

Investigating the Concept of Misogyny in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*: A Feminist Perspective

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Abstract

The study aims to investigate the concept of misogyny and the status of women which are discursively constructed in the textual representation of the selected text. The qualitative research methodology has been applied along with a descriptive research design. 5 passages have been selected as a sample purposively under domestic and physical violence from the chapter 1 and 3 of the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* written by Khaled Hosseini. The selected passages have been analyzed by applying a three-dimensional model of Fairclough. The conceptual framework of the research is woven around Lazar's gender perspective in feminist critical discourse analysis. The findings have provided a vivid picture of women's suffering and struggle for equality and rights which is discursively enacted in the form of men's gaze of hatred. The ultimate purpose of this study is to focus on women's freedom, equality, education not only in Afghanistan but all over the world.

Keywords: CDA, FCDA, feminism, female identity, misogyny

1. Introduction

Misogyny is basically about hatred and hostility to women. The main cause of this cruel act is suspicion and discontent with women which leads to major forms of misogyny such as brutality, belittling, verbal and physical abuse. Misogyny has engulfed women's importance in society and their existence as human beings.

Khaled Hosseini, an Afghan-born American novelist describes the concept of misogynism through the portrayal of women characters who are subordinated by the men to show oppression and hostility in a marriage relationship in his novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. To raise sympathy for the Afghan women, Khaled Hosseini has written the story from the women's perspective. It unveils crucial issues such as gender discrimination, subordination, marginalization, no education, health issues, and above all physical, psychological, and domestic violence through the struggle of female characters.

The basic aim of critical discourse analysis; a kind of discourse analytical research to find out how inequality, dominance, and social abuse of power are practiced, replicated, and produced a struggle by text and talk in a social and political context. The CDA analysts took the position to comprehend text critically and expose the fabricated layers of meaning in order to make traditional or current social norms explicit. In this approach, Lazar (2007) has added a feminist perspective in CDA, considering gender as an ideological social structure that causes the division of people into two groups men and women based on their sexual differences that is the main cause of domination of men over women.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Misogyny has been seen all over the world where females are dominated, suppressed, and ultimately killed by male characters in different societies, especially in Afghan society. Many voices have been made in this prolonged oppression in the history of feminism to defend their rights which are continued. This problem needs a logical discussion, argumentation, and feminist critical analysis of those linguistic choices which are used to handle, talk, and treat women.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The present study is noteworthy in analyzing linguistic and discursive choices from the perspective of gender through Fairclough's tri-faced model. The study is also important for the identification of those misogynistic oriented lexical choices which are constructed to oppress and torture women on the individual, institutional, and social grounds. The reason to conduct the present study on this topic is: Gilmore (2009) has argued that misogyny is a neglected topic and should be addressed to create a sense of gender equality. In short, the study has inculcated a sense of consciousness among the students, law reformers, and readers about women's rights and helped them to identify the true value of women, so they can raise a strong reformatory voice in defense of female rights.

1.3 Research Objectives

- To highlight the linguistics and discursive choices which have been constructed in the discourse of the novel to represent different forms of misogyny in Afghan society.
- To demonstrate a deep insight into the status of women and their rights under patriarchal and misogynistic society according to the novel under study.

1.4 Research Questions

- How does Khaled Hosseini discursively construct misogyny in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*?
- How does the novelist discursively represent the status of women in Afghan society in the novel under study?

2. Review of Literature

Fairclough (1992) has described discourses as language systematic patterns insignificant contexts such as political and medical discourse in an everyday situation. Fitch (2005) has explained the focus of discourse analysis is on the text's internal structure. CDA is a discourse analytical approach that views language as social practice based on the reproduction of text and speaking of social and political contexts (Fairclough, 1995).

The connection of Critical Discourse Analysis with feminism is brought together by Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) for the very first time. The main purpose of this nexus is to advance a nuanced and rich understanding of the intricate workings of ideology and power in discourse maintaining and supporting gendered social order. FCDA is the combination of post-structuralist, third-wave feminist theorization of gender with the current forms of Critical Linguistics. (Lazar, 2005; Lehtonen, 2007). The textual analysis aims in feminist CDA is to build a connection between representation of gender in discourses with text, its social, cultural context. Its aim is not oriented around the response of readers nor the intentions of the writer. Citation of all the feminist discourse analysts shows that they have utilized the tri-phased model of Fairclough, regarding it the most appropriate and detailed model for analyzing texts and also helpful for methodological details.

Manne (2017) considers misogyny and sexism distinct from each other. Sexism is considered as the name of the ideology, while on the other hand, misogyny is defined as “police force”, punishing and suppressing those women who try to deviate from it. The societies having prevalent misogyny are more violent towards women. There is no law against those husbands who abuse their wives (individual level) considering it a family matter by the police officer (institutional level). Some other views highlight the punishment and control over those women who try to challenge and raise their voice against male dominance.

Khan (2016) explored in his study the concept of discursive power from the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* written by Khaled Hosseini under CDA perspective by using the tri-phased model of Fairclough as a methodological framework and theoretically used

the perspectives and views of "Michelle M. Lazar." Khan (2017) has also investigated the concept of the national identity of Afghan from the same novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* under the umbrella of CDA by using an important approach; "Dialectical Relational Approach" of Fairclough (1989). Khan and Qureshi (2018) have conducted a study on analyzing the role played by the politics of voices in two novels of Khaled Hosseini, one of them is *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

As compared to previous studies, no significant study has been conducted on *A Thousand Splendid Suns* on the issue of misogyny from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis; Fairclough's model under the theoretical underpinnings of Feminist CDA. The researcher has delimited the current study to only these forms of misogyny such as violence (verbal and domestic) from only one English novel (selected passages) written by Khaled Hosseini on Afghanistan.

3. Research Methodology

The qualitative method has been adopted by the researcher to investigate the concept of misogyny and how women face deprivations in the form of their rights and status under the effects of misogyny. Throughout the current study, a descriptive-analytic method, based on the critical discourse analysis model given by Norman Fairclough (1989, 2001, 2010) has been utilized by the researcher to give answers to the research questions. The selected text of the novel is an appropriate sample of the methodological instrument including most of the linguistic choices are gender-oriented. The researcher has adopted purposive sampling which is a type of non-probability sampling technique. Oliver (2006) highlights purposive sampling as one in which a researcher chooses a specific sample based on importance, capacity, and research problems. So, the researcher has opted novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* from which five passages have been chosen purposively under these forms of misogyny; verbal and physical violence. The passages are taken from the chapter 1 and 3 of the novel after thorough study because in these two chapters the concept of misogyny is the most dominant. The reasons behind selecting only five passages are due to the phenomenon of interest and time constraint because the researcher applied all the tools of Fairclough's model. Sentences have been numbered for the reference purpose in the data analysis part. The researcher herself is the instrument of the analysis under the analytical framework but the researcher has used MS Word to create tables.

3.1 Analytical Framework of the Research

3.1.1 Norman Fairclough's model of CDA

According to the purpose of the current study, the three-dimensional model of Fairclough is used to analyze formal properties of text in the form of three stages, named as description (text analysis), interpretation (discursive practices), and explanation (social practice). These stages are as follows:

3.1.1.1 Description: Text analysis

This is the first stage of the text analysis. In this stage, the identification and labelling of the textual or linguistic features of the text regarded to vocabulary (at the choices of word-level), grammar (at the sentence level), and textual structures (at structural level) are done from the discourse under study as a text. These ten tools are based on ten questions presented by Fairclough (1989).

3.1.1.2 Interpretation: Process analysis

The second stage of the text analysis in Fairclough's model is the interpretation stage which deals with a process analysis of text production and consumption. In this stage, discourse is regarded in the light of discursive practice. It is noticed that discourse (or discursive structure) and society (or social structure) are not having a direct relationship but it is facilitated with the "Members' Resources" (MR) of the participants. Furthermore, the analyst of critical discourse analysis will have to highlight and analyze speech acts and presuppositions for the interpretation of the intertextual context.

3.1.1.3 Explanation: Social analysis

This is the third stage of the model in which discourse is dealt with as a social practice. This third stage views discourse as a part and as a social practice (of the process) of social struggle and it is also considered as social analysis. This step is linked with the interaction of social structures (the relations between power and dominance here) and social practices (it includes discourse as a social practice).

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Domestic Violence (Physical and Verbal Abuse)

4.1.1 Passage No. 1

(1) "Shut up, you," Rasheed snapped.....

(19) Youwhore? (Hosseini, 2007, p. 328-329)

4.1.2 Description: Text analysis

Tool 1: Lexicalization

“Liali,” “Majnoon,” “old times,” “stony,” “finger,” “my son,”
“Harami,” “fool,” “whore” (S1-19)

Tool 2: Information focus

Rewording: “you let him in,” “here” (S7, 8, 10, 11)

Over wording: “duped,” “lied” (S12, 13) “Harami;” “whore” (S18)

Block Letters: “AND YOU DIDN'T LIE TO ME?” (S16)

Tool 3: Pattern of transitivity

Transitive: “turned,” “duped,” (S2, 6, 12)

Intransitive: “snapped,” “roared” (S1, 16)

Tool 4: Active/Passive

Active

Tool 6: Choice of mode

Imperative:(S1) “Shut up, you,”

Interrogative: (S3) “Well, what do you know?”

(S16) “AND YOU DIDN'T LIE TO ME?”

(S18) “About your harami?”

(S19) “you whore?”

Declarative: Remaining sentences.

Tool 7: Choice of modality

Relational: “would” (S15)

Expressive adverb: “here” (S11)

Tool 8: Cohesive devices

“So,” “just like” (S5,7)

Tool 9: Interactional conventions

Formulation, controlling topic are used by Rasheed, and interruption is used by Laila.

Tool 10: Structure of the text from the thematic perspective

Rasheed's assertive way of asking questions and giving answers by himself makes Laila confess about her relation with Tariq.

4.1.3 Interpretation and social analysis

The interpretation of the passage shows 'abuse of power verbally.' The present situation revolves around the dinner table when Rasheed gets to know from Zalmai about visiting Tariq in his home. Zalmai's confession makes the situation bitter-serious for Mariam and Laila because Rasheed's way of investigation is harsh and insulting. Rasheed investigates Laila about Tariq and his presence in his home. She accuses him of lying about the death of Tariq. Rasheed repeats to Laila that she has also spoken a lie about the identity of Aziza's father and ridicules her by calling her a whore and bastard.

'Institution of the family' is shown in the discourse where discourse has been produced by the two speakers who are husband and wife by relation. Rasheed is talking in an insulting way to accuse her wife which is explained through expressive values of words, mode of sentences, modality, and turn-taking system which presuppose their past incidents and intensity of the present situation. The speech acts that are communicated in the discourse are 'assertive' and 'directives' in the form of putting forward the information, asking authoritatively, demanding, and ordering in an angry mood. The word "Majnoon" and "old times" presupposes the 'relation of Laila with Tariq.' Moreover, the word "whore" is a confirmation of Rasheed's belief about Laila's illegitimate relation with Tariq' without any proper proof.

This analysis under the social norms of Afghanistan shows Rasheed's attempt to make her wives feel inferior in their position. Males are allowed to do whatever they want to do, they can have magazines having naked women, having illegitimate relations with women (Jalil's relation with Nana) and above all, they have the freedom to talk with everyone. On the other hand, a woman is beaten and subjected to insult and ridicule even based on suspicion. Rasheed's rage is without any proof, surely not born due to loss of love, but rather that he has been feeling shamed. Mariam has been faced this abuse and insult without any offense for a long time. She has tolerated the longest span of abuse and violence. The discourse producer has used the term 'harami' as an instrument throughout the novel to accuse female characters and as a placeholder for the bitter fact about the

position of the women as the lowest rung of the social ladder in Afghanistan. Laila's struggle for her identity is covert but ultimately, she is suppressed through male power.

4.1.4 Passage No. 2 & 3

(1) Rasheed made a ball of rice..... (36) Then he was gone.....
fragments of Two broken molars. (Hosseini, 2007, p. 101-103)

4.1.5 Description: Text analysis

Tool 1: Lexicalization

“a ball of rice,” “handful of pebbles,” “mouth,” “powerful hands,”
“fingers,” “mouth,” “cold,” “hard pebbles,” “tears,” “Bad food,”
“nothing,” “blood,” “Two broken molars” (S1-36)

Tool 2: Information focus

Over wording: “snatched;” “clasped” (S14, 21) “Shoved;” “forced” (S22)
Rewording: “What’s the matter,” “Get up,” “put,” “mouth,” “pebbles,” “fingers,”
“CHEW,” “Now you know” (S1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 22, 24, 25, 27, 33,
34, 36)
Block letters: “CHEW,” “TWO”

Tool 3: Pattern of transitivity

Transitive: “snatched,” “dropped,” “clasped,” “shoved,” “pried,” “forced,”
“struggled,” “mumbled” (S14, 21, 22, 23, 25)
Ditransitive: “given” (S34)
Intransitive: “mewled,” “swear,” “curled,” “bellowed,” “slammed,” “chewed,”
“cracked” (S6, 10, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30)

Tool 4: Active/Passive

Active

Tool 6: Choice of mode

Imperative: (S12, 14) “Get up,” (S12) “Come here” (S15) “Put these in your
mouth” (S17) “Put”
(S20) “Stop it, Rasheed, I’m” (S24) “Now chew,” (S27) “CHEW!”
Interrogative: (S3, 6) “What’s the matter?”
Declarative: Remaining sentences

Tool 7: Choice of modality

Relational: “could” (S5)

Expressive: “That’s,” “you’ve” (S9, 34)

Adverbs: “once,” “twice,” “again,” “Now” (S2, 6, 24, 33, 34)

Tool 8: Cohesive devices

“But,” “and” (S2, 14, 22, 24, 25, 35, 36)

Tool 9: Interactional conventions

Interruption, formulation, and controlling topic are the devices used by Rasheed.

Tool 10: Structure of the text from the thematic perspective

The structure of this discourse consists of descriptions and dialogues in which Rasheed is threatening and punishing Mariam through extreme domestic violence.

4.1.6 Interpretation and social analysis.

The situation before the lines is related to the birth of the baby girl; Laila at Rasheed's neighbors. The passage which is under analysis shows that imposing one's will on someone who is trying to resist, in terms of abuse of power (see Weber, 1978 for more details). Rasheed claims that rice is undercooked and as a punishment, he takes in a handful of pebbles, which he pushes forcefully into the mouth of Mariam with such cruelty that causes breaking her two molars. He is so ungrateful and accuses Mariam that in their marriage life, she has given nothing except bad food. There is no love and happiness in their marriage only hatred of a man towards his wife which is purely his misogynistic behavior.

‘The institution of marriage’ is involved in the process while distributing power unequally. There are two participants in producing discourse having the relation of husband and wife. The use of abusive language by Rasheed and his actions presupposes his past relationship with his wife. He is habitual in it due to his authoritative, forceful, and comfortable way of giving torture.

The social matrix of the passage shows 'implementation of misogyny by males through physical abuse in the form of domestic violence in the culture of Afghanistan. Rasheed shows his disappointment and displeasure with the food cooked by Mariam. He regards her as his commodity and property as a reproduction machine (misogynistic

behavior). He ridicules and insults her psychologically and physically which shows the violence and deformity through losing her two teeth. The “teeth” show the hidden emotional pain of the women and the mercilessness of the men in the social practices of Afghanistan. The representation of blood shows physical pain. This inhuman attitude of Rasheed creates great displeasure in Mariam's mind about Rasheed. Mariam has been treated by her husband as less than animals because the female characters are forced to do things according to their desires and wills. The struggle of females for their identity is encoded overtly. This also shows the 'law of Afghanistan' where husbands are allowed to scold, beat, and ultimately kill their wives. It is considered as the right of a husband to beat his wife and appropriate according to their policy. The intertextuality shows the proof of it; as police officer considered it as: "As a matter of policy, we do not interfere with private family matters, hamshira" (Hosseini, 2007, p.260)

4.1.7 Passage No. 4 & 5

(1) Laila didn't see the punch coming..... (17) Her shirt had been ripped down the front. (Hosseini, 2007, p. 261-262)

4.1.8 Description: Text analysis

Tool 1: Lexicalization

Punch, “all fours,” “wide-eyed,” “red-faced,” “tender place,” “lower tip of the breastbone,” “belly button,” “husky,” “choking sound,” “Dribble,” “tiny feet,” “pain,” “the beating,” “methodical,” “familiar proceeding,” “no cursing,” “no screaming,” “no pleading,” “no surprised yelps,” “the systematic business,” “the thump, thud,” “wooden club,” “side of beef,” “blood,” “pain” (S1-17)

Tool 2: Information focus

Over wording: “striking; hitting; slapping” (S12, 13)

Rewording: “Aziza,” “screaming,” “beating,” “thump,” “hair,” “neck,” “repeatedly blood,” “ripped” (S4,7,8,9,10 12,14,15,16,17)

Metaphorical comparison: “car,” “wooden club” (S3,13)

Italic: “thump” (S12)

Tool 3: Pattern of transitivity

Transitive: “hit,” “dropped,” “hung,” “dragged,” “ripped,” “striking,” “hitting,” “slapping” (S3,4,6,7, 12, 13)

Intransitive: “screaming,” “watered” (S4,9)

Tool 4: Active/Passive

Passive:

- (S6) "Dribble hung from her mouth"
- (S7) "Then she was being dragged by the hair"
- (S9) "Hair was ripped from Laila's scalp"
- (S17) "Her shirt had been ripped down the front"

Tool 6: Choice of mode

All declarative

Tool 7: Choice of modality

Expressive: "was," "could" (S3, 5, 12, 13)

Adverbs: "again," "over," "repeatedly" (S5,13,15)

Tool 8: Cohesive devices

"If," "and" (S2, 3, 5, 9, 12, 15, 16)

Tool 10: Structure of the text from the thematic perspective

The structure of the above passage shows that there is a description of domestic violence which is done by Rasheed on two female characters Mariam and Laila and his daughter Aziza.

4.1.9 Interpretation and social analysis.

Both women have been interrogated fiercely by an officer at the police station. Due to lack of necessary detail, their story doesn't seem true and they have been returned to their husband, Rasheed. The lines under analysis show the 'misogynistic behavior of Rasheed in the form of physical abuse.' He beats an educated girl Laila with intense anger in the form of punches and drags her by the hair for locking her and his daughter; Aziza in Mariam's room. Later, he abuses Mariam cruelly and locks her too in the tool shed without giving them food and water. Even, he doesn't show any mercy for his daughter.

'The institution of the family' is involved in this process. There is the involvement of the three participants in the extract related to the description of the doer; Rasheed who is performing violence on his wives, Mariam and Laila, and innocent daughter Aziza. Rasheed's torture of female characters shows his dominance. His act of violence presupposes the previous violence that he does on Mariam previously and caused physical damage: "Then he was gone, leaving Mariam to spit out pebbles, blood, and the

fragments of Two broken molars." (Hosseini, 2007, p.103). Moreover, the word "familiar" presupposes Mariam's beating similar to Laila's and her experience of beating Mariam and his previous wife, and shows his comfort and brutality while imposing this torture. He has a good attitude sometimes with Laila when she gave birth to a boy.

The analysis through social perspective shows brutal consequences have to face women when they challenge the power of men or disobey them in that society. It also a hint towards cultural violence and a high level of physical aggression which is done on women in Afghan Society where women are struggling for their identity as the writer has overtly encoded in the text. From verbal abuse, Rasheed has shifted his focus towards full-throttle violence and wife-beating which is also a prevailing issue in the history of Afghanistan. Even her daughter Aziza, the innocent party is not forgiven by Rasheed's anger. This brutality is an indication of the sexist, violent culture in which they live. Moreover, it also delineates Rasheed's attitude of violence towards women. He considers women as his property and treats them according to his wish (a house cat). He shows his complete control over Mariam and Laila's fate when he locks them without giving them water, food, and sunlight. The reason for his doubled power is the laws that are against women in Kabul, so they couldn't escape from this torture. Submission to the will of men was the only way of their survival.

4.2 Results and Findings

The results of Tool No 1 are following from passages 1 to 5:

Table 4.1

Verbal abuse

Attributions for women	Men suppress women in the form of their:
Deceitful wife	Malice
Harami	Volatile temperament
Whore	Murderous intent

Table 4.1 shows how females are abused verbally by males using those linguistic features which are having negative experiential values. The percentage of the word "nothing" is the highest percentage in the passages and the word "harami" is used 20 times for female characters; Mariam and Laila throughout the novel are used as an instrument to show men's treatment. Men abuse women while showing all the negative gestures and reactions which are linguistically constructed in the lexical features. It shows that women are always subjected to hostile behaviors of males and are addressed

through negative attributions and names an instant of misogyny. The results of Tool No 1 are following from passages 1 to 5:

Table 4.2

Physical abuse and its effects

Physical violence (Nouns)	Physical violence (Verbs)	Effects on women
Violence	Roared	Fear
Punches	Hit	Blood
Handful of pebbles	Pushed	Two broken molars

Table 4.2 shows the discursive construction of lexical items in the form of nouns and verbs which shows how Mariam and Laila are subjected to domestic violence and how they suffer physically due to this physical torture. Column 1 shows the linguistic choices which are used for assaults and column 2 shows the verbs which act as violent actions and column 3 presents the pain of Laila and Mariam. This is the strongest form of misogyny in which hatred is shown through domestic violence.

4.5.1 Findings

These are some findings under the stage of interpretation and social analysis:

- In 'the institution of family,' discourse has been produced through the 'unequal distribution' of power which shows the relation of the dominant with the subordinate.
- The theme of 'suppression of women by male members' in Afghanistan is represented through Rasheed's exerting power and abuse of that through physical and domestic violence in patriarchal Afghan society.
- Instrumental usage of linguistic features such as 'nothing' and 'harami' as a placeholder for the bitter fact about the position of the women as the lowest rung of the social ladder in Afghanistan.
- Rasheed has committed all types of direct violence such as psychological, physical, and above all child abuse which shows the 'status of women as an animal in that society.'
- The struggle of female characters for their identity is covert but ultimately, Laila and Mariam are suppressed by male power; verbal and physical power.

- The damage of parts of the body shows the hidden emotional pain of the women and the mercilessness of the men in the social practices of Afghanistan. The representation of blood shows the intensity of physical pain.
- The analysis through social perspective shows brutal consequences have been faced by women when they challenge the power of men or disobey them in that society.
- Sexual or psychological harm to women also includes acts such as threats, deprivation of liberty in private and public life. Moreover, this abuse and violence against women can also be defined as gender-based violence.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

These findings give proof of 'implementation of misogyny by males through physical abuse in the form of domestic violence in the culture of Afghanistan from the perspective of Hosseini. Analysis at the societal level shows that all three female characters are subjected to a male's verbal and physical abuse and Rasheed finds fault in everything which clearly shows the manifestation of misogyny in the domestic context of Afghanistan in the novel under study.

Conclusively, through critical discourse analysis of the text from the feminist perspective, it has been clearly shown that the ideology of gender and power relations are reproduced, negotiated, and contested in the representation of social practices between people, and people's social and personal identities in text and talk (Lazar, 2005). The overall analysis of the selected text from the novel has provided a vivid picture of women's suffering and struggle for equality and rights which is discursively enacted in the form of the gaze of hatred of men under and verbal abuse of power. The analysis of the selected and limited discourse represents that Hosseini has exposed gendered social practices and relations that are having impacts on social transformation. The research findings also provide justification that how the writer portrays Afghanistan society as a patriarchal social order; which is beneficial for men as a social group and excludes women from all the rights while empowering them. The ultimate purpose of this study is to focus on women's freedom, equality, education not only in Afghanistan and Pakistan but all over the world. Therefore, CDA and FCDA provide solid analytical and theoretical foundations for the investigation of critical issues from the perspective of gender inequalities.

5.1 Recommendations

- In further studies, a corpus-driven approach can be added along with quantitative and mixed-method approaches of research.
- In upcoming studies, it is also recommended that other types of discourse can be taken for investigating the problem from a broader perspective.
- Future researchers can investigate the other forms of misogyny such as sexual objectification, sex discrimination, and belittling of women.

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