



A Postcolonial Feministic Study of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* By Khaled Hosseini

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Abstract

Afghan-born American novelist Khaled Hosseini was noted for his evocative descriptions of Afghanistan. *The Kite Runner* (2003), *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), *And The Mountain Echoed* (2013), and *Sea Prayer* (2018) are his major works. His works are about Afghanistan's political unrest. For Adult Fiction, he received the "Indies Choice Book Award." Khaled Hosseini's second novel, *The novel A Thousand Splendid Suns* covers the lives of two Afghan women, their families, friendships, and ambitions for the future, set against a backdrop of three decades of political upheaval, and was inspired by a journey to Kabul, Afghanistan, the author's birthplace in 2003. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* seeks to draw parallels between Mariam and Laila, two female protagonists who struggle with political imbalance, social inequality, and oppression in their respective nations. Khaled Hosseini's literary style in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is both sympathetic and disgusting. He sympathises with individuals who are burdened by the battle. He primarily does this through the use of two literary devices: symbolism and imagery. The central theme of the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is women's rights, particularly during the Taliban. Mariam and Laila were born into non-oppressive regimes. Mariam's execution at the stadium exemplified the inequity of her treatment. The research article explores the feministic side of the novel.

Index Terms - Oppression, love, hope, women bond and gender role.

I.INTRODUCTION

Hope and Oppression

While dealing with the reality of political and personal oppression, the characters in the story frequently fight to maintain optimism. Characters share their distinct hopes at key stages throughout the narrative. For example, Mariam's journey of hope begins when she begs Mullah Faizullah if she can go to school. For Laila, hope lies in Tariq and a failed attempt to flee Rasheed. Most of the individuals in this novel enter such events with high hopes for the future, but once reality comes in, their hopes are dashed. Not only do these waves of optimism keep the reader guessing and make them care about the characters, but they also appear to reflect the cycle of hope and shattered dreams that Afghan women face again after time. Personal stories of hope, in turn, are mirrored in the political hope of Afghan residents, who proclaim their views that Afghanistan will eventually be free. Yet, similar to the personal hope of individuals, Afghanistan's hope often turns to despair after the realities of each new regime leave the nation unfree.

And the past held only this wisdom: that love was a damaging mistake,
and it's accomplice, hope a treacherous illusion (Hosseini 29).

Mariam seeks out her father, Jalil, in the hopes of being adopted into his family, which includes his wives and half-siblings. Nana also lost hope when she saw her daughter move away from her and seek out her father instead. Mariam is driven by hope to make her marriage work, but she loses it when she realises that hope keeps Laila going, especially when she learns that Tariq and his family must leave Afghanistan. When Rasheed employs a man to tell Laila that Tariq is dead, Laila's hopes of meeting him are destroyed. Mariam's hope returns when she forms a bond with Aziza, and subsequently with Laila. And while Mariam loses her freedom by confessing to Rasheed's murder, her hope for Laila and her children is that they would be able to start a new life together, free of prosecution and ultimately free of Rasheed.

Women Bond

Despite the effects of their husband's and government's efforts to diminish women's influence, the ladies form deep friendships. In nature, the bonds are different. For example, Giti, Hasina, and Laila create a girlish connection, but later in the storey, Mariam and Laila form a far stronger familial bond. When Mariam arrives in a Taliban-controlled prison, Nana finds strength in her daughter Mariam, and Mariam finds admiration in Nana. Women have a tremendous ability to find strength and support in one another, according to the novel. If Mariam hadn't earned confidence and affection from Laila, she would never have been able to locate Rasheed.

It's our lot in life, Mariam. Women like us we endure.
It's all we have. Do you understand? (Hosseini 155)

Despite the fact that gender conventions alter throughout the novel as a result of shifting jobs and legislation, one constant topic is female companionship. The novel's structure reveals that the relationship between Mariam and Laila is at its core. Laila also cherishes her friendships with Gita and Hasina, with whom she shares laughter, games, and secrets about guys, temporarily forgetting about the violence and risks of puberty.

A Thousand Splendid Suns and *The Kite Runner* both emphasise on the father-son and mother-daughter relationships in the household. Hosseini's work is mostly concerned with relationships. *The Kite Runner* is his debut novel. This film centres on a father's connection with his kid, with the father attempting to teach the youngster the difference between right and evil. The focus of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* shifts to the mother-daughter bond. The novel depicts the women characters, Nana and her daughter Mariam, as well as Laila and her daughter Aziza, in a heartbreaking way, with the central characters being Mariam and Laila, who form a mother-daughter bond as a result of their circumstances, a bond that eventually becomes a weapon against patriarchy.

Female friendship, as Hosseini expresses throughout the narrative, becomes one means to challenge these limits from inside. Mariam and Laila, for example, form a friendship against Rasheed, their husbands and the source of much of their misery. This manifests itself most visibly in the shape of their escape plan. However, the time they spend drinking tea, talking, and laughing together allows them to draw strength from each other and survive their tyranny in more subtle ways. Even in a society where women are unable to participate in the public realm, the book claims that female relationships function as a means of asserting their own validity and dignity. Khaled Hosseini portrays the two female protagonists in a unique way. He reveals the Taliban's authoritarianism and animosity toward women solely because of their gender. A critic described the novel as "a stunning depiction of female pain," emphasising the terrible conditions Mariam and Laila had to endure. According to one review, "Hosseini defends the lights," implying that he intended the work to be sympathetic to female viewpoints.

Women are valued by the family, tribe, and, ultimately, the nation. The limitations that women experienced when seeking education are discussed in this study, and how their lack of education limited their immense potential in a male-dominated environment. Nana comes from a poor household, which complicates matters even more. Nana's life has turned her into a tough woman. It's difficult not to feel compassion for her plight when you hear her narrative. The Afghan women's hardship was exacerbated by Soviet authority. Despite her difficulties, she raised Mariam on her own; most people would not have done so. Laila adored her daughter and paid regular visits to Aziza in the orphanage. Mariam and Laila have a mother-daughter relationship. They have been subjected to heinous acts of violence by their husband. These two characters are shown to have an excellent relationship in this novel. Mariam had a tender thought for Laila. "I'm going to be a mother," she said. Then she was laughing to herself, saying it over and over relishing the words

(Hosseini, 88).

Gender Roles

A Thousand Splendid Suns delves into the untold story of gender discrimination against Afghanistan's persecuted women. The fictional novel paints a realistic picture of a country torn apart by idealised leaders and conflicts waged by foreign and domestic forces. The story is told from the perspectives of two ladies who live in a troubled society. This text illuminates Afghanistan and the consequences of a corrupt government on the Afghan people. Inequality between men and women has been documented in both third and first world countries. The raw, frightening inequality of women in third-world countries was highlighted in this work.

A man's accusing finger always finds a woman.
Always you remember that Mariam (Hosseini 78).

As readers, we can deduce that women in Afghan society face a lot of discrimination from their own blood relations and husbands. The novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, on the other hand, explores Afghanistan's true nature of great gender inequity toward women and how it impacts all of the story's characters. The work analyses how women have unequal rights inside marriages, are subjected to significant physical abuse, and are emotionally and physically tormented by their purportedly devoted husbands. A marriage is defined as the uniting of two persons in a personal relationship as partners. Rosemarie Skaine, *The Women of Afghanistan Under the Taliban* said that, "While much of the Afghan population suffers under the Taliban, women bear specific, unrelenting and often violent adversity, including the denial of basic human rights, veiling, seclusion and segregation" (Skaine, 7). However, this is not the case in the novel. Many people who have multiple wives regard each of them as if they were things. Most of the time, women are not educated in any way and are just taught how to cook and clean. Even within the book, it's clear that many ladies recognise that what's happening to them is terrible, but that they have no choice but to watch as a bystander in this macabre spectacle.

She is a strong lady who can outlast any bad man who attempts to take away the ones she loves and lives for, and she represents hope for Afghanistan's future. She and Mariam have been subjected to domestic violence and insults from him ever then. Laila is subjected to the most heinous type of humiliation at the hands of the Taliban. In his novel, the author portrays Laila as a strong female heroine. "Almost ten years. But for a moment, standing there with Tariq in the sunlight, it was as though those years had never happened. Her parents' death, her marriage to Rasheed, the killing, the rockers, the Taliban, the beatings, the hunger, even her children, all of it seemed like a dream, a bizarre detour, a mere interlude between that last afternoon together and this moment" (Hosseini, 333). Mariam gains courage from her presence and support to fight back and eventually murder Rasheed. The following statement made by the judge exemplifies Muslim men's attitude toward women. Laila ultimately discovers the life she's always wanted at the end of the book. In one other's presence, Mariam and Laila find comfort and contentment. By trusting each other, they are able to be free of agony not just physically but also emotionally.

Two generations of characters are brought together beautifully by the terrible sweep of war in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, where personal lives, the battle to survive, build a family, and find happiness are intricately woven from the history playing out around them. Mariam understands she's been a fool all along. To save her daughter-like Laila from death, she kills. She takes control of her own destiny for the first time. Laila and Mariam don't appear to have any legal rights at any stage. But Hosseini portrays both Laila, whose parents raised her with a sense of entitlement and privilege, and Mariam, whose mother taught her to endure by taking control of the circumstances in which they lived to the extent that they could, and he has cleverly shown feminism and activism on their part to some extent.

Conclusion

Throughout the novel, they had relied on each other to live and survive. They would not have gotten as far as they did without each other. Mariam has passed away, and Laila has lived her life after finally achieving her goal. She had found the calm and happiness she had always desired in Tariq. Hosseini includes a scene in which Laila is trying to come up with a name for her future child. "If it's a girl, Laila has already named her" (Hosseini 415). Laila had already decided to name her daughter Mariam if she were to birth a girl. This scene, in my opinion, sums up the entire message that the author was attempting to convey. Anyone can get out of any predicament with a little bit of hope. This is what occurred to Laila with Mariam's help. Laila chose to repay her by naming her child after the lady who, in essence, saved her life. Laila seemed to be trying to

express her gratitude in this situation. The tale of Afghanistan in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* contains a depiction of the role and place of women in Afghan society. In this novel, Khaled Hosseini has tenderly and delicately studied the situation of women in Afghanistan, as well as women in general.

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