

THE MAIN AND SECONDARY THEMES IN KHALED HOSSEINI'S NOVEL A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS

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Abstract: In this article, the works of Khaled Hosseini—particularly the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*—are analyzed with a focus on the fate of women in Afghan society, the impact of war and violence, and problems within family relationships. The article examines, through literary analysis, themes of domestic violence, true love, self-sacrifice, and the preservation of human values. In conclusion, Hosseini's novel presents the fate of Afghan women from a humanistic perspective and highlights the role of literature in promoting social justice and moral awakening.

Key words: war, woman, family, child, love, respect, happiness, education.

Introduction

In literary studies, works of fiction are examined by classifying them according to specific themes. In Khaled Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, alongside war and the consequences it brings, timeless themes such as women, love and affection, self-sacrifice, and return to the homeland also occupy a significant place.

Literature Review and Methodology

If we analyze Khaled Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the research process employs biographical, psychological, comparative-typological, descriptive, and stylistic methods of analysis.

Results

The theme of woman and femininity. At the center of this novel is the role of women in Afghanistan in society and the family. The author's choice of women as the main theme lies in highlighting the fate of women in the Afghan family and Afghan society before the war, during the war, and after the war. Husayni's portrayal of women of all ages as inferior to men once again demonstrates what traditional Afghan families are like. The life paths of Maryam and Leila are divided into stages such as childhood, marriage, love, and friendship. Firstly, five-year-old Maryam is branded "forbidden," forced into marriage at the age of fifteen, four years after her marriage, her husband's future third wife Leila is born, and finally she kills her husband, with whom she lived for twenty-seven years, in defense of Leila and her children. Secondly, Layla's life is fundamentally different from Maryam's, that is, her birth becomes a great celebration, she goes to school, receives education, acquires modern skills, falls in love with Tariq, loves him, and is also loved by him. Fate, which initially blessed her with happiness and joy, suddenly changes completely when she turns fourteen, and Leila, separated from her family by catastrophe, marries sixty-year-old Rashid. Although she decided to take her own life, when she learned that she was pregnant with Tariq, she found the strength and will to live and became the mother of a little girl named Aziza at the age of fifteen. When Rashid talks about Laylo's daughter, he treats her like an object: "Sometimes, I swear, sometimes I want to put that thing in a box and let her float down Kabul River. Like baby Moses." Also, in other places, it is openly revealed that a girl is undesirable in strong patriarchal societies. For example, Maryam, while stating that she is barren, points out to Laylo that giving birth to a daughter is a greater sin than childlessness. In another place, speaking about his future child, Rashid emphasizes that he is convinced that he is a son and will name him Zalmay. At the end of his speech, he tells Maryam that if a girl is born, she can give her whatever name she wants. Four years after Aziza's birth, Layla gave Rashid a son. Finally, at the age of twenty-three, she reunited with her only love Tariq and left for Pakistan with her

children in search of a happy and prosperous life. In 2003, they returned, hoping for the prosperity of their homeland.

The theme of war. In the novel, Husayni connects the history of Afghanistan, which has been drowning due to the continuous war over the past 33 years, with the development of events in a consistent sequence. Leila's father describes the communist era as "the best time for women" because of the education reforms she carried out: *"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, always lowering his voice, aware of how intolerant Mammy was of even remotely positive talk of the communists. But it's true, Babi said, it's a good time to be a woman in Afghanistan. And you can take advantage of that, Laila. Of course, women's freedom – here, he shook his head ruefully—is also one of the reasons people out there took up arms in the first place"*.

Husayni describes in detail the Taliban's rise to power, their history as young Pashtun youths whose families were forced to flee to Pakistan during the anti-Soviet war, and their declaration of themselves as the Taliban. He talks about how they divided the country into parts, closed universities, tore pictures from walls, broke televisions, burned books, and put an end to bookstores. Women are strictly prohibited from working, studying, going outside without male relatives, and showing their faces.

Describing this, the author, while describing Kabul after the terrorist attack in the USA on September 11, 2001, writes about the reconstruction of schools, the repair of roads, and the return of women to their jobs. The image of Kabul at that time reflects the conditions under which women lived during the period of political instability in Afghanistan. The author points out that political changes lie beneath the rampant oppressive policy towards women. The image of Kabul plays an important role in revealing the main idea of the work.

The topic of domestic violence. The escalating violence and horrors in Kabul can be compared to the excessive dominance of men who degrade and humiliate women in the family. When Rashid asks Maryam, "Are you afraid of me?" Maryam shakes her head, and this is her first lie in her married life. From that moment, a period of fear begins in his life, and for years, it does not leave him, disturbing his peace. During her four years of marriage with Rashid, Maryam had become convinced of how much attention she had paid to him, and she had fully realized that one word was too little for her, and two words were too much.

Maryam always lived in fear that Rashid's mood would change, that if he got angry, she would take out her frustration on him. In the course of the novel's development, Rashid's violence against his wives allows us to show how the atmosphere in the family has deteriorated and become savage. A clear example of his cruelty is the treatment of his wives after their escape plan failed: "she [Laila] was being dragged by the hair. Hair was torn from Laila's scalp, and her eyes were tearing with pain." Then Layla sees Rashid dragging Maryam's neck into the courtyard. Barefoot, her face covered in blood, her hair disheveled, her headscarf torn, Mariam sat hunched over. Rashid locks them in separate dark rooms: *"Azan rang out a second time and still Rashid had not given them any food and, worse, no water... the room turned into a pressure cooker... The muezzin called azan a third time. Again the heat... Laila was sure now that Aziza, [her daughter], would die in this heat, and Laila would have to lie beside her stiffening little body and wait for her own death."* The atmosphere of violence in the family serves as a basis for students to form a real picture of how Afghan women live in everyday life. The unjustified suffering of the heroes and the torture of vulnerable populations and vulnerable women, both nationally and within families, reflect the decline of the human qualities of Afghan society.

The theme of true love. In the work, true love, dedication, and care are manifested in Maryam's struggle to save Laylo, who realizes that Rashid, having learned about Laylo's meeting with her former lover Tariq, will not just stand idly by. Unable to free Leila from the grip of her tyrannical husband, Mariam is forced to hit her with a shovel, knowing that if she releases her, she will return with a rifle: *"He would be satisfied with shooting only her, that there was a chance he*

would spare Laila, she might have dropped the shovel, but in Rashid's eyes she saw murder for them both". Thinking about this, Maryam strikes her husband and later, thinking about the well-being of Leila and Aziza, takes all the blame upon herself. As he takes his last breath before his death, the following thoughts cross his mind: "*She is 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, a person of consequence at last. No, it was not sad*". Thus, the resistance to oppression as a response to injustice and torture is manifested in the dedication of the characters of the work and their concern for the lives of others. Maryam and Layla give the reader the impression of acting heroically.

Discussion

Educational topic. Laylo's dependence on men throughout her life is reflected in the novel, in particular, at first her father educates her, inspires her to study, explains that women are also worthy of a bright future, gives her maternal love and guidance in place of her mother, who grieves for her deceased sons. Mariam and Leila perform their traditional duties, that is, they become a mother and a housewife. Although Maryam is an illiterate village girl and Laylo is a literate city girl, both of their hands are tied, they cannot go outside the house. When Maryam arrived in Kabul, she saw women in the courtyards spreading laundry and carrying their children. She tries to do the housework perfectly, spending her days cleaning, washing, and cooking, but when she sees her husband's indifference to these things, she becomes disappointed. While cooking, she worries whether her husband likes her food or not, and finally, when he approves of the food she prepares, a mountain falls from her shoulders, and she feels some inner relief. Mariam's entire life is spent making her husband happy and caring for him. The novel mentions only two women engaged in a specific profession: Leila's teacher and the surgeon who operated on her. All female characters, except these heroines, appear in the roles of wife and mother.

Khaled Hosseini's novel "And the Mountains Echoed" does not follow the path of detailed depiction of Afghan society, unlike the previous two novels; on the contrary, it contains stories spanning several generations, encompassing not only the accused around parents and children, but also brothers and sisters, as well as nannies. Each of the nine chapters in it is narrated from the perspective of different characters, and contrary to the style of the author's first two novels, it is evident that he managed to present the life story of several characters at the same time, abandoning the focus on only one character. It expresses how we can be amazed at the actions of our loved ones at the most crucial moments by holding a mirror to the interpretation of feelings such as love, injury, betrayal, honor, and sacrifice between members of one family.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that in Hosseini's "*A Thousand Splendid Suns*", the unique characteristics of the female characters, who are members of the Muslim Pashtun society, are analyzed across childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Maryam, Laila, and Aziza, as they transition from childhood to maturity, undergo significant physical, social, and psychological changes.

The eternal and shared themes expressed in the author's work are presented in this study as primary and secondary themes, supported by relevant examples. According to the classification developed, Hosseini's "*A Thousand Splendid Suns*" highlights five key themes: women and femininity, war, domestic oppression, true love, and education.

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