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Unveiled: Voice of Women in Khaled Hosseini's Novel

A Thousand Splendid Suns

Abstract:

Khaled Hosseini is an emerging Afghan-American Novelist in twentieth century. Hosseini have inspired innumerable hearts and minds of people living, throughout the world. Through his style of writing he has opened the eyes of people and has clearly portrayed the struggles of Afghan community. Accomplishing his characters he reveals the plight of women in their daily struggle in Afghan. Amidst invasion of Taliban in his mother country he has marvelously related to the changing scenario of his country. Based on all these criteria's he has framed his second novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*(2007). In this work he describes two women belonging to two different generations but still wrapped in the warmth of love. These women face disharmonious atmosphere in the hands of same husband. But still Hosseini strongly focuses on the humane quality which enriches their livelihood.

Hosseini a unique writer truly known for the theme of family relationship has touched the hardened part of human commiseration. His idiomatic approach to deal with the female pattern of living, their unspoken voice, struggles, agonies, pain, fear and hope for future is keenly scrutinized by him and he has related to beautiful spin of story based on the female protagonist Mariam and Lila.

Mariam is first introduced in the novel as a harami(3) which means illegitimate child. Hosseini remarks, “ Mariam was an illegitimate female who would never have legitimate claim to the things other people had, things such as love, family, home, acceptance” (4). Her mother Nana who is not married to Jalil but has begot his child carries the burden.

Mariam is always bullied by her epileptic mother who waits for the arrival of his hypocritical father as he was a businessman in Herat. Mariam attracted to his father's sweet words, his knowledge and his handsomeness disobeyed her mother and took a step forward and went in search of his father when he failed to return on usual Thursdays. This enthusiastic behavior of Mariam, enabled her to witness many truths about her father which she never believed when her mother told her. After this incident, life of Mariam totally crumpled. After the death of her mother, Mariam's father under the control of her step-mothers arranged for marriage to a known acquaintance of her father who is a shoe maker in Kabul.

Mariam as his second wife unwillingly marries Rasheed who is very elder to her, years have passed Mariam faces many miscarriages this hardens the heart of Rasheed. As Mariam lacks in reaching her womanhood Rasheed begins to torment her. She did not win her husband's love, she faces all cruelties in her life by living a secluded life, obliging to the commands of Rasheed to wear burqa to stay indoors etc. These are the framed rules by Rasheed which Mariam followed without refusing it.

Hosseini, then interposes with another character Laila who is the neighbor of Mariam. Laila is brought up in a totally free atmosphere where her father is an educationalist and Laila has all liberty to learn and live her own life. Laila on the other hand is very fond of Tariq her close acquaintance. The happiness of Laila does not last long. Her family is affected by great tragedy, eventually she becomes an orphan having the child of Tariq. With no alternative she becomes the wife of Rasheed.

Hosseini then brings a contrast in the relationship of two ladies from different generation and from here there is a spring of jointure between two females. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns: An Ode to the Brave Hearts of a World Blown Away*, Sinha, Sunita and Singh, Vinita opines:

The hopes and dreams and disillusion of these two women, their inner lives, the specific circumstances that bring them together, their resolve to survive,

and the fact that their relationship evolves into something meaningful and powerful, even as the world around them unravels and slips into chaos. (128)

Laila can sense the grievances of Mariam, her unspoken words, pain which she was enduring throughout her life. Mariam's happiness is found among Laila's children Aziza and Zalmani. She takes good care of them. Laila and Mariam find consolation in each other; their friendship grows as deep as the bond between sisters, as strong as the ties between mother and daughter.

In Hosseini novels there is always a twist of events. In an unexpected manner Rasheed's family meets financial scarcity. Thus Aziza is forced to live in an orphanage. As a dream comes true, Tariq reappears, to meet Laila and there is a reunion of souls.

Zalmani lets out the truth to Rasheed that an unknown, one legged man came to meet his mother. Rasheed understood it was Tariq, temper of Rasheed has crossed the limit and he begins to thrash his beloved wife. Laila in return was accusing him through verbal fights. Mariam could no more withstand the atrocities of Rasheed. Mariam when she saw Laila with blood stained body she could no longer bear the pain, she ran to the tool shed took a shovel and first time Mariam took her own decision to kill her husband. Because the love she had towards Laila is stronger than Rasheed's relationship.

Mariam sacrificed her life to liberate Laila. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns: An Ode to the Brave Hearts of a World Blown Away*, Sinha, Sunita and Singh, Vinita says:

Mariam surrenders herself to the Taliban, and undergoes prosecution. Hosseini's novels show us just how a woman's love for her family can motivate her to overcome all her difficulties through her heroic acts of self-sacrifice. (133)

Laila's dreams came true when she met Tariq, initially it was only her envisage. After the Taliban invasion Tariq and Laila came to Kabul to re-construct their country they understood that it's their responsibility to build their homeland. Laila as a teacher and Tariq helped to renovate the orphanage where Aziza stayed.

Laila in remembrance of her soul mate went to Herat to visualize the land where Mariam spent her childhood days. She was happy to see the place and she was well aware

that Mariam's soul was here. She saw the beautiful stream, mountains, people living there she loved every moments there. Laila read the letter written by Jalil seeking for forgiveness, regretfulness, missing love and it also had Mariam's share which was safeguarded by Mullah Faizullah's family. As the relationship of Laila and Mariam turns to be mother and daughter affection the property of Mariam is inherited by Laila.

Hosseini beautifully sums up the story by showing characters like Tariq who takes the lead in his family. All the members in the family are involved in debating new names for Laila's new baby, but the game involves only male names but if it is a girl child, Laila has already named her.

Through these women characters Hosseini extraordinarily shows the suffering of Afghan women but the more beautiful part which have to be learned from them is hope during hopeless conditions, sacrifice in the name of love. Till the very end of life they have to endure pain which shows the real strength of women and also enhances the unspoken words spoken through their action like tears, pain, fear, struggle, lustfulness, conflict, agonies. For each woman living in Afghanistan dread against the rules in their homeland, Taliban's control, and torches from the hands of husband which prevail in their own house but still it is the hope which helps to humanize people and to face the world.

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