

Complexity of marriage in afghanistan n a thousand splendid suns novel

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



Identity in Freedom

Marriage can be the first step in a new beginning. It is supposed to be a lifelong journey, but a success depends on knowing that individual intimately. Marriage may fall apart if both people are not equal partners. The novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, by Khaled Hosseini shows how marriage in Afghanistan is complicated and how many Afghans believe in arranged marriage to demonstrate better reputation for the family rather than falling in love. It demonstrates that women in Afghanistan have no freedom in expressing how they feel and they suffer under the pressure of Islamic governments, Talibans and males. Khaled Hosseini emphasizes that women have no choice but to agree with what their parents arrange for them. Women have to tolerate the pain of having no voice until they stand up and demand their freedom, or else this abusive cycle will not end.

Mariam is an Afghan girl who is first seen as a shy, thoughtful child who has to agree with what her parents tell her. Nana prepares Mariam for the real world by telling her that men are cold hearted and abusive to women when she says, " Like a compass needle that always points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman. Always. You remember that Mariam." (7) Nana tells Mariam that it is normal for an Afghan girl to be abused and to not have a voice. This shows how women in the Afghani culture feel that men rule women by not allowing them to have a voice.

After the death of her mother, Mariam suffers because she cannot express her feelings but so much is expected of her. Mariam's father has three

spouses due to the Afghani culture. The father's spouses do not want Mariam in the house because she is different from them. She has no choice but to accept and agree with what is planned for her. Khadija Mariam's half-mother describes the man she has decided will marry Mariam as, "A khastegar. A suitor. His name is Rasheed,[...] he is a friend of a business acquaintance of your father's. He's a Pashtun, from Kandahar originally, but he lives in Kabul, in the DehMazang district, in a two-story house that he owns." (43) Mariam is being forced by her half mothers to accept this marriage, because she is given no choice and voice. The half mothers are more concerned about the family reputation and getting rid of Mariam rather than supporting her. Mariam wants to refuse the arranged marriage but because she has no voice, she does not have a choice but to marry a man she does not know. As her wedding day approaches, Mariam is in a situation she does not want to be in. When the mulah asks her, "And do you Mariam Jan, accept this man as your husband?", a female voice from down the table says, "She does"(48) Mariam is forced into this marriage; She has no voice to say speak for herself, as the father's spouses are even answering for her 'I do'. This represents Mariam cannot have an opportunity to speak for herself by tolerating the pain her father is putting her through.

Once married, Mariam is fed up with her husband, Rasheed, who is constantly verbally and physically abusing her. At the breaking point, Mariam kills Rasheed with a shovel after he takes it too far and tries to strangle Laila, his second wife. Mariam tells Laila, "For me, it ends here. There's nothing more I want. Everything I'd ever wished for as a little girl you've already

gave me. You and your children have made me so very happy.” (319).

Mariam is thankful for what Laila has given her, but has no desire to live, since nothing she wants is left out of life. Mariam was abandoned by her family leading her to her death. Mariam tries so hard to find out who she is but, she struggles because it is too late for her to have a voice. She was never been given an opportunity to express her thoughts and feelings. As Mariam is on her way to jail, she is reminded of her desire for freedom:

Mariam wished for so much in those final moments. Yet as she closed her eyes, it was not regret any longer but a sensation of abundant peace that washed over her.

She thought of her entry into this world, the harami child of a lowly villager, an unintended thing, a pitiable, regrettable accident. A weed. And yet she was leaving the world as a woman who had loved and been loved back. She was leaving it as a good friend, a companion, a guardian. A mother. A person of consequence at last. No. It was not so bad. This was a legitimate end to a life of illegitimate beginnings. (329)

All Mariam wanted was her life to be fair. She wished people heard her voice, heard the pain she was going through, especially her father. But no, for an Afghan girl it is normal to live an unfair, hard, and an ugly life. Mariam had no freedom, no way of letting people know she is living an abusive life, no voice to be heard.

Since the beginning of the novel, Mariam has been through a lot of experiences. Mariam is first seen as a quiet child until she stands up for her

beliefs and kills Rasheed for crossing the line as he tried to strangle Laila. For Mariam, “ She turned it so the sharp edge was vertical, and, as she did it, it occurred to her that this was the first time that she was deciding the course of her own life.” (349) As Mariam killed Rasheed she finally was able to achieve the freedom and escape the pain she was hiding all these years. All throughout Mariam’s life men expected a lot from her starting from her. Mariam wished she had been allowed to give her opinion of freedom by people hearing her voice, but no one was there to support her. If Mariam had not stood up and killed Rasheed after all these years of hiding and tolerating the pain she was put through then she would not have achieved freedom or have saved Laila from the trap she was in; But luckily Mariam stood up for her beliefs and took a step by sacrificing herself to save Laila from getting strangled and her run away with her teenage love, Tariq.

Mariam, having no voice and tolerating the pain her dad put her through brought her to a situation where her only choice was to commit murder. Mariam wished she had a choice for this marriage but instead she suffered under the choices her father made for her and the pressures and expectations he had of her. Mariam was a quiet girl who tolerated her husband Rasheed until she stood up for herself and killed him. If it was not for this Afghani culture, and men being abusive to women Rasheed would not have been dead. As of today father’s disown their daughters caring for their family reputation rather than caring for their own family. This brings their daughters no choice but, to do revenge on their spouse or to commit suicide.