



The Thematic Analysis on Khaled Hosseini's “*A Thousand Splendid Suns*”

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ABSTRACT

Feminism strived for gender equality especially for women in social, political and economic field. The paper explored the feministic themes in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, with particular attention on female solidarity, friendship, resilience, and gender oppression in the Afghan context. It examined how Hosseini depicted the hardships and tenacity of the female leads, Mariam and Laila, who, despite being shunned by their family and society, manage to survive severe social, political, and financial hardship. The study emphasized the individuals' cultural and personal aspects, showing how their private and public lives mirror larger societal concerns about gender inequity. The study examined, how the women faced oppression while also finding strength and empowerment via support, camaraderie, and individual fortitude. The study emphasized the individuals' cultural and personal aspects, showing how their private and public lives mirror larger societal concerns about gender inequity. Afghan women's lives were complicated, and the analysis highlighted how their connections with one another offer a platform for defiance of patriarchal systems. The study concluded that Hosseini's writings make a substantial contribution to feminist literary discourse because they present a gripping account of women's tenacity and empowerment in a culture that attempts to repress them.

Key words: feminism, oppression, solidarity, friendship, resilience

Feminism was a ideology that prioritize gender equality and highlighted the necessity of legislative and political changes to attain gender parity. It promoted equal chances in work, education, and political engagement while fighting for the protection of women's rights within the confines of the current political and social systems. Rather than radically

altering society, feminists aimed to eradicate gender inequality by legal modifications and social transformation. They seek to remove obstacles that keep women from realizing their full potential and hold the view that women should have the same opportunities, rights, and responsibilities. The distinguished modern novelist Khaled Hosseini is well-known for his perceptive depictions of Afghan life and its socio-political struggles. His two books, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) and *The Kite Runner* (2003), had received a great deal of praise for their compelling stories and examination of issues like gender, identity, and resiliency. Hosseini's work was praised for its intricate character development and capacity to convey the complexity of Afghan society in the midst of turbulent historical circumstances. Hosseini had significantly influenced global conversations on human rights and cross-cultural understanding through his literary works as well as his humanitarian endeavours.

Khaled Hosseini's 2007 book *A Thousand Splendid Suns* provided a moving examination of Afghan women's life in the face of numerous forms of brutality and persecution. The intersecting lives of Mariam and Laila, discovered love and courage in one another despite social and personal hardship. This research highlighted key topics and provided insights into Hosseini's portrayal of gender, survival, and Firstly, the paper illustrated the theme of gender oppression where Mariam was treated in a complicated way by Nana. Being a single mother who was left behind by Jalil, Nana had experienced social shame and rejection, which had affected her relationship with her daughter. Nana had reflected the societal pressure on Mariam by referring her as "*harami*" (an illegitimate kid). This made her feel mentally suppressed in the society. Nana's repressive behaviour, was from the own trauma and the difficult conditions she faced in life, limited Mariam's feeling of self-worth and instilled a belief that she was essentially flawed and a girl who was undeserved of pleasure. Nana's oppressive behaviour suppressed Mariam which was portrayed as "There is only one, only one skill a woman like you and me needs in life... Only one skill. And it's this: *tahamul*. Endure" (Hosseini 17). Nana's viewpoint was indicative of a deeply held conviction that women, especially those on the margins, must just accept and endure the problems society has thrown at them. Instead of fostering resiliency or self-worth, she puts her resentment onto Mariam, making her feel helpless and inevitable. She also highlighted that "Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman. Always. You remember that, Mariam." (Hosseini 7), where the author emphasized Nana's perception of gender prejudices in society, which she conveys in a way that Oppressed Mariam by fostered dread and highlighted her inferiority complex. Mariam's internalized oppression and cycles of marginalization are reinforced by Nana's own experiences with oppression, which in turn mould a pessimistic outlook on Mariam's future.

Mariam's father, Jalil, was a successful Herat inhabitant who had multiple wives. Jalil and his wives rejected Mariam's request to live with them, viewed her as a disgrace and a reminder of their lack of dignity and pressured Jalil to arrange Mariam's marriage to Rasheed, a considerably older Kabul man. This act of forcing Mariam into marriage is a form of gender-based oppression that further marginalized her and denied her control over her own fate. "Mariam knew that she was being sent away because she was the walking, breathing embodiment of their shame." (Hosseini 47), this explicitly shows that Mariam's family viewed her as a "problem"

rather than a daughter, that ultimately resulted in her arranged marriage and lack of autonomy over her own life decisions. The act of forcing Mariam to get into a relationship at a young age depicted the societal stigma and gender-based oppression Mariam experienced.

Secondly, the paper illustrated the theme of friendship and solidarity through the bond between Mariam and Laila, who started as rivals but ultimately ended up being a family of choice. Laila confronted Rasheed and shielded Mariam from his abuse. This brave action established their mutual trust. Later, they seek to flee together with the common objective of achieving freedom. Despite the endeavour's failure, their affection deepened, and they supported one another through daily hardships. Mariam ultimately sacrificed herself to protect Laila, demonstrating the strength and selflessness that resulted from the true friendship and solidarity. As Mariam found true company for the first time, she had built a strong affectional and supportive tie with Laila. The friendship and solidarity was also highlighted in Tony Morrison's work *Sula*, where Sula and Nel's strong friendship is encapsulated as "Empowering Friendship", even in the face of severe circumstances. Their friendship turned as a source of strength which helped them to deal with life's obstacles, this is portrayed in the text as, "They were each other's best friends. And that was the greatest love of all." (Morrison 121).

Finally, the paper illustrated the theme of resilience where despite the stigma and brutal abuse Mariam endured from her mother, Nana, she developed courage and perseverance in her life. After being pushed into marriage to Rasheed, she faced even more challenges, but she found inner fortitude in spite of the restrictions imposed on her. The relationship between Mariam and Laila despite Rasheed's mistreatment shows the women's resiliency in the miserable situation. Mariam and Laila struggled with sentiments of animosity and jealousy. However, they ended up becoming sisters and supporting one another despite Rasheed's abuse. As they struggle against his oppression and find comfort in each other's company, their relationship became a source of strength. Mariam found serenity, dignity, and a sense of fulfilment in her last moments, despite the pain and discrimination she has endured throughout her life. Her perseverance and fortitude in the face of hardship demonstrated her unwavering resilience, which was depicted in the text as, "Mariam wished for so much in those final moments. It was not so bad, Mariam thought, that she should die this way. Not so bad. This was a legitimate end to a life of illegitimate beginnings" (Hosseini 370). The theme of resiliency was also emphasized in Estés work *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*, where it captured the tenacity of women, showing how they possessed the knowledge and fortitude to bounce back and endure over adversity, which was highlighted as, "Wild women are the keepers of wisdom and the regenerators of life." (Estés 29). The "Wild Women" which was represented as the symbolic figures of women who, in spite of their difficult circumstances manage to persevere. The concept of women's perseverance in myth and reality depicted the resilient nature of women. A lot of journals had looked at themes of female strength, resilience, and gender oppression in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, but the majority of studies concentrate primarily on male-driven oppression and Afghanistan's larger geo-political environment. Nonetheless, the novel's theme of female-on-female tyranny had not received much critical attention in the academic community. Nana and Jalil's wives were the two examples

of characters who deliberately continued to mistreat Mariam, showing how women may both act as agents who facilitate patriarchal ideas. Furthermore, the idea that female friendship and solidarity can empower women was frequently marginalized in the literature. The development of Mariam and Laila's relationship from early animosity to deep friendship was a vital source of support that helps both ladies get through extremely difficult times. This paper addressed this gap by highlighting how female relationships in the novel not only challenge oppression but also foster resilience and empowerment. Moreover, the study investigated how internalized patriarchy appears in characters such as Nana and Jalil's spouses, who reinforce cycles of gender oppression inside the family by projecting patriarchal beliefs onto other women. The power of Mariam and Laila's friendship shows how female solidarity act as a counterforce against oppression, resulting in the reclaiming of identity and agency. By exposing fresh facets of gender dynamics in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, this method provided a thorough understanding of women's empowerment and resiliency in the face of intricate oppressive systems.

Khaled Hosseini deftly examined the subtle relationships between female camaraderie and solidarity, gender discrimination, and overcoming hardship in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The work eloquently illustrated how women, especially Mariam and Laila, experience gender discrimination from both men and other women, including Nana and Jalil's spouses, who uphold patriarchal standards and marginalize them. In spite of this, the concept of female friendship and solidarity shows itself as a strong force that helped Mariam and Laila endure great agony. They discovered empowerment and resilience in the face of oppression because of their bond, which turned into a source of strength. In the end, Hosseini highlighted how these women overcome and defy the limitations society had set on them by supporting one another and navigating their common problems. Women face oppression from a variety of sources, the book shows how their tenacity, love, and unity give them the ability to regain their agency and prosper even under the most difficult situations.

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