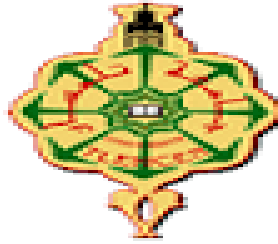


PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
University of Tlemcen
Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages
Department of English



**The Feminist Marxist Approach to
Analysing Hosseini's *A Thousand
Splendid Suns***

**Dissertation submitted to the Department of English Language as a Partial
Fulfillment of the Master Degree in English Literary and Cultural Studies**

Presented by:Supervised by:

YousraSerir* *Prof. Ghouti Hadjoui

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Dedications

To my wonderful parents who brought me to this life,taught me all what I need
and gave me the opportunity to fulfill my ambitions.

To my tender Sister Lina and my loving brothers Mahmoud and Abdelkader.

And finally, a special thank to my beloved friends, family and all people who
occupy a great space in my heart.

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My sincere thanks go to the board of examiners Dr Wassila Mouro and Dr Mohamed Khelladi for devoting their time and effort to read and evaluate my work, and to everyone who tendered me a helping hand in my research.

Abstract

This dissertation mainly sheds light on the analysis of khaled Hosseini novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* which has been the concern of many specialists in literature, media and cinema. Only being set in Afghanistan is enough to attract attention about that undeveloped strictly traditional country; and great desire for knowledge was noticed to approach the type of citizenship, in particular, the people of that country everyday lives.

Based on description and analysis, we strive to deepen and repeat the reading of the novel, in order to supply a good approach to the narrative and the plot from the lens of different critics interested by the novel

After posing questions about the dilemma of different generations of women facing distinct types of men struggling for happiness sometimes, and greedy want another time, and after testing the hypotheses of the case, we infer some research findings that in spite of contradictory characters in the novel, there are always bad and good people expecting their resort, mainly seen from jalil, Rasheed, Tareq, the male characters opposed to the female ones: Nana, Laila and Mariam.

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General

Introduction

General Introduction

When I was in the license, I often heard master students complaining about the writing of memoir and I so much belittle from their worry. However, when time was up for me to do a research, the shadow of the phantom haunts me calling for fixing an idea about a poem a play or a novel, out of routine, far from boredom and suiting honorable readers, teachers' merits and other personal dreams. Hesitatingly I failed to convince myself by a theme with such grandeur till randomly searching in the sites of Google for fun reading, the novel of *A Thousands Splendid Suns* appears to me as the rainbow shining after long rainy days without shelter

A Thousands Splendid Suns is written by the American born Afghanistan novelist Khaled Hosseini who is the son of an afghan diplomat and teacher. He moved to California and studied medicine but prefer to be a writer. *A Thousands Splendid Suns* is his second novel after his successful one entitled *The Kite Runner*. It is a reference to the city of Kabul and the worrisome women, their weakness, dependence and imprisonment mingled with despair, torture and beatings through the heroines Mariam and Laila.

A Thousands Splendid Suns set in Afghanistan during the period 1960s till 2000s, to depict the plight of two women born in separate decades purposefully to compare the evolution of women status in Kabul. Hosseini inspires the title from a poem written about Kabul by the seventeenth century poet Saib-e-Tabrizi to weave tragically events in successive episodes full of suspense, artistic touch and ingenuous narrative.

In fact, this research targets at seeking those hidden truths left unexplored in the area of research to strongly echoing the voice of women nurtured on false prejudices and stereotypes especially in Afghanistan a country often accused of slaughter and crime or as a refuge for terrorism

The problem statement of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* lies in the review of the limited freedom of Afghan women in a country full of political upheavals and social unrest. Consequently the research questions inferred from the general layout are as follows:

- Do the characters in the novel like Laila and Mariam mirror an authentic portrait of women in Afghan society?
- Is *A Thousand Splendid Suns* a reflection of Feminism and Marxism?
- Does *A Thousand Splendid Suns* raise awareness about cultural clashes in a deprived country becoming the concern of international politics?

Thus the following hypotheses require arguments to be tested before being confirmed

- Laila and Mariam give deep insights about the social truth of the woman in Afghanistan society
- *A Thousand Splendid Suns* reflects a host of theories related to feminism and Marxism approaching different movements towards literature in general and women vs men in particular
- Indeed *A Thousand Splendid Suns* expresses a host of cultural disharmony and brush encountered in a country of primordial world politics.

The research methodology requires descriptive and analytical approaches that lead to the written up of this research from reading the novel, underlying its main characters and themes, restating its ideas and ordering the sequence of its events till extracting the main research findings

As for the research planning, it is composed of two chapters; while the first provides a review of literature which comprises definitions of concepts considered as keys to research proposal such as Feminism, Marxism, the second chapter mainly examines critical insights about *A Thousands Splendid Suns* plus some approaches to its scanning as a novel reviewing hot topics about murder, suicide, rape, guilt, greed, and others.

Chapter One

Literature Review

1-1 Introduction

The research paper requires some knowledge about the main concepts considered as keys to stand up arguments and before all provide data about the topic. Thus, many definitions come to mind in order to introduce them and this is the main content of this chapter.

1-2 Literature

The exact definition of literature is almost hard to give because it differs from one reader to another, but most believe that it is an art which describes written and sometimes spoken material. The word "literature" is derived from "literatura," which means "writing formed with letters."

Simply put, literature is an art characterized by creation and invention that most commonly comprises works of creative imagination through different forms including poetry, prose and drama expressed through sonnets, lyrics, novels, novellas, short stories, plays to cite only few. Literature, then, is a work of art. It is not journalism or technical book; it is, rather, fantastic or creative full of invention and originality.

Many scholars have tried to define literature, among them, Réne Wellek and Austin Warren in their book entitled *Theory of Literature* (p20):

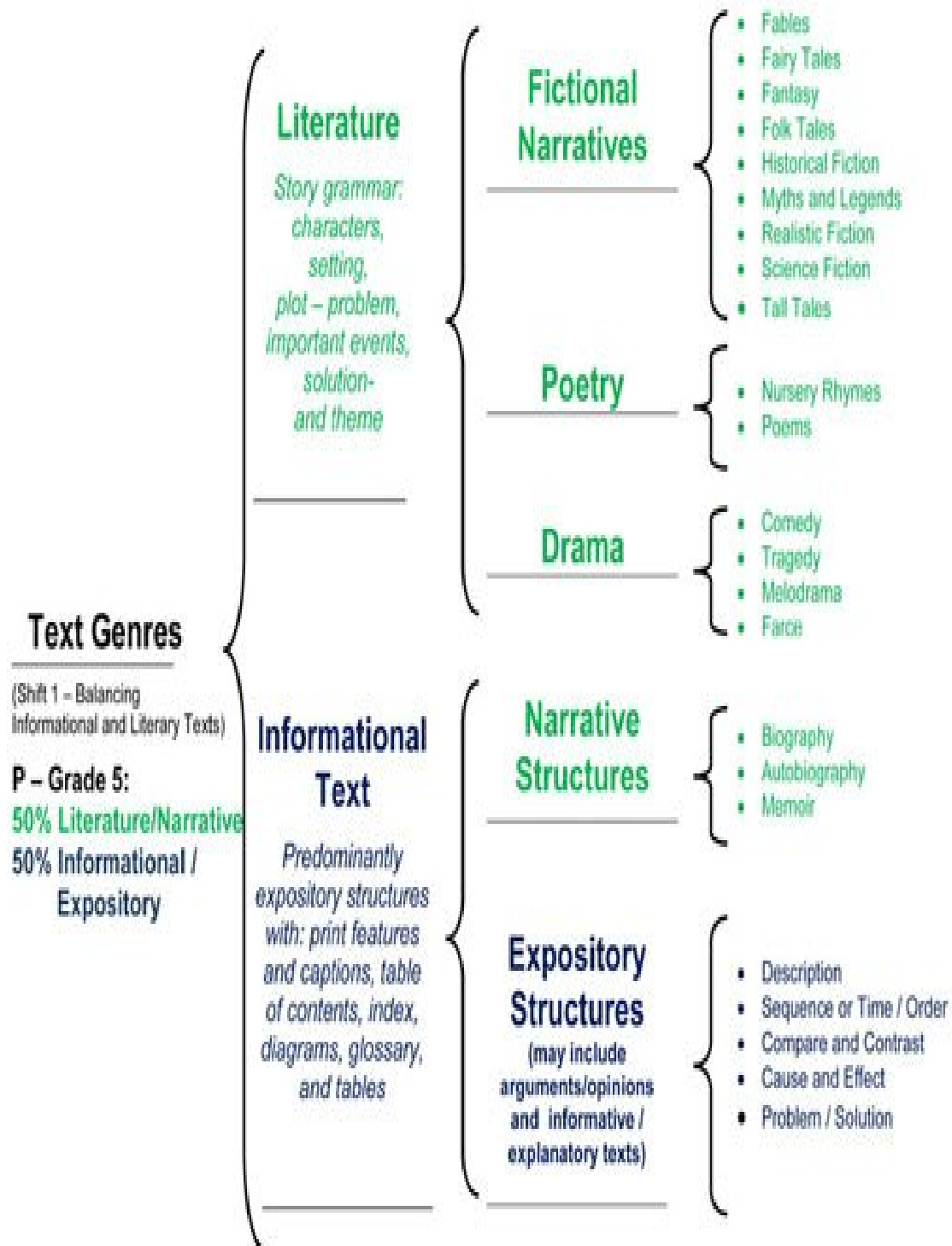
What is literature? What is not literature? What is the nature of literature? Simple as such questions sound, they are rarely answered clearly.

Jean Paul Sartre once asked in his book entitled "What is Literature" the following questions: "what is writing? Why does one write? For whom? The fact is, it seems that nobody has ever asked himself these questions" (p23).

Therefore, the art of literature, though it may seem easy to define, is not straightforward to set up evidently; but it is achievable to come near to the connotation and the denotation of literature by including the main important literary genres related to texts.

CHAPTER ONE : Literature Review

The following diagram explains the general genres that literature comprises:



Created by Denise Alterio, Judy Carr, and Lynn Miller for Sullivan County BOCES - scbooces.org
Text Genres Brace Map: P - 5
June 2012

Diagram 1-1 Different Text Genres in Literature

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Different types of texts suggest the variety, diversity and the richness of literature requiring great skills of art and language to read and write and especially the task requires gift and endowment that ordinary people do not have. So writers of literature besides being skillful in language and ideas they are talented persons created to share donation freely to appreciate beauty and give without limits.

1-3 Feminism

The term ‘feminism’ can describe and explain how its creatures support the equality for women and men and move their topical focus and assumptions away from men’s experience and viewpoint. “As long as she thinks of a man, nobody objects to a woman thinking.” ([Virginia Woolf](#), [Orlando](#) chapter6)

The revolt of feminist theories anew in the history of revolutions pace to literature domain to urge and motivate women get the right to write and express themselves after long before writing anonymously like George Eliot whose name is Marry Ann; or others who wrote secretly and not knowing the zenith of their success since most of them died before that like Emily Bronte with her legendary novel *Wuthering Heights*. This political and cultural movement tempts to establish equal rights and opportunities for women by shining light on legal protection for women and social problems that they suffer from as said Joss Whedon in Joy Davinson:

Equality is not a concept. It's not something we should be striving for. It's a necessity. Equality is like gravity. We need it to stand on this earth as men and women, and the misogyny that is in every culture is not a true part of the human condition. It is life out of balance, and that imbalance is sucking something out of the soul of every man and woman who's confronted with it. We need equality. Kinda now. (Whedon, 2007:169)

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Many writers and abolitionists tried to find solutions and issues that are misidentified by the historically male dominance within a society such as insisting on working and expanding women choices to develop their human interest, and their freedom of thinking and working and being equal with men in all domains. Consequently, for the abolitionists, this latter should be done to push for change in order to increase gender equality as advocated [Adrienne Rich](#) essay “Claiming an education”^{*}:

Responsibility to yourself means refusing to let others do your thinking, talking, and naming for you. It means that you do not treat your body as a commodity with which to purchase superficial intimacy or economic security; for our bodies to be treated as objects, our minds are in mortal danger. It means insisting that those to whom you give your friendship and love are able to respect your mind

(Rich,1979:26)

The poet’s feminist prose Rich also related her opinion to the famous Victorian novelist Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre: "I have an inward treasure born with me, which can keep me alive if all the extraneous delights should be withheld or offered only at a price I cannot afford to give".Chapter6

Accordingly, Adrienne rich insists on the responsibility of the self by the woman to be sure of herself and not be shallow to admit any easy solutions or domestic activities like :

^{*}https://s3.amazonaws.com/arena.../Claiming_an_Education.pdf

Marrying early as an escape from real decisions, getting pregnant as an evasion of already existing problems. It means that you refuse to sell your talents and aspirations short...and this, in turn, means resisting the forces in society which say that women should be nice, play safe, have low professional expectations, drown in love and forget about work, live through others, and stay in the places assigned to us.

(Rich 1979:26)*

Domestic activities were denied and other meaningful tasks were the principles of feminism at its starting revolt:

It means that we insist on a life of meaningful work, insist that work be as meaningful as love and friendship in our lives. It means, therefore, the courage to be "different"...The difference between a life lived actively, and a life of passive drifting and dispersal of energies, is an immense difference.

(Rich 1979:26)*

She totally rejected the passive way in being responsible.

1-4 History

Not starting so far because feminism is rooted to older days of Greek civilization, Feminists and scholars have revealed to three parts of the revolution of this movement's history known by the following waves:

*https://s3.amazonaws.com/arena.../Claiming_an_Education.pdf

*https://s3.amazonaws.com/arena.../Claiming_an_Education.pdf

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The first feminist wave was in the nineteenth and the early twenties centuries. It was a political rebellion and gain of power till expanding to other issues never thought before like sex and economy. The first wave was mainly concerned with women's right to vote, Its biggest achievement was winning some political power and winning improved rights for women in marriage and property. In 1918 only women who were over thirty could vote and the remaining one did not have this right. However, in 1928 all women over twenty-one have earned the approval to vote.

The second wave was from 1960s till 1970s; an post world war II era, very promising for working outside and getting more reproductive rights. It introduces all ideas and actions that are joined with women's liberation movement, starting with fighting for legal and social rights for women such as learning and working.

In 'The Feminine Mystique' (1963) Betty Freidan discussed that because of the feminine mystique i. e. air of secrecy in the life of women often jailed, covered, hidden and overthrown when no more useful to men greed, therefore, women were unhappy in their lives. She thought that this was a negative principle of femininity which she called; "The Happy Housewife" and it restricted women to the role of housewife and mother, giving up on work and education.

Germaine Greer (1970) is a feminist who discussed that:

Women are 'castrated', the eunuch of the title, by society. In particular she attacked the nuclear family, romantic role and the limits on women's sexuality. She argued that gender roles were not natural but learned. They conditioned girls to conform to a very restrictive femininity. The book has been criticized for not offering any realistic solutions to women's oppression, because it proposed action by individual women rather than organized political action *

*<https://fr.slideshare.net/Katrinabrookes/feminism-theory>

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The third wave stretched from the 1990s to the present, it gets more consciousness and maturity in the minds of females because the main principles for feminism were prefaced in the former two waves. By this wave, the feminist movement and its ideas were developed by treating the different disadvantages and problems that women undergo because of their social class, race and ethnicity. This feminist wave tends to address the apparent failures of the second wave feminism.

1-5 Marxism

Marxism is a philosophy and a method that originates from the mid-to-late 19th century and developed by the two German philosophers living in London [Karl Marx](#) (1818-1883) and [Friedrich Engels](#) (1820-1895).

This theory describes class relations and social conflicts in terms of economic factors that manipulate the political life.

Marxism is cited in the Encarta Reference Library as “a theory in which class struggle is a central element in the analysis of social change in Western societies.” Marxism is the opposite of capitalism explained by Encarta as “an economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production and distribution of goods, characterized by a free competitive market and motivation by profit.”*

Cornel West also talked about capitalism and Marxism in his book “The cornel West Reader” and he said:

In a time in which Communist regimes have been rightfully discredited and yet alternatives to neoliberal capitalist societies are unwisely dismissed, I defend the fundamental claim of Marxist theory: there must be countervailing forces that defend people's needs against the brutality of profit driven capitalism.

(Cornel West, 1999:211)

*<http://www.allaboutphilosophy.org/what-is-marxism-faq.htm>

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Marx analyses and critiques the development of capitalist system that has succeeded feudalism and he noticed the struggle of two main social classes, he argued in “The German Ideology” that:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force.

(Marx and Engels, 1972: 64)

He also insists that:

The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.

(Marx and Engels, 1972: 64)

This is why an idea over another are perfect because:

The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas.

(Marx and Engels, 1972: 64)

These two classes are formed by the capitalists and the workers, the struggle was between the bourgeoisie (the property owning class) who hold the productive resources and who are private owners and the proletarians (the industrial working class) who work to survive. He claimed that:

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In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor, and there with also the antithesis between mental and physical labor, has vanished; after labor has become not only a means of life but life's prime want

(Karl, 1993 :164)

Then he discussed the amount of fortune as he said:

after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs

(Karl, 1993 :164)

So Marx tried to analyze the complex relations between these two different classes as the contradictions arose and intensified through this system and become observed and apparent to the proletarians which led to the emergence of a strong unrest between the two antagonistic classes until it drove to a social revolution as [Stathis Kouvelakis](#) claimed in [Philosophy and Revolution: From Kant to Marx](#) that “The right to make revolution is unconditional, for it alone establishes right.”

Consequently, this revolution led to the appearance and the founding of a new economic system called socialism, Karl Marx advocated this idea as he said “Let the ruling classes tremble at a communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose

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but their chains. They have a world to win. Workingmen of all countries unite!”*

George Orwell the English novelist famous for his *Animal Farm* and *1984* but also is a big critic and essayist who explained capitalism, Marxism and socialism in his book “Down and Out in Paris and London” he said that:

Fear of the mob is a superstitious fear. It is based on the idea that there is some mysterious, fundamental difference between rich and poor, as though they were two different races, like Negroes and white men.

(Orwell, 2012:86)

Orwell distinction of the rich and the poor gets deeper when he explains:

But in reality there is no such difference. The mass of the rich and the poor are differentiated by their incomes and nothing else, and the average millionaire is only the average dishwasher dressed in a new suit. Change places, and handy dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief?

(Orwell, 2012:86)

He also argued that:

Everyone who has mixed on equal terms with the poor knows this quite well. But the trouble is that intelligent, cultivated people, the very people who might be expected to have liberal opinions, never do mix with the poor. For what do the majority of educated people know about poverty?

(Orwell,2012:86)

*https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/k/karl_marx.html

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Marxism is based on socialism followed by a classless society that governs and controls itself, and in which the main strategy is people possession of the means of production, distribution, and exchange without remaining to the dominance of other classes or structures.

1-6 Socialism, Marxism and Communism

People often confuse with the use of these three systems as if they are all the same and they have the same meaning so in the political circle and the polite conversations, the terms communism, socialism and Marxism are used in a way indistinguishable and interchangeable. However, in fact these three economic and political systems differ from one another and are interrelated because each previous system foretells the beginning of the next one, it means that each philosophy is constructed upon the other one. The distinctions between these three terms are clearly shown. In classic Marxist theory, communism describes the system of holding all the property in common and it is considered as the final step of the progress of human socioeconomic relations, in the Marxism model, the feudal system is brought down and removed by the rise of the bourgeoisie ushering in the capitalist epoch that requires an underclass:

Modern bourgeois society which arose from the ruins of the feudal system has not wiped out the antagonism of classes. New classes, new conditions of oppression, new modes and forms of carrying on the struggle, have been substituted for the old ones.

(Marx inThe American Federationist, 1898:108)

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This class has some distinctions and features:

The characteristic of our epoch - the epoch of the bourgeois, or middle class - is that the struggle between the various social classes has been reduced to its simplest form. Society tends more and more to be divided into two great hostile classes - the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat.

(Marx in *The American Federationist*, 1898:108)

This was described by Marx by showing how the wealth of the bourgeoisie depended on the work of the proletariat, but Marx foretells that this later would create a big resentment which pushes on a revolution by the workers against the bourgeoisie and eventually, would lead to the overthrow of the capitalist system then the defeat of communism and the founding of socialism instead which lead to the end of the political power and the disappearance of the social class differences:

When in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another(Marx, 1847:127)

A new classless society comes out as a result of the proletariats' failure of capitalism based on the idea: 'from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs'. Marx, the Manifesto of the Communists.

1-6-1 Marxism in Literature

By the fact that literature is related to life, Marxism should occupy great deal of it. Those speaking voices in literary texts about classes, cultures, social inequalities empower the theory of Marxism in literature. Add to this that Marxism is an

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expression and an institution of different domains considered a driving forces essential to build up a society like economics, sociology and politics. Raymond Williams in his famous book 'Marxism and Literature' sets the two concepts as:

Having previously settled into a stable set of doctrines, *Marxism* has recently (as of 1977, when this book was written) experienced both a revival and a related openness and flexibility of theoretical development. *Literature*, meanwhile, for related reasons, has become problematic in quite new ways.*

Literature up to Marxism has conditions for production which changes with cultures, societies, and systems. The work is tasteful and sensible more than the reader. While art is a province of human skill crowning with beauty and aesthetics to express a literary text as the bearer of beauty, sensuality and wisdom telling only and always the truth in the abyss of fictional world.

1-7 Summary of the Novel

'Herat', a small city in Afghanistan, behind its wracked walls, lived young Mariam and grew yonder with her mother Nana: a typical lady who believed that women should learn nothing but endurance; and often repeats: "Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman." (p.7).

Nana does not stop to warn of and instill all along the novel the following truth about women of Kabul:

There is only one, only one skill a woman like you and me needs in life, and they don't teach it in school . . . Only one skill. And it's this: *tahamul*. Endure . . . It's our lot in life, Mariam. Women like us. We endure. It's all we have. Do you understand? Besides, they'll laugh at you in school. They will. They'll call you *harami*. They'll say the most terrible things about you. I won't have it. . . There is nothing out there for her. Nothing but rejection and heartache. (17/18)

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Mariam is the illegitimate daughter of Jalil, a big business man and an owner of a cinema, and Nana who bitterly received her: “Nor was she old enough to appreciate the injustice, to see that it is the creators of the *harami* who are culpable, not the *harami*, whose only sin is being born.” (4).

He used to visit Mariam weekly and on her fifteenth anniversary she begged him to take her for watching Pinocchio. He first accepted but when she went to his house he did not let her in. thus she slept in the street till the morning when Jalil’s chauffeur took her back home, where her epileptic mother committed suicide.

Mariam moved to dwell with her father and his three wives who soon wanted to get rid of her and pushed her father to marry her off to a shoemaker called Rasheed.

Mariam became the scapegoat of an abusive and vicious husband who married her only to give him birth to a child so that to replace the son he lost. When she could not do so , Mariam’s marriage became real hell to her.

Not far from Rasheed and Mariam’s house, grew Laila in war conditions. She only sought her comfort with Tariq her beloved one. Tariq lately flew the country with his family and left Laila illegally pregnant with his daughter, Aziza. Malicious Rasheed exploited the situation and asked Laila for marriage to cover over her shame. Mariam first did not bear Laila but lately both cohered against Rasheed’s cruelty and abuse.

Many years passed and Laila gave birth to another child named Zalmai from Rasheed. One day, she was very surprised by an unexpected guest. It was Tariq whom she thought he died.

Maybe it is senseless to want to be near a person so badly in a country where bullets had shredded her own brothers to pieces. But all Laila has to do is picture Tariq going at Khadim with his leg and then nothing in the world seems more sensible to her. (p.137)

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When Rasheed figured out about Tariq's arrival he treated Laila aggressively, what obliged Mariam to kill him with a shovel in order to protect her. After this gruesome incident, Mariam had been executed by the Taliban, while Laila and Tariq and the kids moved to Pakistan and lived comfortably; until the US invasion, when Laila decided to go back home to stand by her city. Before reaching Kabul, she stopped in Herat to visit Mariam's house with a deep grief on her execution. There, she found a box of letters from Jalil. It was Mariam's share from her father's inheritance. Laila used the money to finance the orphanage and became a school teacher thither.

At the end of the novel, Laila is pregnant again but now it is legal from Tariq hoping to reach the happiness they have spent their lives looking for.

1-8 Khaled Hosseini Biography

Khaled Hosseini is an Afghan-American novelist, he was born in 1965, Kabul, Afghanistan. He was the oldest son of five children and was raised by very educated parents; a father who was a diplomat for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a mother who taught Farsi and history in high school.

When Hosseini was 11 years old, the Foreign Ministry transferred his family to France, Paris. After four years, they returned to Kabul but because of the circumstances due to the Russian invasion of Afghanistan which took place in 1980 and which devastated his homeland. Hosseini's family submitted for approval of political asylum in the United States and they were granted for it. Consequently, they moved to San Jose, California where Hosseini found a difficulty because he did not speak English at that time so he stated that it was a "a culture shock" and "very alienating" for him.

In spite of their distance from the country's unrest and disorder, the family was up to date with the situations of their friends and relatives as explained Hosseini:

We had a lot of family and friends in Kabul. And the communist coup, as opposed to the coup that happened in '73, was actually very violent. A lot of people rounded up and executed, a lot of people were imprisoned. Virtually anybody that was affiliated or associated with the previous regime or the royal family was persecuted, imprisoned, killed, rounded up, or disappeared.*

This is why it is very common to hear about many people relatives and families which occurs with them the same event and were executed to the same sort:

And so we would hear news of friends and acquaintances and occasionally family members to whom that had happened that were either in prison or worse, had just disappeared and nobody knew where they were, and some of them never turned up.

The penchant for torture continues:

My wife's uncle was a very famous singer and composer in Kabul who had been quite vocal about his dislike for the communists and so on and he disappeared. And to this day, we have no idea what happened to him. So that sort of thing, we began to hear news over in Europe of mass executions and really just horror stories. So it was surreal, and it also really kind of hit home in a very real way.*

In 1984, Hosseini graduates from high school, but this time, he spoke English fluently, He envisaged becoming a writer and this was his main ambition but he decides first to follow medicine. Then he graduated from Santa Clara University with a bachelor's degree in biology in 1988 and then he joined the University of California, School of

*https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khaled_Hosseini

*https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khaled_Hosseini

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Medicine to learn medicine. He became a doctor after three years of residency in Los Angeles and worked as internist between 1996 and 2004 for three years. He practiced Medicine for a decade and, finally, he decided to achieve his ambition of writing and he started by his first novel called *The Kite Runner* in 2003 and then he wrote *A Thousand Splendid Suns* published in 2007 . These two novels became popular and earned a lot of success, more than 10 million copies were sold in the United States and more than 38 million copies worldwide and granted a lot of popular and critical awards. Hosseini third novel was called *And The Mountains Echoed* published in 2013 and before its release Hosseini said:

I am forever drawn to family as a recurring central theme of my writing. My earlier novels were at heart tales of fatherhood and motherhood. My new novel is a multi-generational family story as well, this time revolving around brothers and sisters, and the ways in which they love, wound, betray, honor, and sacrifice for each other.*

In addition to his ambition of being a novelist, Hosseini was also interested to focus in writing a screenplay, a stage play, and more short stories.

1-9 Khaled Hosseini a Writer par Excellence

When a writer reaches sales of 34 million copies between two novels only he deserves to be called “publishing phenomenon”*. His debut with the *Kite Runner* then his successive successful *A Thousands Splendid Suns* offer him merits of the title.

His debut, 2003's *The Kite Runner*, written in the early mornings before work as a doctor, was followed by 2007's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Together they've sold over 38m copies worldwide.

(Hoby 2013)

His thinks literature is endless stories to tell focusing the role of the family as he exactly has been brought up as he says:

*https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khaled_Hosseini

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In Afghanistan, you don't understand yourself solely as an individual...You understand yourself as a son, a brother, a cousin to somebody, an uncle to somebody. You are part of something bigger than yourself. The things that happen within families

(Hoby 2013)*

With his resonant stories he succeeds to echo literary voices appreciating the power of literature. He achieves the narration of hot topics of abuse, misery and enables readers to read them with suspense.

After the success of *The Kite Runner*, everyone expects ambitiously what should follow. Remaining in Afghanistan, soon after Hosseini produces his *A Thousand Splendid Suns* that offers him big triumph and reward and if we start reading the first pages of the novel we understand that indeed Khaled Hosseini a Writer par Excellence as the following chapter should incline.

*[Hermione Hoby](https://www.theguardian.com) Saturday 1 June 2013 in <https://www.theguardian.com>

Chapter two

The Analysis of A Thousand Splendid Suns

2.1 Introduction

Many literary elements worth studying in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* to know deeper the multi interpretations of the novelist who succeeds to a large extent giving a good background about the country of Afghanistan often mistaken by the rumors of the media

2-2A Thousand Splendid Suns Analysis

Hosseini uses so many elements that contribute successfully to the making of his novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, so amazing for reading and studying like the choice of characters between male and female, the plot and the setting.

2-2-1Setting

Hosseini is telling the story of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* in a net of events put in an important setting so that the reader gets enough knowledge about Afghanistan a place often unknown to the world. The setting in the novel is in Kabul starting by those upheavals caused by the Soviet invasion till the dominance of Taliban over power in the country. This era is so important for the characters who lived the period of torment and persecution by the former invasions. The main places in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* are fixed in Herat, Gul Daman, and Afghanistan. In very few times the novelist jumps to Pakistan in Muree and the striking time of the events have taken place since the year 1958 till nowadays.

2-2-2The Main Characters

Mariam and Laila play primordial role in the novel gathered both by unwanted marriage from the same husband, and after a long unloved companionship, they become so friendly and compassionate one for the other. Mariam the illegal girl of Nana, the miserable housecleaner, and Jalil, the rich man, has forced to marry Rasheed after the death of her mother and the rejection of her father's wives; while Laila, the young beautiful lady bearing an illegal baby forced to marry Rasheed to flee society blame. She gets 'Aziza' whose father is the absent 'Tariq' and gets 'Zalmai' from her

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forced marriage. Rasheed is a severe person greedy of personal desire, so cruel and villain, abusing his wives Mariam and Laila who live under his roof bitterly. Finally Mariam kills Rasheed for the sake of Laila and gets executed as imposed from Taliban rule. Another male character ‘Tariq’ seems to be the gentleman in the story. He was the lover of Laila who got separated from her because of war, leaving Afghanistan with his parents. After he disappeared and everyone thought he was dead, he suddenly appears to rejoin his first love and lives happily with Laila and their daughter Aziza.

2-2-2-1 Characters Map

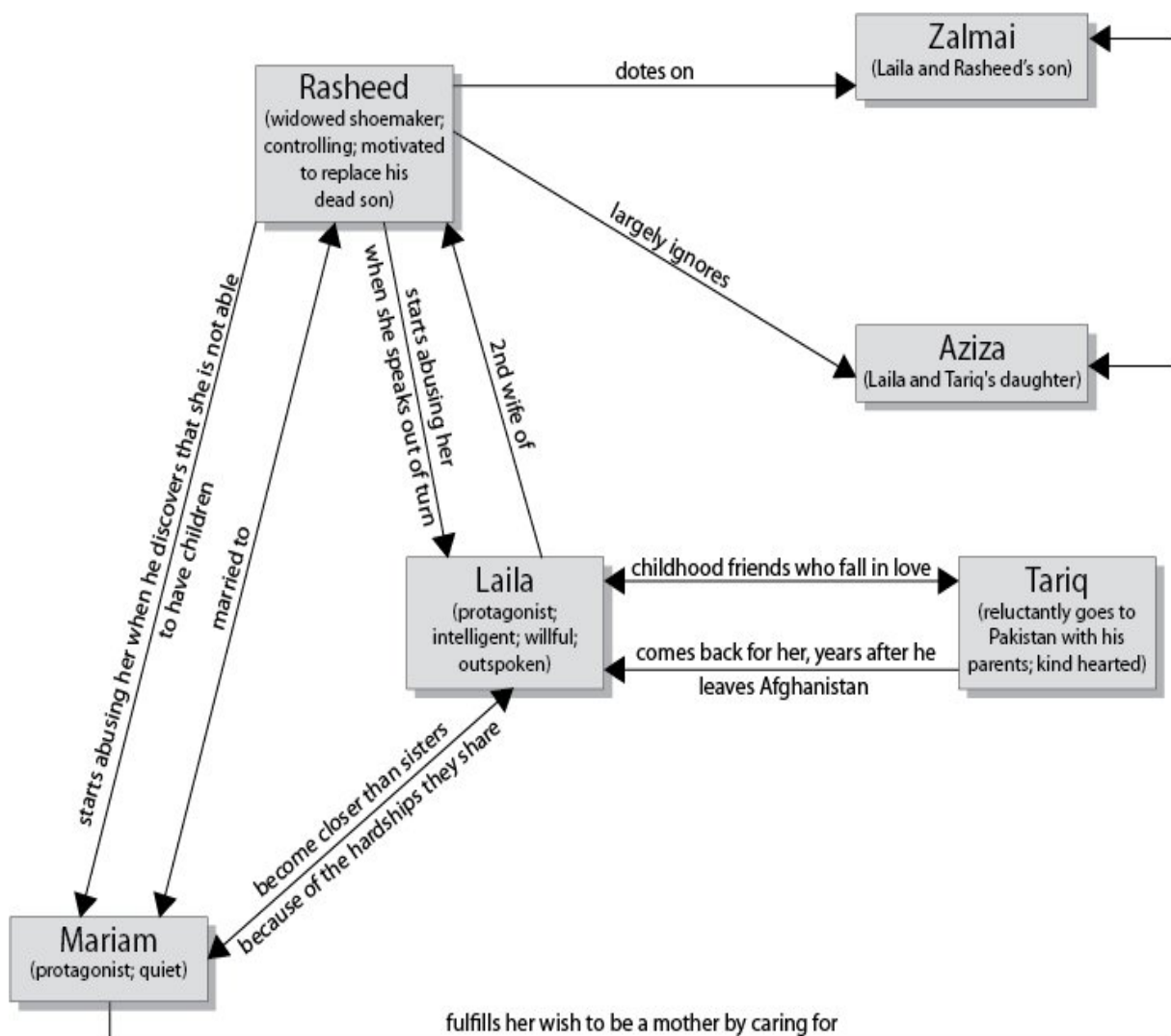


Figure2: Main Characters in the Novel

Source: <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/t/a-thousand-splendid-suns/character-map>

2-2-3 The Plot

The novelist in his *A Thousand Splendid Suns* was so skillful to introduce different generations with their contradiction, difference and characteristics to the reader. Starting the novel in the year 1974 when Mariam was 15 year old, thrown by her father because she reminds him that she is a sin, then thrown by the death of her Nana in the hands of the shoemaker Rasheed, who should become her terrible husband and should be killed by her in the end. In between the course of events, Laila should mark torture by living forced under Rasheed rule till getting free from him to meet her love for ever Tariq.

So the whole story is a complex narrative weaved by the author in the eyes of two women a newer generation in Kabul which sacrifice alarms when Mariam protects Laila from the torment of Rasheed; whom she kills and gets executed to leave Laila live her love again with Tariq and her children. So the women in the novel are metaphorically the splendid suns of the title, which should always set and shine again, to represent hope for a better Kabul in the near future.

2.3 Feminism in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

As a target, Khaled Hosseini's *A thousand Splendid Suns* is based on the nature of women living in Afghan society. He is interested in revealing the discrimination and the struggles that the central characters Mariam and Laila face, as they live in a very harsh period for women's rights in Afghanistan.

Hosseini shows his enormous concentration towards his native land Afghanistan, by describing all what concerns it either in the past, the present or the future: particularly in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* where he tried, in a way or another, to mirror exceedingly the realities and his delineation of the struggles of women specifically in Afghanistan. He could plant the seed of compassion in the readers' mind to afford their interest in the course of the novel.

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By using feminist and womanhood perspectives, Hosseini could successfully reflect the real image of the Afghan women, as he shed light on the discrimination and victimization of women by patriarchal lifestyle imposed in the society.

As the oppression predominated in the entire novel, Nana, Mariam, Laila and Aziza are typical examples which represent the bad treatment and show the abuses and the seizures faced by the Afghan women which are demonstrated by Hosseini in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

2-3-1 Nana the Social Low Status

Nana (Mariam's mother) suffered from oppression, cruel and violent treatment from her fiancé Jalil and his family, on the one hand, and insult and expulsion of her father on the other, hand because she gave birth to Mariam a 'harami' (an illegitimate child).

Nana was treated poorly during her entire life. Jalil abandoned her and expelled her from his house, because she was working as his housekeeper, so when she was pregnant, he repudiated his baby and fired Nana to a small village. He felt embarrassed and ashamed to get a harami child out of wedlock, so to cover up his mistake in front of his family, he sent her away.

Nana expressed all what she felt and all what she experienced because of men by warning her daughter Mariam, that men always find a manner to blame women for redeeming and rescuing themselves when she said: "Like a compass needle that always points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman. Always, you remember that, Mariam... 'and believe me' Nana said 'it was a relief to your father having me out of sight' (p.07)

This excerpt strongly warns men danger up to Nana view.

2-3-2 Mariam's Endurance

Nana's daughter, Mariam, was an illegitimate child, so from her first day, she had a bad luck first to be a harami girl, then because of the hatred of her father Jalil, she was not accepted at all by him. He does not like her because he thinks that she is the cause of soiling his family's reputation. Then she was compelled by him to get married to Rasheed who was thirty years older than her, although she does not want to be engaged to him because she was just fifteen. Despite her refusal, she ended with accepting him by force. And finally, her husband, also, started to abuse her especially when she had a miscarriage and she became unable to be pregnant "[Laila] watched him shove Mariam into the tool shed... He shut the double doors to the shed, took a key from his pocket, worked the padlock. " (p.405)

Finally, Mariam ends with murdering Rasheed to save Laila's life (his second wife) because he was about killing her. Although this was a self-defense and she committed this crime to rescue Laila but she was blamed and executed up to Taliban regime.

2-3-3 Laila's Sacrifices

Laila was luckier than Mariam, she was not an illegitimate child but she had also suffered from mistreatment by men throughout all her life. The first time was when she was at a young age, one of the boys of her village, Khadim, sprays piss on her by a water gun and makes her a laughing-stock in front of all his friends.

Laila turned around and was greeted by the barrel of a gun...Laila began to backpedal, but Khadim was already pumping the trigger. One after another, thin jets of warm water struck Laila's hair, then her palm when she raised it to shield her face. Now the other boys came out of their hiding (p.177)

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Furthermore, she was abused by Rasheed, first when he lies on her that her beloved Tariq was died in order to accept his proposal for marriage. Then when he started harming and reprimanding his wives Mariam and Laila for whatever goes wrong with him in his life, especially, he became abusive when Mariam was unable to deliver a child and when Laila gave birth to a girl. Besides the horrors of Rasheed who violated his responsibility as a husband, Laila was beaten by the Taliban for going out alone to visit her daughter Aziza in the orphanage:

Sometimes she was caught, questioned, scolded-two, three, even four times in a single day. Then the whips came down and the antennas sliced through the air, and she trudged home, bloodied, without so much as a glimpse of Aziza(p.487)

Despite all these abuses, struggles and injuries that Laila underwent in her entire life, all the sacrifices she offered made her stronger and powerful to resist all the difficulties and continue her life as a great and an affectionate mother.

2-3-4 Aziza's Sufferings

Aziza was marginalized and received a very bad treatment from Rasheed whom she believed he was her true father, but he rejected her for being a girl and sent her to the orphanage just because of her sex. In fact, Rasheed wanted to retrieve her first son who died by another one and when Laila delivered Aziza instead of a boy, he became upset and started to rebuke both Aziza and her mother Laila. It is hard to grow up in such a situation very complex and very cruel; but despite all these obscurities and troubles, she could be soulful and tender. She was well-mannered and courteous as she could maintain the capacity to forgive, because she was raised by Laila and Mariam her aunt who taught her that **He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love.** (Martin Luther King)*

* <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/416868>

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The theme of marginalization is one of the important aspects of the novel, this term refers to the process whereby a person or a group of people are considered less important and inferior or become downgraded and discriminated unjustly; by pushing them away and relegating them to the edge of the society. Consequently, this later affects them badly, making the person feel different and distinguished from the others.

Because of different reasons, marginalization crawls into the minds of people of various nations, for instance, the Africans were marginalized because of their skin color, furthermore, the Indians distinguish each other by relying on the community they belong to. In the same way, the women of Afghan were marginalized by men of their own nation, who control every aspect of woman's life and treat them as inferiors. So, because of the odd propagation and the dominance of the patriarchal lifestyle which was enforced and encouraged in the Afghan society, women in particular suffer from several problems as a result of their systematic victimization, and sacrifice by patriarchal institutions, that caused poor treatment and cruelty, mostly the Afghan women undergo.

2.4 Reasons of Marginalization in Afghan Society

The society of Afghanistan has been so long considered as conservative and traditionally tied. Different political and religious regimes affected the society and drove it back far away from civilization and modern types of life.

2.4-1 The Impact of Political Changes on Women Rights

The novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* discloses the difficult conditions that women undergo in Afghanistan. One of the main reasons which led to the marginalization is the changing political situation that has a strong effect on the women's status in the Afghan society.

As portrayed the novel, the position of the women changes from a region to another. And throughout the story of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* the most

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convenient city that retraces the common political changes took place in Kabul; where the reader could experience the shift and alterations of the woman's status. All the different changes were represented in Kabul, and this was noticed when Mariam moved to this city and was forced to marry Rasheed. She observed astonishingly the modern life, especially for women, she was amazed by the fact that women could wear whatever they want in a modern style, they were able to go outside alone, and walk around the city alone, they were allowed to forgo head coverings, drive, work, and even holding professional positions.

This period was known as the most interesting time in Afghanistan, for women in particular, who enjoyed the most liberties. It was in the communist era when the Afghan people were under the rule of the soviet government. This epoch promotes all kind of freedoms for women as said Laila's father: "it's a good time to be a woman in Afghanistan." (p.135)

Women were given the right to study and learn. Education was emphasized for them in the communist era. Equality was imposed and spread in all the country in the sake of women, so they were given equal rights to education. Moreover the communists cancel forced marriages and increased the age of girls to sixteen as a minimum age for the possibility of marriage. Men and women are considered equals in all domains so wearing hijab and burqa was optional and was not obligatory for women. Nevertheless, pursuing these women's rights in Afghanistan was not welcomed in all the country, still some areas, especially rural ones, strongly dissent and oppose the modern lifestyle that was practiced by the majority of women in Kabul.

Women's rights and freedoms were reduced when the Taliban gained power and head the city in 1996. Women were severely controlled and their rights were strictly limited. They become marginalized, maltreated, prisoners in their homes as they were required to stay in their houses and cannot leave or walk outside alone unless with a man from their relatives. They were harshly punished, if caught in the street alone, as it was explained in the novel when Laila was beaten several

times, because she left her home alone in order to go to visit her daughter in the orphanage, and this was forbidden under the Taliban rule.

Education and equality were abolished; women did not have the right to learn or to work. Hence, illiteracy disseminates and represents 90 percent of the Afghan women today.

2-4-2 The Impact of Social Norms and Religion

Religion has an integral role in the civilization of any country. It is considered as a vital part and a moral basis in the society. It can strongly influence any environment as it can affect their culture in different ways. This is why, religion goes in parallel with the social norms as part of culture; it can drive any individual relying on his beliefs and his correct or incorrect understandings, that shape his fate and his way of thinking in his milieu. At stake are whether the merits of religion we cherish will guide to the right path if used and construed properly or some bad interpretations and perversions due to the misapprehension of religion will ruin and distort all the society.

Accordingly, the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* has portrayed the problems and the abuses of religion and social norms. But it has good and bad responses, for some readers, it was not successful and it had negative views. For example, Poonam Sharma said that “the book is depressing and feels disappointed with the book”.¹

Shaan Rezvi and Nausheina Haniff, on the other hand, argued that:

***A Thousand Splendid Suns* was disappointing, because the author of the book gave the readers (especially non-Islam) a very negative thought about Muslim men and women, so they will probably get a misunderstanding view of Islam after reading the novel.²**

¹http://eprints.ums.ac.id/23247/2/04.CHAPTER_1.pdf

²http://eprints.ums.ac.id/23247/2/04.CHAPTER_1.pdf

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In fact, it was because of the negative thinking of the Afghan people and their misunderstanding of the religion in many situations, the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* was unsatisfactory for many readers who have got an awful vision of Islam. But actually, Hosseini tried to show the consequences of the horrors of war that happened in Afghanistan and which led to the emergence of the terrorist group known as the period of the Taliban and here the image of Islam started to be distorted. This means that religion has no relation with the results due to the tortures of war, which can occur in any other country that has already experienced the disorder and devastation of battles. And more precisely, religion has no guilt if misused and misunderstood.

In fact, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* reflects the realities that took place in Afghanistan through the representation of war and hostility, which occurred from the 1970s to the 2000s. During this period, Afghanistan suffered from poverty, oppression and war.

Hosseini denotes all what happened in his country; he mentioned all the struggles, the tortures and the troubles that Afghan people experienced during the conflict. He also pointed out to many damages caused by the war which had increasing impacts in the environment. Consequently, no one could fully recover from the devastations of warfare; women in particular were persecuted, abused and oppressed. Religion was misinterpreted and misrepresented, and unfortunately, wrong beliefs controlled the society by supremacy so, as a result, the dominance of the social norms took a huge part in their culture and their environment. From this point, Hosseini demonstrates that the results of war were produced in many dramatic consequences, resulted in the dissolution of the Afghan society and the distortion of the religion.

A Thousand Splendid Suns was a good example to represent the conflict and the animosity that occurred in Afghanistan. As a result of war, the oppression of women was very common, the wrong influence of religion in Afghanistan was widespread since the emergence of the Taliban in 1996, and the overwhelming impact of the social norms was great.

In fact, the Taliban had erroneous comprehension and understanding of Islam. They mingled between the right and the wrong, they interpret religion in a way that suits

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their desires and fulfils their needs. For instance, in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, women survive on Islamic theocracy because of the Taliban who construed Islamic law for their own gratifications. Mariam, for example, was forced to marry Rasheed, who was thirty year older than her, though this compulsion is forbidden in Islam but she was obliged to obey. Furthermore, she suffered from his abuses and his cruelty which were exemplified in the novel, when Rasheed did not like his rice, so he obliged Mariam to eat rocks "Through the mouthful of grit and pebbles, Mariam mumbled a plea. Tears were leaking out of the corners of her eyes"(Hosseini p104)*. Also, when she had a miscarriage, he started to abuse her physically and mentally. However, Islam promotes the kind treatments of wives because men are instructed to be good and nice towards them: "...And live with them in kindness..." (Quran 4:19)

Likewise, Laila, his second wife, experienced his brutality, as he was beating his wives to the core because Afghan men believed that women are property of their husbands, and they are allowed to do whatever please them, and treat them in a way that infringes and violates their role as husbands in Islam; as if Islam promotes and urges inequality, cruelty and brutality. Nevertheless, the Prophet peace be upon him urged men to mollycoddle and treat their wives with gentleness, because their behavior shapes their image as Muslims and reflects the faith and the sincerity of the Muslim's good character as he said: "The most perfect of believers in belief is the best of them in character. The best of you are those who are the best to their women"(Al-Tirmidhi)

As well, according to Quran, Islam endorses equality; men and women are equal, but they have different roles in life. Women have to obey and guard their husbands, and men have to protect and maintain their wives.* *In A Thousand Splendid Suns*, women were not considered as real people and their role in life is just to cook and clean. They were thought of inferiors and maids, the Taliban forbade female education, women were not allowed to learn and to work or even to go outside alone without a man of their relatives. The Taliban forced women to wear a burqa to cover up all skin when

* A Thousand Splendid Suns.

*http://www.academia.edu/7829243/Study_of_Marginalized_Afghan_Women_in_Khaled_Hosseini's_A_Thousand_and_Splendid_Suns

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they go out from their houses, even during the time of delivery. These rules were common in Afghan society and had to be followed and applied.

Another social norm that was very prevalent in Afghanistan was about getting a male or a female child. Men are pleased and very satisfied when their wives deliver a boy, and in this case their women become adored and treated well, but if they give birth to a girl, they will be oppressed and deprived of care, love and respect by all family members. This was demonstrated by Rasheed who was angry and raged at Laila when she gave birth to a girl. Although, this is completely out of her control but he rebuked her for delivering Aziza which was not a boy as he wished. This was not only Rasheed's hope and ambition for getting a son, all the Afghan men valued males over females.

Though, in Islam, men and women are equal and their difference lies in their piety and righteousness: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (one who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)". (Qur'an 49:13)

Besides the negative responses that *A Thousand Splendid Suns* received from some critics, this novel had positive ones more. Rachel, for instance, is a journalist who spent four months in Afghanistan to discover the Afghan lifestyle which was already described by Hosseini at the same year. She said that: "Hosseini writes accurate views of what did happen in Afghanistan, and how do the Afghan women endure their sufferings from the awful situation in their country".³ On the other hand, Lev Grossman defined the novel as "a dense, rich, pressure-packed guide to enduring the unendurable"⁴ Harvey Freedenberg, also said that "*A Thousand Splendid Suns* has challenging subject matter and well-written also, so it deserve to get the prizes".⁵

This proves that Khaled Hosseini has successfully explained the Afghan situation and he narrated in details and handled the women issue who lived through a very rough

³ <http://ew.com/article/2007/05/18/thousand-splendid-suns/>

⁴ <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1622583,00.html>

⁵ <http://www.bookreporter.com/reviews/a-thousand-splendid-suns>

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time of women's rights in Afghanistan, illustrating it by Mariam and Laila's sufferance, who were seized by the government, treated as animals, forbidden from participating in the society, and being part of it or marginalized in all domains.

2.5 Mariam and Laila's Search for Power and Happiness

As the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* describes the lifestyle of the Afghani women and their victimization in their society due to several reasons, the protagonists Mariam and Laila exemplified the truth of their environment, they symbolized the reality of their culture and surroundings via their different situations and positions in the society.

Mariam and Laila represent dissimilarities physically and socially, but joined together to be co-wives of the same cruel man Rasheed. Their fate led both of them to experience similar tragedies and brutality under the control of their reckless husband. Mariam was a coarse, simple and unattractive woman from the rural lower class. She was marginalized and maltreated by men throughout her entire life. First, by her father Jalil who was embarrassed by her because of being his illegitimate daughter and she was forced by him to marry Rasheed. Then, she was completely offended by a terrible husband who abused her in every opportunity he has got. Laila, on the other hand, had a stunning beauty she was from the urban middle class, so fascinating and glamorous, she was liked by her father who encouraged her to fulfill all her wishes and ambitions in life; she had the opportunity to learn and was one of the excellent students, which makes her stronger and confident. Whereas Mariam did not have the chance to be educated and go to school, furthermore, she always felt unwanted in the society which diminished her self-confidence.

Notwithstanding their different upbringings, their destiny drove them to share the same life and the same experiences of war, loss and abuse. Their fate brought them together to be a family and to divide all the problems they could not control. They continued holding the pressure due to all the consequences of their similar fate even in the face of the compelling difficulties they received.

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Despite the inhumanities, humiliation and brutality they faced, they resisted and sustained all the hard injuries with a huge strength and power. They fought for their freedoms till the end of their breath; they have learned from each other many things to complete each other, and to be one hand which rendered them stronger and potent. First, they became co-wives then, friends and mother-daughter to each other so they could be able to face a bad husband, and the cruel dominance of the patriarchal institution that hindered all their walks.

Mariam, for instance, was subdued and so weak without any self confidence; she was not liked by her father, she was an illegitimate child which affected badly her life. These circumstances could not make from her a confident woman. She did not learn how to defend herself but to keep quiet and endure, as Nana has taught her, she remained silent when accusing her and could not gain control on her life, but she learnt from Laila how to pluck up courage, to overcome her weaknesses and to combat the stumbling blocks in her life.

Laila, on the other hand, knows how to summon her inner strength, she was confident and educated because she had a father who encouraged her during her childhood, so she could build her self-assured and believe in herself. Although she was luckier than Mariam but she learnt from prudence and wisdom two things that Laila missed especially when she delivered her first child; Mariam was next to her and helped her subtly to raise him. Moreover, she decided to sacrifice herself in order to rescue her from their cruel husband and give her the opportunity to live in peace with her first love Tariq, and here both of them regained power; first when they tried to flee from Rasheed to seek for their freedoms; Laila decided to run away with Tariq and this demanded from her a huge power to take the risk to achieve it, for Mariam, she could ultimately summon her personal force when she took her courage and murder Rasheed.

And here Hosseini confirmed that woman's love for her family can make her strongest, selfless and courageous enough to sacrifice by everything even her-self to protect her relatives. He could ultimately show the role of women and the necessity of gender equality to change the course for the next generation. He confirmed through the

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novel that it is important to make the balance in the society that relies on both men and women since each one completes the other and if one gender is valued over the other, the society will be imbalanced.

2.6 Marxist Criticism in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

The Marxist theory is developed by the two philosophers, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. It describes social conflicts due to class relations and differentiations to better understand the society and its main problems.

The novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* holds many examples from the Marxist perspective, the characters were from different social classes, Jalil was from the upper class whereas Nana and Mariam were from the lower class, and this was the main reason that led Jalil to reject them from his family, because of being ashamed of his illegitimate daughter Mariam, and of her mother Nana who worked as a housekeeper in his house. Nana believed that the dominance of the upper class is clear as they are more powerful, strongest and distinguished compared with them who are poor and illegitimate without honor or mercy when she said “This is my reward for everything I’ve endured. An heirloom-breaking, clumsy little harami” (P.04)

She feels strongly the power of Jalil over her that she could ever never control and she thinks that she and her daughter were unwanted and rejected easily by everyone in the society. She argued that because of Jalil’s wealth, everyone believed his lies and denied her “You know what he told his wives by way of defense? That I forced myself on him. That it was my fault” (p.07)

They were classified and discriminated in the society since they were from the lower class and it was clearly that they were ruled by powerful people, who belong to the upper class. She was controlled by Jalil who could separate himself from her and his daughter just because for him, his status in the society which does not allow him to interact with them. She expressed this in the novel when she said “It was a relief to your father having me out of sight. It suited him just fine” (p.09)

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For Jalil, his position in the society interdicts him to interact with people from a lower class even with his daughter Mariam, who belongs to this community. When she went to live with him, he left her sleeping at the street instead of receiving her in his house, because of this discrimination between classes, she was unacceptable although she was his daughter and this act caused her a great grief and pain. Also, this segregation was clearly shown when Jalil refused to take Mariam to the cinema in order to keep himself away from direct confrontations and social interactions with the upper class, this unjust and harmful treatment gave rise to a feeling of frustration and sorrow: “They were tears of grief, of anger, of disillusionment. But mainly tears of a deep, deep shame at how foolishly she had given herself over to Jalil” (p.35)

Her father thought that he is wealthy and rich so due to his status, he could never ever hobnobbing lower class. Consequently, he refused all kinds of meetings or encountering with people less powerful than him, in order to preserve his image in the society. And this means that people from the upper class are more authoritative than the lower class in the society. A reality that reinforces the idea that the rich are seen as the most trustworthy by people as they have the power to give orders, command and make decisions in a way that suits them and ultimately, they gain the obedience of the poor, as they can influence them. As a result, they are able to control them easily, and the poor must obey and endure all the pains and the hardships even if these discomforts made them suffering and rendered them anxious and embarrassed. Unfortunately they are obliged to afford and hold this unpleasant and difficult situation in order to survive which was promoted by the Marxist Belief.

The poor in Afghanistan have restricted options, unlimited choices are available and granted only to a particular social class; for those who can provide and supply them.

For instance, in the novel, Hosseini showed the dominance of the upper class towards the others, that the poor are only a load; they have to be controlled because they are powerless and miserable and they were considered as useless persons who have no role in the society. Eventually, they are not allowed to cooperate with the rich and they have to be ruled by them. “She was being sent away because she was the walking, breathing embodiment of their shame” (p.48)

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Mariam was forced to marry Rasheed by her father Jalil and his family. This proves that she had no other option but to accept, as her choices and freedoms were very limited and depended on her status in the society. The fact that she belonged to the lower class, she had not several opportunities so she did not have the chance to learn and to go to school like her half sisters, and she was obliged to obey everything was imposed on her. Therefore, not only was she ruled by the upper class but also her choices were narrowed. This is why she was forced to accept engaging with a man thirty years older than her “Fifteen, evidently was not a good marrying age for them” (p.47)

Mariam experienced living in the middle class with her husband Rasheed and here, she could recognize the truth of her father who controlled her by his power and wealth as he was a rich man who represented the upper class.

As the broad zone of middle class Kabul was ruled by severe Islamic set of laws and strict manners, Mariam could not enjoy the same freedoms as women of the upper class benefit from, she could only envy and dream about having the same opportunities and equality between classes “The women in this part of Kabul were a different breed from the women in the poorer neighborhoods [. . .] Mariam watched them cantering uninhibited down the street” (p.75)

What is noticed in the novel as well as is the difference of thoughts among the same social class. There were some intellectual elitists like Hakim who did have his own point of view which was different from his entourage. Although, he belonged to the middle class like Rasheed and Laila, but he had his personal opinion towards his family and he did not match with his surroundings, who belong to the same social category. Rasheed commented on Hakim’s attitude as if he was wrong and has no authority on his wife because Rasheed was more strict and traditional. So he felt menaced by Hakim who, for him, is an open minded “There’s a teacher living down the street, Hakim is his name, and I see his wife Fariba all the time walking the streets with nothing on her head but a scarf. It embarrasses me frankly, to see a man who’s lost control of his wife” (p.70) Hakim, as an intellectual, upheld the idea that women

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and men are equal, although this made him different from his social class; he kept supporting women's right as he believed on his own thoughts.

Contrary to Mariam, who found that marrying a thinking man is the best way to rescue her life from the community vision, and their accusation that she brought disgrace and shame because of being illegitimate, Laila, on the other hand, was more confident and had a strong personality, gained from her father who encouraged her to learn and to be strong, therefore, her marriage from Rasheed was a degeneration for her as she lived with a fanatic man. Although they belong to the same social class but her family were more open-minded and elitists, they lived differently than the other members. Laila was raised in another way that granted more freedoms but her liberty ended by the death of her father "I have certain . . . reservations . . . about the way that your parents-Allah, forgive them and grant them a place in paradise- about their, well, their leniency with you" (p.223). Her former life was not similar to what she encountered with her husband. This is why; she could not support the codes of her social class once marrying Rasheed. Ultimately, these differences created a pressure and tenseness between people of the same strata.

Afghanistan was known by the dominance of the different social classes based on different levels of wealth, status and impact in the society, which is formed by gathering three different strata. First, the richest group who represents the upper class, they are the most valued persons in the society because of their power and strength. As a result, they have more opportunities and freedoms in life, following the middle class who are more conservatives and ending by the poorest class, who have no choices in life, they are weak and controlled, their opportunities are limited so they must obey and endure the hardships to survive.

2.7 The Joining of Feminism and Marxism in A Thousand Splendid Suns

Afghanistan has been considered as a newly born Marxist made country after the former regime of dictatorship and torture reigned it. That is why, the novelist Khaled

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Hosseini focuses in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* the relationship of gender contest and class clashes; and in here Feminism strongly meets with Marxism in the novel. The following listed points should clarify this deeper:

- Mariam, the striking female character, bearing the shame of being an illegal baby, described as harami, and the daughter of a low rank mother, and in spite of all this, she fervently views freedom in education. So there is a rebel towards change to express female revolt against oppression.
- Rasheed, Mariam's forced husband, represents the ultimate personification of male hierarchical person demeaning from her especially when knowing she is sterile; the ruining of his dream to be a father. So the woman is badly persecuted as a slave does in front of her master.
- Another young feminist should identify Rasheed life: Laila who endures the same abuse of Mariam but she looks more confrontational than her. So both later on strive to free themselves from this aching endurance by opposing Rasheed dictatorship.
- Both life and death enable respectively Laila and Mariam to get freedom in spite of their social differences.
- Women are repressed by Taliban and by marriage and other rules which explain the loss of gender and class equality.
- Mariam, though, the daughter of a rich father that she hates and denies, belongs to the lower class out of will; while Laila is a purely strong personification of radical Feminism.

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- Laila mutual and close friendship with Mariam supports Marxist tenet and attitude towards class equality.
- Mariam's mother, Nana, always warns her that Jalil her upper class father should never confess her birth and he will keep debasing and degrading from their status. This is well explained by Marx and Engels in the "Communist Manifesto" where they strongly denounce that women of lower class are seen by capitalists as fallen women:

The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production. He hears that the instruments of production are to be exploited in common, and naturally, can come to no other conclusion that the lot of being common to all will likewise fall to women. For the rest, nothing is more ridiculous that the virtuous indignation of our bourgeois at the community of women which, they pretend is to be openly and officially established by the Communists. (501)

- Laila, unlike Mariam, is a middle class person taught equality between gender from Babi her father who looks convinced in the novel that equality between classes is essential socially and economically as imposed by the Marxist theory:

Women have always had it hard in this country, Laila, but they're probably more free now, under the communists, and have more rights than they've ever had before . . .," Babi said. "It's a good time to be a woman in Afghanistan. And you can take advantage of that, Laila.

(Hosseini 121)

- Rasheed refusal to the born baby Aziza represents the patriarchal strong want for a boy to hold the name of ancestors. In many instances in the novel Rasheed

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despise of a daughter birth is repeatedly claimed which intensify the tension between him and both Mariam and Laila:

Sometimes, I swear, sometimes I want to put that thing in a box and let her float down Kabul River. Like Baby Moses. Mariam never heard him call his daughter by the name the girl had given her. Aziza, the Cherished One. It was always *the baby*, or, when he was really exasperated, *that thing*.

(Hosseini 212)

- Mariam gets back honor at her execution thinking she, at last, could react with power, and thus contribute to the abolition of the dominant state represented in Rasheed. Hosseini nicely depicts this by considering that virtue is rewarded to Mariam who starts her life by a sin but ends it by a victory:

She thought of her entry into this world, the *harami* child of a lowly villager, and unintended thing, a pitiable regrettable accident. A weed. And yet, she was leaving the world as a woman who had loved and been loved back. She was leaving it as a friend, a companion, a guardian. A mother. No. 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 329)

- Indeed, Feminism strongly meets with Marxism in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* at the revolutionizing path of that dominant patriarchal system crowned by Rasheed the dictator enslaving women. This is deeply noticed when Mariam bravely saves Laila in order not to let her children live motherless, and kills Rasheed. She turns abruptly to a feminist defending her mate, and she breaks

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the standards of class by rebelling against her husband cruelly behaving towards Laila:

A Marxist way of thinking, at its best, helps us understand the cutting edge of change, the blind driving force of capital, the dislocations, innovations, and global reshufflings. Feminism offers our best insight into that which is most ancient and intractable about our common situation: the gulf that divides us all from nature and that which is most human in our nature.

(Rowbotham 346)

The rebellion against the patriarchy, the revolt against gender oppression, the uprising against class differences are strong female actions of Laila and Mariam in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and are the zenith Khaled Hosseini successfully reaches to wed Feminism with Marxism.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

This research paper focuses highly sensitive topics in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* especially related to gender inequalities, the condemning life under Taliban laws, rape, separation, discrimination, war, no work, no word, and women visualized as the epitome of inferiority. As for Marxist perspective the socio political activism is very apparent in the novel which strongly explains the missing values of gender and class equality, as for Mariam who is related to a very low rank because of her false birth.

Men power over women is strikingly a feminist perspective of gender inequality in the novel, which has been the main targets of this research; plus Marxist perspective striking in Mariam parents, her mother thrown from society and away from civilization, because of her illegal act and her father remains powerful as belonging to the upper class, yet ashamed of his daughter.

So, indeed, the novel reflects the portrait of women in Afghan society, the order and the hierarchy of classes from high to low among poor and rich people; and cultural plus religious clashes are reviewed with intensity from the author via the reader and from the latter via the former.

A Thousand Splendid Suns is a good teaching about the Afghan society, a deep introduction to its people, a reflection of cultural and religious values, a correction of many prejudices and stereotypes that Khaled Hosseini strives powerfully to do.

The scope of research has always limitations. And as far as this research paper is concerned, further issues have been left unexplored as for the sake of freedom in a society condemned to live in jail forever; and the women efforts endeavored to reach a respectful position with future generations as Khaled Hosseini expresses it in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* “marriage can wait, education cannot”.

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