

# THE STUDY OF NATURALISM ON A *THOUSAND SPLENDID SUN* NOVEL

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## ABSTRACT

Language teaching of literature is the way to encourage the students ability to give responses to what they read. This way can in one hand promote literacy and critical thinking of the students and facilitate students to build a learner center environment in learning. In this article the writer tries to raise and discuss a literature stream of a novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini, it is still taking background of war going on in Afganistan. This novel has discussed the naturalism of literature which draws people's lives that portrayed in the very low life, tragic, and pathetic. It tells the story of two women who are suffering due to war and forced marriage. It also deals with an infinite love, incredible affection, sacrifice and struggle of different ages of two women, but became one family because of a polygamous marriage. This novel not only tells the life-wrenching character with family conflict, but readers are also invited to imagine and to feel pain as a result of an endless war in Afghanistan. Literature may also have a wider educational function in the classroom in that, it can help to stimulate the imagination of students to develop their critical abilities and to increase their emotional awareness.

**Key Words:** Language Teaching, Literature, Novel

## INTRODUCTION

The discussion of this section begins with the overview of what literature is. The rest is related to the idea of good literature program in language teaching in which the author notices to take the study of naturalism in literature.

Literature is one of esthetic expression from an author toward the nature, it is imaginative work from someone based on consciousness and responsibility from creativity aspect as art work. Literature also gives many pictures of life as it is author's intention to show human as art person who has dominant esthetic. Literature cannot be separated from stream influence that causes the immersion of that literature; it can be seen from the characteristics of the literature from each its author. Korri Layun Rampan stated that stream of literature can be meant as the expression from the authors who believed that their work was good literature at that time. If the result of literature considered as conventional, literature that they will create considered as unconventional literature.

Purves et al define literature as a work of art that " seeks to please the person who made it and the person who attend to it (1990:11). They further state that literary works arouse a response's a sense of knowing, a sense of feeling, a sense of moving" (15). Probst in Farrel ans Squire (1990:27) underlines that a conception of literature and the literature classroom can reawaken our first feelings for books before becoming professional readers and teachers. He highlights

what Rosenblatt proposes in *Literature as Exploration* that " the human experience that the literature presents is primary...The reader seeks to participate in another's vision to reap the knowledge of the world. To fathom the resources of the human spirit, to gain insight that will make his own life more comprehensible; (1990:27).

In the classroom, there are many different people who attend to the piece of literary work, i.e students who are reading the works. They are different individuals who will have different interpretation. Since responses are subjective, there will be a vast number of interpretation from different individual subjects, i.e students. Teacher should realize that in their classroom they are going to accommodate many human experiences shared by their students who come to class with different backgrounds and experiences. The teachers should teach that there is no best interpretation on the work. There should be allowed multiple interpretations.

Teacher should teach the students to make a sense of the literature, how to learn the life experience from the piece of literary works and the students should experience personal and social act in the classroom. It means that teachers should facilitate the students to have personal responses towards a piece of literary work. Lazar states that it is important to ask students to have personal response toward the literary reading. He says,

..... Literature may also have a wider educational function in the classroom in that, it can help to stimulate the imagination of our students to develop their critical abilities and to increase their emotional awareness. If we ask students to respond personally to the text we give them. They will feel empowered by their ability to grapple with the text and its language and to relate the values and tradition of their own society. (1993:19)

The teachers should teach aesthetic reading in which the enjoyment of reading literary works will be served and the aesthetic experience while reading the piece of literary works are offered. The students will, then, learn how to share feeling, enjoy the beauty of literary works, and relate to their own experience. Probst (in farrell and Squire, 1990: 28-29) stresses what Rosenblatt suggests that "reading literature might respect human element". Teachers can not simply just teach the students the elements of the literary works, such as literary works, such as literary techniques, terminologies, information about the writer, etc, nor can teachers regard that reading is only a matter of " extracting from the text," , which focuses on different reading.

In other words, the important points of what it means to be good students at literature here is for them to be " the readers" of "literary experiencers". The students can share in their responses what they feel important from their reading of the literary works (Bleich in Musthafa, p.52). In doing so, a student will respect and value other students, and of course her/ his opinion and response as important as her/ his teacher's. Therefore, s/he is not going to consider that the teacher's words of opinion is the best interpretation.

In order to understand their life, human tries some ways and utilizes some facilities that available such as knowledge and art. One of the arts that used for expressing any kinds of human life included in literature. Boulton as quoted by Aminuddin (1987:87) stated that:

"Literature is not only to show beautiful value, life norms and events that think of inside satisfaction to the readers, but also contains a view that connected with religious affairs,

philosophy, politics, and life complexity" .

An author can be included in some streams because of the variety of his/her works. While, a novel, short story, poetry or movie text can be some examples from an author to show that he/she followed some literature streams.

In this article the writer tries to raise and discuss a literature stream of a novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini which has been translated into many languages including Indonesian.

## **NATURALISM STREAM**

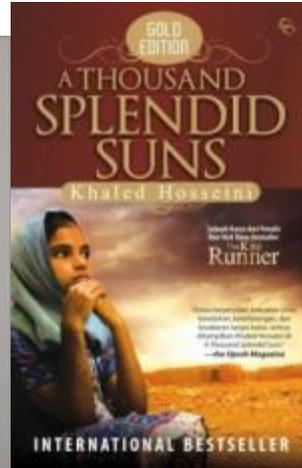
Naturalism is the stream that tends to portray the bad realities, evil or ugliness or lack the state of society or human nature. Naturalism figures reveal the fantastic aspects of the universe. Author naturalist calmly writes about the scandal of the authorities or anyone else, with the language independent and incisive. Pornography, their work becomes their pulp, not taboo for them. Usually, this is really they realize, even they could boast naturalism as their style. Naturalism is the stream that tends to portray the realities of bad, evil atatau human ugliness. Naturalist figures reveal aspects of the universe that is fantastic.

Gilian stated that naturalism based on the philosophy of materialism which is the idea that what can be described from the five senses is the truth. Naturalism developed in the late 19th century, the man who first introduced this genre is Honourede Balzac in his novel entitled *La Comedie humaine and Le Pere*.

Another character from this stream is Emilie Zola, according to him; naturalism is the development of extreme French realism. Naturalism demanded that the literary should be natural, by describing the nature and the human condition in an objective and real situation. Zola explained the beliefs of the naturalist through the collection of his work "Les Rougon-Mac quart". This collection shows the vast Zola's attention on people's lives both from the bottom to the top, from the poor to the rich people, the good and bad people. Zola thought that literature naturalists should be based on an investigation about the condition of economic, social, and ways of different life of layers and segments of society. (Gilian, 1993:56)

## **NATURALISM ON A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS NOVEL BY KHALEED HOSSEINI**

In the above section it has been stated that the naturalist described the real situation, often tends to bad figures because wanted to give a real picture of the truth. The characters of the naturalism explain the ugliness of this characters, society; naturalist author does not hesitate to describe the real situation. Emilie Zola, a greatest French naturalist author of his time is often considered beyond the politeness as if there are no longer limits to the size of morality and divinity of him. This is the data and review of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* novel by Khaleed Hosseini:



Title : *A Thousand Splendid Suns*  
Publisher : Qanita PT Mizan Pustaka  
Edition : Gold  
Author : Khaleed Hosseini  
Translator : Berliani M. Nugrahani  
Printing : II Mei 2011  
Category : Fiction  
ISBN : 978-602-8579-52-0  
Pages : 506  
Publishing Year : 2011

### **REVIEW OF A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS NOVEL**

The story takes place in Herat, Afghanistan, and Gul Daman, a small village in Afghanistan. The story covers three decades of anti-Soviet jihad, civil war and Taliban tyranny viewed from the perspective of two women. Mariam is the illegitimate daughter of a wealthy businessman, and at fifteen years old, she was forced to marry Rasheed whom increasingly brutal when Mariam failed to have a child. Mariam lived with Rasheed for twenty-seven years.

This story is set in Afghanistan when the situation was controlled by the communists, the Soviets invaded, then the period under the rule of the Mujahideen among its fraction dispute, until the Taliban controlled Afghanistan and the implementation of Sharia law, covered with a situation of Afghanistan in 2003, a year after the Taliban expelled from the major cities of Afghanistan. The background of this novel is Afghanistan's lives during times of war (1970's to 2000's).

*A Thousand Splendid Suns*, was selected by the author as the title of the novel based on poem of Saib Tabrizi:

Every street of Kabul is enthralling to the eye

Through the bazaars, caravans of Egypt pass

One could not count the moons that shimmer on her roofs

And the thousand splendid suns that hide behind her walls

A Thousand Splendid Suns tells the story of two women who are suffering due to war and forced marriage. The second novel of Khaled Hosseini is still taking background of war going on in Afghanistan.

The first figure, named Mariam. She was a harami - the result of an affair between Nana and Jalil. While Nana, is a maid in Jalil's home. Jalil is a businessman and has had three wives. Nana, the mother is a person who is full of bitterness, rumored so often possessed by jinn so that she always failed to get married. Nana is a maid in Jalil's home, a wealthy man who had three wives. Fate began to play in Nana's live when Nana was pregnant and Jalil's wives away her. Nana's father disowned her as the child. Jalil did not quite have the courage to take responsibility for his actions, to conceal this disgrace, Jalil 'moved' Nana to a secluded house and away from the city.

In this novel, the effective manner has been shown by Khaleed Hosseini to describe the state of society at that time because the truth cannot be denied. Quotes in this novel indescribable:

"You are cheater!" Nana said after Jalil went. "The richer man, will be the greater his mouth. He never brought you to any tree. Avoid what he all said. He has betrayed us, your dear father was. He kicked us out of his mansion, as if we were not meant for him. He did it pleasure".

The quote states how women's feelings of Nana who feels her pride trampled because of the power that occurred at that time. The power of men who commit acts arbitrarily. A bad characteristic of Mariam's father, he shed to his daughter.

Over the years, Jalil visited Nana and Mariam every Thursday regularly in Kolba. In Thursday's, Mariam would hear the wonderful stories of his father, and after that, Nana will distort all Jalil's words, and always said that Jalil would never acknowledge Mariam as his daughter.

Towards the thirteenth birthday, Mariam asked a special gift from Jalil, but it turned out in the day that awaited it, Jalil did not come, and make Mariam reckless and went to Herat, to Jalil's luxury home, where she was not welcome at all. Mariam's departure to Jalil's home brings misfortune. Nana Suicide and Mariam left alone. In the last words, Nana stated in her heart:

"I'm all that you have in this world, Mariam, and if I were died, you would not have anyone else. No one will care about you. 'Cause you are nothing!".

The quotation above shows how the character of Nana feels bitter, the author invites the reader to follow the story line that shows the sadness of a woman who felt what her daughter's future will be experienced.

Jalil was forced to take Mariam to her house. Then, Mariam was forced to marry a man who was much older (Rasheed) and was taken to move to Kabul. Marriage brings new misery to

Mariam, especially when she had a miscarriage and made Rasheed start rough to her. Such citations coarse fraction of the actions of Rasheed displayed by Khaleed Hosseini, stated in the quote:

"Stand up," said Rasheed. "Come on, Stand" Rasheed grabbed Mariam's hand, cupped her hands and put gravel there. "Put it in your mouth!" Rasheed's hand was clamping Mariam's jaw. Rasheed shoved two fingers into Mariam's mouth and force it open. After that he put the hard pebble grain. Mariam tried to rebel, but Rasheed continue stuffing pebbles in her mouth, wicked grin. With a mouth full of sand and gravel, Mariam said petition. Tears streamed from her eyes.

In the quotation above, the author so clearly raised issues that occur in the character of his novel characters, he can describe the nature of the evil character of Rasheed, this author really has thought of naturalism. Further, the author describes married life of Mariam is like living in hell. Description of the failure of pregnancy after a miscarriage suffered by Mariam made Rasheed always despised food made by Mariam to him. Until Rasheed put pebbles into Mariam's mouth to chew. When angry, Rasheed did not hesitate to release the buckle and disarm Mariam.

Then, the second figure is Laila. He lived next door to Mariam and Rasheed in Kabul. The daughter of a teacher named Hakim and mother named Fariba. Both Laila's brothers went Jihad and make Fariba live in darkness awaits the return of her children. Fortunately Laila has strong Babbi and a good friend named Tariq. Tariq always protect Laila from tampering men. Friendship was led them to a more distant relationship.

The battle makes many residents who fled to Pakistan, including Tariq family. Laila's family was preparing to evacuate when another disaster comes. Make Laila alone. Mariam and Rasheed take care of Laila. Rasheed is the one who saved Laila when disaster comes. But, it turns out, all of that is not sincere. Rasheed intends to marry Laila who has almost the same age with Mariam when Rasheed married her.

Laila agrees, but, instead making Mariam hostile. Laila becomes malika in the house and she always protected by Rasheed. But the sweetness was also only temporary, which instantly changed when Laila gave birth to a daughter.

This is the beginning of friendship between Laila and Mariam. They both defend and protect to face Rasheed's roughness. Situation is more uncertain because of the war. The situation in the household is also not improved. In the midst of suffering, Laila and Mariam trying to find a thousand splendid sun that will give light in the darkness of their world. If we look at the heart cry of Nana, Mariam's mother:

A man's heart is very different from the womb of the mother, Mariam. Rahim will not bleed or expand because they have a shelter. I'm all you've got in this world, and if I was died, you would not have anyone else. There will not be anyone who cares about you. Because you are nothing!

The phrase is often uttered by her mother every time Mariam insists meet Jalil, a father who is never legally disowned her as daughter. And Mariam's desperation had to pay very expensive. After she meets Jalil secretly, Mariam found her mother dead hanging herself. Mariam's live

suddenly changed. Now she's treading life. She scavenges for love in the midst of the bitterness as illegitimate daughter. Resigned to a forced marriage, bear the pain of her husband's bad behavior. But in the emptiness and fading hope, a thousand splendid sun of heaven appeared to her.

This novel tells the story of two women of different generations united by destiny begins with the story of Mariam.

Mariam grows without the complete affection of both parents, even though she regularly visited by Jalil, she still longed for the warmth of a family. That's what makes her desperate to visit her father in the city. Actions that changed Mariam's whole life, her father refused, her mother committed suicide, the author were not enough surprise us; even Mariam was forced to marry an old widower of Jalil's friend (Rasheed).

Then the second story, the story of a little Laila, in 1987 when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan for one and a half years since the coup of 1978, until Laila become teenager, in 1992 when the Mujahideen managed to control Afghanistan. Laila's life story with Babbi (her father) who loves to read and always taught Laila various things, and Mammy (mother) who is depressed because both of Laila's older brothers went Jihad against the Soviets and then died. The story of Laila with Tariq, the one-legged boy friend due to exposure to landmines, and the story of Laila with Giti and Hasina, her companions.

When Laila was 14-year-old, a civil war broke out in Afghanistan. Here the story began to drain the heart; there is loss, sorrow, and separation. The second part covered with rocket attacks, which devastated Laila's house and bring interwoven with the story of Mariam in the third section.

In the third section, we are brought to Laila's life as a young girl who lived in learned family even her mother slightly mentally deranged. Khaled Hosseini shows the living contrast as a woman in Afghanistan. Laila's happy life has many friends, her father is clever and moreover there is a friend, Tariq. As usual fate can change in an instant. The lives of Mariam and Laila played by life destiny appeared in the form of war, sexual harassment, domestic violence and how love and hope that makes them to survive.

The third part of this novel tells Laila and Mariam interchangeably. In addition to domestic violence they have experienced, the days of the Taliban with Sharia law in 1996. Especially the rules for women: should not leave home without the company of her male mahram, do not show their face, not allowed to speak unless spoken to, should not laugh in public, girls should not go to school, women should not work And perhaps, remember the words of Laila's father earlier (page 169):

"Women have never been considered in this country, Laila, but now, under the communist regime, women were more likely to gain independence and a variety of other rights that they never got before ... Of course, the independence of women is also one of the reasons for the people out there to take up arms because of anger "...

Seeing the quotation above describes the state of the Taliban reign, the minimal facilities for women, special hospital for women was not well equipped, no clean water, electricity, supply of equipment and medicines is limited. Reading a Caesarean section that had to be done without real anesthetic make us want to have circumcision the Taliban repeatedly without anesthetic injections as well.

In the next part, the author uses Laila's point of view. While, for sections three and four, the author uses Mariam and Laila's point of view interchangeably. The strength of character that made by the author makes this novel can touch the readers about everything that happened to the characters.

Khaleed Hosseini's point of view in exposing the reality of women's lives in Afghanistan shows the theme of inner strength of women that are the most common themes. Mariam and Laila endure through so much pain because they are women, but each one has the power to endure. Mariam face father whom refused to recognize her as a daughter, and a husband who violated his rights for twenty-seven years, and she killed Rasheed when Rasheed determined to kill Laila.

Mariam was arrested for murdering Rasheed and executed in a stadium in front of thousands of people. Laila escaped from Kabul and went to Pakistan. Furthermore when Mariam accused of killing Rasheed, quoting the words of the judge in this novel:

"I am not afraid to leave the life that also abandoned my son five years ago. Live that forces us to endure suffering, even long after we are no longer able to bear it. No, I'm sure; I'll accept my death with happiness when the moment arrives. Which makes me worry, hamshira, is the day when God called me presented to him and asked, why do not you do what I command you, mullah? Why do not you obey my laws?"

The above sentence is one sentence that can make the reader ponder and evaluate themselves from everything that has been done. The quite touching part was when we read the letter from Jalil who is Mariam's father, explained there how the things are done can not be changed anymore.

## **ANALYSIS**

This novel is interesting to be read. A series background of Aghanistan conflict (war between the Mujahideen of Afghanistan with the Uni Soviet followed by the internal conflict of the Mujahideen, Taliban control, until peace finally came) into a coherent story with the life of both figures. This novel not only tells the life-wrenching character with family conflict, but readers are also invited to imagine and to feel pain as a result of an endless war in Afghanistan.

The writer considers Mariam and Laila are the protagonists that teach the readers about the realities of life as a woman in a Muslim country. They face several wars throughout their lives to defend themselves. While antagonists one that is Jalil, Rasheed, the Mujahideen, and the Taliban who abuse women and destroying their country. They live for a long time and refused to surrender.

Khaled Hosseini's novel, also deals with an infinite love, incredible affection, sacrifice and struggle of different ages of two women, but became one family because of a polygamous marriage. The story of Mariam, who was a "harami", and Laila, a child who was born from educated and modern family, with all the ideals of a beautiful future, but she has to accept fate, trapped in a forced polygamous marriage and also burka prison.

The Taliban Islamists, utilizing religion in the interests of their own group, and also the fact of "supporter and advocator" are people who come from the outside of Afghanistan such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and other Islamic countries.

Naturalism that appears on this novel and the most preferably is how the author tells in this novel, which flows like water, and not impose his assumptions, and the explanation of very bad conflict in Afghanistan, but it does not look like the" focus "of the story, it just as a" complement "of Mariam and Laila's story, though his explanation about conflict was very" bite ".

In accordance with the theory of naturalist literature, A Thousand Splendid Sun's novel by Khaleed Hosseini, this author of the naturalist is quietly writing about the scandal of the rulers, Mariam's father (Jalil) and Rasheed (husband) and who all involved with free and sharp language and ends with tragic atmosphere, filled with despair, and very sad. In this novel, three women seek happiness, Nana, Mariam and Laila.

The story of this novel also illustrates that the Taliban is a tribal militant Muslims, exploit religion for the interests of their own group, and also the fact of "supporter and advocator" are people who come from outside of Afghanistan such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and other Islamic countries.

The slow tempo of the narrative of this novel, it is considered a reflection of the slow life of Mariam and Laila spent with Rasheed. Creep slowly through day to day and life through in the shadow of the threat. Afghanistan in the past was with all its glory. Who would have thought, a country where the girl cannot go out without a burqa and escorted by their husbands, fathers, or brothers, and had been held by the Taliban as written by Khaled Hosseini are the ones who just "holding beads and memorize verses in the language they do not know and understand ", it is a beautiful country, which once had a culture and a great relics of the past.

## **CONCLUSION**

There is an urgent need to have in our language teaching of literature as to encourage the students ability to give responses to what they read. This way can in one hand promote literacy and critical thinking of the students and facilitate students to build a learner center environment in learning. Based on the discussion of this novel, it can be concluded that some literatures have the characteristics that indicate of that literacy work. Literature streams indicate the objectives of literature. This novel has discussed the naturalism of literature which draws people's lives that portrayed in the very low life, tragic, and pathetic.

This novel offers bone-chilling stories, presents a portrait of Afghan life as a whole. A Thousand Splendid Suns tells about the lives of two women, with different educational background, which became one of fate, in a painful polygamous marriage. This is heartbreaking story of two Afghan women in sustaining their life with all strength in the ongoing war.

Anyone could not be able to count the moons that shimmer on the roof, or a thousand splendid suns hiding behind a wall which is the Poetry of Saib e Tabrizi. The meaning of poetry and a novel content by Khaled Hosseini is a story about hope for victory, and dismissed fears force. A character in this novel offers a touch of zest for life in the middle of fading hope. The point of this novel tells the story of the sacrifice and struggle of a woman's life in searching the happiness. The story is very touching in the midst of war, famine and anarchism. Once again, Khaleed Hosseini was successfully churning feeling. Personal side in this fictional story is so powerful and touching.

In his novel, the author also discusses about the changes in the country, since a colony of the Uni Soviet, controlled by the Mujahideen, to the Taliban. Khaled Hosseini also describe about Afghanistan in the past, which I think he got it through the eyes and memories of her father and mother, since the author's childhood has lived abroad because his father was a diplomat, and when the war broke out they could not return to that wonderful country.

Basically, this novel teaches truth, perseverance, and patience in the face of all the problems that exist in human life. The power of self confidence in Him who will always gives the way to lead us to something that we need. One of the points that can be drawn from this novel is: do not keep anger for too long, because in the end we are going to regret it, why do not forgive when there was a chance for it (remember the relationship between father and daughter that is full of bitterness, disappointment and regret between Jalil and Mariam).

The next point, the writer judges from the point of view of Afghanistan society at the time that any Afghans have always found a way to survive in the midst of death, loss and unimaginable grief. Survive to continue life. And Mariam was doing it. Mariam goodness is as poem left by Laila's father to Kabul, "Whoever cannot count the moons that shimmers upon roofs or the thousand splendid suns hiding behind walls". Mariam's love and sacrifice... It was great!!!

## **SUGGESTION**

The concern of teaching literature is suggested to us more on center environment in learning. In the response-centered literature class, the students are guide towards the awareness os aesthetic stance reading. Besides, the writer hopes this article is able to provide knowledge to the readers of the naturalist literature as well as introducing the reality of life that occurred in the Afghanistan as Moslem country. Last but not least, for the sake of improving the article, the writer opens constructive criticism from readers.

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