

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

A Thousand Splendid Suns is an originally English novel written by Khaled Hosseini. It was first published on May 22, 2007 by Riverhead Books, a member of Penguin Group (USA) Inc, New York. It consists of 384 pages and 51 chapters, with ISBN 978-1-59448-950-1 (first edition, hardcover). The title itself comes from a poem about Kabul by Saib-e-Tabrizi, a seventeenth-century Persian poet, who wrote it after a visit to the city left him deeply impressed. Hosseini was searching for English translations of poems about Kabul, to be used in a scene where a character's sadness that caused by leaving his beloved city, when he found this particular verse. He realized that he had found not only the right line for the scene, but also a remaining title in the phrase "*a thousand splendid suns*" which appears in the next-to-last stanza. The poem was translated from Farsi by Dr. Josephine Davis. It refers to a poem in which the city of Kabul was described as having a thousand splendid suns. It also is a symbol for Mariam who "is in Laila's own heart, where she shines with the bursting radiance of a thousand suns" (ATSS, 2007: 246).

Hosseini began his writing by his first novel, *The Kite Runner*, in March of 2001. In 2003, it was published and has since become an international bestseller, published in 70 countries. His second novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* was

published in May of 2007, in 60 countries (<http://www.khaledhosseini.com/hosseini-bio.html>).

A Thousand Splendid Suns recounts a story of two Afghan women, which become major characters, who have very different characteristics, Mariam and Laila. Mariam is a villager who lives with her mother, Nana, in an isolated place. Once, Nana was a maid in the Jalil's house, who is also the father of Mariam. Jalil is a wealthy man who has three legitimate wives with nine children. In order to hide his scandal, before his illegitimate child (Mariam) born, he and his family decide to send away Nana to an isolated place, far from Jalil's home. The reason why he did the action is that he does not want his illegitimate daughter, together with her mother, ruin his good reputation. However, every Thursday Jalil continually visits Nana and Mariam, for about one or two hours. He thinks that it can redeem his sin. But, it can never change Nana point of view of Jalil. She feels a great disappointment because Jalil never acts like a gentleman does. He does not have a gut to marry Nana.

Different from her mother, Mariam admires her father a lot, since she does not know her status by being an illegitimate daughter. As a little girl, he does not understand what "illegitimate" means. When someday Jalil is absent (he does not visit Mariam and Nana), she goes to the city where her father live although her mother prevents her and says that she will suicide if Mariam goes. She waits for a couple of days in front of the house very patiently until her father comes to meet her. But he does not show up. Then finally she gives up. She goes home with tears and a very deep sadness. She regrets why she ignored what Nana has said to not

going there. As she gets home, she finds Nana hanging on a tree. Knowing that someone who does care with her now is gone, Mariam feels that her world comes to an end. Finally, she is forced to be married by Rasheed, a man that has been chosen by Jalil and the families. She gets no other choice. At one side, she does not want to marry with the man without love, but at the other side she is angry and feels very disappointed with her father by left her abandoned.

At the first years of the marriage, Rasheed was a good man. But he is changing more brutally each time Mariam has miscarriages, until the doctor's verdict that she can no longer having a baby. Mariam's days with Rasheed just like nightmares. Everyday, Rasheed abuses Mariam, both verbally and physically. With the dogma that had given by her mother, she can only endure when her husband tortures her.

Laila is an educated and spirited girl, who lives in the neighborhood of Rasheed's home. She falls in love with her childhood friend, Tariq. Unfortunately, Tariq and his families decide to move because in that time there is war in Afghanistan. A moment before Tariq moves to a safer place, he and Laila were making love. Sadly, Tariq and his families are hit by a bomb. Laila thinks that Tariq is dead.

She makes the decision to be married by Rasheed because there is no other option, after her parents are killed by a rocket fire. She needs the shelter, since she doesn't have any families left and she also doesn't want her baby born without a father figure. At the beginning, Mariam and Laila are hostile. But in the end, they become friend to against the cruelty of their husband, Rasheed.

A Thousand Splendid Suns receives both bad and good responses from public. The negative responses come from several readers. For example is Poonam Sharma (at <http://worldthrumyeyes.wordpress.com/2008/05/04/book-review-a-thousand-splendid-suns>, on May 5th 2008, at 4:59 AM) said that the book is depressing and feels disappointed with the book. Shaan Rizvi (at <http://www.islamicinsights.com/entertainment/books/thousand-splendid-suns-book-review.html>, on January 20th 2008, at 05:15 PM) and Nausheina Haniff (at <http://www.squidoo.com/Thousand-Splendid-Suns>, on March 14th 2011, at 2:42 PM) have a quite similar opinion relates to the novel. They assumed that *A Thousand Splendid Suns* was disappointing, because the author of the book gave the readers (especially non-Islam) a very negative thought about Muslim men and women, so they will probably get a misunderstanding view of Islam after reading the novel.

Although there are some negative responses, but there are positive responses more. The example of good responses come Rachel, a 21 years old journalist who spent four month in Afghanistan in the same year when Hosseini returned (at <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,20038949,00.html>, on June 3rd 2007, at 5:03 PM) said that Hosseini write an accurate views of what did happened in Afghanistan, and how do the Afghan women endure their sufferings from the awful situation in their country. Lev Grossman (at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1622583,00.html>, on May 17th 2007) praised the novel as “*a dense, rich, pressure-packed guide to enduring the unendurable*”. Harvey Freedenberg (at <http://www.bookreporter.com/reviews/a->

thousand-splendid-suns, on February 24th 2011) said that *A Thousand Splendid Suns* has challenging subject matter and well-written also, so it deserve to get the praises.

Currently, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* has sold nearly 8 million copies in the US with many more millions all over the world at about in 40 countries. It has received starred reviews from Publishers Weekly, Kirkus Reviews, Library Journal, and Booklist as well as reaching #2 on Amazon.com's bestseller list before its release. Time magazine's Lev Grossman placed it at number three in the Top 10 Fiction Books of 2007. It was nominated for ALA's Best Book for Young Readers Award 2008, Book Sense Picks Highlights 2007. The best of lists of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* was featured in numerous end-of-year wrap-ups and best-of lists, such as: #1 Worldwide Bestselling title in 2008, *Washington Post* best books of 2007, *San Francisco Chronicle* Notables of 2007, *Miami Herald*, *People Magazine* Top Ten Books, BN.com Top Ten, *Hudson News* Best Books of the Year, and Booklist Editor's Choice 2007. Columbia Pictures owns the movie rights to the novel, but production has yet to begin; Steven Zaillian is currently writing a screenplay and is also slated to direct, Scott Rudin has signed on as a producer (<http://www.khaledhosseini.com/hosseini-bookfacts-text.html>).

All praises for the novel is well-deserved. Since the novel itself has many points of interest. It includes the characters, the setting, the plot, and the author's style of writing.

The characters in the novel which become the major characters (Mariam and Laila) are two Afghan women who have different characteristics, different

family backgrounds, and different age. But the destiny brings them together. They marry the same man, named Rasheed. The two women which totally different become a unity to fight against their husband cruelty, and mistreatment of women by the Taliban. Mariam, who at first hate Laila, in the end of story, sacrifices her life to save Laila together with her children. The author itself, expected the reader will have empathy especially for Afghan women who, he thinks, suffered the most because what happened to their country.

The story takes place Afghanistan, including the main events in its history over the past three decades, from the communist revolution to the Soviet invasion to the U.S.-led war against the Taliban. A small country which is rarely being heard, suddenly become a country that have been talked about by people, become a center of world's attention. The name of the country almost becomes the headlines of all mass media. A lot of people know Afghanistan as a terrorist country, because of Taliban. The author of the novel gives the views of truly Afghanistan within the novel, before and after the raising of the Taliban. At least, with his novel, he wants to deliver a message to the public that Afghanistan is not as bad as they think. He also wants to give the view of how cruel the Taliban is, and how suffer the Afghan citizen because of them.

The novel is divided into 51 chapters and then is divided again into 4 main parts. First part of the story is focused on Mariam, while the second part is on Laila, the third part is on Laila together with Mariam, and the fourth is on Laila. The plot is well-connected along through changing scenes of emotions and

characters. The author makes an interesting plot with creating conflict which has relation with the condition in the setting of background in that time.

It takes a lot of skill to make a reader “feel” the emotion in writing, and Khaled Hosseini does a great job of that by using very detailed sense of place in this book, and the language that he used is simple and the reader can visualize the illustrations written in the book effortlessly. Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is written in beautiful proses which are carefully chosen to expose the horrors of life for many Afghans in recent decades. Much of the power and authenticity of Hosseini’s narratives would seem to be caused by the fact that he was born and spent the first twelve years of his life in Afghanistan before the family moved, first to Paris, and then the United States.

The novel has some interesting subject matters, such as: friendship between two women, the salvation in love, oppression, and conflict between traditional and modern culture. The conflict between traditional and modern cultures is reflected in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, for example, it is shown through Mariam and Laila. Mariam is representative of traditional person and Laila as a modern person.

Williams (1981: 10-11) said that the problem which becomes the interest is in defining the term of “culture” itself. The history and usage of the complex term is showed in Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) and Williams (1958 and 1976). In general usage, he stated that a range of culture can be distinguished from: (i) a developed state of mind – as in ‘a person of culture’, ‘a cultured person’, (ii) the process of this development – as in ‘cultural interest’, ‘cultural activities’ to (iii)

the means of the process – as in culture as ‘the arts’ and ‘humane intellectual works’. It is coexist with anthropological and extended sociological use to indicate the ‘whole way of life’ of distinct people or other social group.

Conflict between traditional and modern cultures as an issue in society has relationship with sociology. Sociology is science which deals with society. So the writer wants to describe the traditional and modern cultures and its conflict in the novel with sociological approach.

Based on the background above, the writer wants to conduct a study entitled “Conflict between the Traditional and Modern Cultures in Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns* Novel (2007): Sociological Approach”.

B. Literature Review

The study conducted by the writer has a relationship with the study that was conducted by Dina Rezdha (Sebelas Maret University, 2010), entitled “A Humanistic Approach on the Main Character, Mariam in the Novel ‘*A Thousand Splendid Suns*’”. The aim of the study is to show what the characteristic of the main character in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and to find out the humanistic value by using Maslow’s theory hierarchy of needs. The writer analyzes Mariam’s character and her needs which cannot be met and caused she killed her husband. The writer found that the layer of needs in deficiency needs has unfulfilled. She needs to re-reprioritize the need. Her decision to kill her husband is one way to fulfill the unfulfilled need.

Another related study was conducted by Laili Agustina (Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, 2012), entitled “Against Patriarchy in Khaled Hosseini’s

A Thousand Splendid Suns (2007) Novel: A Feminist Approach". The major problem of this study is how against patriarchy is reflected in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* novel by Khaled Hosseini. The outcome of the study is shown in the following conclusions: *first*, from the structural analysis of the novel, it shows that Khaled Hosseini wants to illustrate and convey his idea about how women are subordinated and exploited in patriarchal culture and how to speak against patriarchy. *Second*, based on Feminist Approach, the conclusion is that there is against patriarchy in the Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* novel. Hosseini creates that the inner strength of women will be more than the strength of men when they show up. He makes the paradigm that women are not always weak, incapable and depending on men. Women's character can break the type of women's position, right, role and participation that are categorized by patriarchal culture. Therefore, the ability of women to speak against patriarchy is categorized as a feminist attitude.

Different from the previous studies, the writer has different perspective in analyzing the different issue of the novel. The writer uses sociological approach in analyzing the conflict between traditional and modern cultures that is reflected in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* novel. In this study, the writer considers the novel as the social document and the author's situation (Laurenson and Swingewood, 1972: 17-21).

C. Problem Statement

The problem statements of this research are formulated as follows:

1. What are the characteristics of the traditional and modern cultures represented in the novel?
2. How is the conflict between the traditional and modern cultures described in the novel?
3. Why did the author address the conflict between the traditional and modern cultures in the novel?

D. Limitation of the Study

The writer focuses this research in analyzing the conflict between the traditional and modern cultures that are reflected in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* novel by applying the sociological approach.

E. Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study are mentioned as follows:

1. To identify the characteristics of the traditional and modern cultures that is reflected in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* novel
2. To describe the type of conflict between traditional and modern cultures that is reflected in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* novel.
3. To reveal the underlying reason of the production of Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* novel.

F. The Benefit of the Study

The study of conflict between traditional and modern cultures in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* novel has several benefits:

1. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the study of literature especially on Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* novel.
2. Practically, the result of this study will increase the writer's knowledge which is related to the cultural understanding.

G. Research Method

The type of this study is qualitative, since it correlates to the social science (the analysis of human's life, behavior, etc) and deals with words instead of numbers in the explanation (Strauss and Corbin in Hakim, 2004: 312). The object of the study is Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* novel. The type of the data is text, which can be word, phrase, or sentence. The data are Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* novel (as the primary) and the data which are related to the study (as the secondary or supportive). The data are collected by means of library research (collecting the data which is correlated to the problem of the study) and note-taking technique, to make the study easier to do in both in collecting and serving the data. It consists of steps such as: reading the novel several times, reading some related books to find out the theory, data, and information required, making notes of important parts in both primary data and secondary data, classifying the data into categories, and drawing conclusion to get the last result. The technique of the data analysis is descriptive since the result of the analysis is in the description form of the conflict between the traditional and modern cultures by using the sociological approach (Hakim, 2004: 28).

H. Paper Organization

The research paper consists of six chapters. The first chapter is introduction, which contains the background of the study, literature review, problem statement, objective of the study, benefits of the study, research method, and paper organization. Second chapter is underlying theory. The third chapter deals with social background. Fourth chapter is structural elements of the novel. Analysis and discussion of the characteristic and conflict between traditional and modern cultures that reflected in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* novel are presented in fifth chapter. Finally, the sixth chapter consists of conclusion and pedagogical implication.