

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Background

Literature mirrors society, reflecting its various aspects, including social, cultural, political, and economic life. Literary works result from the creativity of writers who are not born in a cultural vacuum but are influenced by society and, at the same time, have the potential to influence it (Semi, 2021). In literary works, the author's imagination is not merely a personal exercise; it is intertwined with the documentation and interpretation of the social realities that emerge within the author's environment. In its myriad form narrative, poetry, drama, and fiction literature can capture a broad spectrum of people's experiences. It has been instrumental in documenting the lives of elites and marginalized groups while simultaneously serving as a medium for highlighting the relevant social issues of its respective eras.

Literature is pivotal in preserving historical records, offering a chronicle of significant societal events. Like historical approaches, sociological approaches prioritize examining factors external to literary texts (Semi, 2021). This finding lends further credence to the notion that literature serves a dual function, encompassing both the dimensions of entertainment and education and serving as a medium for reflecting on social realities. As articulated by Sapardi Djoko Damono, the inherent interconnectedness between literature and society is predicated on the premise that literary production is inextricably intertwined with the social milieu. This assertion posits that literary works emanate, evolve, and are nurtured within the ambit of the social environment (Damono, 1978). This statement elucidates the symbiotic relationship between literature and society, thereby demonstrating how literature serves as both a reflection of social conditions and a catalyst for social change.

Literature functions as a mirror of society, reflecting its various aspects, including social, cultural, political, and economic life. Literary works are the result of the creativity of writers who are not born in a cultural vacuum but are influenced by society and, at the same time, have the potential to influence it (Semi, 2021). In literary works, the author's imagination is not merely a personal exercise; rather, it is intertwined with the documentation and interpretation of the social realities that emerge within the author's environment. Literature, in its myriad forms, namely, narrative, poetry, drama, and fiction, has the capacity to capture a broad spectrum of people's experiences. It has been instrumental in documenting the lives of elites and marginalized groups while simultaneously serving as a medium for highlighting the relevant social issues of its respective eras.

Literature serves a pivotal role in preserving historical records, offering a chronicle of significant societal events. Sociological approaches, akin to historical approaches, prioritize the examination of factors external to literary texts (Semi, 2021). This finding lends further credence to the notion that literature serves a dual function, encompassing both the dimensions of entertainment and education while also serving as a medium for reflection on social realities. As articulated by Sapardi Djoko Damono, the inherent interconnectedness between literature and society is predicated on the premise that literary production is inextricably intertwined with the social milieu. This assertion posits that literary works emanate, evolve, and are nurtured within the ambit of the social environment (Damono, 1978). This statement elucidates the symbiotic relationship between literature and society, thereby demonstrating how literature serves as both a reflection of social conditions and a catalyst for social change.

Moreover, literature plays a role in shaping the ideology and identity of a society by serving as a medium for certain groups to articulate their cultural values and beliefs. Sapardi Djoko Damono's assertion that literature serves as a reflection of an evolving era underscores the capacity of literature to serve as a reflection and the construction of a developing social structure (Damono, 1978). Research on the reciprocal relationship between literature and social structures demonstrates that

literature exerts a profound influence as a medium of cultural expression, thereby substantiating its significance in human life. The close relationship between literature and social structure confirms the dual role of literature as a cultural artifact as well as a means to understand and change the social order. Literary works that possess high aesthetic and social value have the potential to drive transformation, both in individual consciousness and in the formulation of social policies. Consequently, the study and appreciation of literature constitute a pivotal element in the development of society and culture.

Literary works are characterized by the creation of imaginative worlds that resonate with existing social realities, thereby facilitating readers' comprehension of the complex challenges confronting society during a given period. Literature frequently serves as a medium for articulating social injustices, class conflicts, and individual struggles against oppressive systems, thereby reflecting the tensions and dynamics inherent in social change. The environment in which a writer operates invariably gives rise to a particular genre of literature (Iswanto et al., 2017). This statement underscores the profound interconnection between literary works and the socio-cultural milieu that engenders them. Literature serves a dual function: it reflects existing social structures and also acts as a catalyst for social transformation by stimulating debate and prompting a shift in social perspectives.

Beyond its role as a historical document or a reflection of reality, literature also functions as a medium for individuals to critique and challenge prevailing social injustices. Literature of a high calibre, replete with incisive social critique, has the capacity to galvanize readers, fostering empathy, critical thinking, and proactive action in the face of social disparity. Consequently, literature functions not only as a medium of cultural expression but also as an instrument of social change.

The theoretical framework of literary sociology is predicated on the premise that literary works are inextricably linked to the social milieu of their respective eras. This perspective aligns with the notion that the analysis of the sociology of literature can elucidate how literature reflects, interrogates, or critiques norms, social hierarchies, and socio-cultural processes and transformations that emerge .

However, it must be noted that not all social conditions depicted in literature necessarily reflect the expectations or desires of society as a whole.

Literary sociology, on the other hand, situates literary works within a broader social context, emphasizing that each literary text is born from a social environment that influences the values, norms, and ideologies that develop in a given period (Damono, 1979). Literature is regarded as a cultural artifact inextricably linked to its socio-cultural context. Consequently, a comprehensive analysis of a literary work necessitates an in-depth examination of the social and cultural milieu that influenced its creation.

The interplay between social reality and character responses in literature can be examined through the lens of genetic structuralism, a theoretical framework developed by Lucien Goldmann. This approach encompasses two primary aspects: firstly, the relationship between the elements in a literary work, and secondly, the relationship between those elements within a broader network of meanings. Consequently, a writer essentially articulates a collective worldview, which is an imaginative reflection of his social conditions (Endraswara, 2011). From this vantage point, literature is not merely regarded as an individual expression but rather as a consequence of the intricate interplay among the author, the text, and the social, cultural, and historical structures that encircle it. Consequently, literary works serve as a reflection of the personal thoughts of an author and a manifestation of the social dynamics that shape and influence them.

In this study, researchers employed the theory of genetic structuralism, as proposed by Lucien Goldmann, to analyze the relationship between literary works and the social structures that surround them. The findings of the present analysis demonstrate that literary works are characterized by both autonomous elements and extrinsic components. Literary texts, in addition to serving as individual expressions of the author, also represent the historical reality that conditions their emergence. Therefore, literary works must be understood in relation to the social structures and collective consciousness that shape them (Goldmann in Endraswara, 2003). The theory of genetic structuralism, as developed by Lucien Goldmann,

posits that literary works function not only as individual expressions of the author's imagination but also as reflections of the collective consciousness of specific social groups influenced by the prevailing social structures and historical experiences of that society (Goldmann in Wellek & Warren, 1956). Therefore, literary works serve a dual function: they reflect social realities and also play a role in shaping and changing public consciousness.

Goldmann's rejection of the notion that literary works are solely the product of individual thought, devoid of social influence, is a seminal contribution to the field. The author posits that writers cannot fully disengage from their social context; consequently, their work represents a more extensive social structure. From this perspective, literature is regarded as a component of humanity that functions as a document of social life and an agent of social transformation (Goldmann in Faruk, 2012).

Furthermore, genetic structuralists underscore the notion that an author's perspectives can be ascertained by examining their life background. Consequently, a comprehensive understanding of a literary work's structural intricacies necessitates considering the social factors that envelop it. This factor complements the structure of literary works (Goldmann in Faruk, 1999). Consequently, this approach asserts that literary analysis cannot be conducted exclusively by examining its intrinsic components; it must also encompass the social and historical factors that influence the process of creating works.

Novels represent a frequently utilized medium in this regard. Novels represent a genre of literary composition that functions not solely as a form of entertainment but also as a medium for societal reflection. In many cases, novels function as a medium through which writers articulate their perspectives on the social, cultural, and political milieu surrounding them. The social realities that occur in society often serve as the primary backdrop for the novel, exerting a significant influence on the characters' evolution and the narrative's progression. Therefore, it can be posited that this novel functions as a mirror, reflecting how specific social conditions influence the life course of its characters.

A preliminary analysis of the literary work revealed its representation of social reality, characterized by a transindividual subject in its narrative structure, following the framework of genetic structuralism. The literary work under scrutiny is the novel, authored by Khaled Hosseini. The story recounts the narratives of two female characters, Mariam and Laila, who inhabit a social milieu characterized by profound repression. The narrative delineates a tumultuous epoch in Afghanistan's historical trajectory, encompassing the Soviet invasion, civil unrest, and the reign of the Taliban. This period was characterized by the pervasive presence of discrimination and systemic violence against women, manifesting in both domestic and public spheres.

Hosseini's depiction of these experiences is meticulous, transforming the novel into a multifaceted narrative that not only chronicles a personal history but also serves as a poignant reflection of Afghan women's systemic struggles and collective suffering. To date, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* has been examined more frequently through a feminist lens. This perspective is understandable in light of the novel's unambiguous depiction of various forms of oppression against women, including domestic violence, restrictions on access to education, inequality in marriage, and patriarchal domination that is institutionalized socially and politically. The feminist approach underscores the arduous journey of individuals confronted with oppressive systems and the multifaceted forms of resistance that emerge in pursuit of autonomy and dignity. However, an exclusive focus on individual experiences may result in neglecting the broader social structures that influence these experiences. In this context, the approach to genetic structuralism becomes pertinent. This methodological approach facilitates a more comprehensive examination by correlating the subjects' experiences with the social consciousness of Afghan women during a specific historical era. In this case, Mariam and Laila are not merely understood as individuals who experience oppression within the family sphere; they are also regarded as representations of collective subjects who face structural injustices.

The women's narratives illustrate how women respond to social realities in various ways, from submission and resistance to solidarity. For instance, Mariam's decision to terminate her husband's life in order to safeguard Laila and Laila's subsequent choice to return and reconstruct her community exemplify a potential form of consciousness: that is, a collective consciousness that has not yet attained dominance but is beginning to emerge in response to prevailing social structures. Moreover, the solidarity between Mariam and Laila functions not only as a narrative element but also as a symbol of hope for the emergence of a new consciousness capable of challenging the repressive patriarchal system. In this context, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* can be regarded as a text that reflects social conditions and can effect transformative change within the social order.

This study employs the theoretical framework of genetic structuralism to reinterpret the text *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Previous interpretations of this text have characterized it as a personal narrative of the author's experiences. However, the present study proposes a reinterpretation of the text as a representation of collective consciousness within Afghan social history. This approach facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of the role of literature as an articulation of collective experience, as well as its function as a medium for mapping the tensions between existing social structures and the possibility of change.

Therefore, the author has employed the genetic structuralism theory, as Lucien Goldmann developed, to analyze the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. This approach unveils a more profound dimension of meaning by recognizing literary works as a form of aesthetics and a component of a living social dynamic. In this case, literature functions as a reflection and expression of society's collective consciousness. This phenomenon serves not only to record reality but also to respond to and imagine the possibilities of change in it.

Considering the background mentioned above, this study aims to examine how the novel employs character narratives to represent the collective consciousness of women. Mariam and Laila's experiences not only reflect their individual suffering and fortitude but also represent the voices and realities experienced by many

women in a patriarchal society. This research also seeks to reveal how the spirit of solidarity and togetherness between the female characters in the novel forms a collective unity born from shared experiences of pain, hope, and resistance to the systemic injustices they face.

1.2. Statement of Problem

One of the predominant themes in the critical discourse surrounding Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* pertains to the dynamics of gender violence and the manifestation of resilience in the face of oppression. This thematic analysis is predominantly executed from a feminist standpoint. Such criticism tends to concentrate on the characters' situations while ignoring the broader socio-historical conditions in which the novel is situated. While this reading is rich in possibilities, it is limited in terms of a thorough understanding of the novel's broader social context.

Thus, this study seeks to answer two main questions:

- 1) How is the social situation in portrayed as a reflection of the collective experience of Afghan society?
- 2) How do Mariam and Laila, as part of a collective struggle, respond to social injustice in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*?

1.3. Research Objectives

This research aims to explore how *A Thousand Splendid Suns* represent the social, cultural, and political realities that occur in Afghan society, with a primary focus on women's experiences. Nevertheless, the present study does not exclusively examine characters' individual experiences in novels; it also explores how literature can reflect broader social dynamics, such as gender injustice and patriarchal domination, that affect the daily lives of Afghan women.

- 1) A comprehensive analysis of the social, cultural, and political realities experienced by Afghan women in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is imperative.

This analysis should particularly focus on the impact of patriarchy, war, and social injustice on these women.

- 2) A close examination of the responses and struggles of the primary characters, Mariam and Laila, is necessary to understand their role as representations of women's resistance and collective consciousness within an oppressive social structure.
- 3) The present study proposes an examination of the relationship between literary works and the socio-cultural conditions of Afghan society by applying the genetic structuralism theory developed by Lucien Goldmann.

1.4. Research Significance

This research will likely make a significant theoretical and practical contribution to the study of literature, particularly within the framework of literary sociology and the analysis of social realities reflected in scholarly works. The significance of this research can be articulated as such:

- 1) Theoretical Contribution: This research makes a theoretical contribution by applying the structuralist genetic framework developed by Lucien Goldmann for the analysis of Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. This approach enables a more profound examination of the correlation between social structure and collective experience as depicted in the literary work. This research also addresses a significant gap in the sociological and scholarly studies that have yet to assess Hosseini's work from this viewpoint and increases the scope of application of Goldmann's theory in modern literature.
- 2) The practical contribution : The practical implications of this research are manifold. It is anticipated that readers, academics, and interested parties will be able to glean insight from it regarding social structures and their impact on the lives of humans, particularly women, as illustrated in this novel. This comprehension will likely serve as a means of enhancing the reflexive

perception of social reality through the medium of literature. Additionally, it is expected to contribute to the cultivation of awareness regarding the significance of comprehending the social dynamics encountered by specific communities





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