



جذور معاناة المرأة والحلول الأساسية التي قدمها خالد حسيني في ألف شمس رائعة

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ألمستخلص :

الف شمس رائعة هي رواية كتبها الروائي الافغاني خالد حسيني. تصور الرواية معاناة المرأة في المجتمع الابوي الافغاني و القمع الذي تواجهن على اساس الجنس من خلال ثقافتهم واسلوب حياة مجتمعهم ومن خلال انظمة الحكم في بلادهم. يتطرق هذا البحث والذي يحمل عنوان (جذور معاناة المرأة والحلول الأساسية التي قدمها خالد حسيني في ألف شمس رائعة) الى الصراعات والمعاناة التي تمر بها الشخصيات الرئيسية في الرواية عندما تحاولن ايجاد مكانهن في المجتمع. انها قراءة للرواية من منظور التأثير السلبي للمرأة على وضعها الاجتماعي وحياتها البائسة وبالمقابل الدور الايجابي الذي يلعبه الرجل في تحرير المرأة. ينقسم هذا البحث الى عدد من المحاور. يبدأ البحث بمقدمة عن وضع المرأة في افغانستان حيث المعاناة التي عاشوها بسبب النظام الابوي والانظمة الحاكمة في البلاد. ثم يناقش عدااء المرأة للمرأة وتأثيرها السلبي على بناء شخصية الأفغانيات و في المقابل يستعرض الحافز المعنوي التقدمي الذي تتلقاه المرأة من الرجال. بعد ذلك ، ينظر إلى التناقضات التي تظهرها المرأة في تفضيلهن للذكر على الأنثى. استنتج البحث إلى أن النجاح والتحرر الحقيقيين للمرأة لا يمكن أن يتحقق بدون وحدة ودعم حقيقيين بين النساء أنفسهن من جانب ومع الرجال من الجانب الآخر، حيث يمكن لكلا الجنسين معاً إنشاء مجتمع يمكن للجميع العيش في سلام وكرامة. الكلمات المفتاحية: مريم و ليلي، تحرير المرأة، الاتحاد بين الرجل والمرأة.



**The Root of Women Suffering and Core Solutions as Presented by
Khaled Hosseini in *A Thousand Splendid Suns***

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Abstract :

A Thousand Splendid Suns (ATSS) is a novel written by the Afghan novelist Khalid Hosseini. It portrays the sufferings of females in the patriarchal and male-oriented society of Afghanistan and the gender oppression imposed on them through their culture, lifestyle, norms, and the governing system. This particular written text, (The Root of Women Suffering and Core Solutions as Presented by Khaled Hosseini in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*) shows the conflicts and struggles that the major female characters undergo when they try to find their place in their own specific society. It is an attempt to read (ATSS) from the perspective of women's negative influence on their own social status and their miserable life and the positive role of men in women's emancipation. It is divided into several sections. It starts with an introduction to women's status in Afghanistan where they suffered from both the patriarchal system and the governing rule. Then it discusses the hostility of women against women and their negative influence on the personality building of Afghan females, in contrast, it argues the progressive inspiration women receive from men. After that, it looks at the contradictions women show in their preference for males over females. Finally, it concludes that the true success and emancipation of women cannot be achieved without real unity and support among women themselves on one side and with men on the other side. Both genders together can create a society where everyone can live in peace and dignity.

Keywords: Mariam and Leila, Women Emancipation, Unity between Men and Women.



1. Introduction

ATSS pictures the life of Afghans throughout more than three decades. In the last three decades of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, Afghanistan has gone through many changes, with some very devastating. This period witnessed many political and ideological changes and fluctuations, which resulted in military coups, insurgencies, civil wars, and interventions of international super powers and the Afghan people suffered a lot of destruction and scourge from the barbaric and indiscriminate killing of children, women, and the elderly, and the crimes of looting and rape. These political and military changes had a great impact on the lives of the Afghan people as a whole, but females were the victims who received the largest share of the scourge and the oppression practiced by the groups that controlled Afghanistan during that era.

Women had the largest share of suffering. They not only faced the restrictions and suffering imposed on them during the war period but were the most vulnerable group in the society of that time. Khalid Hosseini, in his novel *ATSS*, pictures women as they suffered violence and oppression from various groups in society. One of the most unsafe and challenging obstacles facing women was the hostility of women to women or women against women, which may be considered the basis of their weakness and suffering and their frailty of facing the challenges during different periods. Adding to this, the mentality of women themselves, where they were often supportive of the opinions that restricted women's freedom and believed in their inequality with men in rights and duties since, "in the perspective of Afghan womanhood, females experience conflicts when they try to fit into the public tasks and search for their personal identification at the same time" (Golden & Almutairi, 2013). In Afghan society, women are viewed as not honorable if they try to break the societal bonds of honor such as making marriage decisions on their own, disobeying their parents or husbands even if they are wrong, or eloping with their lovers. Penelope Andrews notes, "In 2010, the Taliban stoned to death a couple who chose to marry, and eloped—against the wishes of their parents." (2012, p. 157) The isolation of Afghan women from societal influence has created many social and economic problems



Women took over the responsibilities of the home and stayed indoors because it was both encouraged by family and society and safer than being outside. Because of the drastic shift where educated women were removed from public vocations for nearly a generation, the economy and family dynamic suffered, as Walter and Desai point out:

[T]he removal of skilled and educated urban women meant the closure of most schools because over 50 percent of teachers were women. It meant further deterioration of public health as women workers were sent home. It meant the near collapse of a badly maintained civil service as women were banned from public places and forced to stay at home. Overall, it intensified the social malaise gripping Afghanistan as a result of illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, and disease. (2003, p. 13)

This indicates that equal contributions from men and women are necessary for the development of a nation in different sectors of life.

1.2. Women's Hostility against Women

ATSS is set in Afghanistan. It portrays the tormented country by the civil war, causing dreadful economic and political instability, poverty, injuries, and apocalyptic deaths of hundreds of citizens. Land mines, genocide, fierce politics of gender inequality, and a harsh patriarchal social system affected thousands of people. It comes as no surprise that *ATSS* contributes to the discourse that women are in certain cases against themselves. The connection between women themselves is of great importance. Adrienne Rich maintains that the connection between and among women is the most feared, the most problematic, and the most potentially transforming force on the planet. (Valentine, 1989, Pp. 385-390). This connection among women will not have a positive effect on female status unless they themselves support each other.

The beginning of the novel subsumes a conflict between two female characters, Nana (the mother) and Mariam (her daughter). Mariam, a five-year little girl, is humiliated by her mother because unintentionally breaks a sugar bowl. Nana grabs her and stares into her eyes shouting, "You are a little clumsy little harami. This is my reward for everything I've endured. An heirloom-breaking, clumsy little harami." (Hosseini, 2007, p. 4) It takes



Mariam years before she realizes that the word harami means “bastard” or an illegitimate child.

Before Mariam’s birth, Nana was a housekeeper for a wealthy man in Herat named Jalil (Mariam’s father). In an illegal love affair, Jalil impregnated Nana and she gave birth to Mariam. Once Jalil’s wives discovered Nana’s pregnancy, they “demanded that he throw her out” (Hosseini 2007, p. 6). Nana and her daughter were isolated in kolba disconnected from the world outside. Mariam had no chance to go out and experience the world outside because her mother was strongly against the idea of leaving her. She put her daughter inside a cage and did not give her an opportunity to experience the outside world by herself to learn how to deal with and adapt to the difficulties she may face in the future. Michael Ryan in his book *An Introduction to Criticism, Literature/ Film/ Culture* (2012, p 98) argues, “We can encourage [children] to be whatever they wish to be from a gender perspective and allow their biological impulses to express themselves free.” Furthermore, Ryan argues that we can teach our children toughness of a kind might our ancestral biological inheritance urge us to believe it is necessary to survive in the harsh world. (2012 p. 98). Accordingly, Nana encapsulating her daughter inside Kobla will influence her handling of difficulties throughout the novel.

Mariam asked her father to go out of Kolba to experience all the stories he told her, but her mother used all her power to stop her saying, “I’ll die if you go. The jinn will come, and I’ll have one of my fits. You’ll see, I’ll swallow my tongue and die. Don’t leave me...Please stay. I’ll die if you go.” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 27). Nana taught her daughter to be cautious of males. She maintained that males are merciless gender, and all their concerns are hostility to females. She implanted in her mind that females are lonely and they should not trust men, “man’s heart is a wretched, wretched thing, Mariam... I am the only one who loves you. I am all you have in this world... and when I am gone, you’ll have nothing. You’ll have nothing. You are nothing.” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 27)

The small house could symbolize the solid fortress that females built around their thinking to experience the outside world, especially the males.



Females portray them as a ruthless gender that women cannot resist. Famous feminists present men as the sex, which could be as completely different from the women's race. The French feminist writer Simone de Beauvoir states, "This has always been a man's world" (Beauvoir, 1997, p.93). The woman is weak and of inferior productive capacity because she has remained in bondage to life's mysterious processes and man has failed to recognize in her being like himself. The true reality is that studies show "that woman and men are equally aggressive, once one takes indirect or passive aggression into account" (Ryan 2012, p. 95) and that "both genders have the same abilities in terms of speech interaction... [If] given a chance men make as good parents as women, and women make as a good corporate executive." (Ryan 2012, p. 95). Females should be aware of these realities and should stop demonstrating men as different, cruel, and undefeated creatures.

Nana tried to demonstrate that Mariam's father is lying to her about all the good stories he tells. She told her to remember that, "like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman" (Hosseini, 2007 p. 7). She warned her of the dangers that wait for her if she ever decides to discover the world outside Kolba. She insisted that the day Mariam leaves would be the day she dies. Indeed, when Mariam returned home, after she visited Herat, in search of her father, she catches sight of, "the rope dropping from a high branch. Nana dangling at the end of it." (Hosseini, 2007, p. 37) The big obstacle in front of Mariam, who tried to get out of the walls that surrounded her, was her mother, who was of the same sex.

After Nana's death, Mariam moved to Herat. She was supposed to find some peace from females in a house, where they constituted the majority. Contrariwise, she was treated as an outsider. She was offered a room where Jalil's daughter, "Niloufar and Atieh play...sometimes" and where "mostly...used...as a guest room" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 39). With Mariam's arrival in Herat, Jalil's wives, as they had previously stood against Nana, refused to accept her as well. They informed their daughters that she was not their sister. Niloufar told Mariam, "My mother says you're not really my sister like you say you are." (Hosseini, 2007, p. 41). She wants to teach her



daughters not to accept Mariam as their sister. They treat her as a guest who bid them farewell soon as Niloufar asks her, “how long will you stay here” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 41).

Women conspiracies started against Mariam in Herat. Jalil and his wives met to decide on sending Mariam far away by marrying her to Rasheed, a man from Kabul, who was forty-five years older than her. Instead of blaming and holding Jalil accountable, all their attempts were to get rid of Mariam without caring what might happen to her since, “they had been disgraced by her birth, and this was their chance to erase, and once for all, the last trace of their husbands’ mistake. She was being sent away because she was the walking, breathing embodiment of their shame.” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 48) The scene shows the helplessness of Jalil (male) in front of the unity of all the three wives he had and that, “his sense of guilt makes him weak.” (Ryan 2012, p. 100). When Mariam refused the marriage and asked for her father’s help, he even could not raise his eyes. With a glimpse of eyes and the spirit of the most helpless man, he said, “Goddamn it, don’t do this to me” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 49). Bressler argues that females are not united to gain their rights but searching for stuff to get mad about. (2011 p. 164). Such an attitude separates females and expands their rage against each other even in educational institutions.

Hosseini acknowledges women’s contribution to educational sectors. A serious and hardworking teacher is a female. The paradox is that the female teacher used her authority to oppress the female students. This duality is highlighted in the character of a teacher named Shanzai. On one hand, Shanzai is a female, teaching in girl’s schools, indicating the opportunities for education and working for the female segment in society. On the other hand, the teacher appears to be very oppressive. Even though she advocates the idea of female education and emancipation but she is described as stern and unforgiving. She could represent what be considered progressive views by saying, “women and men were equal in every way and there were no reason women should cover if men didn’t.” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 111) Her authoritarian wish, to impose her outlook on the schoolchildren, is evident from the fact that she “did not cover and forbade the female students from



doing it.” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 111). With all the cruelty that females conducted against people of the same sex; on the contrary, within the story world of the novel. we come across certain supportive men of women’s rights.

1.3. Men in support of women

The oppression that women face in patriarchal societies resulted in the emergence of many female writers defending their rights. Not all men have an oppressive mentality against women. There are male writers who wrote for the benefit of females. “James Joyce...in Ulysses writes as a woman and breaks down the order of grammatical discourse to generate a new transgendered that is feminine because it avoids the repressions of traditional male discourse” (Ryan 2012, p.94).

The patriarchal system is pictured as women oppressing forces within the story world but many men were in support of women’s rights. They put efforts into gaining women’s rights and treating them equally. After Jalil’s wives planned to expel Mariam and her mother, he did not abandon them but he and, “two of his sons...built the small Kolba.” (Hosseini, 2007, P. 10). This could reflect his seriousness in building it in the best way possible, otherwise “[he] could have hired laborers to build Kolba ...but he didn’t.” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 10). He ensured that Kolba must contain all the necessities of living and without shortages. Kolba could symbolize male caring and support for females to ensure their safety and fulfill their entire shortcomings in life.

Kolba was not built carelessly but as completely as possible. Nana and Mariam had access to all the facilities they need in their daily life. Jalil “put in a new cast-iron stove for the winter and stacked logs of chopped wood behind the kolba. He added a tandoor outside for making bread...he brought a few sheep...and he had [his] sons dig a deep hole...outside the circle of willows and built an outhouse over it.” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 10). He provided daily needs and, “[a] wheelbarrow came once a month filled with rice, flour, tea, sugar, cooking oil, soap, toothpaste.” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 10). All these could refer to the guilt that Jalil could feel toward Nana and her daughter and also the caring and love that he has for Mariam since after his hard effort to



build kolba without any shortages, Nana states that it is, “his ideas of penance” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 11).

Jalil treated Mariam with respect and love. He visited her every Thursday weekly. He brought her candies and gifts. He, “never called Mariam [harami]. [He] said she was his little flower (Hosseini, 2007, p. 4). He was the source of knowledge and news of the world outside, “[he] told her the story of Queen Gauhar Shad...He described to her the green wheat fields of Herat, the orchards, the vines pregnant with plump grapes, the city’s crowded, vaulted bazaars” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 4-5). He used to bring her newspapers and read them to her and, “he was Mariam’s link, her proof that there existed a world at large, beyond the Kolba, beyond Gul Daman and Herat.” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 22-23). It is in more than one section in the novel where men support females’ education and urge the importance of females’ learning to practice their role and defend their rights.

Mullah Faizulla, a male character who is an elderly Holy Koran tutor, is one of the persons who respect Mariam the most. He hardly could refuse any of her requests. When she asked him to convince her mother to allow her to go to school, Mullah Faizulla replied, “God, in His wisdom, has given us each weakness, and foremost among many is that I am powerless to refuse you” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 18). He was a strong supporter of women’s education much to Nana’s dismay, he asked Nana, “if the girl wants to learn, let her...let the girl have an education.” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 18). Nana was against the education of her daughter, claiming that schooling for girls will return with no benefit for her and that, “[she] will learn nothing of values in those schools.” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 18). Such attitudes of Nana towards girls’ education could be explained by the French feminist Simone De Beauvoir who maintains that, “since the female is not male, she becomes the other, an object whose existence is defined and interpreted by the dominant male. Being subordinate to the male, the female discovers that she is a secondary or nonexistent player in the major social institutions of her culture, such as the church, government, and educational system” (Bressler, 2012, p. 149.) Accordingly, females are standing against their own development. They resist the reality of their improvement and education.



Mullah Faizulla visited Mariam frequently to teach her the five daily prayers and tutored her Holy Koran recitation. He taught her how to read and write. After Nana's death, Mullah Faizulla visited Mariam and brought her a Holy Koran. She replied, "you know I don't need any lessons anymore...you taught me every surah and ayat in the Koran years ago" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 20). He used to comfort her in times of need, even years after their last meeting each other, Mariam used to remember his wisdom to comfort herself and gain strength. Besides the presence of many females in Jalil's house, he was the only person who tried to comfort her after Nana committed suicide.

Babi, a schoolteacher, was an educated person who loved reading books. He was a father of two sons (Ahmad and Noor) and a daughter named Laila. He believed that women's education was an essential pillar in the development of a country and that it did not differ in the importance of her role from that of men. Babi encouraged her daughter, Laila, to move forward with her studying. He urged that the future of the nation rests on her shoulders. Opposite to Nana, who taught her daughter to stick to home and that the world outside is a great danger, Babi advised her daughter saying,

"I know you're still young, but I want you to understand and learn this now...Marriage can wait, education cannot. You're a very, very bright girl. Truly, you are. You can be anything you want, Laila. I know this about you. And I also know that when this war is over, Afghanistan is going to need you as much as its men, may be even more. Because a society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated, Laila. No chance." (Hosseini, 2007, 114)

Due to the support of her father, Layla had confidence in going far with her studying and had no intention of early marriage, "because (her father) had no intention of giving her away anytime soon." (Hosseini, 2007, 114), and "[it] would be [their] absolute top priority, to get [her] a good education, high school then college." (Hosseini, 2007, p. 148-49). Her father believed that women's education is one of the main factors behind a nation's prosperity.

Babi was attributing the cause of armed conflicts to the lack of women's education in society. A society in which women were educated and sophisticated was a society far from armed conflicts. He believed that the



reason for the fighting in rural areas was due to their lack of interest in the freedom and education of women, “women have always had it hard in this country...of course, women’s freedom is also one of the reasons people out there took up arms in the first place.” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 133). By (out there) Babi does not mean Kabul, as at that time, Kabul women were at universities, taught at school, and even held positions in government but he meant the tribal area, “especially the Pashtun region...where women were rarely seen on the streets and only then in a burqa and accompanied by men.” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 133). At the time male characters supported the emancipation, development, and education of women and equality with male, in contrast, there were female characters who preferred males to females.

1.4. Women’s Preference of Males over Females

Fariba was Babi’s wife and Laila’s mother. Despite the kindness and encouragement from her father, Laila felt neglected by her mother. Sometimes she wished to talk to Mammy (Fariba) knocking and sitting for hours outside her door. She whispered her name repeatedly, but Mammy did not open the door. Even after many attempts to get a little attention from her, mostly her attempts ended in disappointment. This often pushed her to ask herself, “why Mammy had even bothered having her” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 117). She found this distinction very disappointed and often, “she went to her room collapsed on her bed” (Hosseini, 2007. 118). The situation distanced her emotionally from her mother and this returned to the reality of her mother’s depression and locking herself inside alone as her two sons were enlisted with the Mujahedeen to fight the Soviet Union.

In her good days, Fariba talked mostly about her sons. Laila, “always felt excluded when the talk turned to her brothers.” (Hosseini, 2007. P. 119). Her mother’s attitude led her to feel faceless compared to her male brother. Fariba said that when her sons returned from the fight, she had to find them brides. The neighboring women suggested her many girls but she refused all of them. She underestimated all the girls and did not see them reach the level that qualified them to marry her sons. She claimed that each of the girls had imperfections while she saw her two sons free of any defects. For example,



when the women suggested Aziza, she slapped her cheek with mock outrage saying, “She has a thicker mustache than Hakim”, while regarding a top student in her class named Anahita, she mocked her asking, “have you seen the teeth on that girl? Tombstone. She’s hiding a graveyard behind those lips” while mocking another two sisters calling them the, “two dwarfs. No no no Oh no. Not for my sons. Not for my sultans [kings] they deserve better” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 120). The talks continued without any positive speech from Fariba (a female) about any females while all her praises went to male characters. Such disintegration between females and refusing each other would never help their case. For women to gain their rights and play their real role in bettering their situation, they should unite and speak out in society in order to be heard loudly.

1.5. The Success of Women is in their Unity with the Support of Men

ATSS tells the story of the sufferings and struggles of the two female characters, Mariam and Laila. Women need radical changes to gain equal rights to live the life that they deserve in all aspects of life. Women should raise the awareness and sympathy of all other Afghan women to unite and fight for their rights. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, the first major published work that acknowledges the awareness of women’s struggle for equal rights, Marry Wollstonecraft maintains that, “women must define for themselves what it means to be a woman. Women themselves must take the lead and articulate who they are and what role they will play in society by rejecting the patriarchal assumption that women are inferior to men.” (Bressler, 2012, p. 148). Simone de Beauvoir puts her voice with Wollstonecraft saying, “Women must define themselves, articulate their own social construct of what it means to be a woman, and reject being labeled as the Other.” (Bressler, 2012, p. 150). For women to be able to articulate their voice in society, they need to unite and change the mentality of men to gain support from them too.

Mariam and Laila almost appeared throughout the scenes of the novel. They struggled and suffered a lot from family education, the social patriarchal system, and the Taliban governing system. Mariam married a man forty-five years older than her. She accepted the way of the world when



it tossed her life upside down. On the other hand, Laila, being alone after a rocket killed her parents, surrendered to her fate and accepted to marry a man sixty years older than her. Both of them became wives of the same person, Rasheed. At a time, they both were against each other, “a hurtful silence would fill the room, and Laila could almost see the wordless hostility radiating from Mariam like waves of heat rising from the asphalt.” (Hosseini, 2007. P. 225). Their share from each other was only quarreling and swearing bad words at each other. Laila called Mariam, “a sad miserable woman” and Mariam called her, “a thieving whore” (Hosseini, 2007. P. 227). The enmity between both of the same sex never helped them but weakened them in front of Rasheed. Anytime they did something he did not like, he would, “raise the belt” and say, “I am on to you both. I won’t be made ... a fool, in my own house.” (Hosseini, 2007 P. 235). The misery and suffering continued in their life to the time they decided to accept and help each other. Then their life was relished with some calmness and relaxation that they both could think about a way out of the harshness they being into for years.

The unity between the two women gave them peace of mind. They could think about a plan to emancipate themselves from the restrictions and oppressions of life. Laila intended to run away with her little daughter. She asked Mariam to join them. After all the years she spent in depression, she finally, with the help of Laila, thought that, “there [are] kinder years waiting still. A new life, a life in which she would find the blessing that Nana had said harami like her would never see” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 250). Despite their unity their plan lacked, “finding a man suitable to pose with them as a family member” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 253) because during the Taliban-era women were not allowed to travel without a male escort, and worse was that, “it is a crime for a woman to run away.” (Hosseini, 2007, p.259). According to Taliban rules, women were not allowed to go outside without a male escort, and in one of the rules of conduct addressing Afghan women, “You will stay inside your homes at all times. It is not proper for women to wander aimlessly about the streets. If you go outside, you must be accompanied by a mahram, a male relative. If you are caught alone on the street, you will be beaten and sent home.” (Shabanirad and Seifi, 2015, p. 6). Rahimi, the



author of *Status of Women: Afghanistan*, argues, “Afghan women, even until the beginning of the 20th century were the slaves of their father, husband, father-in-law, and elder brother. Their most valued characteristic was silence and obedience.” (1991, p.6). Women being subordinate to males in Afghan society was behind the failure of Leila and Mariam’s plan. Even with insistence, all their plans and endeavors fail because there was no man to support them. They were caught by the police and handed over to Rasheed once again. After ten years, Layla met Tariq, her boyfriend from school days. This reunion revived the hope of emancipation again.

Rasheed became furious knowing that Laila and Tariq met in his house. He began beating Laila and then Mariam. This time was different from all the past quarrels because for the first time Mariam reacted and beat him back, “fingers clawing Rasheed’s face, clipped nails digging into his jowls and pulling at his hair and scratching his forehead... she realized with both shock and relish, that the fingers were hers.” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 338). Despite the cruelty and harshness of Rasheed, the unity of both women helped in resisting him. When he beat one of them, the other returned fighting against him. This made Rashid dispersed, not knowing whom he should attack, thus began to leave one of them and hit the other, which weakened his position until finally they were able to defeat him together. With the triumph over the domestic oppression, they still needed freedom from external violence and obstacles imposed on them by the ruling regimes.

The first endeavor to run away ended in failure due to a lack of a male escort. Mariam knew that she had to sacrifice in order to give a chance to Laila to run away with her children. She wanted to take the blame of killing Rasheed and not Laila because, “what will happen to... the children.” (Hosseini, 2007, 114). She bore the burden of the crime. She admitted that she was the one who killed her husband. She gave Laila the opportunity to escape with Tariq. They migrated abroad and got rid of the society and the government, which oppressed and robbed them their freedom. Mariam was sentenced to death for murder and Laila escaped to a neighboring country. After getting rid of Taliban rule, Laila decided to return back home, with her family, to help rebuilding the country. She fulfilled the expectation of her



father that, “[she] can be anything [she] want[s]. When this war is over, Afghanistan is going to need [her] as much as its men may be even more.” (Hosseini, 2007, 114)

1.6. Conclusion

The females in Khalid Hosseini’s novel, *ATSS*, underwent countless oppression from the ruling system, patriarchal society and other women. In the story world, women were one of the main sources of their own miseries and sufferings. Observing the childhood upbringing of both female protagonists and their adult life, there is a direct connection and influence on their personality building and their future decision-makings. Mariam, who was brought up by her mother who locked her down from the outside world, had a character that accepted everything against herself without any objection and never defended herself. On the other hand, Laila, who in her childhood had the support and encouragement of her father, had a stronger character. She always thought of plans to get a way out of her terrible life.

Regardless the patriarchy system and all the oppression against women, a number of male characters had positive influence over the personality building of women in Afghanistan. Mala Faizulla, who taught Mariam writing, reading and reciting the Holy Koran, became the source of psychological comfort for the rest of her life. Babi taught her daughter, Laila, the importance of the role of women. It was her father’s influence over her that in her adulthood, she always searched for a better life. Finally, with the help of her lover, Tariq, she could create the life she had dreamed. All these women and men relationships and influence over each other lacked perfection and success without a true support of the both sex to each other. Despite the unity between Mariam and Laila and the great efforts they put forward to gain emancipation, their success was limited. They could not achieve full freedom alone that guaranteed them a good life. The true emancipation never came until after the true unity between woman and woman on one hand, and man and woman on the other hand which based on a true love and mutual respect and understanding.



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