The study in this thesis analyses Afghan women’s lives and roles which are believed to be tied up to patriarchal rules in aspect of society and politic. The analysis aims on the images of the women which likely become determinant of society’s treatments to them. Finding different images between the women themselves, and different treatments to them by society, the analysis is led to be conducted by using theory of marxist feminism which gives explanation of the phenomenon. Applying Eagleton and Milne’s marxist feminism, it is seen that the women themselves, are actually divided into two different social classes: bourgeois and proletariat. Having guided by the theory and other similar ones, it is found that not all of women oppressed and bound by patriarchy. Hence, Afghan women’s lives and roles are apparently different each other depend on social class they belong. While bourgeois women are immune to any oppression because of being powerful in economy, the proletariat ones are oppressed by society which is ruled by patriarchal concept.

Keywords: Afghan women, patriarchal culture, women class division, marxist feminism

Introduction

By examining some feminist’s literary works, it can be seen that most of them focus on exposing gender inequality as the main cause of oppression. However, according to MacKinnon, feminism’s focus is not merely about oppression caused by gender inequality. Feminist literary criticism has sought for other factors and aspects which cause oppression on women alongside gender (516). It results in intersection of feminism with other theories. As the outcome, feminism spreads into some focuses and varieties. One of them is marxist feminism which focuses on oppression on women caused by social class inequality due to inequality in economy (Eagleton and Milne 37). However, finding literary work on marxist feminism is not an easy thing since most of oppressions concern on either gender or class inequality only which is shortly related to marxism or feminism only. Yet, it is barely found in a novel entitles “A Thousand Splendid Suns”.

“A Thousand Splendid Suns” is a novel which is depicted from real condition of Afghanistan. The novel has been rewarded as “New York Times Best Seller”
and made into a movie. Unlike other feminist novels, “A thousand Splendid Suns” is written by a man, named after Khaled Hosseini. As an afghan man, Hosseini concerns on situation of Afghanistan as he reflects life of many afghan women in the novel who are described marginalized in social and political scope. Nevertheless, as seen in the novel, the oppression and persecution do not happen to women in general, but only to poor women which raise phenomenon of men’s different treatment. To make it brief, women of bourgeois social class that are rich cannot be touched by the hand of oppression while those from proletariat who are poor, are totally oppressed.

Having a look at the phenomenon above, the different treatments to women in different social class which are reflected in the novel become something unique and interesting points to be analyzed. Generally, oppression occurs to woman in common, and it is based on the images on them which are always the same in every patriarchal culture (Bressler 119). However the novel shows the opposite, because not every woman is oppressed, especially those who have power in economy by having means or financial independence. Most of previous feminism researches on the novel do not concern on the phenomenon, therefore the writer is urged to analyze it and bring it up in this thesis.

**Methodology**

The research is done by doing qualitative method in which the data is analyzed by using words instead of numbers. The writer himself is the instrument of the research who reads the literary work as the object of the research. As library research, the first step in doing the research is to broaden writer’s knowledge and understanding on marxist feminism and women class division. The writer also reads some sources which concern on Afghanistan as the setting of the novel to understand its society’s condition.

In analyzing women in different social classes, the writer uses approach of marxist feminism by Terry Eagleton and Drew Milne which sees women consist of bourgeois and proletariate. The rich women are known as “Bourgeois women”. Otherwise, the poor women are known as “Proletariat women” (Eagleton and Milne 331). In relation to men’s treatment on them, only women from proletariat class experience it. Meanwhile, bourgeois women are believed to be immune towards it, because they acquire some degree of financial independence miraculously either from their career or inheritance of their rich family (331).

In addition to it, Hooks’ theory is also used to identify the classes as completion of the main theory. In this case Hooks includes education factor as identifier
of the class. Hooks associates bourgeois women as well educated ones since he reckons that high level of education is accessible with money as an attribute to strengthen the bourgeois domination in many aspects of society (40). In the other hand, Hooks identifies that most of proletariat women are uneducated ones. The condition makes the women powerless either in economy or politic, and end up in oppression (40).

Based on the theories, the writer lists the images on bourgeois class women as well as proletariat class ones. Then, it will lead the writer to find men’s treatments to the different class of women as well.

**Result and Discussion**

**Images on Women Based on Marxist feminism Concept**

Images on women based on marxist feminism concept are determined by their position in society which is derived from power in economy (Eagleton and Milne 331). Ownership over means will give women power to reposition their class from proletariat to bourgeois, as well as their role from the oppressed to become the controlling ones. The stronger women in economy, the better position they earn in society (Matthaei 118). Yet for women who do not have means, they will be still powerless in society, and things do not change for them. Those women are still oppressed by men in every aspect of society (331).

In accordance to it, images on women in marxist feminism are not merely weak, oppressed and marginalized, but it can be powerful, dominating and ruling according to which social class they belong. Hence, Images on women in marxist feminism are categorized based on their class in which bourgeois and proletarian class have different roles and images (Eagleton and Milne 330).

**Images of Bourgeois Class Women**

According to Eagleton and Milne, bourgeois women are those who are powerful because of being rich (331). Due to their richness, those women have power in society and immune to oppression (331). Hooks gives addition that the bourgeois class women also have more access to education which makes them identified as well educated ones (40).

**Invincible to Social Rules**

As reckoned by Hooks, bourgeois class women are invincible to any oppression because of having power in economy (39). In relation to Afghan society, oppressions on women have been manifested in social rules which overpower the law (“Afghanistan: No Country for Women”, par. 7). Thus, if the women are invincible to oppression, it means that they are invincible to social rules which rule society. According
to Cambridge Dictionary, “Invincible” means impossible to defeat or having capability to prevent what is intended by others. Hence, being invincible to social rules for the class of women means being able to reject and deflect the oppression on them without any consequences which bind them.

As a concept which values men more than women, patriarchal rule in afghan society revolves on persecution on women which covers ban of education, compulsion to work in domestic sector, compulsion to become housewife, compulsion in marriage, compulsion to wear burqa, prohibition for having career, and any other rules or mindsets which restrict women’s activity and put men’s authority above them (“Life as an Afghan woman”, par.1-22). However, with their power of money, bourgeois women are not tied up to any rule or mindset which roles society and immune to it because money controls everything as suggested by Matthaei (118). By having money, the women are able to do what are forbidden by society without any consequences. This makes them seen invincible to social rules.

It did not escape Mariam that no mention was made of her half sisters Saideh or Naheed, both her own age, both students in the Meri high school in Heart, both with plans to enroll in Kabul University. Fifteen evidently was not a good, solid marrying age for them. (32)

Living in Afghanistan which is patriarchal society, education is surely not a choice for woman, while early young-age marriage is a must for them (“Afghanistan: No Country for Women”, part. 1-10. However, Mariam half sisters (Saideh and Naheed) who are bourgeois women, make their education to level of high school without prohibition and compulsion of getting married. The two girls are free to make their way to high school and even university level though it is forbidden for women to have high level education in Afghanistan. Unlike Mariam, they are also free from their parents’ demand to get married at early young age which is actually society rule and tradition in afghan society. Apparently, the afghan society rules cannot bind them though they live in it. By seeing the fact, it can be seen that Saideh and Naheed as bourgeois class women are invincible to patriarchal rules which rule afghan society.

Another fact which shows image of bourgeois class women as the invincible ones can be seen from Rasheed’s description on bourgeois women to Mariam as he walks her to rich neighborhoods in Kabul.

These women were what was the word Rasheed had used? "Modern." Yes, modern Afghan women married to modern Afghan men. […] These
women were all swinging handbags and rustling skirts. Mariam even spotted one smoking behind the wheel of a car. Their nails were long, polished pink or orange, their lips red as tulips. They walked in high heels, and quickly, as if on perpetually urgent business. They wore dark sunglasses, and, when they breezed by, Mariam caught a whiff of their perfume [...] they all had university degrees, that they worked in office buildings, behind desks of their own, where they typed and smoked and made important telephone calls to important people. [...] (49-50)

The bourgeois women who are also addressed as modern women by Rasheed are really different from most of women in Afghanistan. If women in Afghanistan are forced to fully cover themselves with burqa, the bourgeois women do not care about the rule at all. Instead of obeying it, those women feel free to show up their beauty to public. Smoking which is usually done by men only, is also done by those women as well. If women in Afghanistan are forced to stay at house and serve their husband, the bourgeois women cannot be tied up with such a rule since they are well educated and have bright career opportunity instead. Shortly, the patriarchal mindset and society rules which bind women in Afghanistan are completely dull to the class of women. By being able to deflect the rules and prevent the rules to control them, it can be said that the bourgeois women are invincible to social rules.

Images of Proletariat Class Women

Proletariat class women are those who have no power in society because of being poor and dependent on men in financial thing (Eagleton and Milne 331). Different from the bourgeois, proletariat class women in marxist feminism are seen as uneducated ones, dependent, weak, belongings and other negative images that are seen in patriarchal culture. Though some of them have enough education, they are still powerless and oppressed because of having no means (332). In account of it, it can be said that the images of lower class women in marxist feminism are the same with images on women from perspective of general Feminism. While general Feminism sees that the images are caused by patriarchal belief that women are “created that way” by God; weak, illogic, etc. (Bressler 191), marxist feminism in the other hand believes that those are caused by women’s failure in gaining position in society because of being powerless in economy (Eagleton and Milne 332).

Vulnerable to Social Rules

Cambridge Dictionary defines “Vulnerable” as condition which makes something able to be easily hurt, influenced, or attacked either physically, emotionally, or
mentally without something to protect. In account of it, being vulnerable to social rules for women can be defined as being powerless or easily forced to follow and obey any social rules which bind them without having something to prevent the rules from them. With their powerlessness in economy, women of this class do not have capability to resist it, since they cannot make money themselves and only rely on men to give them food, clothes, place to stay and even security (Barret, par. 5). The condition makes women have no choice and power to reject men and resist the social rules which favor men, since their dependency on men gives them disadvantageous consequences for doing so. With the condition, women are seen as easy targets to be oppressed because they can only obey the social rules without resistance. Thus, it makes the women seen vulnerable as depicted below:

He fished a sky blue burqa from the bag. The yards of pleated cloth spilled over his knees when he lifted it. He rolled up the burqa, looked at Mariam. [...] "I'm a different breed of man, Mariam. Where I come from, one wrong look, one improper word, and blood is spilled. Where I come from, a woman's face is her husband's business only. I want you to remember that. Do you understand?" Mariam nodded. When he extended the bag to her, she took it. (47)

Considering afghan social rule that women are property of men or their husband, Rasheed’s statement indirectly shows his belief that Mariam is his private property. As property or belongings, Surely Mariam may not be touched and even seen by public, especially other men. Because Mariam is Rasheed’s private property, her face and all of his body only belong to him. Rasheed does not want things he has seen by other. Therefore, Rashed protects what belong to him by forcing Mariam to fully cover her body and face with burqa. Without asking Mariam’s opinion in the first place, Rasheed easily orders Mariam to wear the burqa without any rejection from her. In the other hand, Mariam’s obedient to it also shows how easily the rule binds her. Referring to definition of “Vulnerable” beforehand, the easiness for Rasheed to order Mariam to wear burqa as one of social rules shows that Mariam is vulnerable against it.

Image of women as vulnerable target of oppressing social rules is also strengthened by society’s assumption which is represented by officer Rahman. It can be seen from his conversation with Laila in the following quotation:

[...] "If you send us back," she said instead, slowly, "there is no saying what he will do to us." [...] She could see the effort it took him to
keep his eyes from shifting. "What a man does in his home is his business." […] "What about the law, then, Officer Rahman?" Tears of rage stung her eyes. "Will you be there to maintain order?" "As a matter of policy, we do not interfere with private family matters, hamshira". (160)

As an officer, it is a duty for Rahman to protect people from any violence and any action causes damage to them. However, once Laila asks for protection by not sending her and Mariam back home, Rahman can do nothing though Laila has told him about torture and violence she and Maryam are going to have from their Husband, Rasheed. Violence to anybody is supposed to be a crime, and the doer should be arrested unquestionably, so is Rasheed. Nevertheless, officer Rahman sends the women home instead of arresting Rasheed for his violence action. Rahman reasons that it is a man’s business to do whatever he likes in his home including doing anything to his wife(s). Rahman’s statement shows his perception and belief that women are owned by men or their husband as determined by afghan social rules (“Afghanistan: No Country for Women”, part. 5). If women are owned by their husband, of course Rahman cannot do anything about Rashed’s abuse to Laila and Mariam since an owner is free to do whatever it likes to its stuffs or belongings. Thus, the law is dull to it. With the dull of law over social rules which oppress women, it can be said that there is nothing to protect women of this class. Thus, men as represented by Rasheed can do anything he wants to his women with any justification from society. With no protection they have, the women are surely vulnerable to social rules which commonly oppress them.

**Men’s Treatments to Women Based on Images on Women in Marxist feminism**

Marxist feminism concept that sees women in two different social classes produces different images on them. The different images somehow lead to men’s different treatment to women. Bourgeois women who are seen powerful both in social and political scope are treated equally to men, while the proletariat ones are oppressed and persecuted. Just like the images on women, men’s treatments to women in perspective of marxist feminism can also be seen from the two scopes. Because men’s treatments to women are derived from their different images, the treatments are likely different as well according to women’s class.

**Men’s Treatments to Bourgeois Class Women**

In account of their richness and financial independence, bourgeois women in Afghanistan will be powerful and cannot be
persecuted by society rules which are actually rolled by patriarchal concept. Therefore, the women are immune to any oppression because the rules cannot bind those who have money since money controls society (Matthaei 118; Hooks 40). In relation to the novel, the bourgeois women in Afghanistan are pictured out powerful and even have possibility to surpass men’s authority in some cases once they earn more power in economy (Matthahei 119). The bourgeois women are seen by society as the invincible, the superior and the ruling ones in social scope. While in political scope they are seen as the decision makers and the powerful opposition. In response to the images, men treat them in different ways compared to general women in patriarchal system.

**Accepting Women’s Invincibility**

Men’s treatment to accept women’s invincibility is a response to bourgeois women’s image which is invincible to social rules. According to Macmillan English Dictionary, “to Accept” means to agree and believe that something is true or right or to allow what happened. Thus, men’s acceptance to bourgeois women’s invincibility to society rules can be seen from their agreement or belief that the women may do anything which is forbidden by the patriarchal society.

"I have customers, Mariam, men, who bring their wives to my shop. The women come uncovered, they talk to me directly, look me in the eye without shame. They wear makeup and skirts that show their knees. Sometimes they even put their feet in front of me, the women do, for measurements, and their husbands stand there and watch. They allow it. [...] they live in the richer parts of Kabul. (47-48)"

It has become society rule in Afghanistan that women should wear burqa and cover themselves with it to keep their beauty for their husband only. However the bourgeois women who are invincible to such rule do not care about it at all. Instead of covering themselves, the women easily show their beauty to public as Rasheed experiences himself. Their husbands who accompany them to Rasheed’s shop are not bothered with their wives demeanor and allow it. Rasheed himself who criticizes the women can do nothing about it though he disagrees. Rasheed can only show his complain to Maryam without a gut to tell the bourgeois women directly. By referring to the definition of “to Accept” which means to agree or allow what happened, the men’s action to let their wives break the social rules shows their acceptance to their wives invincibility, while Rasheed’s powerlessness
to protest the women directly, can be interpreted as allowance.

**Men’s Treatments to Proletariat Class Women**

In the novel, the proletariat class women are mostly described as the ones who completely depend on men in financial thing. It makes them seen vulnerable to social rules, inferior to men and as servants in family. While in political scope, their powerlessness to patriarchal rules makes those women seen as defenseless and powerless ones. As consequences of their images, those women should endure oppression, persecution and abusing treatments from men.

**Abusing Women Physically**

Abuse on women is done by men due to women’s image which is vulnerable to social rules that are derived from patriarchal concept (“Afghanistan: No Country for Women”, part. 5) Being powerless in economy makes those women depend on men and cannot resist social rules which commonly oppress them. If social rules determine that women are owned by men, then it has to be obeyed by women. Once social rules demand women’s obedient to men, they have to be with it. With the vulnerability of women to social rules, men have every access to treat them by any mean.

In relation to afghan society, the treatment women receive at the most due to their vulnerability to social rules is physical abuses (“Afghanistan: No Country for Women”, part. 1 -10). According to Macmillan Dictionary, “to Abuse” means to treat someone in a cruel or violent. Thus, men’s abuse on women can be identified by cruel or violence action which men direct to women. Such treatment on women is shown in several scenes of the novel and mostly inside of Rasheed’s family circle which involve Mariam and Laila as representation of proletarian women. One of the scenes which show men’s abuse on women can be seen in the following quotation:

[…]"What a man does in his home is his business." "What about the law, then, Officer Rahman?" "As a matter of policy, we do not interfere with private family matters, hamshira"

[…] Rasheed grabbed Laila by the elbow and pushed her up the steps. Laila didn't see the punch coming. It was as if a car had hit her at full speed, in the tender place between the lower tip of the breastbone and the belly button. […] Then she was being dragged by the hair. She saw Rasheed leading Mariam across the yard by the nape of her neck. There was blood on his hands, blood on Mariam's face, her hair, down her neck and back. […] (161)
Mariam and Laila who are caught by the Police in their escape from Rasheed are finally sent back home. With social rules which deem women as their husbands’ property, they both are bound by the rules as consequence of being proletariat women. Therefore, those two cannot find protection from the Police which values the rules more than the law. Considering his wives as his property as deemed by social rules, Rasheed sees their action of running away as a fatal mistake. Thus, there is no anything stands to prevent him doing whatever he likes to his property, because his preceding persecution has been legalized by the law officer itself. Knowing his wives vulnerable to the rules, Rasheed is in advantageous position as a man. Hence, Rasheed does not hold back his wrath on his wives by kicking, and punching them. Clearly, punching and kicking somebody as Rasheed does to Mariam and Laila is acts of violence and cruelty. With violence and cruelty he does to his wives, Rasheed’s action can be categorized as abuse on women who are represented by Mariam and Laila.

**Conclusion**

Afghan society is ruled by patriarchal concept which favors men’s authority and oppresses women. The strength of patriarchal concept in Afghanistan is also supported by Afghan traditional culture and religion values. This make the patriarchal rules rule society and even more valued than the law. As the result, afghan women live in terror of persecution, oppression, abuse and violence from society and men. They are seen as property and do not have right over themselves. Shortly they are marginalized in every aspect of life because.

However, with money and economy power, many of afghan women gain controls to society and omit patriarchal rules which bind them. This makes those who have money powerful and invincible even to society rules which have been being ruled for centuries by patriarchal concept. The strength of capitalism in afghan society forces women to make their escape from oppression only by possessing money in order to be powerful and resist the oppression.

Capitalism which favors those who are rich but not the poor makes afghan women divided into two different classes. The rich women who are known as bourgeois ones begin to make differences in Afghan history by their invincibility. While those who are poor known as proletariat women. The proletariat ones are those who are still vulnerable to oppression and cannot escape the society rules. Finding that women can be powerful and powerless, study on women in marxist feminism concept shows that afghan women have different images
regarding their class. Images of their class will determine how they are treated by society or men and determine how their lives and roles in the society.

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