The Misrepresentation Of Pukhtoon Men In The Novel A Thousand Splendid Suns By Khaled Hosseini

Introduction

“A thousand splendid suns” is a 2007 novel by Afghan American author Khalid Hosseini. Western people consider the orients are barbaric, uneducated, and nonsense. These assumptions drove the mind of the people from the other part of the world against Pukhtoons. Since these charges against orients are not real, these are only based on false assumption. These suppositions are the creation of the western writers and artists who presented the one side of the nature of orients. The other side of their nature remained still unexplored. Khalid Hossaini’s “ A Thousand Splendid Suns” highlights the social issues of the Puhtoon society. These problem are more specifically associated with women, for example the rights of women, which is an issue almost in every society. But he dose not stop here, his severe criticism of Pukhtoon men’s the projection of the western assumption about the eastern.

The novel’s chief concern is the depiction of the male character from Pukhtoon’s society. Hossaini use the plot and sub plot of the novel which depict the different aspects of Pukhtoon men. The depiction of father, husband, friend, neighbour and stranger is the few important points of Pukhtoon’s men in the novel. Every now and then the Pukhtoon men are depicted to be barbaric, sexually attracted, socially uncivilized and naturally beast. These point’s are the main false assumption of westerns about the orients. Khalid Hossaini takes the influence from the ideas of the westerns and he goes to extreme of misrepresentation of the whole society on the basis of the stereotype characters.

The novel starts with unconventional prohibited sentence which discusses the origin of the birth of the leading female character of Mariam. Mariam was the illegitimate daughter of Jalil. Mariam’s mother Nana slept with Jalil and her belly began to swell. Nana,s father outcastes her from his home because she brought defame to the whole family. Finally her father leaves his own mother land and leaves Nana to live by her own.

Rasheed plays the role of a leading oriental character. His descriptions match all with those of westerns about orients. He is depicted to barbaric. In the first glance when Mariam sees him, her breath is seized and she is afraid of his giant and strong muscles. His bloodshed eyes scare Mariam. The smoking smell that come from his mouth is taken as a ugly quality of the orients. His matrimonial behaviour is depicted in much more details which is clear underestimation of Pukhtoons. Eventually, the story of the novel of “ A Thousand Splendid Suns” is the story of betrayal of women by men. Male is dominant over females are everywhere suppressed and live on the mercy of males of their society and family.

1.1 Research Questions

Q1: What role play Western’s writer in misrepresentation of the Afghan society?**Q2:** What is the impact of Orientalist view of Western scholars and writer on Orients?

1.2 Research Objectives

- To find out what are the undesirable effects of the Westernized perspectives about Eastern Civilizations
- To find out how the Western popularized view of Orientalist blemished the image of the East/ Pukhtoon's?.

1.3 Delimitation

However the novel is interpretable from the Orientalism perspective, the researcher is appreciative to delimit the topic to misrepresentation of the Orients, specifically Pukhtoon's men.

1.4 Significance

The research is an attempt to find out the severe problems and the evils caused by the Western popularized term of Orient that consequently spoiled the image of Easterns on International level. Western powers took the advantage of the chance, they made native people colonized and mentally slaves in order to extract their natural resources and raw materials and minerals

Literature Review

There is a bundle of comments and criticism about "A Thousand Splendid Suns" of Khalid Hossieni. This novel is based on the controversial theory of Orientalism. Orientalism is the theory according to which people, language and cultures of the East and Middle-East are considered to be barbaric and uncivilized. There are many critics who criticized the theory; they are of the view that this theory is purely based on imagination and false assumptions and there is nothing existing in real like what the western scholars say about these people, their culture and their language. Rather the purpose of this theory is mostly considered to play a role to maintain the white supremacy. Though some of the critics take the theory as the westerners expect; some writers like Khalid Hossieni who has severely misrepresented the Pukhtoon men.

V.S Yoharatnam (2014) stresses concerns about the liberation and rights of females in education and social activities. According to Yoharatnam, Hossieni described the restrictions and limitation of the males in the male-dominated society and therefore it is articulated that the hidden potentials of Afghan females were suppressed. The suppression resulted in so many social evils that brought destructions towards the women of the war-torn Afghanistan. The story of the stereotype Afghan women is narrated in the novel and it is illustrated that in the man-dominated society of Afghanistan are totally deprived even from their basic rights such as love-marriage, the right to education, the right to work outside homes in order to support their families. Many cases are seen that they have no man bread-winner except females but the Taliban regime stopped them to go outside of homes. The females were left with no choice and no other alternative way to burn the fires in their ovens which ultimately lead females of the society to go towards prostitution and win something for living. On one hand the novel illustrate the cruelty of husbands towards their wives. The husbands don't stop themselves from any kind of deep and surface dominance over their wives. On the other hand, the political system of the time, The Taliban regime, also reached its peak of the brutality. But if we look to the novel and its characters in detail, we can also see some highly moral character who is really

concerned with humanity and they struggle to do their best to serve the humanity. One of those people discussed in the novel who was the director of the orphanage and he would hidden support children of the widows and poor families (p.718).

Yawari (2011) claims the writer of the, Hossieni, to be the feminist writer and thus he touches the issue of identity of females in his novel. According to Yawari, throughout the novel, the writer projects through his lens the male dominance over the social and political context of Afghanistan. Hossieni explicitly shows the image of women in the eyes of Afghan man to be his commodity and property. It is clear from the study of many of the characters of the novel for instance Nana, the mother of Mariam, who tells her daughter that whenever the accusing fingers of man is raised, it must be pointing a women. Hossieni's novel is very much concerned with the basic novel according to Yawari, and we can clearly see in the characterization of the novel by the writer that his portrayal of woman is seen to be a reproduction machine. But the writer does not stop on this point. It further claimed that though the slavery is get rid of and do not exist in the world but still Afghan women lives their lives as slaves. The worst part of this slavery is this that they are slaves not to their master but rather to their life partners who keep them as sex-objects and their husband never think of stopping their discriminative behaviour towards to their life partner. (p.86,87).

Ahmer Siddiqui and Pir Suhail A. Sarhandi (2015) assert about the issues of historical elements in Afghanistan and then relate it with present situation of the country and life of the women in the country. It is claimed that the writer has lens of the projection through which he propagates different aspects of Afghan society. These aspects are the literary, cultural and religious traditions of the country which the writer discussed through his characters in the novel. For instance, in one place the Buddhas statues and the culture and social life of the people of Bamyan is discussed which clearly communicates the religious aspect and message of Afghanistan. These symbols represents the depth of the culture and religion of the people and the mentality of Afghan towards their culture and religion. According to Ahmer Siddiqui and Pir Suhail A. Sarhandi, The West has exaggerated in the interpretation and portrayal of Afghan culture and religious beliefs of Afghan people. Their blur lens of research has failed to find out the depth of norms and cultural values of Afghan society and thus great deal of wrong image of Islam and Muslims is drawn in the West. It could be unjust to judge the Afghans through merely a surface knowledge about their culture and social values which lead the world to be misguided. Afghan women are wrongly propagated to be suppressed and the victims of male-domination though it might be true but for some very specific families of or ethnic groups but we can't generalize it for the whole country. Because Afghanistan is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic based country which is extremely difficult to bring under one definition of nationhood, politics and identity (p.59, 59).

Fanta Ayalew (2012) expresses her concern about the Afghan women especially in regard to conceal. The mask commonly used in the Afghan society is known as Burqa which is the major concern of Fanta Ayalew. According to Fanta Ayalew, Afghan women are sick and tired of being pressurized for wearing Burqa. She shows her allergic feelings about the mask used in Afghan society by women and she is keen to remove this cloak system from this society. She quotes some of the lines used by the writer of the novel which shows how cruelly the man is represented in the novel and how horrific the thoughts of women of Afghan society are reflected in the novel. If we take surface study of the novel, one would understand from the second-hand knowledge of the writer from the Afghan society. The mask discussed by Fanta Ayalew is something which is a guard against the evil eyes of men and the society. This mask is what

women can feel secure in, something which provides women the protection in the society. The writer of the novel is the subject of the criticism of many critics because of the second-hand knowledge of the Afghan society, particularly about the women of Afghanistan. He was born in Afghanistan and left his country since he was very young to remember anything from that time. How a rash judgment of a person who has merely known people from his own country can be appreciated (p.38, 40).

Rebecca A. Stuhr (2011) believes the novel “A Thousand Splendid Suns” to be the novel which represents Afghanistan as a whole. Furthermore she elaborates the novel that the internal story and plots of the story is the depiction of the life of man and woman in common. It is believed by Rebecca that the novel is the story of struggle and survival of man and woman. Both genders strive hard to survive through the time of wars that is extended to decade. Not only women but men were the victims of the war. Both men and women struggled to survive and both the genders helped one another to escape from the confusion and destruction of war by losing self-interests. Finally, the issue of personal survival is not of great importance but rather care for each other was more important. Laila and Maryam, being the very hateful women, turned to be friends and this way they tried to face the hardships and difficulties together. Rasheed, too, married three times in his life in order to have a family. His first wife died and have no children to Rasheed; he remarried to Maryam to make a family and have an heir. But the unfortunate circumstance did not favour Maryam which turned the life of both husband and wife into enmity. Rasheed marries a third time, with the girlfriend of Tariq, a handicapped neighbour of Laila. It was the third try Rasheed did for family. He did not hate Maryam because she was a female and he wanted to suppress her because of the bloodline and because of the illegal relations of Nana, Maryam’s mother, and her father Wakeel, which resulted in the illegitimate child, Maryam. It was because Rasheed hated her but still he provided her shelter and protection. Rasheed hated Laila because she had illegal sexual intercourse with her childhood boyfriend, Tariq. The daughter she carries in her womb is not the daughter of Rasheed but it was because she slept with Tariq and she got pregnant. Instead they, Maryam and Laila, thank Rasheed; they started looking at him with an eye of hatred and revenge. Both the females were well known in the society for their illegal act associated with them. Rasheed was like a bar of steel for both of them. He protected them from the hungry and violent men of war lords of the city which left no women untouched. But in return, for as they are represented in the novel, they kill him and try to run away. The dreadful and uncivilized murder of Rasheed by his two wives was not revealed until Maryam was caught. The novelist, as my personal opinion, is forgetting something of great importance regarding the rights of women. He portrayed the good picture of Rasheed in a too negative way while the hideous murder done by his wives is regarded as a justified action which is clearly the unjust and rash illustration of Afghan men who suffer throughout life from every social and political evil (p.16-20).

Soraya (2014) superbly encourages the male domination in every walk of life and for her arguments, she give further details. She believes that the equality of man and woman is a complex system of relationships put by the society and the society decides the positions of both men and women. Some societies give equal right to women as men but some societies consider women inferior to men. But what is of more importance, is expressed is something about the laws and rules in majority of the societies, that men are superior who are the masters and constructing the social structures, economy and politics. There are many reasons which put the women on marginalized side of their role in society. The important factor in their exclusion from politics, economy and other fields is their own natural defects and drawbacks. They are naturally dominated by their emotions which can cause a great deal of devastating

consequences. In the natural form, if we see and analyze the things, there is everywhere difference among things which makes a different beauty. If there is something like “rights”, there is another connected thing with it as “duties”. If we go to a deeper analysis, everywhere man’s life is at risk, man is the victim of war, man dies in war, handicaps in war, and as for as the social life is concerned, man is held responsible for the most dangerous and exhausting tasks. If this be case, women should share in every duty with man which will prove a heavy burden (p.81).

Research Methodology

Nature of the Research

The method which is being used by the researcher for the proposed study is qualitative in nature as the topic mentioned requires it because of the theoretical analysis. Textual analysis of the text will be made qualitatively to search out relevance.

Data Collection Tools

The tools that are used to collect data in this research comprise of different sources including books, research works, internet, and articles.

Data Analysis

The only chapter which performs the dealing with the data is data analysis; which is collected by the researcher. In this chapter, the data collected by the researcher is put to analysis through qualitative approach. There are various resources involved in data collection which the researcher used. The researcher will be going to revise the collected data entirely and the prerequisite will be dug out. In the whole research, this is the purer chapter in which constituents are dug out from the principal and main source. The purpose of this chapter is to verify the research questions about the characters of the novel and their portrayal in orientalists view point.

It is utterly visible in the portrayal of the character sketches drawn by Khalid Hossaini in his novel that he is completely influenced by the Oriental views of Westerners against Easterners. One can so easily understand the influence on the writer from the characters he deployed in the novel. The stereotypes Western scholars made merely on notions and assumption can be seen in the characters like Rasheed, the leading oriental character in the novel. It is quite astonishing that the write presents the only one stereotype character which carries all the assumptive characteristics of the typical oriental.

There are so many instances in the novel regarding the leading stereotype character of Rasheed in which his multifold and multidimensional character is portrayed. The Western assumption of barbarism, sexuality, uncivilized, non-humanistic can be effortlessly traced in the characterization of Khalid Hossaini in this novel. There are many excerpts that show the basic idea expressed in the novel.

In chapter two of the novel, the writer utterly goes against the kingdom of King Zahir Shah, a male who dominates the whole country and he is presented who was just a boring and dull. And

his reign was thus a boring and fruitless, too. The writer expresses thus: “… the twenty sixth year of King Zahir Shah’s most uneventful forty years reign” Here the on one hand the politics of the time is criticized but on the other hand male picture is drawn so vividly brutal and unjust. Hossaini draws the pictures of orients of every field, politics, household, streets, neighbourhood, and so on and everywhere he unjustly portrays the picture.

Proceeding further in the novel, in chapter five, the very cruel image of a father towards her daughter is depicted. When Mariam comes from Kolba to visit her father’s grand house in the city, instead of welcome, he does not appear to her and she is take back to the Kolba by his driver. The writer says: “Then itsnapped away from view. A hand appeared and frantically pulled at a cord. The curtains fell shut”

In the proceeding chapter, the same story, the depiction of Jalil as a cruel and hypocrite father, is continued. The father comes to visit his daughter but the writer considers his to double-faced and hypocrite because he wears the mask of goodness in front of the people of village and because the people he shows his mercy to Mariam. He writes: “in front of the villagers who accompanied them, he made a great show of tending to Mariam”.

In chapter eight, the writer turns to toward his stereotype orient character, Rashid, who is shown as a merciless, barbaric, uncivilized and sexually brutal in the course of the novel. In some cases, Rashid is a father who is cruel and merciless towards his wife and his daughter, too. In other cases, he is barbaric in the household environment, his style of eating, his habits of sleeping, his appearance like beard; everything is counted as the symbols of barbarism. Hossaini proceeds in the introduction of his orient character of Rasheed, he says: “The size of him almost made her gasp…” He does not stop here in the description of Rasheed; he goes forward and uncovers the other qualities of his stereotype character Rasheed.

“in the mirror, Mariam had her first glimpse of Rasheed: the big, square, ruddy face; the hooked nose….”

All the explanation above about of the leading character of Rasheed is the result of Western assumptions about the Eastern. They have stereotyped the Easterners and on the basis of those assumptions they regard us. In reality, the stereotype assumption cannot be applied to the whole East. Neither it is true for Afghans singly nor it is true for Afghans as a whole. Thus the unjustified explanation took place on the grounds of personal belief and understanding of the writer.

One the important things in the West about East is the picture of sexual brutality; this picture is drawn by the Western writers and painters. Hossaini followed the steps of those writers in the characterization and depiction of the character of Rasheed.

“ He crossed the room and sat beside her where she lay on the bed. The springs creaked as the bed tilted to his side”

The writer goes on even further in the explanation of Rasheed, he takes the instance of the very night when Rasheed is intending to spend night with his wife. “Mariam began shivering. His hand crept lower still, lower..” When it comes to Mariam, she says she does not want to do it. “His hand was on her right breast now, squeezing it hard through the blouse, …The pain was sudden and astonishing. Her eyes sprang open”

Rasheed is presented to be brutal and his mind is dominated by sexual force. And this force leads him towards brutality. There are some other instances which according to the viewpoint of the writer confirm the assumed sexual and stereotyped character of Rasheed. “….on every page were women, beautiful women, who wore no shirts, no trousers, no socks or underpants. They wore nothing at all”.

The above excerpt clearly is the notion that took birth from the Western assumption of orient. In fact the misleading depiction from a writer who merely belongs to the society can bring the storms of invalid ideas and blindly acceptance of the Western stereotype of orient.

Another important issue discussed in the novel is the betrayal of man with woman; this projection of the writer can be seen throughout the novel a particularly very much evident in some of description. When Mariam says to Jalil, her father, that she wants to go to city with her, he tries and successfully deceived her. Eventually, Mariam comes after her father to the city where she finds his mansion, she sees his face, a glimpse, but he draws the curtains. According the suggestion, orients are incredibly habitual of betrayal. It is suggested that not only men, but also politics and government betrayed women and the due rights were not granted to them.

The other point about the Afghan society presented in the novel is the liberation of women. Women have no right to choose her husband; everything regarding the marriage is arranged on the will of the parents of the girl but against the will of the girl to be married. Though in novel it gives it beauty and decoration to the plot of the story, but the assumption cannot be applied on the whole society. Of course there are conservative people everywhere, even one can find them the Europe or US, but does not mean that the whole west or east is full of the these elements.

Conclusion

This chapter deals with the final and decisive ending of the research article. The novel ‘A Thousand Splendid Suns’ represents the Orientals and the social structure of East. Though the novel is well-received by both, common masses and critics, but yet its notions are based on the assumption of Occidents about Orients. Rasheed and Jalil are the stereotype male Oriental characters about whom the writer uses the viewpoint of Occidents. All the instances used in the novel are more fantasy rather than the depiction of real situations. Rasheed is depicted as a barbaric, beast, uncivilized and aggressive Orient which is the false notion about East in the Western society. On the other hand, the female characters are depicted exceptionally capable as compared to the male characters. The society, overall, is portrayed as male dominated but he forgets the dominating roles of the females in this aspect. The researcher used a qualitative method in the research article. The data is collected through primary and secondary sources. Primary sources involve the personal views and the secondary sources imply impersonal views. After the data collection, the data is analyzed in the Data Analysis chapter in a careful manner which proves the misrepresentation of Pukhtoon Men in the novel.