 2016, p. 51). For this polar difference between males and females, the relation

between them is most of the time exploiter and exploited. Males do not think the females are equal partners and this unequal relationship advances toxicity, chauvinism, sexism, and so on. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is a story of sexism and the consequences of sexism. It groups the characters into two categories: villains and heroes where oppressors are villains and oppressed ones are heroes. The heroes suffer and thereby win sympathy and admiration from the reader. Here Mariam and Laila are heroes for their woes and resistance, and Jalil and Rasheed are villains for their cruelty and defeat. The cause of war between these two groups is undeniably sexism that makes their world so toxic that no songs of compromise, forgiveness, and love can be tuned. The male characters' false consciousness of masculinity confines them so much that they do not find any way to escape. As a result, their lives also are devastated along with the devastation of women's lives. They embrace their tragic end silently.

Jalil is a chauvinist character who does not value the urge of his daughter for losing his face in society. When he realizes his fault, the gap between the father and daughter is so huge that he cannot even talk to Mariam let alone asking forgiveness:

He'd stood there for hours, waiting for her, now and then calling her name, just as she had once called *his* name outside his house. Mariam had parted the curtain once, just a bit, and caught a glimpse of him. Only a glimpse, but long enough to see that his hair had turned fluffy white, . . . he was thinner, much thinner. (Hosseini, 2007, p. 301)

If Mariam had forgiven him, their life might have been changed to something better. However, the denial from Mariam and his sense of guilt breaks his heart into pieces. He dies on his way back silently. His tragedy lies here, "He was dying then. He had driven all the way from Herat to say good-bye" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 303). Mariam also shows excessive pride when Jalil comes to her door. Therefore, she regrets after his death, "What would have been the harm to let him in, sit with him, let him say what he'd come to say?" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 302). Sexism hinders their way to healthy bondage.

Sexism also damages the healthy relationships in Rasheed's house. To exert his masculine power, he shows aggression on Mariam and Laila after Mariam's miscarriages and Laila's giving birth to Aziza and their plan to escape the house. The air in the domestic space is so deadly that the wives always live in fear of the husband. The consequence of their pains is also awful, Rasheed's "brutality can be compared to that of the Taliban as both show their inhuman act to uphold their so-called masculine power. The more Rasheed mentally and physically tortures them, the more their mother-daughter bond grows stronger" (Yasmin & Islam, 2021, p. 24). Mariam and Laila resist him, and Mariam takes a crucial decision to murder him to rescue her loving ones. Rasheed has been an affectionate father to Zalmai but dies as a villain. His demise echoes the fate of Okonkwo in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* whose fear of being termed as weak causes his downfall. His fear leads him to kill Ikemefuna and to take many irrational decisions that make many people of his clan go against him. Like Okonkwo, Rasheed also is afraid of losing control of his wives and decides to kill them which ironically causes his tragic ruin.

Showing the tragic consequences of toxic masculinity, Hosseini also urges for healthy masculinity for reducing sexism and the violence born out of it. In the novel, Mullah Faizullah is a representative of caring masculinity. He teaches Mariam reading, playing, and reciting the Koran. Sometimes, Mariam shares the things that she does not share even with her mother, Nana. Hakim is a caring husband and father. Ignoring the expectations of society, Hakim values his wife's opinion, cares for his daughter, ensures education for her, does everything for the comfort of Fariba and Laila. He is progressive and educated. Tariq is another symbol of healthy masculinity. Tariq's sense of healthy masculinity makes Laila feel "anchored", "sheltered" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 374) a feeling that she never felt with Rasheed. Laila's life in Murree is contented and tranquil with Tariq. When Laila wishes to back to Kabul, Tariq values her wish and comes back to Kabul. He allows Laila the freedom to visit Herat, the birthplace of Mariam, alone. This freedom enjoyed by Laila does not mean that

the common females of Afghanistan want to subvert order. The females do not want that; they want the freedom of expression, freedom of movement, freedom to fight for their rights. They also crave such kind of protection where they are respected as human beings, not victims of gender apartheid. Laila enjoys the sanctuary of Babi and Tariq as she gets her own space there.

The novel calls for the reduction of sexism showing the victimization and poignant fate of toxic masculine characters whose sexist activities exclude them from the empire of compassion. It ends with an encouraging tone demonstrating the merits of healthy masculinity. Laila and Tariq with Aziza and Zalmai are living in Kabul. Laila is teaching the kids in the orphanage. She is conceiving a baby girl in her womb. She has decided on the baby's name, that is Mariam. The fate of the girl will not be like the woman, Mariam, who had endured brutality all her life and finally killed the oppressor. The baby girl will live in a good world where the males will discard their false concept of masculinity accepting the truth that "A woman is a being. She is not an appendage of man. A woman is not the other. She is not an addition to man" (qtd. in Akhtar et al., 2017, p. 116).

Conclusion

The article studies toxic masculinity as a potential discourse addressing its evil consequences on the characters' lives. The study argues that toxic masculinity snares men in vague supremacy that prohibits men to highlight their humanitarian agencies, however, contributes to the continuation of gender binaries. Toxic masculinity makes men to forget their true self which is as sensitive as women. To retain their authority over women, men pretend to be strong but silently suffer a lot by hiding their actual feelings. This chauvinistic attitude soaks men's psyche and makes them aggressive and violent for which they face tragic ends. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Khaled Hosseini portrays toxic men and their agonies. Jalil and Rasheed are the poor victims of patriarchy and male chauvinism. They suffer inwardly but are not privileged like women to express their despairs. However, this issue is unaddressed in society, in culture, even in academia. This study calls for reducing sexism screening the devastating effects of toxic masculinity. It offers a message to the world that a healthy relationship is crucial for a nonviolent world; otherwise, both genders will be the victims of sexism. It recommends a radical reform in patriarchal law and form benevolent atmosphere so that people can live peacefully.

References

Akhtar, S., Rauf, M., Ikram, S., & Raees, G. (2017). A legitimate end to illegitimate beginning: A critical analysis of Mariam's character in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. *English Language and Literature Studies*, 7(1), 113-119. doi:10.5539/ells.v7n1p113

Azzi, M., S., Belkhiri, M., Y. (2019). *Patriarchy and gender stereotyping in Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns* (M.A. Thesis, University of M'sila). Retrieved from <http://dspace.univ-msila.dz:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/14471>

Chaplin, T., and Aldao, A. (2013). Gender differences in emotion expression in children: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin* 139(4), 735-765. Doi: 10.1037/a003073

Ghosh, H. A. (2003). A history of women in Afghanistan: Lessons learnt for the future or yesterdays and tomorrow: Women in Afghanistan. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 4(3), 1-14.

Hosseini, K. (2017). *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Ingram, K., M., Davis, J., P., Espelage, D., L., Hatchel, T., Merrin, G., J., Valido, A., Iynisha, G., & Shanti, D., K. (2018). Masculinity: A gamut in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini." *Language in India*, 18(2), 78-84.

Kazemiyan, A. (2012). *A Thousand Splendid Suns: Rhetorical vision of Afghan women* (M. A. thesis, University of Ottawa, Canada). Retrieved from https://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/22680/1/Kazemiyan_Azam_2012_Thesis.pdf

Riany, S. A. A. (2017). *The impact of oppression toward women seen through two women characters in Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns* (Undergraduate thesis, Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta). Retrieved from https://repository.usd.ac.id/9510/2/124214130_full.pdf

Sebastian, A. (2016). Feminine power as represented in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. *International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature*, 4(11), 51-58.

Torgal, C. (2019). Longitudinal associations between features of toxic masculinity and bystander willingness to intervene in bullying among middle school boys. *Journal of School Psychology*, 77, 139-151. Doi: 10.1016/j.jsp.2019.10.007

Thompson, E. H., & Pleck, J. H. (1986). The structure of male role norms. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 29(5), 531-543. Doi: 10.1177/000276486029005003

Waling, A. (2019). Problematising 'toxic' and 'healthy' masculinity for addressing gender inequalities." *Australian Feminist Studies*, 1-15.

Yeasmin, F. (2000). Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. A saga of Afghanistan. *Research Journal of English Language and Literature*, 8(3), 381-390.

Yeasmin, F., & Islam. S. (2021). The concept of parenthood in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. *Journal of Critical Studies in Language and Literature*, 2(6), 19-27. <https://doi.org/10.46809/jcsll.v2i6.92>