

The Key Themes of the Novel “Thousand Splendid Suns”

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The novel “Thousand Splendid Suns” is one of Khalid Hosseini’s masterpieces, and comprises a lot of different social and historical aspects that evolve around a country known as Afghanistan. The novel covers various themes such as marriage vs. love, ties to Afghanistan, shame, education of women, female bonds, oppression, and hope.

Women of Afghanistan

One of the topics that “A Thousand Splendid Suns” highlights is the nature of women. Laila and Mariam, the novel’s two characters, live through an abrasive period fighting for their rights in Afghanistan. They’re dominated by the government, treated as their husband’s possession, and prohibited from taking part in societal activities. Through their potentiality and resilience, the two women can surmount these hindrances. Situations might not always be pretty, but that’s the significance. The women in the book aren’t like the queens or princesses waiting for their prince to help them get out of their problems. Instead, they’re unbelievably tough women trying to take control of their own lives.

Women’s Right to Education

Earlier than the ascent of the Taliban, Afghani women were progressing on the way to equality as they wanted their basic needs of education and employment. The city of Kabul was considered to be the epicenter of women’s progression in Afghanistan before the [Civil War](#) and the Taliban’s reign. However, in 1996, when the Taliban came to power they established a scheme of gender social policy which set women in a condition of continual house arrest unless a male relative accompanies them. Women’s development in education and occupation was intervened by the coarse laws made obligatory by the Taliban.

The women in “A Thousand Splendid Suns” depict contrasting educational experiences. Mullah Faizullah (Hosseini, 11) teaches Mariam the teachings of the Koran and makes her learn reading and writing. But whenever she shows the desire to go to school to her mother, Nana implores that the one instruction that Mariam should remember is to “endure.” (Hosseini, 6). Comparatively, Laila’s father considers education important. Hakim tirelessly works with Laila helps her with her homework and provides extra work with a goal to educate her more. He insists on tutoring Laila himself when the city’s air becomes dangerous. He remarks about the value of women studying in universities (Hosseini, 84).

Laila and Mariam teach Aziza whatever knowledge they have to educate her. Mariam teaches the Koran like she was taught, and Laila eventually teaches as an unpaid worker at her school. The book ends with a hopeful vision regarding women's education such that Aziza and Zalmi go to school together.

Taliban not only limited the progression of women, but they also implemented strict laws such as windows of a houses where women reside must be painted black so that the public does not see them. Women did not have permission to depart from their houses without wearing a burqa, which covered their bodies completely.

Women's Basic Right to Live Freely

Moreover, women were not given the right to decide for their own lives. Girls under the age of 16 were highly encouraged by the Taliban to get married. They assigned a violent religious police force, who had the authority to beat women who profaned the Taliban code and had an eye on the actions of women. The actions that guaranteed a beating included a woman wearing shoes that made noise when walking, showing her ankles, laughing loudly, and also wearing the wrong type of burqa (Hosseini, 46). Women not only sustained aggression from the Taliban forces, but their biological relations were also the cause of oppression.

One of the most important decisions that completely changes your life is when and to whom to get married. A clear-cut difference is noted in the novel between true affection and forced marriages. In the story, all the marriages are forced therefore they are not possible to be influenced by love. The notion of marriage, for Nana, was destroyed by a "jinn." (Hosseini, 3) Mariam finds a bit of hope in her marriage (Hosseini, 33) which she thinks will lead to satisfaction and possibly to loving emotions, but it turns into a mere depression. Laila succeeds in escaping the forced bond placed on her by Rasheed (Hosseini, 130) as she already loves Tariq (Hosseini, 79).

The comparison between true love and forced marriage is evident once Laila and Tariq, in the end, get to marry one another and live as a family. Daily life experience in a forced marriage involves hatred and futile expectations for better days to come. With her true love, Tariq, on the other hand, daily life routines leave Laila satisfied and consummated.

Female Bonds

Disregarding the attempts of husbands and the government to reduce strength and power, women have strong bonds. These bonds differ in existence. For example, Mariam and Laila form an extraordinarily powerful familial bond while Giti, Hasina, and Laila have a girlish friendship bond (Hosseini, 70). Thus, there lies an implication in the story that women possess a strong power to find capableness and support for one another. If Mariam had not obtained self-assurance and love from Laila, she would never have the power to fight Rasheed.

The fall of the Taliban brought a ray of hope in the lives of many Afghans that the state of affairs would modify for women. However, violent acts [toward women](#) have carried on in Afghanistan even after the end of the Taliban's reign. Those who try to protect and support the women who have fallen victim to violence in the country have found many difficulties themselves.

Oppressiveness and Hope

The characters in the book try to sustain hope while handling the bitter realities of political and private subjugation. Passim the story, characters express their hopes at many points. For example, Mariam's ray of hope shines when she asks Mullah Faizullah if she may attend school (Hosseini, 12). In *Tarzi* lies Laila's hope and attempted escapism from Rasheed. Most characters go into such circumstances with high levels of hope for the coming days, but once realism strikes, a character's hope is broken down.

These rays of hope create an emotional attachment to the characters and stipulate suspense in the reader, and this story seems to contemplate the cycles of hope and broken dreams that Afghan women undergo.

Ties to Afghanistan

In the story, the expression of feelings of connectedness by the characters to the geographical area of Afghanistan is highlighted. Hakim quotes poetry. Fariba, whose sons got martyred, does not want to go anywhere far from this land for which her sons gave their lives. Disregarding the increase of war and threat in Afghanistan, many characters decline to leave due to their linkage to their country as their homeland. Others return to their beloved country after the war has settled (Hosseini, 112). Laila desires to return to Kabul and play her role in restoring the country. Tariq also has an urge to return home, driven highly by Laila's desire (Hosseini, 114). The characters also have an inner hope that the violence will settle, and that hope gives insight into a more peaceful future besides the fright that comes with going away from a known land.

The individual tales of hope, furthermore, are reflected in the political expectancy of the Afghan citizens. People expressed their strong belief that finally, freedom would be observed in Afghanistan with every new ruler. After the realities of each new authority leave the nation bound, Afghanistan's hope again turns to desperation.

Works Cited

Hosseini, Khaled. *A thousand splendid suns*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009.