

## **Women Against Women: A Study of Internalized Misogyny and Patriarchal Bargain in Select Feminist Novels**

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### **Abstract**

The present study analyzes how women are embodiments of their oppression in patriarchal communities based on the models of internalized misogyny and patriarchal negotiation in non-traditional suffragette fiction. The present study utilizes feminist literary critique to analyze female characters' strategies as they fight to ensure their survival by negotiating oppressive social orders, marginalizing other women, and enforcing traditional gender roles. The study indicates the complexity of women's agency, and rather than opposing it, some women enable the reproduction of gender disparities through their behaviours and attitudes. Conventional feminist theory tends to portray women as victims of a patriarchal community. The present study argues that internalized misogyny is both a survival tactic and an instrument that sustains patriarchal communities, through a close analysis of major female characters in Margaret Atwood, Arundhati Roy, Toni Morrison and Khaled Hosseini's novels. The study employs a feminist literary critical framework with a qualitative research design to analyze chosen texts through theoretical concepts of internalized misogyny (Manne) and patriarchal bargain (Kandiyoti). To build an integrated picture of how women support patriarchal regimes, the study combines textual analysis with supporting resources such as research papers, critical essays, and feminist theory-based texts.

This study analyzes how women internalize and reproduce dominant oppressive ideologies in historical and sociocultural contexts. The results challenge dominant feminist theories of victimization and resistance by proposing that the patriarchal bargain is a strategic bargain in which women exchange autonomy for social security, status, or protection.

This research adds to feminist theory through an explanation of the complex way women negotiate, uphold, and sometimes subvert patriarchal authority. It presents a more nuanced description of the dualistic construction of women as agents and victims of misogyny.

**Keywords:** internalized misogyny, patriarchal bargain, subjugation, gender, feminism.  
*"Women's hatred of women is universal and it is the strongest of all the hates."*

(Morrison 56)

### **Introduction**

This research mapped to discuss how internalized misogyny and patriarchal bargain perform in feminist literature. Its main function is to show how women become defenders of the patriarchal system who once were oppressed by patriarchy. Feminism has advocated for

women for several decades; still, freedom is vague. Though men have been viewed as the main oppressors, theorists such as Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Manne, and Deniz Kandiyoti advocate women too can participate in the oppression of other women as well. This paper will discuss the theme internalized misogyny and patriarchal bargain.

The term “internalized misogyny is used to show how women internalize patriarchal ideals, which causes them to criticize and manipulate other women” (Faludi). According to Kandiyoti “patriarchal bargain describes how certain women, at the expense of other women align themselves with patriarchal structures for their convenience.” (Kandiyoti 280) With special reference to literature, it will be discussed how various socio-cultural settings affect and how they appear. This study expands the scope of current feminist discourse by highlighting women's role as enforcers of patriarchal norms rather than male subjugation.

Feminism has undergone several phases, each focusing on a distinct facet of oppression and emancipation. The first wave of feminism arose in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, prioritizing legal and political rights, especially women's suffrage. Prominent individuals such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton (Stanton) and Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Wollstonecraft 105), championed women's voting rights and educational opportunities.

The second wave expanded beyond voting rights to challenge gender roles, workplace discrimination, reproductive rights, and domestic oppression. Activists like Gloria Steinem and Angela Davis promoted equal pay, reproductive rights, and legal safeguards against sexual harassment. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) criticized the social expectation that women should only find fulfilment in domestic roles. (Friedan 78)

The third wave focused on intersectionality, showing how gender oppression interacts with other identities, including race, class, and sexual orientation. In 1992, Rebecca Walker first used the term "third-wave feminism" to advocate for a movement that was more inclusive and diverse (Walker 39). Feminists like bell hooks and Judith Butler spearheaded the third wave, which concentrated on intersectionality and showed how gender oppression interacts with other identities including race, class, and sexual orientation (hooks 22). The fourth wave emerged in the 2010s, distinguished by movements like #MeToo, online feminist debate, and digital activism. The spread of knowledge of gender violence, sexual harassment, and workplace inequalities has been greatly aided by social media sites like Instagram and Twitter [11]. Global awareness of the prevalence of sexual misconduct has been raised by

movements like #TimesUp (2018) and #MeToo (established by Tarana Burke in 2006 and made popular in 2017) (Burke 102). Modern feminism criticizes gender nonconformity, toxic masculinity, and the commercialization of feminism by businesses.

The word "misogyny" is derived from the Greek terms "misos" and "gynē," "hatred" and "woman," respectively, according to the Oxford English Dictionary ("Misogyny"). The word "internalized" is a derivation of the word "internal," which is something that has been internalized into one's mind or opinions. The thesis advanced by Simone de Beauvoir in her book, *The Second Sex* (1949), "women are socialized to perceive themselves from a patriarchal perspective, greatly influenced the use of the term "internalized misogyny" during the second-wave feminist movement" (Beauvoir 250). Internalized misogyny is the mechanism by which women internalize sexist attitudes and behaviours unwittingly, which leads to the devaluation of other women and themselves. This is because patriarchal societies perpetuate negative stereotypes, conditioning women to perceive that they are inferior to men. ("Internalized Misogyny" 50)

Kate Manne's *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny* (2017) defines "misogyny as a system where women are punished for deviating from their roles and are subjected to masculine hate". (Manne 92) Women frequently control other women to preserve socially acceptable, making them both the victims and the perpetrators of misogyny. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) and Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex* (1949) both argue that women are socially conditioned into being submissive, leading to internalized misogyny. Women criticizing other women for their decisions may be seen as an expression of internalized misogyny. Conflicts between mothers and daughters arise when elder women enforce patriarchal ideals on younger generations, reinforcing the perception of femininity as inferior. (Gilbert and Gubar 67)

The term "patriarchy" refers to male authority in societal and familial systems, derived from the Greek words *patēr* ("father") and *arkhein* ("to rule"). Feminist rhetoric in the 1970s gave it its current meaning, referring to male supremacy in society. The phrase "bargain+" comes from the Old French word *bargaignier*, meaning "to haggle or negotiate." ("Patriarchy") According to feminist and sociological theory, a bargain is a calculated concession made within a system of oppression. Women often opt for conformity as defiance brings no immediate rewards. Kandiyoti contends in her essay "Bargaining with Patriarchy" (1988) that women opt for conformity as defiance brings no immediate rewards. Since they

provide societal approval, financial stability, or a feeling of authority in the home, some women choose to adopt conventional roles (Kandiyoti).

They seek societal approval, financial stability, or a sense of authority in the home. Some women take on submissive positions in exchange for financial stability, while others maintain distance from "disobedient" women. This paper examines these ideas through a literary analysis of four significant novels, arguing that women are often the most perilous patriarchal enforcers.

The Booker Prize winner novelist Arundhati Roy is best known as an Indian playwright, activist and radical theorist. She is a renowned novelist for her novel *The God of Small Things* written in 1997. Her main themes are postcolonial identity, caste oppression and gender discrimination. Ammu the main character of the novel, is a victim of social taboos and patriarchal norms. She is a prominent feminist and sociopolitical figure and a strong opponent of capitalism, militarization, and Hindutva politics.

Margaret Atwood is a Canadian novelist, lyricist, activist and thinker who is well known for her dystopian and psychological novel that questions gender politics and power structures. She wrote *Surfacing* which explores identity, gender roles, and psychological trauma from a feminist perspective. Her main discourses are issues of patriarchal oppression, reproductive rights, and eco-feminism in her writing. *Surfacing* is crucial to conversations on internalized misogyny as of sharp criticism of women's role in maintaining patriarchal hierarchies.

Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison, a renowned American novelist and essayist, explores female inequality, racial trauma, and Black identity through her works. Her Pulitzer Prizewinning novel *Beloved*, a slave narrative, challenges white and male-dominated narratives and promotes intersectional feminism, emphasizing misogyny as a racial and gendered experience.

Khaled Hosseini is an Afghan-American humanitarian and author well known for his novel *The Kite Runner* (2003). His powerful depictions of gender inequality, displacement, and war are the key themes of his novels. He portrays Afghan women's difficulties in patriarchal and war-torn civilizations that are powerfully explored in his 2007 novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The protagonist Mariam, absorbs her mother's patriarchal views and later undergoes severe domestic violence with his husband. This text also talks about

internalized misogyny as it stresses how women impose tyranny on one another, either out of survival or social conditioning.

This study investigates the internalized misogyny and patriarchal bargain in feminist literature by addressing a crucial question.

- In what ways do the concepts of internalized misogyny and patriarchal bargain shape the lives, choices, and struggles of the female protagonists in the selected texts?

## Literature Review

This literature review investigates scholarly discussions of internalized misogyny and the patriarchal bargain, focussing on how they manifest in feminist literature. The secondary sources include journal articles, theses, and online databases, to provide an in-depth concept.

Internalized misogyny is the phenomenon in which women acquire sexist attitudes and behaviours toward themselves and other women, reinforcing patriarchal norms. In the article "The Fabric of Internalized Sexism." Bearman et al. define it as "when women adopt learned sexist behaviours towards themselves and other women," which reinforces a maledominated culture. (Bearman et al. 15)

This internalization results in behaviours such as slut-shaming, mistrust of women, and favouring men over women, all of which reduce women's social status. According to research published in the World Journal of English Language, "internalized misogyny decreases the value of women when they subconsciously plot sexist and misogynistic ideas into other women and themselves."

Neena Sunny and Yadamala Sreenivasulu's article "Internalized Misogyny: A Transnational Exploration of Select Literary Narratives" investigates "how internalized misogyny fosters gender inequality in a variety of cultural settings." The writers use Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter* and Anita Nair's *Idris: Keeper of the Light* to demonstrate the complex mechanisms by which women might subconsciously perpetuate patriarchal norms. (Sunny and Sreenivasulu 605)

The patriarchal bargain refers to women strategically complying with patriarchal systems to benefit themselves, often reinforcing structural gender inequities. Deniz Kandiyoti's work, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," investigates how women navigate these systems, often reinforcing them. (Kandiyoti 280) Sreeparna Chattopadhyay's article,

"Analysing 'Women Are Women's Worst Enemies' Or Patriarchal Bargain," analyzes how women might perpetuate patriarchal norms by morally policing other women.

(Chattopadhyaya) Pink's poem explores the paradoxes of parental love and internalized misogyny as seen in the lines, "my mother acts as if I hung the moon / but she can't help but criticize / the way that it droops in the sky" ("Pink").

Zara Shams' poetry "There is no such thing as a woman" explores the generational transmission of internalized misogyny, where patriarchal norms unintentionally perpetuate these values. The work reflects on women's experiences in both private and public arenas, adding nuance to feminist literature by providing a nuanced view of the internalization of patriarchal values and the dynamics of women's relationships within oppressive regimes. (Shams)

Despite extensive research on gender oppression, patriarchal institutions, and feminist resistance, few studies have specifically examined how women maintain these systems through internalized misogyny and patriarchal bargains in literary tales. The emphasized research gaps are as follows:

- Fewer studies focussed on women's role in upholding patriarchal standards. Scholars have widely examined patriarchy as an oppressive force.
- Scholars have analyzed victimization and resistance in Margaret Atwood, Toni Morrison, Arundhati Roy, and Khaled Hosseini. However, there has been little emphasis given to women who internalize patriarchy and impose its limits on others.
- Most researchers only criticise male oppressors leaving behind female characters such as grandparents, moms, aunts, and elder women that perpetuate social misogyny. While feminist scholars have analyzed "patriarchal bargain" and "internalized misogyny" in literature, few have compared these themes to modern media images of women oppressing women.
- The Shayari, poetry and cultural literature have been skipped that also address internalized misogyny.

This study aims to analyse "internalized misogyny" and "patriarchal bargain" in feminist literature by filling these research gaps by engaging a comparative, intersectional, and multidisciplinary method. It aims to highlight diminished female offenders of gender oppression and integrate literary, cultural, and media narratives to gain a better understanding of how women maintain gender hierarchies while resisting them.

## Research Methodology

Through close reading, textual analysis, comparative analysis, an interdisciplinary approach, and the incorporation of poetry, cultural texts, and media, this study uses a qualitative approach to investigate internalized misogyny in novels such as *The God of Small Things*, *Surfacing*, *Beloved*, and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The study contrasts the internalized misogyny in these novels with how it is portrayed in films and television shows.

The film *Thappad* (2020) is a notable example, examining themes of female agency, emotional neglect, and marital inequity while criticizing patriarchal training and internalized misogyny. It challenges the notion that women should endure mistreatment to meet social standards. (Sinha)

The film *Mrs.* directed by A. Kapoor's (2025) protagonist goes through internalized misogyny and patriarchal bargaining. Richa who becomes the daughter-in-law of a traditional household and dutifully serves male family members is one example of how patriarchal training leads women to enforce their subordination. Initially, she attempted to blend in with her husband's traditional family highlighting the patriarchal agreement to follow social orders and avoid unnecessary chaos. The story of *Mrs.* reveals the societal gender laws and orders for females that provoke reflection on the silence endured by women in this patriarchal organization. (Kapoor)

Miller's *The Handmaid's Tale* (TV Series) investigates women's role in perpetuating patriarchal tyranny. (Miller) Fincher's *Gone Girl* (2014) exposes contemporary society's standards of femininity and ingrained misogyny. (Fincher)

Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* explores Ammu's ostracization of both men and women, representing caste and gender-based internalized oppression. Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* delves into the anonymous narrator's struggle with internalized misogyny and societal expectations of femininity.

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* examines Sethe's suffering and the role of Black women in maintaining or fighting male dominance. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini focuses on Mariam's victimization and the role of female figures in perpetuating patriarchal norms.

This paradigm allows for a thorough, comprehensive, and intersectional analysis of internalized misogyny and patriarchal bargains in feminist literature. This study adds current views to feminist literary criticism by combining literary analysis, feminist ideas, media

comparisons, and interdisciplinary research. The research approach tries to accomplish the following aims and objectives.

1. To investigate how internalized misogyny and patriarchal bargains influence female oppression in feminist novels.
2. Analyze how women, intentionally or unknowingly, impose patriarchal norms, oppressing other women.
3. To analyze female characters who promote patriarchal frameworks, including:
  - a) Baby Kochamma's role in Ammu's ostracism (*The God of Small Things*).
  - b) The nameless narrator struggles with patriarchal expectations set by other women (*Surfacing*).
  - c) Sethe suffers from internalized injustice within the Black community (*Beloved*).
  - d) In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Nana and Laila victimize Mariam.
4. To show how patriarchal training causes women to shame and constrain other women, especially in mother-daughter interactions e.g., Nana (*A Thousand Splendid Suns*).
5. To look at the female characters like Baby Kochamma, Nana, and Laila who engage in patriarchal bargains to achieve power while perpetuating the enslavement of other women.
6. To make attention to feminist literary studies from male oppressors to female enforcers of patriarchy, thus providing a new viewpoint on gender oppression.

This study explores feminist literary criticism by examining how women are controlled by internalized misogyny and patriarchal bargaining, challenging the simplistic notion of universal female solidarity, and contrasting feminist novels with actual cases.

### **Patriarchal Bargain and the Betrayal of Women in *The God of Small Things*:**

The term “patriarchal bargain” was first used by Deniz Kandiyoti in 1988 to describe "how women accept and internalize gender oppression in exchange for limited benefits or security within a patriarchal system." In the novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) Arundhati Roy portrays a deeply ingrained patriarchal society in which women negotiate their oppression. The novel demonstrates how female characters, particularly Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, betray other women to uphold patriarchal conventions rather than challenge them. Their treatment of Ammu, the protagonist of the novel, whose transgressions of social norms lead to severe punishment meted out by women themselves, most exemplifies this betrayal.



Baby Kochamma who was formerly a nun now becomes the agent of patriarchal bargain. She oppressed Ammu. To preserve her sense of authority within her home, she must adhere to established gender norms as part of her patriarchal deal. Ammu was living in a broken marriage instead of giving sympathy to her Baby Kochamma actively advances patriarchal values upon her. On learning her affair with Velutha, an Untouchable man she orchestrates Ammu's death. In the novel, "Baby Kochamma resented Ammu because she saw her as the living, breathing, embodiment of her failures" (Roy 44). The statement illustrates how Baby Kochamma's internalized misogyny derives from her prior disappointments—she rebelled against gender conventions before eventually surrendering to them. Her betrayal of Ammu is an act of self-preservation, preventing another woman from succeeding where she failed.

*The God of Small Things* is a narrative that explores how women can be enforced by the patriarchal court system, reinforcing traditional taboos about caste and female sexuality. Baby Kochamma manipulates Ammu's children, Estha and Rahel, into falsely accusing Velutha, leading to his death. This harshness demonstrates how women can often function as enforcers of the systems that oppress them, reinforcing traditional taboos about caste and female sexuality. According to Roy: "It was not entirely an accident that the History House became a place where helplessness found a voice" (Roy 293). Baby Kochamma exploits the patriarchal court system to squash any challenge to conventional norms, therefore "helplessness" refers to both Velutha and Ammu.

Mammachi, Ammu's mother, perpetuates patriarchal tyranny by sanctioning violence against women while negotiating a patriarchal bargain: accept male control in exchange for economic security and societal favour. Despite years of domestic violence from her husband, Pappachi, she never fights him, revealing how generational trauma and internalized misogyny hinder women from opposing patriarchal standards. "Mammachi was virtually blind and extremely lovely. She played the violin. She maintained a 'proper Nair woman' distance from her husband (Roy 49). Her "good Nair woman's distance" represents her acceptance of a gendered hierarchy in which women's subservient roles are idealized. However, when Ammu is oppressed, Mammachi does not defend her and instead brutally blames her for defying gender stereotypes. *The God of Small Things* is a narrative that explores how women can be enforced by the patriarchal court system, reinforcing traditional taboos about caste and female sexuality. She betrays her daughter by siding with patriarchal structures, reinforcing the notion that women who transgress are undeserving of sympathy. Her disapproval is evident

when Ammu attempts to challenge patriarchal constraints, "Ammu had not had the kind of education nor the kind of job that would have allowed her to live on her own" (Roy 38).

Ammu's rejection of patriarchal deals distinguishes her from other characters, as she refuses to accept gender inequality in exchange for protection, posing a direct challenge to society's standards. As a result, she is rejected, humiliated, and eventually abandoned by both men and women. Roy vividly portrays her fate: "She died alone." With a lungful of river water. "And a pocket full of dreams" (Roy 161). Ammu's terrible death highlights how women who repudiate patriarchal contracts frequently face the most severe consequences, but those who uphold them (such as Baby Kochamma) enjoy social security at the expense of other women's suffering.

*The God of Small Things* highlights how women betray other women to survive in a patriarchal environment, demonstrating Kandiyoti's notion of patriarchal bargains. Baby Kochamma and Mammachi support patriarchy, sacrificing Ammu in the process. This cycle of oppression emphasizes the pervasive nature of internalized misogyny and suggests that true gender emancipation can only be achieved when women reject both systemic oppression and their role in it.

### **Female Alienation and Misogyny in Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*:**

Through her novel *Surfacing* (1972) Margaret Atwood portrayed feminine alienation and internalized misogyny in a patriarchal culture. The protagonist of the novel is an unnamed narrator who goes on a psychological and physical journey that shows her isolation from society, her body, and even her identity. Atwood uses her sharp critique of the gender norms and power of the system which leads a woman in isolation, self-loathing, and internalized misogyny, making her an engaging feminist speaker.

The narrator feels intensely alienated, both physically and emotionally. She tries to find her place in a male-dominated society where women are represented, silenced and deprived agent. This alienation derives from her experiences with men, notably her previous relationships, as well as the tragedy of a forced abortion, which left her emotionally distant. She thinks about her dissociation: "I can't feel, what I'm saying, and I don't know what I was like back then. But when I look in the mirror now, my eyes remain the same, unable to focus" (Atwood 68). This passage implies that the narrator is so alienated that she cannot identify herself literally and metaphorically.

She rejects gender norms and their expectations and forwards herself towards nature to get herself back from the male-dominated society. She became alienated not only because of males but also by both men and women. She felt alienated because of the internalized misogynistic notions about females. She felt uncomfortable with traditional norms that were generated only for women. She became meek and when she looks at her past life she says, "True, there were some women who were real, who did not decorate themselves, but they were rarities" (Atwood 84).

Atwood criticizes internalized misogyny where women maintain patriarchal standards. Femininity is generated because of male power. In the novel, the narrator remains alienated from other women. Her struggle to embrace her female identity while avoiding gendered standards is evident in this internal conflict. Furthermore, she characterizes her former self with contempt, especially while contemplating her abortion: "I'd allowed it to happen; I should have seen it coming. But I hadn't expected sacrifice; I'd viewed it as surgery" (Atwood 78). This moment of self-blame and guilt demonstrates the psychological impact of patriarchal control over women's bodies. Instead of acknowledging the coercion and lack of power in her abortion, she internalizes blame, perpetuating the cultural narrative that women are responsible for their pain.

Like *The God of Small Things*, the women of the novel *Surfacing* betray one another in the patriarchal system. By illustrating the example of Anna another female character in the novel Atwood demonstrates the narrator's interactions with Anna. She is a perfect example of the traditional belief that women should become the source of gratification. Anna's behaviour alters around men as noticed by the narrator, especially towards her husband David, she says, "Anna claims to love him, but her eyes evasively slide away from his evasive" (Atwood 115). The gendered power disparity in relationships is highlighted by Anna's submissive posture, which demonstrates how she portrays herself as feminine to win over men. The narrator's sympathy and resentment of Anna illustrate the underlying conflict that many women have when they see other women complicit in patriarchal tyranny.

The narrator has developed through a psychological change by the conclusion of the novel, shedding not only patriarchal society but also conventional gender rules. Her fleeing into the bush is indicative of her desire to disown the label patriarchal society has imposed upon her: "I am neither an animal nor a tree. I am not an abortionist. I'm not a victim" (Atwood 172). It is the time she takes back herself, refusing to be defined by male

oppression, female betrayal, or cultural expectations. Yet estrangement remains since she cannot fully resume as a member of human society.

Margaret Atwood illustrates in *Surfacing* how a patriarchal culture creates internalized misogyny and the separation of women. It illustrates how women are socialized to betray one another, dislike their sex, and hide their feelings. Throughout her progress, the narrator fights for autonomy, disclosing eventually that women's true freedom needs both personal and cultural development. The feminist theory of the novel brings forth issues regarding how women's lives are affected by power relations, gender roles, and self-image.

### **Trauma in *Beloved* – Sethe Enslaved by Women:**

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) is a powerful exploration of trauma, memory, and the brutal heritage of slavery. Sethe, an ex-slave, is at the centre of the novel, and her psychic and bodily wounds define her life. Although the narrative is concerned with the brutality done by white slave masters, it also shows how women, in direct and indirect ways, play their role in Sethe's suffering. The phenomenon of women being traitors to women in repressive systems is central to her suffering, so *Beloved* is a significant text in "internalized misogyny" and "patriarchal bargain."

Sethe's suffering starts during childhood when she is left alone by her mother. Motherhood was a risky and hard responsibility in the world of slavery, as is made clear by the story. Sethe's mother, not being able to protect and bring up her daughter, leaves her psychologically; "She was my ma'am, and nobody's ma'am would let them be as hungry as me" (Morrison 240). This scene illustrates how enslaved mothers, who were often deprived of their agency, could not meet their maternal responsibilities, and their children had to grow up hungry not just for food but also for love and security. The absence of maternal love in Sethe's early life contributes to her later parenting challenges, especially in the choices she makes for her children. In addition, Sethe learns that her mother had killed her previous children to spare them the atrocities of slavery, highlighting the tough and horrific choices enslaved women had to make: "She picked me up and carried me behind the smokehouse." There, she spread her dress open, and I saw that she had these scars on her ribs" (Morrison 61). They are the brutalization of black women's bodies, not just done by white enslavers but also by a system that pushed them to make tough choices for survival.

The women of Sweet Home, the plantation on which Sethe is a slave, are both complicit in and contradictory to her suffering. Mrs. Garner, mistress of the plantation,

initially presents herself as a "kinder" slave owner than her husband. She upholds the system that represses Sethe, showing the duplicity of white women's participation in slavery. She makes Sethe believe that she has some power, particularly in choosing her husband, but her power is illusory. When the schoolteacher's rule takes over from Mr. Garner's, Sethe is subjected to atrocious abuse by people who dehumanize her. The schoolteacher's nephews mistreat her, and the women slaves of Sweet Home do nothing to intervene.

The lack of solidarity among women here is significant, indicating how slave women were often powerless to help each other, leading to a vicious cycle of loneliness and suffering: "They treated me like I was just a cow, no, like I was a calf. "They took my milk," (Morrison 20). This quote indicates not just physical desecration but also maternal loss, as Sethe's capability to care for her children is stripped from her. The fact that no woman intervenes bolsters the argument that even amid oppression, women are left to endure by themselves. Rather than understanding the depth of Sethe's trauma, other women in her world ostracize her for committing infanticide. Her behaviour was based on a desperate desire to safeguard her children, yet society, specifically other black women, condemned her.

This comment illustrates the way, even in repressed cultures, women are often expected to be morally accountable by other women. "She was trying to out-hurt the hurtier. "Not in the manner of a preacher or a teacher, but her way" (Morrison 295). What this statement indicates is that Sethe's brutality is not an evil act, but an act of intense resistance—a means of responding to the system that brutalized her once. Nevertheless, women from the community distance themselves from her, revealing how trauma isolates women more than it unites them.". Beloved, the ghost of Sethe's dead daughter, symbolizes unresolved mother trauma. She is both a literal ghost and a metaphor for the past that cannot be forgotten. Sethe's interactions with Beloved illustrate the psychological effects of regret, loss, and women's sorrow.

Beloved's return home at first seems to offer a chance at redemption, but she soon becomes a force of possession, swallowing Sethe emotionally and physically. This union symbolizes the bittersweet complexities of motherhood, where love and destruction converge: "You are mine; you are mine; you are mine" (Morrison 255). This obsessional fixation illustrates how Sethe is trapped not only by her past but also by her guilt, and suffering sustained by both her actions and other women's condemnation. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* illustrates how, in oppressive systems, women are both victims and agents of suffering.

Sethe's suffering is brought about not just by white male oppressors but also by women, who, through inaction or judgment, perpetuate her isolation.

Whether enslaved women do not stand up for each other, white women support the system, or the community shuns Sethe, the novel illustrates how internalized misogyny and patriarchal bargain intensify female suffering. Sethe's tale illustrates the vicious complexities of women under siege, raising fundamental questions regarding solidarity, survival, and the price of mother love. Morrison's representation of Sethe compels readers to reflect on the participation of women in one another's pain, urging a deeper inquiry into how history, trauma, and resistance impact women's relations.

### **The Mother-Daughter Conflict and Female Oppression in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*:**

Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) is a moving examination of female oppression, perseverance, and intergenerational suffering. At its core are the intricate motherdaughter relationships, particularly those between Mariam and her mother, Nana, and later between Laila and her daughter, Aziza. The novel depicts how oppressive patriarchal structures throw women against one another, turning them into both victims and perpetrators of gendered pain. Nana's internalized misogyny, Mariam's difficulties with self-worth, and Laila's attempts to escape the cycle of oppression all contribute to a narrative of female suffering under patriarchal rules.

Mariam, an illegitimate child, grows up isolated from her mother, Nana, who hates both Mariam and her father, Jalil. Nana's hatred, moulded by a lifetime of betrayal and tyranny, shows in the way she nurtures Mariam. She continually instils fear and guilt in her daughter, discouraging her from seeking love or freedom. "Learn this now and learn it well, my daughter: Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman" (Hosseini 7).

This warning expresses Nana's deeply held opinion that women will always be blamed and suffer in silence, regardless of what they do. Instead of strengthening Mariam, she brainwashes her into accepting the same misogynistic structures that subjugated her. Nana dismisses Mariam's self-worth, making her feel unwanted and cursed from birth. "There is only one skill a woman like you and me needs in life... Only one. And it's this: tahammul. Endure" (Hosseini 17). This intoxicated lesson tells Mariam that women are expected to suffer, endure, and never resist, a message that has shaped her whole adult life, notably her marriage to Rasheed, an abusive man. Nana's ingrained misogyny and hatred

prohibit her from providing Mariam with the love and strength she sorely needs, instead turning her into another victim of patriarchal abuse.

Mariam's situation takes a fatal turn when her father's wives arrange her forced marriage to Rasheed. Rather than helping Mariam, these ladies sacrifice her to maintain their privileged positions in the household. Their cooperation in Mariam's persecution exemplifies a patriarchal bargain in which women tolerate gendered violence to maintain their social security. That was it. The game was ended. She had no father. No home" (Hosseini 50). Jalil's wives consider Mariam as a burden rather than a daughter or sister, demonstrating how, under patriarchal circumstances, women frequently betray one another rather than stand together. Mariam's forced marriage is an act of both male power and female involvement, demonstrating how patriarchy persists by pitting women against one another.

Unlike Mariam, Laila strives to stop the generational cycle of female suffering, particularly via her bond with her daughter, Aziza. Despite facing severe abuse from Rasheed, she emphasizes Aziza's education and future, refusing to let her suffer the same fate as previous generations: "Marriage can wait, but education cannot." You're an extremely clever girl. Truly. "You can be whatever you want" (Hosseini 282). This event directly contradicts Nana's teachings: where Nana encourages Mariam to endure, Laila urges Aziza to struggle for a better life. This contrast emphasizes how female resistance, not surrender, is the key to overcoming injustice. However, even in Laila's instance, female discrimination is firmly ingrained. When Rasheed drags Aziza into an orphanage due to financial difficulties, Laila is powerless to stop it, demonstrating how patriarchal systems continue to influence women's lives despite their efforts to resist.

Initially, Mariam and Laila are cast as competitors for Rasheed's approval. This dynamic exemplifies how patriarchal structures push women to fight for male validation, turning them into enemies rather than allies. However, Mariam and Laila eventually overcome their artificial rivalry, developing a strong sisterhood bond: "Mariam had never previously been wanted like this. "Love had never been declared to her in such an open, unreserved manner" (Hosseini 17). Mariam's friendship with Laila becomes her first genuine love, demonstrating that women's solidarity is the most powerful weapon against injustice. Mariam reclaims her agency by deciding to protect Laila and Aziza, challenging the notion that women must suffer in silence. Her last deed, killing Rasheed to save Laila, is a symbolic rejection of the misogynistic mentality Nana had instilled in her. Mariam therefore liberates Laila and achieves her redemption, demonstrating that women's strength lies in togetherness

rather than division. "This was a legitimate end to an illegitimate beginning" (Hosseini 329). Mariam's murder by the Taliban confirms the harsh truth of patriarchal justice—even actions of self-defence by women are punishable—but her legacy lives on via Laila and Aziza, providing a ray of hope for future generations.

The mother-daughter connections in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* depict long-standing cycles of female oppression and internalized misogyny. While Nana and Jalil's wives betray Mariam, Laila and Aziza's relationship provides a way to female emancipation. Hosseini's work argues that patriarchal organizations flourish by pitting women against one another, yet resistance is feasible when women band together rather than separate. Mariam's transformation from a silent child to a selfless saviour exemplifies both the cost of female perseverance and the power of female unity. Hosseini's sacrifice demonstrates that ultimate emancipation for women resides not in surrender, but in rebellion, endurance, and defiance.

Parveen Shakir, a feminist poet, writes, "Us ne jism bech kar yeh socha. Roti achi hai izzat se" (Shakir 30). "She sold her body and thought, Bread is better than honour." This verse parallels Mariam's awful reality, in which women must choose between dignity and survival—a choice that, under patriarchy, is never truly theirs to make.

## Findings

An examination reveals numerous significant findings involving "patriarchal betrayal" and "internalized misogyny." The following findings were drawn from the analysis of female characters by authors such as Arundhati Roy, Margaret Atwood, Toni Morrison, and Khaled Hosseini utilizing "internalized misogyny theory" and "patriarchal betrayal theory." 1.

Internalized misogyny is deeply established in female characters who have been conditioned by patriarchal ideals, causing them to regulate other women's behaviour, impose gender norms, and perpetuate oppressive cycles.

2. The concept of "patriarchal bargain" manifests itself in various ways across cultures and historical situations, demonstrating how women negotiate their places within patriarchal systems to achieve limited power and security.
3. Female characters frequently maintain patriarchy by punishing people who transgress societal norms, supporting existing power structures rather than eliminating them.
4. The novels illustrate patriarchal values being passed down through generations, demonstrating how older women, many of whom are victims themselves, impose restricting ideologies on younger women.



5. While some characters break out from these patterns, the cost of opposition is frequently social estrangement, violence, or death, underscoring the pervasive nature of patriarchal domination.

### **Contribution and Recommendation**

This study indicates that women's oppression is not only the result of male supremacy but is also maintained by women who accept and reproduce patriarchal values. The concept of patriarchal bargain provides insight into the intricate ways in which women navigate oppressive systems, frequently choosing survival above unity. By analyzing these feminist novels, this study emphasizes the need to recognize internalized misogyny as a major issue in feminist discourse. The study advocates for a broader understanding of female culpability in patriarchy, moving away from binary narratives of victims and oppression and toward a more nuanced examination of female agency within repressive frameworks.

This paper contributes to feminist literary studies by conducting a cross-cultural analysis of women's culpability in patriarchal institutions using literary texts from various geographic positions and providing a nuanced interpretation of female agency within oppressive contexts, addressing the binary opposition between victimhood and empowerment. Future study into ways for dismantling internalized misogyny through literature and feminist education is encouraged. By combining literary analysis with feminist theories, media comparisons, and interdisciplinary research, this study adds new perspectives to feminist literary criticism. It lays the groundwork for further investigation into how feminist literature can critically engage with the complexities of internalized misogyny and patriarchal bargains.

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