



# SHADES & SHADOWS: WOMEN IN WAR

RESILIENT AFGHANI WOMEN!

## ABSTRACT

VIOLENCE AGAINST THE WOMEN IS AN UNDENIABLE AND EVIDENT REALITY OF AFGHAN SOCIETY UNDER TYRANNY OF TALIBAN. THE TRANSITION OF SOCIETY FROM COLD WAR TO EXTREMISM AND YET TODAY REEMERGENCE OF TALIBAN HAS RAISED THE QUESTION OF WOMEN RIGHTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS UNDER TALIBANI AFFLICTIONS. THIS ARTICLE REVISITS THE PLIGHT OF THOSE BRAVEHEARTS WHICH IS MANY A TIMES LEFT UNSAID AND MOST OF THE TIMES UNHEARD!

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(Submitted- 2/12/2021 )  
[Course title]

**“ONE IS NOT BORN, BUT RATHER BECOMES A WOMAN..” Simon De Beauvoir (THE SECOND SEX)**

She told it to herself that her domains were not in the black or white or any definitional custom. She was an entity that fell between the Uncertain, Undefined, Delusion and Reality. She was broken to make her whole again. She was not like those girls in Magazines. She was beautiful for the way she thought and that glitter of an unknown wonderland in her eyes. She was a survivor of TALIBAN.



When the longest war in the History of America ended in the 2021 After Taliban capturing Kabul without a single shot fired, A new tale of atrocities rekindled itself in the name of Religion and Politics. The Education of a woman, The Employment of a woman, The Freedom of a Woman and an overall life of a Woman came under shadows of the scrofulous mindset which changed the state of Once a liberal country into Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan!!

More than 70% of Afghans do not live in the cities and these Taliban Insurgents have swallowed large swaths of countryside in past years. In these hinterlands women's life is all about crisis. They are taken like commodities. Many of the girls disappear at Puberty and come to emerge as Grandmothers, if ever it happens. The shades and colors of life are taken over by shadows and colorless patches of seclusion in cocoons of Hijab or Burqa.

The international community's tool kit is limited, and their political will is questionable. But Taliban's brutality has increased its intensity and changed forms. Women around the world have fought for their rights, with uneven but important success stories. In the last 20 years, women and girls in Afghanistan have enjoyed a measure of freedom and are demanding more of it. Standing beside the Afghan woman in

her struggle to stay relevant and empowered & finding tools to pressure the Taliban and the political will to do so, is the least a responsible International Community should do.

## **AFGHANISTAN AND GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX**

Gender equality means that women and men, and girls and boys, enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections. The World Economic Forum (WEF) has released the Global Gender Gap Report 2021. Afghanistan is at the bottom of the Index at 156th rank.

The country ranks among the least favorable on the Gender Inequality Index and the literacy rate for women is among the lowest in the world. Violence against women and girls is rife and the majority don't go to school. GII measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development—reproductive health; empowerment; and economic status.

The gender differentials in morbidity, mortality and accessing and utilizing health services shows the terrifying consequences. Health professionals have expressed inadequate medical knowledge and interpersonal skills to address sensitive issues, such as domestic, physical, and sexual violence. Discussing sexuality and its impact on health remains taboo both within and outside of the medical profession. Strict cultural norms restrict a woman's autonomy to seek health care, choose a marriage partner and have control over her body, indicating a need to increase awareness about how harmful social practices adversely affect health. In Afghanistan, as of February 2021, 27% of seats in parliament were held by women. 1964 was a milestone year in the history of Afghanistan as for the first time the Afghan Constitution was adopted granting equal rights to women, right to franchise as well as right to participation in political and public life.

Labor force participation improved from 15.2 per cent to 21.8 percent but Low Literacy rate is yet a factor for a lesser labor Force participation rate. As a social Observer, it would not be wrong to articulate that gender inequality has taken its roots deep into cultural norms and barbaric atrocities termed as “civilization” by Taliban.

Women occupied just 6.5% of ministerial positions in Afghanistan before the Taliban took over the country, according to January 2021 data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), an international organization of Geneva-based international organization of national parliaments. Now, the country joins the ranks of only a dozen other countries where there are no women serving in high-ranking positions in government.

To emerge victorious from the clutches of Tyranny under Taliban, women should be in a comfortable place in the 3 aspects of Gender Inequality Index. The East and West should come together to enhance the Intensity of Equality in spirit.

## ***RELIGION OR POLITICS!?!?***

The draconian repression under the veil of Islamic Law or Sharia takes centerstage in Taliban Oppression. But many who interpret the Quran underlines that the man and woman were “created of a single soul”.

The first person to embrace Islam was a woman (KHADIJA)

The greatest scholar of Islam was a woman (AISHA)

How can a religion make such repressive laws for women when Once it was embraced by women??

The Prophet preached on the Importance of women, their Unique contributions, and Campaigning for their Rights.

Religion and Politics should not become a Partner in Crime with Taliban Afflictions.

### ***FEMINISM AND AFGHAN WOMEN***

Charles Fourier, a French philosopher, is credited with having coined the word “feminism” in 1837.

Belief in and advocacy of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes expressed especially through organized activity on behalf of women’s rights is termed as Feminism.

Gender equitable societies are healthier for everyone. As feminism challenges restrictive gender norms, improvements in women’s access to health care, reproductive rights, and protection from violence have positive effects on everyone’s life expectancy and well-being, especially children and hence many voices are resurfacing from Afghan communities to talk about their oppression. Many brave hearts wrote their tales of terror to waken the world about situation of Women’s Rights in Afghanistan.

In 2021, we s need feminism more fiercely because women deserve better and to make sure that their rightful existence as an Individual is not jeopardized. We need a truly even playing field and have equal and equitable freedoms, choices, and opportunities and right to fight back the Tyranny of the Taliban. The Wheel of time should move ahead for the Women of Afghanistan, and it should not be derailed because of a derailed mindset of some barbarous men.

True feminism is that which seeks to liberate all women with a solidarity in Economy, Society and Revolutionize the human spaces in manifestation of meaningful coexistence of both sexes.

### ***AFGHAN WOMEN AT CROSSROADS OF GEOPOLITICS.***

.... Men Fight War, Women win them...

From Cold War to Extremism and From Extremism to Intervention and today again at the edge of Extremism, Women in Afghanistan had to bear the brunt of war and hostility.

The Soviet invasion jolted American beliefs that the USSR was taking advantage of declining American presence in the region following the Islamic Revolution in Iran. It fueled U.S. concerns that Soviet control of Afghanistan would be a major step toward overland access to the Indian Ocean and to domination of

the Asian subcontinent. The successive years led to brutal conflicts leaving many of the women as widows and single mothers. One catalyzed another and Women's life was just like a fragile entity.

### ***RESILIENCE OF AFGHAN WOMEN***

She was not Fragile like Flower, She was Fragile like Bomb.....

In the decade of 90s when Taliban first tried to take over women's Liberty, they not only imposed Social Restrictions but more radically their access to Healthcare, Education and Jobs. Male Chaperone was the only way for them to get away from their homes. Post-Taliban years, In 2004 Women got many rights. The resilience of womenfolk once again made them rise like Phoenix. People like ZAHRA HUSSAINI, a cyclist of Afghanistan was nominated for Nobel Prize in 2016. In 2017, women constituted 29% of the workforce. Afghan Women and their mothers and grandmothers have sacrificed a lot for the freedom which they had. Today when on whims and fancies of some fanatic Psychopaths, their hard-earned Liberty is getting snatched, then it makes the resolve more firm. The beauty of Hindukush and bravery of a Solid Afghan heart is an attribute which marks the distinction of an Afghan woman as even remarked so beautifully by Poets and Chronicles.

### ***ENDING NOTE***

As the Taliban ascended to Power the Women's Rights are in the shadows of Tyranny of Taliban. Global Leadership must coordinate a dialogue to establish a balance in Afghanistan. A Sustainable Way of Life for Women must be a priority with Freedom of an Empowered Life.

Professor S'adiya Shaikh points out in her book SUFI NARRATIVES OF INTIMACY that a solely "rights-based" approach to reform in Muslim societies is not enough. She calls for a "comprehensive theological critique" that interrogates the nature, roots, and assumptions of these Ultra-patriarchal power structures and their gender-discriminatory policies. Without such a drastic scrutiny, the Taliban's 'religious' authority will persist, unchecked. Hence, it's important to gain perspective on the issue to vandalize the Taliban.