



War and Trauma in Khaled Hosseini's Novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* with the Reference of Mariam and Laila's Life

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Abstract

Khaled Hosseini is one of the most famous recent writers of Afghanistan. He has written three novels based on the Trauma and War under the background of Afghanistan. In this paper, I would like to explore the theme of War and Trauma in Hosseini's second novel A Thousand Splendid Suns, especially with the reference of the life of Mariam. The violent history of Afghanistan is depicted in Khaled Hosseini's novels in vivid detail, highlighting the psychological effects and human cost of war. The terrible effects of decades of civil war, turmoil in politics, and Taliban repression on common Afghans, especially women, are depicted in A Thousand Splendid Suns. Through the experiences of Mariam and Laila, two women whose personal narratives tie within the misunderstanding of struggle, this paper examines the themes of trauma, displacement, and emotional suffering brought on by war. The study uses literary analysis to show how Hosseini uses trauma narratives, realism, and emotional storytelling to illustrate the resilience of the human spirit and the generational effects of violence. In the end, the study emphasises the novel's significance as a record of female companionship, survival, and the long-lasting effects of war.

Keywords: war, trauma, Afghanistan women, resilience, women oppression.

Afghan born American novelist Khaled Hosseini is renowned for his vivid depictions of the country in his works. He examines the issues of homelessness, cultural displacement, and moving diasporic experiences, as well as the philosophy of exile and home and the concern for the subalterns. Examining the various cross-currents and ethnic pluralities examined in postcolonial fiction is made easier by the sociocultural perspective. He looks at the issues

faced by migrants who are displaced, marginalised, and evicted.

According to psychoanalysis, the main characters experience alienation, fragmentation, and a lack of roots in their lives. He paints a vivid picture of the clash of cultures, the Taliban's destruction of art and culture, and the crowd's throwing of stones at the adulterers till the victims are dead. Hosseini conjures up the image of innocent people's dead bodies being thrown onto trucks. He has used



straightforward words to effectively draw attention to the Taliban's savagery.

With the enormous success of *The Kite Runner*, Hosseini established his reputation. He was encouraged and his second work *A Thousand Splendid Suns* published. He focusses on the plight of Afghan women who fell prey to male hegemony and patriarchal tyranny. Two generations of people who experience violence, displacement, and cultural dislocation are chronicled by Hosseini. There are numerous instances of violence, terror, and battle throughout the plot. He has two goals in mind: he wants to portray the effects of Afghan wars on people's lives and ideas in a realistic manner in his writings.

A Thousand Splendid Suns tells a domestic story of the suffering of women in a culture that oppresses them, using the political context of Afghan society. Women's identities were eroded by Taliban culture, which encouraged men like Rasheed to torture women. The socio-political and cultural history of Afghanistan is also traced. In this book, the idea of a shattered nation is important. The lives of Laila and Mariam are shattered and shattered; they endure a devastated existence. Mariam and Laila fight valiantly to be free of patriarchal dominance.

Mariam and Laila's friendship serves as a weapon in Hosseini's struggle against the tyrannical powers. According to Rebecca Stuhr,

Hosseini is a cultural theorist of the post-colonial era. His novels depict the traumatic experiences of the people caught in the web of cultural collision. His stories are quite compelling and the language is quite bewitching. He questions assumptions that break and disrupt the lives of women. He gives details of history, culture, and daily life in Afghanistan. (77-78)

A wealthy businessman named Jalil enslaves Nana in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Jalil is torturing Nana psychologically. She always feels deeper scars in her soul, even when there is no physical assault scenario and he doesn't care. Because he is a heartless guy, Nana cautions Mariam to exercise caution and never put her blind faith in him. Nana is compelled to live distant from the main town in an

impoverished and makeshift kolba. Nana and her daughter Mariam live alone. A religious instructor named Mullah Faizullah visits once a week to help Mariam learn to read and recite the Quran.

Nana and her daughter live a life of estrangement; the only thing that makes her happy is her daughter's future. She feels guilty about having sex with Jalil, which has left her resentful and mentally disturbed. The idea of being confined to a little hut with no hope for the future was unthinkable to her. She experiences discrimination, abandonment, and rejection. She is not permitted to live with Jalil because he has other spouses. She is ill and frustrated; he is wealthy but a coward. Because she was dependent on Jalil's weekly payment, Nana was a poor woman who never sent her daughter to school. Mariam too suffers because of her father's lack of concern.

Mariam felt alone and friendless since she never received any love. The most of her time was spent thinking about the good old days of life while sitting on the side of a river. Because her father will be visiting them on Thursday, Mariam waited for that day. He would offer her false hopes for the future and bring her some things. She would wait for the following Thursday for another week. Paradoxically, Mariam loved her father but was unaware of the true reason for their split and the reason behind her mother's lonely existence. Jalil's warning to Mariam that his love for her is illusory and fake was continually mocked by Nana. Jalil only came to see them to make up for his transgression of sexual harassment.

Mariam is warned by Nana about Jalil, who harbours deep-seated cruelty. Mariam and Laila discover that 'they were not enemies any longer' (224). On her sixteenth birthday, Mariam defied her mother and went to Heart to see her father by himself. She disregarded all of her mother's cautions. As she pictured a pleasant welcome in her father's mansion, Mariam had a positive image of her father. She wanted to take her father to the movie theatre because she enjoyed the city. She was pretty excited and felt free like other kids. On her birthday, she wanted to remind her father that they would be going



to the movies. She had been warned by Nana that if she went to Heart, she would kill herself. Mariam received subpar treatment when she arrived to Heart. Her father did not show up to pick her up.

Mariam is naturally quiet and obedient. She complies with her husband's wishes and consents to wear a burqa. Her lack of vision and slave existence are symbolised by her burqa. Rasheed is a labour class member and a devout Muslim who lacks education. His mentality is limited as he torments Mariam with physical force. Rasheed merely wants Mariam to have a son; he doesn't love her.

Mariam is subjected to oppression; she is imprisoned in a pitch-black room to endure suffering. Mariam receives severe beatings, including having her hair pulled. Every woman, including Nana, Mariam, and Laila, has been sexually attacked, raped, and beaten. They endure psychological and physical abuse. The Taliban's religious extremism, terrorism, and patriarchy all oppress them. Taliban terrorism causes Laila to lose both her family and her lover.

Due to the political turmoil in Afghanistan, Laila loses both Tariq and her parents. Her parents were instantly killed when a bomb destroyed their car while they were packing. The Taliban were the ones who initially introduced the gun culture to Afghanistan. They outlawed all forms of entertainment and enacted extremely stringent legislation. No one was allowed to perform live, and it was illegal to write books or watch films. Since the Taliban denigrated everyone, young females were the true target of the menace. Tariq tells Laila about a man who was publicly hacked because of his passion for paintings.

Rasheed neglects Mariam as well, and she lives as a married widow. She is a very unfortunate girl; she is beaten by her husband and ignored by her wealthy father. Her frequent miscarriages end up being the true source of her problems. Laila is a well-educated girl, but her life and her family were ruined by the war. Rasheed is self-centred and avaricious. He transfers his affection to Laila, his second wife, since he desires an heir.

Since Mariam turns out to be infertile, Rasheed married Laila. Due to political unpredictability, Laila was compelled to wed Rasheed after her parents were killed in battle. Her destiny is intertwined with Mariam's destiny. Both are victims of the brutality of the Taliban. Laila is expecting a child with Tariq, her beloved, who fled to Pakistan to avoid the Taliban's terror. Laila's marriage marks the beginning of Mariam's troubles. Mariam is forced to endure isolation as Rasheed grows apathetic towards her and stops sleeping with her. Laila gets pregnant and benefits from Rasheed's affection and trust.

However, this love is self-centred because he immediately begins to beat her. As Mariam discovers her purpose in life, she has a positive relationship with Laila. Her primary goals are to protect Laila from the vicious Rasheed and to take care of her kids. Rasheed feels envious of Laila's genuine love for Tariq. Due to the numerous lies he told Laila regarding Tariq's passing, Rasheed is guilty. Rasheed intends to murder Laila over her love for Tariq.

Rasheed feels envious of Laila's genuine love for Tariq. Due to the numerous lies he told Laila regarding Tariq's death, Rasheed is guilty. Rasheed intends to murder Laila over her love for Tariq. Rasheed was given complete authority by the Taliban's stringent laws. All women's rights were abandoned. The harsh regulations of the Taliban force Mariam and Laila to endure hardship. The Taliban's insistence that women remain within their houses marked the beginning of the cultural clash. They couldn't leave the house. Mariam and Laila are forced to live in Rasheed's cage since they are not allowed to work. Laila had a liberal upbringing, but in 'Rasheed's house she is in a cage locked to suffer eternally' (271).

After her daughter dies, Mariam is left to battle the harsh world alone. When she discovers that her father is a huge hypocrite and forces her to sleep outside of his large estate, she experiences life and human relations for the first time. She remembers her mother's teachings and curses her for not following them. According to the Bible, the primary cause of human suffering is the sin of disobedience. Mariam



suffers from guilt and is plagued by it constantly. She believes she is to blame for her mother's suicide. Since she has nowhere else to go, she is forced to accept her cruel father's marriage proposal.

Mariam is enmeshed in the maelstrom of cultural clash; she had to face Rasheed, who stood for traditional Muslim culture. She found it difficult to survive in Kabul's war-torn society. Mariam's guilt-consciousness haunts her constantly. She believes she is to blame for her mother's terrible suicide. Nana's death devastated her entire life; it wasn't a small incident. Due to the death of her mother, Jalil wed her to Rasheed. She came to see that society and fate were working together to destroy her. Her adoption of the Burqa is the first step towards her victimisation and domestication of Rasheed's culture. Since all of the doors to the outer world were shut for her, she metaphorically lost her perspective on life, 'all the shameful secrets of her past' (66).

Having several miscarriages is the primary source of her depression. Rasheed is unhappy when she miscarries despite becoming pregnant repeatedly. She curses Nature and herself for preventing her from experiencing the joys of parenthood. She loses interest in life and its interests and gets ill and depressed. Her guilt haunts her, and she experiences physical and spiritual tom. She is compelled to consider her suffering. In every manner, Mariam had been oppressed and disenfranchised. She endured psychological, physical, and emotional persecution. Cultural hostility causes suffering for Nana, Mariam, Laila, and Aziza.

Hosseini suggests his heinous savagery by using the animal imagery of a grizzly bear. His massive frame and coarse hair give him the appearance of an ugly bear. "Half of the women in this city would kill to have a husband like me, he boasts (276)". Like a tribal war lord of primitive society, Rasheed has four wives and takes sadistic pleasure in torturing them all. Since the administration changed, Laila and

Tariq, who are sincere lovers, were unable to get married. Tariq must flee Kabul for his safety when Laila becomes pregnant.

In conclusion, the issue of cultural collision is illustrated in Hosseini's book *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Mariam and Laila are compelled to face the oppressive and dehumanising culture of the Taliban. The Taliban decimated Kabul's history and culture, leaving its citizens without roots and disrupting their way of life. The novels centre on the conflict between Kabul's culture, which stands for decency, nobility, and selflessness, and humanity, as embodied by Mariam, Laila, and Amir, who fall prey to the Taliban's culture, which stands for brutality, oppression, violence, and denial of rights.

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