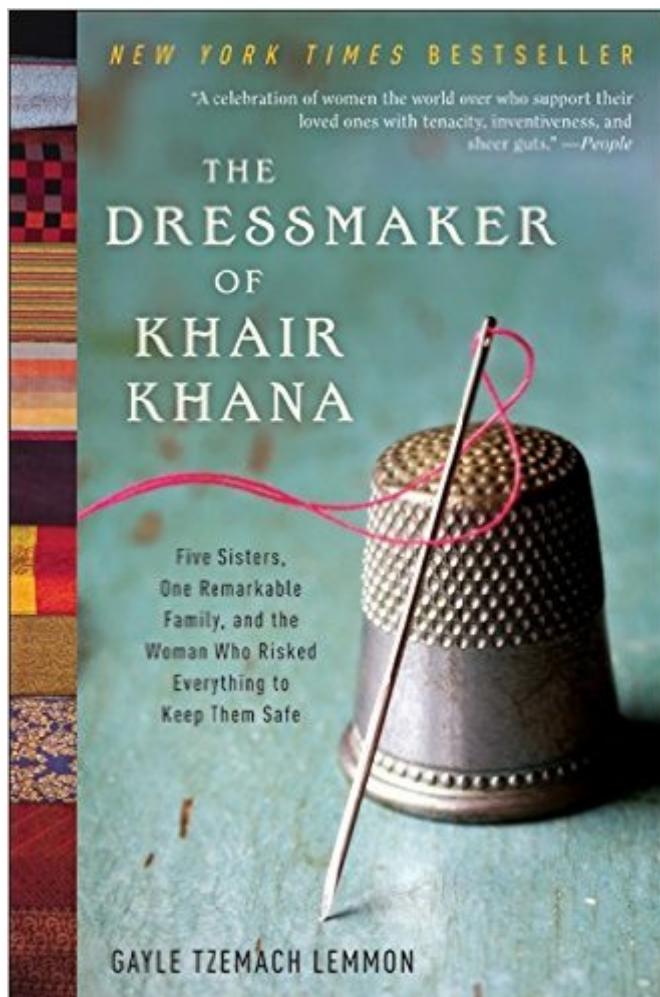


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# The Dressmaker Of Khair Khana: Five Sisters, One Remarkable Family, And The Woman Who Risked Everything To Keep Them Safe



## **Synopsis**

The life Kamila Sidiqi had known changed overnight when the Taliban seized control of the city of Kabul. After receiving a teaching degree during the civil war "a rare achievement for any Afghan woman" Kamila was subsequently banned from school and confined to her home. When her father and brother were forced to flee the city, Kamila became the sole breadwinner for her five siblings. Armed only with grit and determination, she picked up a needle and thread and created a thriving business of her own. The Dressmaker of Khair Khana tells the incredible true story of this unlikely entrepreneur who mobilized her community under the Taliban. Former ABC News reporter Gayle Tzemach Lemmon spent years on the ground reporting Kamila's story, and the result is an unusually intimate and unsanitized look at the daily lives of women in Afghanistan. These women are not victims; they are the glue that holds families together; they are the backbone and the heart of their nation. Afghanistan's future remains uncertain as debates over withdrawal timelines dominate the news. The Dressmaker of Khair Khana moves beyond the headlines to transport you to an Afghanistan you have never seen before. This is a story of war, but it is also a story of sisterhood and resilience in the face of despair. Kamila Sidiqi's journey will inspire you, but it will also change the way you think about one of the most important political and humanitarian issues of our time.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

When American journalist Gayle Tzemach Lemmon sets out to research stories on unsung heroines that became extraordinary entrepreneurs, never did she imagine she'd come across Kamela

Sediqi. This is the incredible story of one young woman who set out to find a way out of a world of despair, and turned a war torn land of death and destruction into a private den of hope for her and her sisters, in order to save their lives from turmoil. When the Taliban suddenly storm into Kabul, life changes for the Afghani people in a frightful and restrictive manner. The take over of Kabul leaves its happy peaceful residents turning on their heals to either secretly evacuate at night across the mountains into Pakistan, or stay and be forced to adhere to severe laws of injustice. The Taliban edict enforces women to be completely covered from head to foot, they are not allowed to go outside without a male chaperone, they must not work in the public and must only work at home. Books, education, colorful clothing, music and joy, are taken from their lives leaving only a world of darkness. Strict adherence to Muslim law and religious creed are mandatory. Evening curfews are set, Taliban spies hide in waiting, offenders are publicly beaten, jailed, or killed. When the family funds get low, and when then level of daily violence in Kabul escalates out of control, Kamela's father leaves Kabul to get help from his family, her brother is sent to Pakistan to work. The family desperately needs food. Times get tougher and tougher but as the burden of taking care of her family weighs heavy on Kamela's shoulders, she miraculously finds a way to keep their chins up and hatches a plan to save the day, and their threatened lives. Unable to continue with her career of teaching, Kamela seeks a way to enable the family to stay in Kabul and not starve. Her older sister is a talented seamstress and soon teaches Kamela sewing skills for dressmaking. Starting out with simple designs that bravely have her in disguise as she knocks on the doors of local tailors, she quickly gains more confidence until many orders pour in from many vendors to the point where she can't keep up. She then begins not only putting her sisters to work, but welcomes in the neighboring women to learn and assist. Before long this band of incredible women create a force to be reckoned with as the dressmaking business grows into a profitable enterprise like no other Afghani woman had ever imagined possible. Constantly working in fear that they will be caught, Kamela devises plans and programs to avoid the wrath of the Taliban and successfully becomes one the world's most fascinating self-made female entrepreneurs. This is a riveting story of the power of determination and hope that can stem from nothing other than the power of love and family. The author shines with her execution of talented writing, a believable and endearing heroine readers won't ever forget, and a message for us all to never give up no matter how much the odds of winning seam dim. The Dressmaker of Khair Khana is surely one for the reading discussion groups and I highly recommend putting this on the top of your reading pile. Fabulous!

This is the latest in a string of inspiring and heartwarming true stories about how determination and

the human spirit can literally triumph over adversity and change hundreds or thousands of lives. (Think Three Cups of Tea and its sequel.) On that level, it works well. It offers a fascinating and sometimes horrifying look at life under the Taliban, who for the most part are every bit as brutal, ignorant and fanatical as they've been depicted elsewhere. The title character, Kamela Sidiqi, is clearly a remarkable woman, and one can't help but be filled with admiration for all she achieved, particularly considering how young she was when she started the dressmaking business that sustained her family and many of her neighbors during the dark years of Taliban rule in Afghanistan. I couldn't help wondering if it has been optioned for a movie because in the right hands, it would make an incredible film. But while I enjoyed it, that's precisely why I think it's not as successful a book as it could be. Throughout, there were leaps in time and gaps in the narrative that left me wondering what happened to this person or that and what had transpired in the interim. It's as if the author, who researched her material long after the fact, didn't have the information she needed to flesh out the narrative, so took some shortcuts, kind of hopping around and in places reducing the storyline to a series of episodic vignettes. A good editor would have caught these and worked with the author to fix them, but several slipped through, and I found myself going back to see if I'd missed something about a character. Sometimes I had, but just as often, I hadn't. Particularly toward the end she seemed to be kind of speeding up just to finish the narrative. I really debated whether to give this three stars or four, but settled on three and a half because it is an interesting story about an amazing woman and her family. It's just that I'd have liked a little more story and substance with my inspiration.

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