

## Suppression of Women in Afghan Society: A Subaltern Study of *The Secret Sky* by Atia Abawi

1. **Saira Noreen**, Lecturer in English, Arid Agriculture University, Barani Institute of Sciences, Sahiwal, Pakistan
2. **Joshaf Afshan**, MPhil Scholar, Institute of Southern Punjab, Multan, Pakistan
3. **Syed Musharaf Hussain Shah**, COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI), Vehari campus, Pakistan

### Abstract

Atia Abawi's novel *The Secret Sky* (2014), shows the repression of women in the patriarchal society of Afghanistan. The primary objective of the study is to gain an understanding of the oppression that women face in societies that exercise dominance. Drawing upon the notions propounded by Spivak (1988), the study has explored women's difficulties as well as the perspectives concerning the suppression on women and the stretches of power that are suppressed. The main characters of the novel fight for their independence and rebel against the chains and shackles that society has imposed on them. They escape and engage themselves in combat with the perpetrators of the crime committed on them. Findings of the study reveal that Afghani culture is patriarchal in nature and in this society, the oppression of women is mostly acknowledged as being acceptable in the name of culture, honor, and values. When it comes to creating resistance against the manufactured characteristics of patriarchal dominance and women's subjection, the female characters are found to be helpless in this regard.

**Key Terms:** Suppression, Subaltern, Afghan Society, *The Secret Sky*

### 1. Introduction

The literature created in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is referred to as Afghan literature. Inspired by literature from Central and South Asia, it is mostly written in Dari, the official language of Afghanistan, and Pashto, the native language of that country. In Afghan literature, a few regional tongues like Pashayi, Turkmen, Balochi, and Uzbek are also used. Afghanistan is a multilingual nation; however its writers typically employ these languages in their written and oral works, as well as in the Afghan curriculum. In addition to Central and South Asia, Persian and Arabic literature have a significant effects on its writings.

Afghanistan has a rich history of oral storytelling as well as traditionally written manuscripts that serve as the foundation for its present literature. The native people of Afghanistan, whether they reside there or not, they speak the two main languages Dari and Pashto. The two officially recognized languages in Afghanistan, which are spoken by the country's 32 million inhabitants, account for a significant portion of its literary output. Poets and writers have chronicled Afghanistan's literary history. French writer James Darmesteter discussed the function of poets and the historical background of Afghan literature in 1886. It is stated that Pashtun poetry has had a major influence on literature. Afghan poets and writers of short stories are currently producing poetry, which includes a restricted description of literature.



The term feminism is regarded with greater skepticism in Afghanistan due to its strong associations with Western ideas of sex, gender, culture, and social upheaval, Though feminism is not supported in Afghanistan but feminists like many women activists named Maryam Mehboob, Spojami Zaryab, and Rangina Hamidi, and men like Khaled Hosseini, who support feminist principles like protection of human rights, gender discrimination, women's awakening and empowering women, and equal opportunities of social and economic growth for all citizens of the country. Afghanistan is a patriarchal society where religion is manipulated to reap in personal, political, social, and traditional benefits. However, declaring publicly that one supports feminism can lead to political marginalization as well as harsh condemnation from social and religious groups (Bezhan, 2006, 2008). Thus, bringing attention to issues related to women's lives is the most important task for these feminist activists in Afghanistan, regardless of whether they express a commitment to any particular ideology supported by Western philosophers.

As for as feminism in Afghanistan is concerned most people have the misconception that women from the Middle East, and particularly those from Afghanistan, are helpless, subjugated, and disadvantaged. People outside of these countries are unaware of the journey that Afghani women take from being in slavery to being freed, or from awakening to determination, in addition to the stereotyped portrayal of these women in Western media as submissive and in need of empowerment and liberation (Imran, 2019). A number of foreign Afghan writers, including Asne Seierstad, Maryam Mehboob, and Khaled Hosseini, are among the diasporas who have implied through narratives that Afghan women are rising above the weight of marginalization and submission, resisting and redefining themselves. (Imran and Hart, 2018). Moghadam (2003) has rightly depicted the true picture of Afghan women as “In Afghan society, gender relations are deeply rooted in the concept of personal property and belonging; that is why women are considered submissive where men exercise control over them in two ways; through marriage and property and by barring landownership for women” (p. 241).

Atia Abawi was born on August 9, 1982, is an American writer, speaker, and television journalist. She spent nearly five years based in Kabul, Afghanistan, as a foreign journalist. Abawi began her career at CNN in the Media Operations division and worked her way up to become a producer and then a foreign correspondent. She was appointed boss of CNN's Kabul bureau and correspondent for Afghanistan in 2008. Prior to Afghanistan, she contributed to a number of well-known international stories, such as the murder of former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto, the 2007 hostage situation in Afghanistan involving South Korea, and the story of Youssif, the little Iraqi boy who was set on fire by rebels in his homeland.

Penguin Random House published her debut novel, *The Secret Sky: A Novel of Forbidden Love in Afghanistan*, in September 2014. Abawi is well-known for her writing and reporting that strongly advocate for women's emancipation. The young adult book chronicles the forbidden love between a Pashtun boy named Samiullah and a Hazara girl named Fatima. *The Secret Sky* depicts the tragedy and beauty of modern-day Afghanistan as Fatima and Samiullah struggle to survive alongside their families, cultures, and the Taliban. *The Secret Sky* has won praise for its truthful depictions of Islamic Fundamentalism. *The Secret Sky* was one of the books that The Amelia Bloomer Project featured in its 2015 compilation of books that offer a glimpse at the diverse experiences of girls and women globally.

*The Secret Sky* investigates the history and contemporary oppression of Afghan women. Because the circumstance has remained unchanged for almost a century, it may be concluded that patriarchy has been responsible for shaping social standards. Within the context of the patriarchal society of Afghanistan, the novel depicts the complete and utter powerlessness, grief, and fortitude of several women. Throughout the book, feminism and gender inequality have been tackled through the female characters. These women are unable to realize their full potential in the patriarchal society because of the restrictions placed on their education, freedom, and choice. The story focuses on the rights that were denied to them, as well as the constraints associated with these factors.

Despite the cruelty and violence that they are subjected to, Sami and Fatima can survive and remain together. Because she was a Hazara girl, Fatima was regarded as being responsible and obedient. Samiullah is a Pashtun who was raised to protect the traditions of his clan. He was brought up to do so. Their romantic relationship was not planned to develop. Fatima and Samiullah strive to remain together in the face of hostility from their families, communities, and the Taliban. The drama that follows displays both the beauty and the sorrow of modern-day Afghanistan. Fatima and Samiullah can overcome this adversity. In *The Secret Sky*, the human toll of war and the fortitude of humanity in the face of adversity are both depicted beautifully. It sheds light on the different challenges. People in Afghanistan, particularly women, have been living under autocratic governments. The plot emphasizes the significance of friendship, love, and academic aspiration as significant sources of resilience and hope in the characters' lives.

The heritage of colonialism is something that Spivak strives to address throughout the entirety of her theories concerning ethnicity and captivity. Even though the Western World is more purified from the ugliness of sharp savagery, she refused to acknowledge the concept that the Western World retains an elite hand over the development of the Third World. The marginalized topics that she addresses in her literary works, such as the subaltern women's status in society and their authorization, are elevated. By analyzing the novel, *The Secret Sky* (2014), this study makes an effort to investigate the oppression of women from a different point of view.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Patriarchal societies are characterized by unequal and asymmetrical relations between the sexes, which serve to stifle the voices of those who belong to the marginalized section of society. Afghanistan has deeply rooted patriarchal and traditional cultural norms that limit the opportunities and rights available to women. These traditions are common in Afghanistan. Women face prejudice and violence regularly, in addition to significant barriers that prevent them from obtaining an education and making decisions. Women in Afghanistan are unable to exercise their fundamental rights and participate equally in social, economic, and political spheres due to the severe forms of gender-based discrimination that exist in the country of Afghanistan. The emergence of voices against suppression can be attributed to some aspects of the unequal relationships that exist between genders and different parts of society. Women, in their role as subalterns, are forced to endure the consequences of the social and political structures and conventions that are responsible for the suppression of their voices. To attain the

essential components of equality and prosperity, it is necessary to provide women who are subalterns with a voice.

### 1.3 Research Objective

- To explore the plight of the suppression of women as depicted in *The Secret Sky* (2014)

### 1.4 Research Question

1. How is the protagonist suppressed and oppressed as subalterns in *The Secret Sky* by Abwai?

## 2. Literature Review

Ashraf and Kennedy-Pipe (2022) researched woman, war, and the politics of emancipation in Afghanistan. This study aimed to investigate the extent to which the topic of human rights for women received a lot of attention throughout the twenty years that Afghanistan was under conflict. One of the primary objectives of Western forces was to liberate women from the oppression of the Taliban and the legacy they left behind. In this study, the regional and local opposition to these liberal measures is investigated, and the problems of enforcing values rather than ingraining them are emphasized. It has come to our attention that the Afghan state has, throughout its history, had a difficult time protecting the fundamental human rights of its citizens, particularly those associated with women. Only when those demands are satisfied will it achieve complete freedom via education and the representation of women in society. The nation provides an opportunity to investigate the history of women's human rights in general as well as feminism from the point of view of an Afghan woman. This type of investigation can be considered a case study. As a result, we will discuss how this conflict made it possible for women to serve in Western military groups, particularly those with greater gender equality on the front lines. Key lessons that assist female emancipation will likely be discovered by conducting additional studies. These lessons include a deeper understanding of cultural contexts and awareness that fundamental human rights, such as the right to life and security, are a prerequisite for female independence.

Fauzia (2019) conducted a study on women's struggle against patriarchy. According to the findings of the study, women in Afghanistan have been subjected to oppressive laws and conditions as a consequence of twenty years of conflict, which has resulted in unfairness and injustice. At every level, Afghan women face difficulties as a result of the patriarchal atmosphere that exists in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, male domination is the critical element that undermines the rights of Afghan women and contributes to their being considered inferior. By relying on Kate Millet's radical feminism, this essay attempts to illustrate the challenges Afghan women face when attempting to advance in their society. The focus of the investigation is on the female characters, including Zeba, Gulnaz, Latifa, Mezghan, Bibi Shireen, the wife of Judge Najeeb, Sitara, Meena, and Aneesa, who are presented with the challenge of finding solutions to problems that arise from their unfair circumstances. They begin to cultivate a sense of self-awareness, the demand for independence in decision-making, the declaration of resistance to

being governed by men, and the fight for fundamental rights such as the freedom to speak, the freedom to acquire an education, and the freedom to work for a living. The development of solid self-awareness and determination is the first step women must take to resist male dominance and progress in their lives and society. The female characters in the story demonstrate this. Through the use of this literary proof, radical feminism emphasizes the fact that women's efforts to protect their rights signal acceptance of the fact that gender inequality and opportunities for women still exist.

Imran and Ismail (2022) analyze Hosseini's portrayal of women as modern archetypes that are subservient, persistent, and strong. These women become conscious of the gendered oppression that manifests itself via their bodies. Hosseini gives women a voice and moral support by creating strong, resilient, and independent female characters in his writings. Using theories from Johnson's *Patriarchal Terrorism* and Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak*, this paper investigates how Hosseini challenges the patriarchal institutions that determine women's identity in Afghanistan. Specifically, the research focuses on how Hosseini opposes these structures. There is a correlation between the suffering of women and the general state of the nation, notably during and after the war on terror, which occurred in the United States. As a consequence, Hosseini's words become equally important to the perseverance of women and Afghanistan in unfriendly and oppressive settings. According to this article, Hosseini makes a connection between the war on terror, foreign incursions, and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and issues that are affecting Afghan women. These issues include the relationship between traditions and modernity, women and Islam, mother-daughter relationships, resistance and rebellion, and women's desire for change and empowerment.

Through their research published in 2017, Khan and Qasim conducted an investigation titled *Feminist Politics of Representation: Portrayal of Afghan Women in Khalid Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The research went on to clarify that a significant section of the literature on how Afghan women are portrayed in Western fiction and media emphasizes the fact that they are frequently portrayed as passive victims of war, domestic abuse, and political repression. In these two modalities of representation, there is an astounding degree of agreement and reinforcement of the predominantly used picture. In the beginning, this essay aimed to analyze the depiction of Afghan women in Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and provide a feminist critique of those images. Second, an investigation has been conducted to determine whether or not Hosseini's portrayals of Afghan women were consistent with mainstream perceptions. According to the findings of the research, Hosseini, by making use of his advantageous location for his purposes, underrepresented Afghan women. His book contributed to the perpetuation of the negative stereotypes that Western media outlets have about prominent Afghan women. In addition to this, he placed an excessive amount of stress on the unavoidable role that the United States will play in the liberation of Afghan women. He has contributed to the discussion on Asia.

In the year 2020, Salman, Butt, and Mahmood conducted research titled *Violence Against Women in Afghan Patriarchal Setup Reflected Through Nadia Hashimi's A House Without Windows*. The current research investigates how the novel *A House Without Windows* by



Nadia Hashimi depicts brutality toward women in the context of a patriarchal society in Afghanistan. In addition, the purpose of this research is to determine the factors that contribute to the prevalence of violence against women in the patriarchal society of Afghanistan. Because of this, Sylvia Walby's study of violence has been utilized as a theoretical framework to conduct an in-depth examination of the provided material. According to the findings of the study, violence against women in Afghanistan is a significant factor that disrupts the harmony and understanding that exists within families. Textual analysis is the primary focus of the qualitative research project that is being conducted. In addition, it suggests that for women to contribute actively to the prosperity of society, they should be provided with an environment centered on freedom, which includes all of the legal safeguards they are entitled to. They should be protected against commercial exploitation.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

The research is carried out with the consideration of the fact that women are considered to be a subaltern in society and that their rights are gaining as a result of radical feminist ideas. Within the framework of Spivak's subaltern theory, women are portrayed as the subjugated portion of society. When women are not treated like humans, feminism creates problems that need to be addressed further. The right to vote was a cause that feminists advocated for to assert their rights in society. This right was established and supported by the inception of the first wave of feminism. The perspective of radical feminism, on the other hand, maintains that all women are currently confronted with the same challenges as a result of gender discrimination. In addition to this, they need to collaborate to dismantle the stereotypes that are prevalent in society. The third wave of feminists, on the other hand, rejected these beliefs since women all over the world suffer from a variety of challenges that these feminists do not accept. When compared to these other intellectuals, Spivak stands out and exerts a large amount of influence on them. In the piece of writing titled *Can the Subaltern Speak?* She casts doubt on the notion that sisters are identical to one another.

Spivak (1988), in a similar vein, is an advocate for the status of women in poor countries around the world. The interview that took place between Foucault and Deleuze is the starting point for her primary conclusions. Her observation is that Western narratives tend to portray Eastern or inferior characters in a manner that is not very accurate. She lays the foundations for her argument by arguing that white men want to protect brown women from brown men. This is the foundation of her argument. In a manner comparable to this, the white men in Afghanistan were first attempting to save the women before they established their interests. Spivak (1988) places a strong emphasis on the idea that because their problems are distinct from one another, they need their languages to speak for themselves.

Spivak (1988) asserts that sexual distinctions exacerbate the sufferings because, in addition to being subalterns represented by the West, women are also subjected to gender discrimination. This belief is supported by the fact that Spivak emphasizes women functioning as subalterns. If the inferior in a challenge to the formation of the boundary has no history and is unable to speak, then the author asserts that the inferior as a woman is even more completely

hidden in the shadows. She uses Sati as an illustration to shed light on the fact that this woman is subjected to double ostracism (self-immolation by a widow).

"Between patriarchy and imperialism, constitutional subject and formation object, the image of women dissolves not into a pure nonexistence but into a coil that depicts the third world women who are in between tradition and modernization," writes Spivak, as recounted in Gandhi (2001).

The study is going to discuss the main tenants as follows:

- There is the existence of the differences among people and the oppressed class of the society.
- Subalterns can gain their rights by raising their voice by the intellectuals towards the ruling people.
- The "epistemic violence" for the people living remotely and far-flung which are being considered as the heterogeneous project to constitute the subaltern.
- Intellectual power adopted by the upper class used as the discursive power for the productiveness of the specific subject in the society which must be practiced masterly by the individuals.
- There is the presence of dominant discourse in the society, so the production of alternate discourse by the oppressed class is hard nut to crack.
- The dominance of the upper-class discourse within the society tries to make assurance of the presence of the desired subjects and thoughts (Spivak, 1988).

Drawing upon these feminist notions, the study has tried to explore the elements of oppression on women using the textual analysis method.

#### **4. Textual Analysis**

Experienced international news correspondent, Abawi shares a shocking and heartbreaking story of love, honor, and treachery. Fatima is a Hazara girl who was brought up to be devout and submissive. A Pashtun child named Samiullah was brought up to uphold his tribe's customs. It was not meant for them to be lovers. However, they do. And while Fatima and Samiullah struggle to stay together against the Taliban, their families, and their cultures, the narrative that follows demonstrates both the beauty and the violence of modern-day Afghanistan. This amazing book is a must-read for anybody who lived during America's War in Afghanistan, based on the individuals Abawi encountered and the events she covered during her nearly five years there.

Subalterns have to suffer in the ruling and agenda-setting classes' suppression. Spivak (1988) endorsed the idea that there exist the differences among people and the oppressed class of the society. Patriarchal societies do not let women live a life of sovereignty and the life of freedom. The reflection of society is evident when a male and female seem to be cursed when they like to love each other and live a loving life. It can also be understood that the ruling class keep themselves as the more civilized and closer to God, and similar aspects can be observed in the lines as "They call themselves God's soldiers. Those words are like an evil pass to condone their wickedness" (Abawi, 2014, p. 11).The stretches of power and the discourse by Samiullah

present that the subalterns are not the people who are close to God and more civilized yet they are considered to have different standards. Spivak (1988) says a complicated relationship exists between the subalterns and the suppressing people. He further explores that there is the existence of the complicated relationship between the powerful and subordinated people. Similarly, the complicated relationship is of "threat," which shows that the suppressors threaten the subalterns as the lines show "Some say they are the Taliban, but we don't know if they're connected to the real Taliban. All we know is that they are dangerous"(Abawi, 2014, p. 11). These lines present the complicated relations of the threat, fear and obedience to follow the set rules.

Set rules and the norms of society lead to distracted human relations. In the patriarchal society, the dominance of the male members sets the norms, values, and rules for the rest of the humans. Cruelty, suppression, and divergence of humanity are rooted in the patriarchal society, which leads to the sense of inhuman actions for women. The lines present that subalterns do not have voice yet they must follow the rules. Women, as subalterns in the patriarchal society, deserve many of the aspects that would be of protection and freedom of life. In the lines, the mother calls mercy for her daughter. "'Oh? Tobah. Tobah." My mother shakes her head in frustration, asking for God's forgiveness as she always does. Not for herself, of course, but for her wicked daughter" (Abawi, 2014, p.32). It shows that the subalterns are prey to the complicated relations, rules, and norms that do not allow women to perform with free will and the choice of life. Women as subalterns have a different existence in society. Spivak (1988), endorsed the idea that there is the existence of the differences among people and the oppressed class of the society. Patriarchal society follows the man-made rules, which are not necessarily related to the kind aspects, especially for women.

The advice of the mother for Fatima is, "You are forbidden from seeing him. You are not a child anymore, and I won't allow you to ruin our name by being seen with him or any other boy" (Abawi, 2014, p. 32) presents the ideological stretches. The power stretches where society's norms, terms, and customs are highly obliged while the humans have to follow them only. Spivak, (1988) elucidates that these are being challenged and manipulated by the invisible, powerful people that challenge sovereignty. So, along these lines, the sovereignty of the female gender is challenged, and she is not given the choice of living and selecting her course. Differences are produced as the women as the subalterns are assured that there is a difference rather than those are assured that they are the central part of the concern (Spivak, 1988). Spivak's same idea is seen in the lines. "She carries the potatoes to the *tandoor*, where a pot is waiting with a half-liter of oil. Underneath the pot, a steady fire is burning, fueled by two dried dung patties. She dices the potatoes and a small tomato, drops it all in the pot, and lets it cook" (Abawi,2014, p. 32). It shows that women have to suffer as the potatoes have to suffer in the fire. The stretches of power and the complicated relations are baseless and have firm concerns with marginalizing women rather than giving them human rights for human freedom and actions.

Subalterns are given the theology of a particular type, saying that the following ideology and the stretches of power are in the hands of specific persons. Similar things can be observed in the lines as the rigid limits of family and rules of families are enforced in the subalterns' minds. A similar discourse can be observed in the lines "I am disgusted at how he can so easily defend



people who are not even family, who are not even from our ethnicity, let alone our tribe!" (Abawi,2014, p.50). It shows that the subalterns are told that their lives depend on the suppressors' set rules, norms, and values. Theology regarding women show that people have to prey on certain aspects as they would have to rigidly follow the rules of suppressors. Inhuman actions and rules lead families towards power and the monarchy.

"This land was given to us by King Abdur Rahman Khan, who wanted to spread the Pashtun power throughout our country! He kept Afghanistan from breaking up into separate states! Besides, the land was not even being used when given to our tribe! I retort," (Abawi,2014, p.50). Spivak (1988) endorsed the same idea as when she discusses the power of of discourse that is tried to be inlaid in the people's minds. Intellectual power adopted by the upper class is used as the discursive power for the productiveness of the specific subject in the society which must be practiced masterly by the individuals. Her idea states that the discursive practices as the suppressors put in the minds of the subalterns that they are not equal to them. These aspects tend to produce discourses that try to make people and humans think that life should be bound to follow the cultural and social standards. The standardization seems abandoned, saying that women have no choice or the other families have to choose to have marriage in their own family. Spivak (1988) further says that the dominance of the upper-class discourse within the society tries to make assurance of the presence of the desired subjects and thoughts. So, the lines are clearly saying the supremacy of the family, norms, culture, and values that could crush the self-choice of living and self-desire of liking for women.

Afghanistan has both patriarchal and absurd features of its culture. The man-made customs, values, attitudes, behaviors, and ideologies present in Afghan culture and patriarchal society imply that the society is entirely composed of so-called values. While the patriarchal society asserts its supremacy and treats the underclass as an outcast and the act of falling in love is perceived as a crime. There are issues with the unseen forces that describe how maintaining a particular society is necessary to construct social norms and values. While adopting these manufactured ideals would be painful and torturous. As Spivak (1988), says the powerful people had not chosen a vocabulary that would express their dominance. It is evident from how things are formed that marginalizatio."I said, "WHERE is she?" Mullah Latif yells at the old peasant again. His children call out, "Baba, Baba!" waiting for their protector to do something. But he can't. All of us surround him. He is helpless" (Abawi, 2014, p. 96). These lines presents the male dominance, which is the core aspect of a patriarchal society. The master in this regard is known as Mullah Latif, and the father of Fatima has to follow him at all costs. Spivak (1988), explains that the dominance of the upper-class discourse within the society tries to make assurance of the presence of the desired subjects and thoughts and this dominance is constructed to get desired results.

In the patriarchal system, suppression and oppression are related in every way. Male dominance results in the implementation of such directives that must be followed at all costs. Spivak (1988) assisted people in understanding what is meant by the term "violence" by describing it as "the "epistemic violence" for the people living remotely and far away, which are considered as the heterogeneous project to constitute the subaltern. Therefore, this violence had

to occur with Fatima and Samiullah so that this could be observed in the lines "I heard what you said, my son." Mullah Sarwar doesn't even blink an eye. He seems as calm and gentle as before. And for once, he stops flicking his beads and looks at me. I understand you are very angry. But you should know that your rage is not because of Sami or that poor girl"(Abawi, 2014, p.117). These lines indicate that subalterns' lives are always in danger and that their voices are suppressed. Due to the actions that are deemed unethical for them, these people are not allowed the opportunity to live a free life. In a patriarchal society where marriage terms and conditions are very different, women's standing is wholly ignored. It demonstrates that women's lives have to be characterized by misery. Women's suffering is not based on objectives or sentiments. The only thing that seems psychologically plausible is that women are the underdogs and will not have a voice, even though Spivak (1988) discusses the infringement of human rights and the subjugation of people. Human voices are completely suppressed in Afghan society because subaltern voices are recognized as a form of resistance against oppression, and subalterns must also maintain oppression.

Spivak (1988) talks about the suppression and the discourse adopted by the oppressors as she endorsed that, here is the presence of dominant discourse in the society so the production of alternate discourse by the oppressed class is hard nut to crack (Spivak, 1988). This idea is visible in the lines, "The anger is a part of the darkness you are holding inside yourself. It is a darkness you must let go. No one can fix your heart but you. Not the men out there and not even your family" (Abawi, 2014, p.117). These lines present that a rigid patriarchal society follows self-norms and values rather than the ethics and feelings of women. Suppression is their tool to dump the feelings and freedom of women as subalterns in their society.

## 5. Findings and Conclusion

The following are the major findings of the study:

- Women are subalterns, and they have no voices against the patriarchal society in Afghanistan. Giving threat and creating fear are the tools of the oppressors.
- The subjugation of subaltern groups is a natural consequence of social standards. The dominating people in the community and the males make up the bedrock upon which the society is built. The situation is more worse here in Afghan society because of the significant age difference between the prospective spouses. Still, Fatima's parents are eager to arrange a marriage for their daughter.
- Society has no plan to entertain the desires of the females within it and it demonstrates that male individuals have complete control over the social constructions, which weave the web of oppression around women
- Establishing rules and standards for a community inevitably results in the disruption of interpersonal relationships. In a patriarchal culture, the standards, values, and regulations for the rest of humanity are defined by the dominant male members of the family. Although family terms and family problems are typically discussed in their entirety, yet patriarchal societies are characterized by the dominance of male members.



- The patriarchal society is the foundation of cruelty, oppression, and divergence of humanity, and it is this society that leads to a perception of inhuman actions being taken against women.
- The women are forced to endure the same torment the potatoes did in the oven. The abuses of power and the tangled web of ties are without foundation, and their primary focus is on relegating women to the margins of society rather than granting human rights that protect individual's liberty.
- Suppression of the male can lead to devastation and suffering, which can be social, intellectual, familial and economic. Fatima was forced to go through all of the these pains and sufferings.
- Subalterns are taught a specific type of theology, which conveys the message that the ideology and the stretches of power are in the hands of particular individuals. The "rigid limits of the family" and the "rules of families" are also incorporated into the minds of the subalterns.

## References

- Abawi, A. (2014). *The Secret Sky*. Penguin Random House.
- Ashraf A, & Kennedy-Pipe C. (2022). Woman, War, and the Politics of Emancipation in Afghanistan. *LSE Public Policy Review*, 2(3), 1–11.
- Bezhan, F. (2008). Obedient and resistant: Afghanistani women in Maryam Mahboob's short stories, *Women's Studies International Forum*, 31, 373–382.
- Bezhan, F. (2006). *Afghanistani Storytelling and Writing: History, Performance and Forms*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: MAI Press. Blumbe.
- Fauzia, S. N. & Rahayu, C. A. (2019). Women's Struggle against Patriarchy: An Analysis of Radical Feminism Through Nadia Hashimi's A House Without Windows. *ANAPHORA Journal of Language Literary and Cultural Studies*, 2(1), 1-9.
- Imran, M. (2019). Review of the book Katherena Vermette River Woman. *World Literature Today*, 93 (3), 104–105.
- Imran, M. & Ismail, S. M. (2022). *Khaled Hosseini's women as modern archetypes: A study of obedient, resistant, and empowered Afghan women*. *Front. Social*. 7:1041435. doi: 10.3389/fsoc.2022.1041435.
- Imran, M., and Hart, X. M. (2019). *Review of We are Afghan Women: Voices of Hope*, By George W. Bush Institute. Laura Bush (Forward). New York: Scribner.
- Khan, U. M, & Qasim, M. (2017). Feminist Politics of Representation: Portrayal of Afghan Women in Khalid Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns. *Journal of Applied Environmental and Biological Science*, 7(9), 127-136.
- Moghadam, V. M. (2003). *Modernizing women: Gender and social change in the Middle East*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Salman, M. Butt, H. M., & Mahmood, S. (2020). Violence Against Women in Afghan Patriarchal Setup Reflected Through Nadia Hashimi's A House Without Windows. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 4(1), 23-33.
- Spivak, G. (1988). *Can the subaltern speak?* In: Williams P and Chrisman L (eds) *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. Columbia University Press: New York, pp 66–111.