

A Thousand Splendid Suns: A Critical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

A Thousand Splendid Suns depicts the heart-breaking situations of a war torn and devastated country Afghanistan and presents the heroism of two women who pass their days amid gunfire, bombs, fighting starvation, brutality and fear. Amid the tragic gloom of desperate tragedy, only silver lining is their loving heart which makes them survive the onslaughts of misfortune with heroism. Mariam against the brutality of the society and her husband gathers enough courage and spirit to not only oppose but also kill her husband who was going to kill his second wife in a mad rage of jealousy. The other girl Laila who is bright, intelligent and beautiful is forced to marry Rashid who is fifty years older to her due to the circumstances created by war. The girl fights injustice and brutality and narrow minded fanaticism of the male dominated society with courage and finally emerges a winner trying to bring the change in her motherland at her own small level.

KEYWORDS

Fighting; Starvation; Brutality; Fanaticism

The researcher read the best seller book written by a truly gifted writer Mr. Khaled Hosseini who in this heart rending pathetic tale presents not only heart-breaking situations of a war torn and devastated country Afghanistan but also with his master stroke marvellously presents a startling heroism of two women who pass their days amid gunfire, bombs, fighting also starvation, brutality and fear. Amid the tragic gloom of desperate tragedy, only silver lining is their loving heart which makes them survive the onslaughts of misfortune with heroism. Mariam, a personification of endurance and tolerance against the brutality of the society and her husband has enough valour and spirit left to not only oppose but also kill her husband who was going to kill his second wife in a mad rage of jealousy. The other girl Laila, a bright, intelligent and

beautiful girl has to marry almost fifty years her senior Rashid due to the circumstances created by war. The girl fights injustice and brutality and narrow minded fanaticism of the male dominated society with courage and finally emerges a winner trying to bring the change in her motherland at her own small level.

Objectives

The researcher read the book with the following objectives:

1. To understand the condition of women in war torn country Afghanistan
2. To know the effect of religious fanaticism and bigotry on women
3. To know the condition of women under changing governments
4. To know the condition of women when they are deprived of basic human rights

5. To know the condition of women living in the condition of extreme deprivation

Research Questions:

- What was the condition of women in war torn country Afghanistan?
- What was the effect of religious fanaticism and bigotry on women in Afghanistan?
- What was the condition of women under changing governments?
- What was the condition of women when they are deprived of basic human rights?
- What was the condition of women living in the condition of extreme deprivation?

Methodology Adopted:

The researcher used content analysis method to analyse and interpret the book. After careful first reading the researcher found out the main points in the book. In second reading content of the book was organized according to selected points. This helped the researcher to reach certain findings.

Content Analysis:

Condition of Women in war torn Afghanistan: The book presents a very dismal picture of women in Afghanistan. It is a country where a person like Jalali can marry three times and give birth to ten legitimate and one illegitimate child. A father is not ready to accept his own child and his illegitimate companion has to end her life by hanging. A little girl of fifteen is married to thirty years her senior for the sake of honour. The same person Rashid again marries after twenty years with a small child of fifteen years Laila. A country where beating wives is considered family affair and no body intervenes. In the same country women have to wear Burka when they go in public. They cannot travel alone. They are not given opportunity to study. They are not allowed to work. Even the doctors have to operate wearing burka.

Religious fanaticism and Bigotry:

Women in the country are tortured in the name of religion. The officer declares that one man's evidence is equal to two women's evidence. Religion is quoted in support of not providing women opportunity to learn, to work and to move independently. Religious fanaticism makes even the heroic women to bow down before the irrational rules laid by them. Even the lady doctor and rebel teachers are shown as wearing burka.

Difference of status between men and women:

The book realistically presents that most of the rules and regulations are for women as men do not cover themselves. They can marry at will at least four times according to law, marry a much younger women, beat them mercilessly. If a woman is found in having illicit relations, she is lashed where a man can be made free after apology. A man having relations out of wedlock is not criticized much whereas the woman is considered doomed in the eyes of the society. She has to pass a solitary and secluded life. Her children are called harami as it is presented in the case of Mariam and Nana.

Condition of women under changing governments:

The novel portrays the realistic picture of women under changing rulers. Women in Afghanistan acquire certain freedom of study and work under Communist government but again under Taliban rule there are strictest restrictions and controls faced by women. It is really pathetic to see the little Aziza staying in the orphanage and doing the domestic chores. The teacher of the orphanage wants to teach the girls but girls have to hide their books when they fear the approach of Talibanis. Even the educated girls have to wear hijab. Doctors operate wearing hijab. They cannot walk alone without accompanying by any male. It is why Mariam and Laila are caught at the border and sent back to their brutal and callous

husbands. Laila is also again and again beaten by the security men for going alone to meet her dear darling daughter.

Inner Strength of Women In spite of the Onslaughts of Misfortunes: The beauty of the book lies in the inner strength and fighting spirit of two main characters of the book. Mariam ill-treated by the society, rejected by her father, brutally dealt by her hot tempered and impulsive husband endures all the tortures patiently without opposition but when it comes to save the life of her dear daughter like girl Laila, she courageously and dauntlessly opposes her husband and even kills him. She also possesses enough moral courage as she refuses to escape with Laila but accepts the entire fault herself. She readily accepts the death sentence awarded to her. Laila also reflects the same never to die spirit as she first opposes Rashid when he wants to put her daughter in orphanage. Then she goes to meet her in the orphanage spite of the dangers lurking on the road in the form of security persons. She even tries to escape along with Mariam and Aziza but unfortunately her bid fails. At the end of the novel Laila leaves her comparatively safe and secure life with Tariq to serve the people of Kabul. She does social work to improve the dismal future of the children of Kabul as like her father she believes that Kabul is the place having thousand splendid suns.

WORK CITED

Hosseini K.2007. *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. ATSS Publications, LLC.

Legal Rules which make women weak:

In the male dominated society certain rules are made to make the women weak and vulnerable. Some of these rules are

1. A woman is not equal to man as evidence of two women is equal to one man.
2. Nobody can raise a voice if the husband tortures or brutally ill-treats his wife as it is his private affair.
3. A woman cannot get education.
4. A woman has to wear hijab when going out.
5. A woman cannot walk on the streets without any male companion.

Findings:

After reading the book the researcher arrived at the following findings:

- The condition of women in war torn country Afghanistan was really very pathetic.
- Due to religious fanaticism and bigotry, women in Afghanistan have to suffer innumerable misfortunes and difficulties.
- Condition of women under changing governments and rulers becomes bad to worse.
- Women have to suffer irreparable attack on their self-respect and honour as they are deprived of basic human rights?
- Women living in the condition of extreme deprivation suffer emotional and physical damage.