

Act of Waiting in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*



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Abstract

Afghanistan has bred Khaled Hosseini not only with flesh and blood but with today what he is renowned for. It is through wide exploration of the cultural, political, social and religious condition of Afghanistan in his books that he gained for himself the reputation of being the author of the three bestselling novels around the world. Along with the sublime artistic expression in his novels it is actually the perpetually changing scenario of Afghanistan, due to its various civil and international wars that arouses the interest of millions of readers and left them awe stricken. Afghanistan is a land filled with war, violence, political turmoil, and religious atrocities so much so that it has destroyed and degraded human lives. Hosseini, the Afghan-American writer, in his novels portrays characters that face extreme miseries, bleak isolation, displacement, violence, death, loots, secrecy, doubt, starvation etc. in tumultuous Afghanistan. His characters such as Amir, Hassan, Mariam, Laila, Nabi, Mr. Wadhati, Pari etc. are caught up in false orderliness and experience a life of boredom and alienation. This made them embrace the absurdity of human existence and creates their own purpose in life. The study is an attempt to sketch how Hosseini has tried to portray human existence amidst wars and atrocities and also highlights how people can choose to continue living with better hopes for the future.

Keywords: Absurdity, Negotiation, Choice, Responsibility and Hope.

Introduction

Khaled Hosseini, an Afghan-American writer portrays the terrible suffering of the people in Afghanistan in his novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007). The study attempts to highlight on the crisis of the people face in war torn Afghanistan and their attempt to survive by building up new hopes and how they waited for its fulfillment. Afghanistan has been a land ravaged with the never ending wars. It has been a witness to both civil and international wars that has led people to bear their tremendous affects on them. Living in such an environment is a great challenge to them. This almost made them feel that life has no value at all. It seems to them that it is a God forsaken land. Brutal activities like gun fires, rocket bombings, land mines, lootings, killings, rapes and murder are usual occurring of every hour. People shut off from their offices, institutions and businesses hunger stricken could do nothing but only pray to save them from their misshapes. This almost sounds like the voices of the great existentialists and absurdist thinkers who propagated that life has no predetermined purpose. The study aims to reveal how Khaled Hosseini has depicted the human existence in his above mentioned novel.

Objectives of the Study

Keeping in view of the statement of the problem this study aims to construct the following objectives in the context of Khaled Hosseini's novel:

1. To explore how existential crisis engulf Hosseini's characters.
2. To investigate the characters of Hosseini in the social context of Afghanistan.
3. To study how Hosseini's characters negotiate with the absurdity in life
4. To find out to what extent Hosseini's characters successfully achieve sublimation.

Review of Literature

For the last few years critics have analyzed the books of Khaled Hosseini through various perspectives like terrorism, war, violence, identity crisis, diasporic experiences, family relationships, exile, immigration, gender discrimination, woman's liberation, Afghan culture, tradition and religion etc. But till date no such effort is perceived to explore

his novels from existentialist absurdist point of views. As existentialism being primarily concerned with the human conditions it is as old and as contemporary as human being itself. The review of literature consists of some books on existentialism and absurdism and also some scholarly works on Hosseini's novels.

Rebecca Stuhr in her book *Reading Khaled Hosseini* (2009) has given a biographical detail of Khaled Hosseini right from his childhood in Afghanistan to his migration to United States. She has discussed in detail about his two novels, *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and has provided some critical perspective to it. In an article titled "The Choice of Responsibility and Freedom in an Existential Lifestyle: A Study of Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*" Priyanka Chakraborty brought out how the realization of responsibility of an individual is necessary to understand true freedom. She pointed out that the tragedy of 9/11, following which the book was written, was the result of many such wrong choices made by people. However, her exploration of the existential idea of freedom and responsibility is limited to the novel *The Kite Runner*.

In the scholarly article titled "Portrayal of Family Ties in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*" published in *Journal of Current Science and Humanities*, Nita Keshav Mane and Rajendra Ramchandra Thorat explored the relationship of humans in different levels in the novel. They analyzed this relationship using Bowen's theory of family system. They maintain that individuals are always interconnected, although they have their own parts to play. They conclude that human beings can cultivate a healthy relationship that is based on love, care and encouragement for each other as shown in the novel. In an interview with Hosseini in 2003 by the *Bookbrowse*, the authors affirm that love is one of the important themes in his novels. He says that only love and compassion have the ability to redeem human beings out of their pains and sufferings.

It is held up by Deler Singh in his scholarly research work "Revisiting the Trauma of War across Continent: A Study of Fiction of Khaled Hosseini and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie" that Hosseini has dealt in his novels extensively about war. Although war sometimes shackles free of its devastating nature promising prestige, prosperity, power, and heroism; its negativity is immeasurable and irreparable. The sufferings they brought to humanity are enormous. Hosseini in his novels has drawn a very realistic picture of this pains inflicted on his characters by wars. This study shows that Hosseini conveys to make people aware that such more wars will put an end to human civilization as well.

A newspaper article of 2015 in *The New York Times* reports that the humanistic aspects of the story of the *The Kite Runner* stand at the forefront and that it surpasses time and place. It informs that after the withdrawal of U.S troops, Afghanistan is still under the shadow of Taliban. So Hosseini through his novel tries to picture the land with 'beauty and innocence' beyond war.

More humanitarian side of Hosseini is seen veiled under different complexities in his novels. One such is explored well by Abadhesh Tundelkar in his paper "A Comparative Study of Human Suffering and Female Identity in the Novels of Khaled Hosseini". He analyzed that Hosseini sets out with a mission to revive women and for that matter humanity as a whole.

In "Resistance, a Facet of Post-colonialism in Women Characters of Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*" by Marzieh Gorden and Areej Saad Almutairi published in *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, shows resistance at female level through post-colonialism and feminism based on Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. It tries to identify the Afghan women as a unique independent individual who is paralyzed by various Afghan culture, habits and lifestyles.

In an article "Gender Discrimination and the Wretched Condition of Women in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*" published in *Arts and Educational Research Journal* Dr. Sahidul Islam discusses the plight of women in the above mentioned novels. He has brought together the sufferings of Afghan women and Indian women though their experiences are different. The Indian women were oppressed under the patriarchal society whereas on the other hand the Afghan women were forced to remain under the veil. In an interview to *Time*, Andrea Sachs wrote that on being asked, Hosseini was very quick to respond that his second novel deals explicitly with the women of Afghanistan. As his first novel is all about men so in his next work he feels the need to address the problems of women. His firsthand account during his visit to Afghanistan in 2003 and witnessing all the sufferings that women faced during war and anarchy moved his sight and was enough for him to create his women characters like Laila and Mariam.

"Understanding Social and Political Unrest through Fiction: A Study of Selected Novels from Contemporary South Asia" published in *The Creative Launcher, E-Journal in English*, Mohammad Aslam Najar seeks to establish the novels of Khaled Hosseini as a political fiction. He has highlighted the contemporary social and political conflicts including the complex issues like identity, justice, struggle etc. dealt by Hosseini in his novels. Sunil Kumar in his article "Afghanistan's Social History in Context: A Study in the Fiction of Khaled Hosseini and Siba Shakib", published in *An International Refereed e-journal of Literary Explorations* analyzed Hosseini's fictions as document of the social upheavals in Afghanistan that has distorted both the social and psychological experiences of the people and that they have lost faith in any kind of institutions like religion, law or the state.

Rim Souissi in her paper "Drawing the human face of a homeland: A Readings of Khaled Hosseini's Novels *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Sun*, and *And The Mountains Echoed*" published in *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural*

Studies discussed Afghanistan's culture and ethnicity. She talks about individual journey of characters and how Hosseini's novels are faithful representation of his homeland. In 'Sino -VS English Teaching' the article named "Exploration of Trauma Narrative in *The Kite Runner*" by Yang Chun focuses on the personal trauma and trauma as a social phenomenon in Hosseini's first novel. He explores Amir's trauma on the personal level and also the collective trauma of Afghanistan apart from the racial trauma that Hazara community faced severely.

An article titled "Siblings Haunted by the past; an Afghanistan's cycle of Misery" Michiko Kakutani, observes that in the novel *And The Mountains Echoed* the past keeps on haunting the future. He mentions how Hosseini's characters are engulfed in the tumultuous Afghanistan. He mentions how Hosseini's characters choose between "duty and freedom; familial responsibilities and independence, loyalty to home and exile Abroad" (Kakutani 21). Unlike earlier novels it is based on more sibling relationship.

Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction by Thomas Flynn gives briefly about existentialism and some of its important aspects. Here he talks about the concept of 'existential individual', responsibility, freedom etc. However he does not include in his work the influential writers like Ionesco, Beckett etc. Moreover he deals existentialism more as a philosophy and focuses its influence on literary movements.

A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall, discusses existentialism where they talk about the Cartesian concept of rationalism that was offended by the existentialism. It explores both the theist and atheist thinkers in existentialism. They gave weight to unveil the uniqueness in individual rather than the general possessions. Further they stressed on the point that philosophy must help human to cope up with anxiety, a common problem, so that they begin to accept life in all its absurdity and must take responsibility to exercise freedom.

Existentialism: From Dostoevsky to Sartre a book edited by Walter Kaufmann, talks about 'individualism' as the common features shared by all the great names associated with existentialism. This book gives a detail account of some of great existentialists right from Dostoevsky to Camus.

Apart from these books there are also many books dealing with absurdism and they specify about human existence. Text like *The Absurd in Literature* by Neil Cornwell handles historical survey of absurdist writings and its pioneers. It focuses on the historical and literary movements along with the works related to absurdity given by the literary figures like Kafka and Beckett. He has discussed mainly about the prose fiction. However the book does not present a comprehensive history of absurdism. Jeff Smith-Luedke in his *The Absurdity of Philosophy* discusses the basic of absurdity and its impact upon future topics. He discusses different aspects of language like how meaningful it is; about its logic,

grammar and its limitations in understanding the absurd.

In *Albert Camus's Philosophy of Communication: Making Sense in an Age of Absurdity* Brent C. Sleasman like the above mentioned books opens with an introduction to absurd as he regards this age as an era of absurdity. Then he goes on to discuss Camus's ideas of absurdity and how he regards the metaphor of absurd playing a role in the communicative decision making process in the contemporary times. Sartre's *What is literature?* gives in details of the purpose of literature. According to him literature must serve as the healer of absurdity and alienation arising out of certain human conditions. It must be used as a medium of liberating readers which in turn liberates the writer himself by choosing freely whatever he writes. However he realized that this freedom is governed by their environment. So, later in his life he retreated from the idea of ontological freedom and bent more to the tendencies of Marxism and goes on to comment that existentialism as lying in the periphery of Marxism.

Thus the review of literature confirms that although Khaled Hosseini's novels have been analyzed through various lenses, nevertheless none have approached the novels from existentialists' point of view. Although there may be a few instances but it lacks depth and it is very sparse. So the present paper senses the need to provide a new insight into the aforesaid novel of Hosseini from the perspective of existentialism and absurdism.

Methodology

The study is carried out by analyzing and exploring the primary text to understand the land and people of Afghanistan as projected in the aforesaid novel of khaled Hosseini. It is placed within the theoretical framework of existentialism and absurdism based on textual reading. Secondary sources like reference books, scholarly journals, internet etc., are consulted for the study.

Main Text

According to great existential thinkers life has no inherent purpose to follow. It is upon the individual to draw out his own goal to live on. The 19th century with its ideals of abstract reason and rationalism devoid of any human feeling brought a huge dissatisfaction among some thinkers. This led them to give a new insight to human life. Further the two great World Wars which dashed away human hopes and beliefs led the movement like existentialism to reach its height. Kierkegaard, the father of existentialism propagated in his essay "That Individual" that one must stand for his individuality which is possible through the path of truth. When he chooses the truth he is almost like a martyr. He gives the example of Christ who was crucified for holding his truth against the "crowd". One must resort back to truth and faith that comes from within. Then only it is possible to shake off from the illusions. What Kierkegaard calls forth is "reflection" to the inner self. For Kierkegaard the way God asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac, such is the situation of every man. The universe has no role to play and so

he rejected the concept of objective and abstract worldviews given by Plato and Copernicus and held these as distractions to human values. The most important thing to be considered for him is "Here is man, and one thing is needful: a decision" (Kaufmann 17). Decision is at the heart of the existentialism. This is what almost all the exponents call for to decide and choose for oneself in the world. Nietzsche's same philosophy was reflected in his famous lines "God of Death" in his collection *The Gay Science* (Nietzsche, 108).

Like Kierkegaard he too focused on passion although he also retains some reason. He can be drawn in line with the other existentialists like Kierkegaard, Jaspers and Heidegger because they refuse to belong to any school of thought. Nietzsche explored more of the human vanity and hypocrisy more in his work and how to negotiate in life to keep on surviving. Whereas many existentialist and absurdist like Heidegger, Jaspers, Sartre and Camus deal with death, dread, anxiety, suffering and hopes in human lives. They try to understand and explore the true nature of human being and their situations. Existentialism further brought in a new light to the individual freedom, commitment and responsibility. It strives to wipe out the traditional rule of the individual bondage in the name of moral law and order placed upon him by the society. This gave him a new sight to explore his inner self and to discover the freedom and choice that he is endowed with. What is again vital to human existence is to wait for their set values to sprout. It is true that absurdist like Camus (through his works like *The Myth of Sisyphus*) and Kafka advocates having a future goal to continue existence after realizing the absurdity of human condition, it is equally important to wait for the fulfillment of its goal. There must be hope for the thing to be flourished in the future. This notion of the existentialist and the absurdist rings in Khaled Hosseini's widely read novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

Waiting is one of the primary activities in human lives. This is also true of the characters of Khaled Hosseini in his above mentioned novel. While dealing with the act of waiting, the name of the prominent figure, Samuel Beckett and his works especially the *Waiting for Godot* (1953), one of the absurdist plays cannot be neglected. Beckett uses his characters to show that waiting is truly anguish and one must pursue the meaning in their life through this.

Waiting leads the character nowhere in the novel. They do not fulfill their expectations. They make futile attempts to achieve worth in their lives, they still continue their existence dwelling finally upon hopes.

Mariam, one of the major characters in the novel was tormented greatly in her life. She accepts the absurdity of life. However, like the existentialist believes, she at the end makes choice freely and takes responsibility for her own action, without help from such external law and orders. All her life she experiences the tediousness of waiting.

A brief peep into in her life would reveal this. Mariam was always restless on Thursdays, when she was young. It was because that was the only day Jalil,

her father, visited her. They were deeply affectionate to each other. Jalil addresses her as his little flower. This way Mariam's first fifteen years of her life was full of joys and fancies. Every Thursday the visit of hour or two with all smiles and gifts makes her life fill with beauty and bounty. She thought no one understands her better than Jalil.

In the very initial chapters, the anxiety of waiting has been highlighted through her character. During this process wariness is set in her mind. She fears that some business might prevent Jalil to visit her. She eagerly waits for her father. The passing of each second before the real appointed hour is not easy for men. This concept is explored well by Keats in his poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn", where he talks about the restless time before the union of the frozen couple in the poem. She was afraid of unseen circumstances that may prevent her father from visiting and may tantalize her. To fill the time she did different task like 'aimless walks, picking petals from flowers and batting at mosquitoes nibbling on her arms'. (Hosseini, 20)

This act of waiting taught Mariam to endure things in her life. Her mother always imparts this knowledge of endurance right from her childhood. Mariam had the positive view that, waiting would be rewarding. She was thus, aware that the hour of boredom would be followed by brightness, as day follows night and winter is followed by summer.

"Finally; on Thursday, all she could was sit against a wall, eyes glued to the stream, and wait. If Jalil was running late, a terrible dread filled her bit by bit. Her knees would weaken and she would have to go somewhere and lie down" (Hosseini, 20).

These restless waiting ends only after her mother announce the coming of her father. Although it's a short visit, that was the happiest moment of the week. She would leap with joy and control herself not to run to him.

This act of waiting is quite different from that of waiting in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Although, the setting can be claimed as almost similar, there is the desolate place, with the two characters waiting for an unidentified person who they thought to have an appointment with. But in the end he never turns up. In the same way Mariam and Nana, reside in a desolate place, away from society waiting for Jalil. Each time they are doubtful about his comings. Though he shows up himself it was only for a few minute their happiness would last. When he went back she stood like an 'immense, immovable object' till his next visit. It is as if the situations of Vladimir and Estragon 'Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful' (Abrams, 2). So, they end up waiting for him quite unsure about the future. Mariam knows very well that her father cannot stay more than hours or two with her. Given that she was born out of wedlock. Jalil chooses to stick to the rules and codes of the society. Otherwise he will be alienated from the society like Meursault in *The Stranger*, who did not care about anything in this life. Although he loved her daughter, he cannot own her in front of others. As it is the condition of every human,

he too fears, of being castrated from society. So he holds back the established norms of society, while he realizes its meaninglessness later. After long years of Mariam's marriage, he has waited for the moment Mariam would knock on his door and give a chance to open it, and bestow on her what was rightfully hers. But his dreams never come true.

When Mariam turned fifteen, she expressed her wish to her father to take her to his cinema and watch cartoon sitting alongside her siblings. But like the appointment thought to have given to Vladimir and Estragon by Godot each following day; Mariam was also said: "Tomorrow. At noon. I'll meet you at this very spot. All right! Tomorrow?" (Hosseini, 27). She also grows hopeful like the two characters in *Waiting for Godot*, when she dreamt of the time her father would take her to live in his house in Herat. The next day of the appointment she wore her best dress and kept counting the clock. She was aware of her mother's disapproval of her ambitions. So, Mariam hideously run to the spot her father had told to meet her. She feels as if these hours of waiting would eat up her. Finally she could wait no longer, restlessness filled her veins, when her father did not turn up she herself run up to her father. Despite her mother's warning that she would die if she goes.

All her illusion dispels when she was shooed away from Jalil's house. She had to spend the night sleeping outside like a stray dog. As if it was not sufficient a grief, another shock came to her with the death of her mother. She grew very shameful of her foolish decision of betraying her loving mother. She could see how true her mother's words were, that she was an unwanted illegitimate child of her father, for whom there is no place in his home and his life. She could do nothing but only nonstop tears of grief, anger and disillusionment rolled down her cheeks.

Situations grew worse when Mariam was forced into a marriage with a shoemaker twenty years older than her. She was like a burden to Jalil and his family, who wanted to get rid of her. In the initial phase of her life it was difficult to adapt herself as a wife. But slowly hope gleams with the thought of a home and a husband that she can call her own. What she wanted now is a child of her own, like other women in her neighborhood. Nana was driven away in this world carelessly. She thought there was no inherent purpose in human life, especially being a woman. In this sense life was absurd for her. Mariam thought her life is different from her mother.

From the waiting for a father now it shifts to the act of waiting for a baby. With her first pregnancy she and Rasheed, was very happy. Her heart swelled with happiness when she thought of this baby. All her loss, grief and loneliness dispel. But this happiness was short lived, as she had a miscarriage when visiting the bath house. Miscarriage becomes a never ending event in her life.

Her continuous act of waiting to become a mother remains unattained. Each time her hope blooms but it is shattered the next moment. This way life was meaningless for her. Her determination to stay with Rasheed is also related to the fact that

people try to find their purposes in this meaningless life.

Rasheed's long wait for a boy child also remains unfulfilled. This resulting in his sour mood, volatile temperament; his punches, slaps, kicks and continuous becomes a part of Mariam's life.

Like the external activities surrounding them, filled with sounds exploding of loud bombs and military palms zooming past, the internal atmosphere inside the house was same between Mariam and Rasheed. A worry Mariam when asked what is to be done; only to get an impatient answer of her husband: "we wait". This reflects the anxiety of life all must endure. Each time a new hope is built and waited for but hopes again dashed into pieces. Life however cannot be held here, it moves on finding importance within existence.

Universal as it is, Fariba, Mariam's neighbor also experiences the same and long act of waiting in her life. Her good days were with her husband, two sons and the daughter. Grief engulfed her after the political turmoil in Afghanistan drawing her two sons, Ahmad and Noor to join the war against the Soviets in 1980. Her days were spent usually in dark rooms sinking beneath the sheets. She was ferocious and indomitable towards her husband for letting them go to the war. She was so much engrossed in the thought of her two sons that she almost forgets that she has a daughter to take care of. In a fit of anger Laila, her daughter, once thought that people should not have a new child if they have given away all the love and affection to the older one. Fariba would recount to Laila how she has been waiting desperately every hour for her sons. This also shows how people does not care for the things they have but only longs for the past and waits continuously for the unknown future.

Fariba's life turns worse when the news from Panjshir came that both her sons were killed in the war. The sorrow hound Fariba for the rest of her days. A great disaster falls upon her life. The loss was irreparable. She wore only black clothes. It was Laila who has to take care of her as well as the house.

She waited for her son's dream to come true. She waited for the day the Mujahideen come to Kabul in victory. It did come but for a brief time. It was when Najibullah surrendered and Jihad was over. She thought her long act of waiting was over. She calls for celebration. It was long five years after Ahmad and Noor's death she did not wore black. Her life revives. However, her happiness ends within four months of Mujahideen's victory. The Mujahideen found enmity within themselves, leading to a chaotic situation. So Fariba's long waited hope, though fulfilled, soon scattered into pieces. Fariba thus framed another hope; shut herself up and changed her dress into black again.

Seeing Fariba in such a distress state Laila expressed her fear that she might commit suicide. Again like Vladimir and Estragon's futile attempt of suicide in *Waiting for Godot*, Fariba also thought of it. But at last what she opt more was to wait and see her sons' dream come true. So she continuously fails to find meaning in her life.

Heavy fighting among the warlords Pashtun, Hazaras, Taziks etc. were the daily activities. Pashtun militiamen were attacking Hazara households and vice-versa. There were the horrific sounds of the gunfire, rockets, killings and lootings loomed around every minute. Moaning of wounded peoples, dead bodies scattered here and there and burned bodies seem everywhere. People in such situation would find life meaningless. Life would be full of sorrows, tears and absurd. People had packed their things and left Kabul to escape from such conditions in life.

Hakim, Laila's father also suggested and tried convincing his wife Fariba to leave Kabul. The fear of violence and unsafe surrounding haunts him so much that he withdraws Laila from school. At last, it was also the fear of losing Laila that her mother finally agreed to change her decision to leave Kabul. Hakim's waiting was finally over. He was very excited at his wife's decision. He expressed his desire to start a new life with each other's company. It seems to him that his dreams of residing somewhere in a foreign country near the sea and opening an Afghani restaurant would come true. This excitement of the thought could not last long, as a rocket zipping past above the sky strike their house and tore it into pieces, killing Fariba and Hakim, and left Laila badly injured. This is an absurd end of human life. Knowing the uncertain nature of hopes and dreams, human beings continue framing it to the end so that it would grant a purpose to live on this life.

The lines spoken through the mouth of Laila rings throughout the novel:

"It won't so much the whistling itself, Laila thought later, but the seconds between the start of it and impact. The brief and interminable time of feeling suspended. The not knowing. The waiting. Like a defendant about to hear the verdict." (Hosseini,170)

At a very young age Laila had realized the impatient act of waiting. She had seen her mother waiting in vain for her two sons, ignoring Laila's presence at all. Her act of waiting is however different from other characters in the novel. The boredom of waiting is experienced by her for the first time when Tariq her friend went to visit his sick uncle to Ghazni with his parents for some week. During that week Laila felt that 'all the hardships a person had to face none was more punishing than the simple act of waiting' (124)

After both Laila and Tariq came under certain age what Laila mostly expected and waited for, is his proposal for love. Although Tariq loved her dearly it was only in the time of his departure from Kabul he actually uttered the words of love. The words she dreamt of were finally spoken but only in the time of farewell. That was a very complicated time for her. Laila cannot leave behind her parents in Kabul and accept the marriage proposal of Tariq. For a moment, she could imagine them setting out together, out of all the violence and trouble, but soon she finds the emptiness of this thought. She was aware that she cannot join Tariq and his family. What awaits her is bleak isolation and murderous loneliness. Even then she looks forward for the time when Tariq promised her to come back.

In the incident where she lost her parents she was nursed cured to life to from her injuries by her neighbors Mariam and Rasheed. Laila understood that life must move on amidst all absurdities. Although it is meaningless to live without the near and dear ones, people in this world is a 'lone traveler' she must find meaning herself in this meaningless life. So, she revitalizes herself and found a cause to live when she thought of Tariq's child inside her womb. Though she believed him to be no more, she felt a part of Tariq still alive. In this hour of utter loneliness and misery what remains of her former life was only the baby. She must live for the baby. She continues and waited life with a positivity, which forms a characteristics of existential philosophy.

She was ready to accept all the pains life would inflict on her. This led to her acceptance of marriage proposal by Rasheed. When she gave birth to a daughter Rasheed's grew very unhappy. As he was expecting a baby boy, perhaps to meet the lost of his dead son from his first wife, his wish remained unfulfilled. Mariam's and Laila's fate become the same. Rasheed hurled nonstop abuse to them. In their all activities he found fault. The tortures grew so much so that at one point of time Laila and Mariam made a vain attempt to run away from him and Kabul.

A warm relationship grew between Mariam and Laila. After Laila and her daughter, Aziza, becomes part of Mariam's life she felt as if the years of long waits are over. She found a daughter in Laila. Laila and Aziza were also very much fond of her. She found an unreserved love from Laila. Life becomes painless in their company. She has someone to call her own. The lootings, murders and fight going on outside forced Rasheed to stay in home. By the time they had to endure Rasheed's bitter behavior.

As if tortures, executions, bombings, rocket fires, were not sufficient the season of drought shows up itself. Food and water became scanty. Rasheed's shop caught fire. Hunger began to cast a pall in their lives. This led Aziza to put away in an orphanage. Laila tried her best not to send her daughter away. At last she could do nothing but wait for better days. Even then she kept on visiting her daughter. She did not bother about the abuses, punishments and severe beatings she got on her way from the Taliban soldiers for going without accompanying a male.

At this peak hour of need Tariq reappeared in her life. It was a moment of happiness and shock to Laila. Somewhere inside her heart she thought the act of waiting was fruitful. At the same time they were aware of its vagueness, the drastic changes that occurred during this long ten years.

Rasheed could not tolerate this union again. He grew so much hateful that, he strangled Laila's neck meant to kill her. Mariam by no means could allow this to happen. She thought that in her twenty-seven years of marriage Rasheed has taken so much from her. So she for the first time in her life chooses her action freely. She took the bold action of killing Rasheed with a shovel but was still at peace thinking that she was deciding the course of her own life.

Rasheed thus trying to end others life met his own ending. His long wait for a son is fulfilled

through Zalmi, Laila and his son. Rasheed loved him more than anything in this world. He bought him toys, sweets, clothes and even a T.V. borrowing money amidst all those period of starvation. But his dreams and hopes to see his son grow up were dashed. Zalmi who worshipped his father kept on asking about his father. His days are now shaped by the sorrows of his father's disappearance. What he can do now is only wait for his 'Baba Jan' to return from a trip as he told to have gone. He has to pass days with this hope till he grows up and knows the truth that his father was no more. So, the act of waiting and its dullness do not even spare the small ones.

Mariam felt guilty for taking away his father from Zalmi. What she lived all her life was like a dry and barren life, without any wish and feelings. Her life transformed only after Laila and her children becomes a part of her life. Her life with them was like a blessing to her. So when she saw that Laila's life was in danger, she had the bravery to commit the crime. She makes effort to justify the crime. The established rules and codes of society seems hollow to her. So did not regret her deed and the punishment for it. An 'abundant peace' had washed over her. She was happy that she has saved the life of her daughter like Laila and Aziza, though her dreams to grow old with them remained unfulfilled.

As in Kierkegaard's opinion given by Kaufmann in his collection of work "His Mission", when people understand that all of their efforts are brief and not absolute, they turn their steps towards religion. The moment before her execution Mariam finally submitted herself to the higher being as she fails to comprehend life and its so-called rules. She asked for forgiveness:

"He has created the heavens and the earth with the truth; He makes the night cover the day and makes the day overtake the night...he is the mighty, the Great Forgiver (Hosseini, 361)

Conclusion

Thus the study explores that all the sufferings and wounds of the people are explored by

Khaled Hosseini by employing some higher forms of seemingly philosophical thoughts like the existentialism and absurdism. It is also found that the novelist in almost every page of the novel shows how characters experience and deal with the bitter absurdity of life and how in the end realize that they must stand up for themselves and endure life with new hopes.

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