

Depiction of Social and Political Elements in Khalid Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns

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Abstract

This research discusses the depiction of social and political elements of Afghanistan during decades in Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns. The purpose of this study is to understand social and political issues. Khaled Hosseini used the novel as a tool to show the world that Afghanistan needed aid and Hosseini wanted to deliver a reflection of Afghanistan country in the past. Each decade was explained through some aspects namely social and political, cultural, educational and health.

Keywords: *A Thousand Splendid Suns, social, culture, politics, history of Afghanistan.*

I. INTRODUCTION

A Thousand Splendid Suns is an interesting novel with a complex problem inside. Some other previous researchers had conducted various studies which focus on different subjects. The previous study is grouped in the sociological and feministic approach. The sociological approach has included: the conflict between the traditional and modern cultures (Rustamia Tri Mahanani), feminism and gender equity (Namita Singh), the plight of the marginalized (Yildrayçevik) Discussion about the history of Afghanistan is not far from the social and political issue that happened in Afghanistan, while, the political issue criticizes the regime problem. Because of the lack of research about the regime, so it is necessary to research that issue. When reading Khaled Hosseini's novel, I found many problems occur in Afghanistan's social and political events. In this study, I identify the depiction of social and political elements, the sociological approach will guide the research to find the cases related to society. Culture, religion, political, economic issues. Sociology is a relevant approach to discuss social processes. The book by Hosseini is a fantastic and wonderful piece of literature that has obtained the plight of Afghans efficiently. These poor citizens were mercilessly exploited by the political power-seekers, starting from the Soviet Union to the conservative and ideological tyrants of the Taliban. As it is infested with dirty power games that lead to civil instability, the pseudo-democratic system in the country is of no benefit. The plot revolves around Mariam, Rasheed, Laila and Tariq, the core characters of the book, based on the contemporary political instability in Afghanistan, while the political uncertainty and turmoil bring real flavours to the storey.

Hosseini's novel must not be appreciated only as literature; instead, it should be verified from both social and political perspectives. Only then the readers could understand the hidden and implicit social and

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political elements addressed within the novel. lives of the characters, these aspects that influence life in Afghanistan are portrayed. The novel may be a few lasses called Mariam. She is the bastard of a rich theatre owner in Herat. In conjunction with her mother, she lives on the outskirts of the town. Mariam's father, Jalil, often visits her, however, and cares for her. Things rotate when Mariam goes in search of Jalil at some point. Her mother commits suicide fearing that Mariam had deserted her. The girl's life changes when her stepmothers marry her off to a shoe vendor, Rasheed, who is sort of forty years old, while little Mariam is just 15 or slightly older. Mariam slowly gets used to her sad marriage and thus the primary ray of hope strikes her when she gets pregnant. The baby becomes her motivation to live. Again, life isn't fair to her and thus the baby gets naturally aborted. The pregnancy and termination period repeats itself several times. The author partly leaves behind the story of Mariam and brings within the character of Laila. Laila lives within the same street as Mariam and she is far younger. Laila doesn't have a nasty past like Mariam and her parents are highly educated and liberal-minded. The novel not only captures war and tragedy but also love through Laila and Tariq, who may be a handicapped man. Things worsen for Laila when Tariq's family migrates to Pakistan because the turmoil in Afghanistan reaches its peak. Eventually, Laila's parents get killed during a bomb attack and she is forced to require shelter in Mariam's house. Rasheed eventually marries Laila who consents to her when she learns she's pregnant with Tariq's child. Marrying Rasheed is that the only means of safety she could find. The wedding and childbirth initially attract Mariam's grudge towards Laila. However, as days pass, Mariam becomes more sort of a mother to Laila. Then, at some point, Tariq returns. From now onwards, the story revolves around Laila, Mariam and Tariq as they crave to steer a far better life. Things calm down when Mariam finally kills Rasheed and frees Laila. Mariam is hanged by the Taliban for murdering her husband, but she is forever remembered by Laila. Mariam had brought within the warmth of thousand splendid suns in Laila's hopeless life.

For its representation of socio-political and economic complexities, the novel must be praised. Through the lives of Mariam, Mariam's mother and Laila, the author depict the severe gender discrimination and orthodoxy that prevails in Afghan society. Women are penalised for eloping by the principles of the Taliban and other conservative organisations. Ironically, it is blamed on the woman who is the object of rape and everyone else's abuse. The novel represents the state of the state through a private perspective, especially through marriage. Rasheed considers the women in his life, Mariam and Laila, as almost slaves who are responsible for cooking and completing other domestic chores. He expects them to supply him with a son (not a daughter) to continue his lineage. Similarly, the political positioning of women is extremely unfair. Women aren't allowed to be educated or to work. Women aren't allowed to participate in politics and are denied any kind of autonomy. The novel also depicts the destruction of heritage sites and other cultural centres like libraries and academic institutions under Taliban rule. Khalid Hosseini has also provided sharp insights on other world-historical events just like the Titanic shipwreck, the attack on the planet Trade Centre and lots of more events. Thus, thousand Splendid Suns are often considered a marvellous piece of labour that dreams of freedom and liberation.

In this part, Ifocus on the four decades discusses in the novel thousand splendid suns first start from Daoud Khan regimes 1973- 1778. The Daoud Khan President builds the republic state of Afghanistan. He took over the facility by bloodless coup while King Zahir Shah got the medical treatment in Italy. The president was helped by the socialists to control Afghanistan. During this regime, the citizen can deliver their aspiration through demonstration to the govt. So, within the ending of the regime occurs the demonstration from the

Afghan Communist Party due to the murder of his member Mir Akbar Khyber. Women on social processes show Nana's status because of the illegitimate wife. Mariam because the bastard becomes a scandal for Jalil. Then, Nana spent the time to require care of and educate Mariam in Kolba. The mother was skilled for her children.

Hosseini viewed the various society between the village and therefore the city. Nana and Mariam's childhood stayed in Kolba village. While Mariam's teenager spent within the Herat and Kabul. Women in Kabul at that time were more fashionable and progressive. There have been many social activities within the city. Mariam also celebrated the good day Eid-ul-Fitr together with her husband joyfully. Citizens of the Daoud Khan Regime shows a peaceful life. The social condition of individuals was influencing the youngsters to urge an education. Mariam under her mother's monitoring was just permitted to find out from Mullah. The Mullah came to Kolba to show Mariam about five daily prayers and Koran recitation. Nana forbade Mariam to review at college because the lesson of surviving life was more important. Different from Saideh and Naheed because the legitimate child of Jalil, both got proper education from their parents. The condition of Jalil because the wealthy people as possible to offer the tutorial need of his child to travel to formal school. The various story about Nana's health while parturition to baby Mariam. Jalil said that Nana had been taken care of by a doctor or midwife in the hospital. But, Nana told that she gave birth alone within the kolba. Her husband didn't come to assist.

The Soviet Union has turned the regime into the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. They were promising the political issue which holds on Islam and democratic principle. But it actually couldn't be realized. They did propaganda about communism even within the education aspect. The President of this regime, Najibullah, was a bit like a puppet president for Soviets Union. Soviets regime gave liberation for the ladies. The ladies were got the proper to figure. Laila's father was fired from his job to offer space for ladies. They got the chance to find out at college or university. The liberty for ladies which never occur before. In Kabul, this policy was acceptable by modern women because the town was more progressive. But, within the tribal area, the citizen resisted it more because they believed in patriarchy and traditional perspective. Afghanistan country available some jobs for a citizen like an employee during a giant bread factory, taxi driver, barber and carpenter. The tradition of Hakim's family or the Islamic religion did the azan recitation for a baby which was just born. Laila's teacher named Shanzai was an educated and progressive woman. She backed the regime of the Soviets and hated America. She did the communist propaganda through education. She educated student to acknowledge the kindness of the Soviets. The facilities of health within the Soviets regime were shown by modern medical technology. The X-ray found to detect the illness inside the physical body. The doctor used it to see up Laila's mother condition many progressive people supported the Soviet Union. During *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the author captures this historical event through the speech of Khala Rangmaal:

She said that the Soviet Union was the simplest state within the world, along with side Afghanistan. It had been kind to its workers, and its people were all equal . . . and everybody in Afghanistan would be happy too, she said, once the ant progressives, the backward bandits, were defeated. (Hosseini 111)

The power under the Mujahideen regime was mentioned because of the Islamic State of Afghanistan. The presidential election was organised by the Mujahideen dictatorship to include the people in the administration. The election of Rabbani because the president mentioned a replacement problem for

Afghanistan. The opposite faction saw that Massoud did the nepotism because Rabbani came from an equivalent faction. Then, the conflict between fractions occurred. Afghanistan got a replacement enemy from their selves. The opposite problem also came from the Hazara tribe which asked for justice because they were under discrimination for an extended time. Rasheed family believed in a patriarchal culture. Mariam because Rasheed's wife couldn't influence Rasheed decision. The ladies on social organization were less than men. The Mujahideen regime created the prohibition for ladies to travel without the ladies relative. Polygamy becomes the tradition of the Afghan citizen. This old tradition occurred because it had been permitted by their religion. During this regime, the citizen felt worried due to the conflict between the Mujahideen faction. They attack each other, crimes like bandits' appearance and murder happened in every place. The rocket attacked the general public place. The social crisis went on in Afghanistan. The emergence of food supplies which didn't inherit the town made the citizen difficult to get the foods. Some citizen decided to pack their things and visited a secure place like Tehran, Islamabad and Iran. The varsity was an uncomfortable place for the training processes. The war between the Mujahideen fraction also destroyed the varsity by the rocket attack. The scholars were impossible to review at college because the surface home becomes an insecure fear place. The concerns of the oldsters made Hakim dropped Laila out from the varsity. At the start of the Mujahideen power, the medical service of the hospital was good. But, the conflict between Pashtuns and Hazaras influenced the medical service of the hospital. The hospital was difficult to stock the drugs. Some hospital patients were amputated without using anaesthesia. The slow medical handling gave the bad effect until the patient was dead.

Taliban regime changed the government sort of Afghanistan become the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in 1996. The Taliban have authoritatively changed the state system and established the rules. The government was ruled by people of Islamic extremism. Some decision of the government was supported sharia. The punishment for the citizen created supported the holy Koran. Taliban also give the sanctuary for bin Laden supported the Pashtunwali code of ethics for a guest. The Taliban brought with it the Pashtun tribal culture. The ladies ought to spend repeatedly reception and to travel with the lad's relative. If they broke the rule, the government would give punishment. The ladies had limited social interaction with people. The Afghan citizen felt the euphoria while the Taliban took over the Afghanistan government. They claimed that the Taliban was purer and incorruptible because they were Muslim and had unity. They created the regulation for all Afghan citizen from the boy, girl, women or men. The citizen was forbidden to sing, dance, play chess, gamble, fly kite, write books, watch films, and paint pictures. However, the citizen could find within the black market. During this period the Taliban destroyed the Bamiyan giant Buddha's statues. Taliban gave limited attention to the child's education. The women were forbidden to travel to high school. The education quality decreased because Universities because the place for educated student were packing up. Taliban believes that the books except the Holy Koran weren't good to read by the citizen. However, the orphanage was available for special children in Afghanistan. The teacher of the orphanage taught the forbidden knowledge like geography, history or science to the youngsters secretly. The health service within the Taliban regime was really bad, starting with the difficulty of girls and men who didn't lookout at an equivalent hospital until the barren of medications. The RabiaBalkhi hospital condition was dirty and unhealthy for ladies. Only two doctors were available within the hospital. The limit of X-ray, suction, oxygen and antibiotics obstructed doctor in helping people on the surgical operation:

Our waten(Country) is now referred to as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. These are the laws that we'll enforce and you'll obey: All citizens must pray five times each day. If it's prayer time and you're caught

doing something other, you'll be beaten. All men will grow their beards. All boys will wear turbans . . . It's illegal to sing. Dancing is banned. Playing poker, playing chess, gambling, or flying a kite are banned. It is prohibited to write novels, watch movies and paint photographs. If you retain parakeets, you'll be beaten. Your birds are going to be killed. If you steal, your hand are going to stop at the wrist. If you steal again, your foot is going to stop.(Hosseini 270)

Many barbaric decrees were imposed by the Taliban and compelled persons to follow them. People were afraid of being punished for a small reason, tended to remain receptive and become practically alienated. The novel recaptures those social-political elements and historical events and also ends with a tone of positivity, that is, Laila comes back to Afghanistan, with Tariq and Zaman, and she rebuilds an orphanage that symbolises the country's reconstruction. During this novel, Hosseini documents the authentic picture of Afghan history by showing the acute effects of the political conflicts on the lifetime of the characters. Using new historicism, this paper attempts to read thousand Splendid Suns as a re-vision of the Afghan history of Afghanistan.

II. Conclusion

In a nutshell, this research paper discusses the social and political spheres of life of Afghans in the prominent novel “*A Thousand Splendid Sun*” written by Khalid Hosseini. This paper sheds light upon the social, political, cultural characteristics of the four decades of life in Afghanistan. In other words, the four decades portrayed in “*A Thousand Splendid Sun*” and depicted via characters, setting, events and style of writing elucidates how the war impacted Afghans’ culture, education, health system, the social and political situation in Afghanistan. Khaled Hosseini beautifully depicted characteristics of the first decade which was Daoud Khan’s Regime as a peaceful one. He presented characteristics of the Soviet Union more repressive on the nationality and liberty of Afghans; meanwhile, he portrayed the third decade which related to the reign of Mujahedeen regime as premature government. Finally, he depicts the fourth decade, the Taliban regime, as more repressive on Islamic religion or Islamic Law. The events of the story are set in the Capitol of Afghanistan, Kabul because political activities relatively happened there. In essence, the author, Khalid Hosseini, wrote the novel to reveal the miserable situation Afghans had to bear because of war. As an activist and humanitarian, he wanted to tell the untold stories of four decades of war so that he could divert the world’s attention to Afghanistan, as a country and as a nation suffers decades of the imposed war.

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