



## QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN KHALED HOSSEINI'S *A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS*

Aanchal Arora

Research Scholar

University Institute of Liberal Arts and Humanities,  
Chandigarh University, Gauran, Mohali, Punjab, India

Email: [arora.aanchal10@gmail.com](mailto:arora.aanchal10@gmail.com)

### Abstract

This paper is directed at examination of the identity crisis of Mariam in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini. Mariam an illegitimate child, lived with her mother. She wanted to live like other children of her father. Mariam was married but her husband dominated her. The researcher shall be highlighting her quest of finding herself.

Key words: identity, self, socially, historically, family.

In life there comes a moment where we wanted to know our purpose of living on this planet. Mariam too wanted to know herself as she was called Harami by her mother and lived in a kolba with her. Her father every week came to meet Mariam but never took her with him to his own house. He never provided her the luxurious life as he provided to his other kids and even after her mother's death under the influence of his other wives he let her get married to a forty years old man. Mariam, even after her marriage could not find peace with herself because she had been made to lead life according to whims and fancies of her husband, Rasheed. Mariam was abandoned by her husband Rasheed when she could bear a child out of this wedlock. Her husband Rasheed married another woman and Mariam was left to fend for herself. She found her eternal powers one day through serendipity while saving Rasheed's second wife Laila from his cruelty.

Khaled Hosseini, best selling author and his works are the proof of his articulation skills and craftsmanship in writing English novel. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is the second novel of Hosseini. As People mentioned about it as "It's the soul-stirring

connection between two victimized women that gives this novel its battered heart". I fully agree with this statement as a researcher.

Identity is socially and historically constructed concept, of which we learn through interactions with; family, peers, social institutions, the media, and such other connections we make in our everyday lives. According to Peter Weinreich one's identity is

"Defined as the totality of one's self construal, in which how one construes oneself is, in the present, expresses the continuity between how one construes oneself as one was and how one construes as one aspires to be in the future."

In the light of this definition, it may be understood that the manner in which one sees him in the past, the present, and in the future, is what constitutes his identity. (Lakra, Quest of Identity in the novels of *Beloved* and *The Bluest eye* by Toni Morrison)

Mariam, always dreamt of living a life with her father. She being labeled as an illegitimate child and more so, belonging to low class Muslim community Hazara, did not get any privilege to lead a normal life. She lived with her mother who usually called her Harami and her father came to meet her on every Thursday but he called her Gul and treated her like a flower. She was allowed to study but at home through home tutor. She believed her mother didn't like when she was happy. When Mariam asked Jalil to take her to cinema and he agreed then her mother Nana, scolded her:

You think you matter to him, that you're wanted in his house? You think you're a daughter to him? That he's going to take you in? Let me tell you something. A man's heart is a wretched, wretched thing, Mariam. (Hosseini 27)

Nana told few more bad things to her and Mariam didn't like this and thought that Nana didn't want her to remain happy or enjoy good life. Her father Jalil, did not show up on her day so she decided to moved to Heart at his place. When she reached his home no one let her enter the home and she slept outside and next day when she returned to kolba she found Nana was dead. She lost her life, her support which lead major turning point in her turbulent life.

It is said expectations hurt the most, similar happened with the Mariam she dreamt of living at Jalil's house and to have access to the things which his other daughters had but this was not the reality. She was moved to Jalil's house after the funeral of her mother and she was burden on Jalil's three wives. They could not bear her at their house so they pressurized Jalil to let her marry to widow shoemaker forty years man. Jalil also agreed and Mariam was shocked to see the behaviour of the other girls who was there in the house and of her age but no one talked about their marriage. She was thought it was Jalil who understood her. She found peace with him but she was wrong and she recalled Nana was right.

It is always hard to find oneself in new city with new people. She was moved to Kabul with Rasheed, her husband. Kabul was new for her and

home too was unfamiliar. She was not happy but relaxed when she was given her space and room. She started managing the house and kitchen and got physically involved with Rasheed and she thought she belonged there. She got pregnant and she started imagining motherhood was the thing that made her complete but she lost the child not once but around seven- eight times. It was the illusion in which she was living. Rasheed started behaving weirdly with her there was the time he didn't allow her to go alone but he let her go when she was married to another woman Laila and she was pregnant. Rasheed started treating her as servant and mocked at her existence and her identity was lost again. Rasheed objectifies her with an old car. Rasheed never treated her with respect he was just imposing the rules upon her and terrified her. Laila gave birth to a girl and Rasheed was not satisfied but Laila wanted to raise her daughter, Aziza same as boys were raised and kept demanding the things. Rasheed thought it's Mariam who was making Laila stubborn. One day Rasheed entered Mariam's room after ages and started beating her and it's Laila who came to save her from the inhuman act that was being perpetrated by Rasheed.

It is believed children are the form of God, so was Aziza. Mariam didn't like Laila but one random day Mariam saw Aziza was crying at night. She went near her and Aziza loved Mariam's company and started crying whenever Maria's left. Mariam found solace with Aziza, she knitted the clothes for her and Laila loved the gesture and this led to bridging the gap between Laila and Mariam's relationship. They started coming closer and complete the household chores together. It was believed Rasheed married Laila just to have kid for the same reason he married Mariam. Aziza was Laila's and his boyfriend child not of Rasheed who was aware of this. Later Laila gave birth to Rasheed's son Zalmi. Rasheed told a lie while marrying Laila that Tariq his boyfriend was dead but later one day Tariq came to meet Laila and Laila was shocked to see him alive that night Zalmi told his dad about the visitor and Rasheed rushed upstairs to beat her and Mariam tried to stop him but he moved towards her and then Laila threw a vase on his head and he grabbed Laila's neck and Mariam realized that he

was going to kill her and she came with the shovel. She watched Laila turning blue so she instantly hit Rasheed. Now in Rasheed eyes Mariam could see the impending murder of the both the ladies so she mustered all the courage and decided the fate of her life again and killed Rasheed. She always lived a life under the control of Rasheed or her father but to save herself and Laila she found herself that she was courageous and she could decide the things herself and made herself widow just to save other lives too and destroyed her life. She even gave a peaceful life to others, she told Laila that she could fled away from here with Tariq and children to a safer place. Mariam was a kind hearted girl who craved for love but didn't get it but she understood the meaning so didn't let Mariam and Tariq to part away. She told Laila

They would leave this house, and this unforgiving city. They would leave this despondent country and go someplace remote and safe where no one would find them, where they could disown their past and find shelter. (Mariam, 345)

Later she stayed there and let them go to the different country.

The researcher had found out Mariam had lost herself by coming under the influence of her father and husband. She always wished for love and Aziza and Laila were the ones who provided the love she craved for and this made her strong enough to find her worth and in last she saved herself and Laila without fearing from Rasheed. Women and Home mentioned about the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as "A harrowing yet ultimately uplifting story of endurance and love."

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