

Analysing Betrayal, Discrimination, and Guilt in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*

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Abstract:

This study closely examines Khaled Hosseini's book, *The Kite Runner*. Hosseini, an Afghan-American writer, shows a war-ravaged Afghanistan in his stories. He explores common themes like family reunion, discrimination, regret, childhood, guilt, womanhood, betrayal, religion, and salvation. These themes highlight how crime in Afghanistan, before and after the Taliban, has deeply affected the main character's mental wounds. In his work, Hosseini shows the devastating status of Afghans in general and women and children in particular who have, for decades, been irrationally marginalised and confined to the four walls of their homes by the society. The main character believes that finding wealth, love, loyalty, and true peace for the Afghan people, whom he sees as deserving the same rights as all humans, is the way to create a better future. The piece talks about the customs and traditions of the Pashtun and Hazara ethnic groups. It uses historical facts, real events, and some fictional details to explore how people can build good relationships in a society filled with mistrust, confusion, doubt, and betrayal. The study looks at how the theme of discrimination has been used in Hosseini's writing to shape his image as a leading author, using a historical viewpoint. The conclusion part includes a summary of the paper and some suggestions.

Keywords: Guilt, Betrayal, Discrimination, Human Relations

Introduction:

In 1999, Khaled Hosseini, an Afghan-American writer, was watching CNN's evening news when he learnt that the Taliban had decided to ban kite flying in Afghanistan. This news motivated Hosseini to write *The Kite Runner*, highlighting the harsh truths of Afghan society through the terrible political events that happened in Afghanistan from 1970 to 2001. The novel captures a memorable and heart breaking story of two boys (Amir and Hassan) who are from different ethnic and social class backgrounds to reveal how childhood decisions eventually affect a person's adult life particularly in the Middle East and America. The kites the boys fly together in the touching story symbolises their implausible fragile relationship they find themselves entangled in and the same is clearly tried in the manner they sit and watch their eccentric old way of life disappear.

In the novel *The Kite Runner*, he shows a war-torn Afghanistan through themes like family reunions, discrimination, regret, childhood, guilt, womanhood, betrayal, religion, and salvation. These themes highlight how crime affected Afghanistan before and after the Taliban, leaving lasting emotional scars on the main character. In his work, Hosseini shows the devastating socio-political and economic status of Afghans in general and women and children in particular who have, for decades, been irrationally marginalized and confined to the four walls of their homes by the society. The main character seeks wealth,

love, loyalty, and true peace for the Afghan people, whom he believes deserve the same rights as everyone else in the world. He thinks that achieving these goals is essential for creating a better future for the country he cares deeply about. This research study looks at the customs and traditions of the Pashtun and Hazara ethnic groups. It uses real and fictional information to discuss how people can build positive relationships in a society filled with mistrust, confusion, doubt, and betrayal. The study looks at how the theme of discrimination has been used in Hosseini's writing to shape his image as a leading author, using a historical viewpoint. The conclusion part includes a summary of the paper and some suggestions.

Theme of Guilt and Betrayal in the Kite Runner:

Betrayal is a key theme in Khaled Hosseini's novel, *The Kite Runner*. For example, the author tries to describe Amir, who comes from a rich Pashtun family in Kabul. Amir feels a strong ethnic identity and a sense of superiority because of his rank. However, he also struggles with emotional insecurity, which may come from his father's annoying behaviour towards him. This is why he always wished his mother, who died when he was born, was alive to give him the love and care he needed (Khemshcandani, 2007). Hossein wants to show that Baba has done his best to support Amir, both with money and mentally. However, Amir feels neglected. He mentions that he sometimes wanted to join Baba and his friends, but Baba would tell him, "This is adult time." "Why don't you read one of your books?" He closed the door, leaving me to wonder why he only spent time with adults. I sat by the door, hugging my knees. Sometimes I sat there for an hour, sometimes two, listening to their laughter, their talk (Hosseini, 4-5). Amir clearly wants his father's attention, but he also feels betrayed.

This feeling comes from his guilt about his mother's death, which he thinks is the main reason for the problems between him and his father. He says: "I always felt like Baba hated me a little and why not, after all, I had killed his beloved wife, his beautiful princess, hadn't I?" (Hosseini, 17). Amir feels insecure because he thinks he is not the type of kid that Baba understands or wanted, and he doesn't believe he can stand up to any bad situations on his own. This comes from what he heard Baba say to Rahim Khan: "If I hadn't seen the doctor take him out of my wife myself, I would never believe he is my son..." A delicate and artistic boy who won't stand up for himself grows into a man who can't stand up to anything. (Hosseini, 20).

For example, when Amir was about to be attacked by three Pashtun boys, Hassan bravely defended him. This happened even though Amir harshly said, "He's not my friend... He's my servant" (Hosseini, 36). The comment suggests that Amir thinks Hassan is lesser because of their different backgrounds. This makes Amir feel jealous of his friend Hassan, who might be a better person. This isn't the end; Amir was also trying to abandon his only friend, Hassan. This shows how Amir takes advantage of Hassan's lack of knowledge for his own enjoyment. He calls Hassan an idiot (Hosseini, 25). He often showed little emotion towards Hassan but tried to make up for it by giving him things, like old shirts or broken toys, when he felt bad for betraying him. Further, when Hassan was being sexually abused by Assef, Amir never took any steps to prevent the attack on his friend.

In Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, Ali and Baba have a bond that is very much like the one between Hassan and Amir since they grew up together. In 2001, Rahim Khan, a friend of Baba, asked Amir to Pakistan. While they were there, Rahim told Amir that Baba was actually Hassan's real father. Baba had several sexual relations with Ali's wife, Sanaubar, who is the mother of Hassan. By having sex with someone, Baba not only betrayed Ali but also Amir, who didn't realise the special way Baba treated

Hassan. Usman Muhammad Khan says that if Amir knew that Hassan was his half-brother, he might have treated him better. Amir didn't care much for the children.

Theme of Discrimination in *The Kite Runner*

Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* is a notable novel that highlights discrimination, especially between the Hazara and Pushtun groups. This discrimination is mainly due to social, psychological, and structural reasons. The Hazara are a smaller group of Shia Muslims, while the Pushtun are the larger group of Sunni Muslims. The Hazaras face discrimination from the Pushtuns mainly because of their low economic, political, and social standing, as well as their physical traits that look similar to Chinese people. They lived on the streets or mostly worked as maids for the Pushtuns who lived in big, fancy houses. As depicted in *The Kite Runner*, the Hazaras were accordingly considered as dirty, stupid, less human, poor and nasty servant class people who did not deserve any privilege (Khadawardi, 4).

In *The Kite Runner*, Amir is a Pushtun, smart, schooled, and comes from a rich family. Amir's father, Baba, was a wealthy merchant in Kabul. Hassan, who belonged to the Hazara community and was often called "flat-nosed Babalu," was Amir's best friend and half-brother. Despite being loyal and trustworthy to Amir's family, he faced discrimination. Amir's neighbour, Assef, was a selfish person who admired Adolf Hitler because he had power and thought highly of himself. His father was Pashtun, and his mother was a German native. He thought that Afghanistan was land meant only for Pushtuns. Assef and his friends, Wali and Kamal, showed their cruelty when they treated Hassan poorly and harmed him just because he refused to give up his kite for his freedom. Amir liked reading. While reading a history book, he found out that the Hazaras were treated very poorly and ignored by the rich Pushtuns for a long time. The book shows that the Hazaras were treated unfairly. They often faced insults, threats, and stereotypes from the Pushtuns, who called them names like "flat-nosed, mice-eating, and load-carrying donkeys" (Hosseini, 10). Khaled Hosseini has also worked to show how discrimination happens in schooling. The Pushtuns and the Hazaras did not get the same quality of schooling. Children from the Hazara community (like Hassan) were not allowed to go to school, unlike children from the Pushtun community (like Amir). Amir used what he learnt in school to make fun of and look down on Hassan, whom he thought was less intelligent and just a dumb helper. Amir reads songs and books to Hassan not just to make him look foolish, but also to show that Amir is better and more powerful. Amir uses Hassan's position to make him do what Amir wants, like eating dirt and calling him "Agha," just to feel more important. Discrimination in *The Kite Runner* is shown when the Hazaras are sexually abused. The act was mainly intended to show that the Pushtuns had power over the Hazaras.

Discrimination is shown when Assef and his friends, Wali and Kamal, decided to rape Hassan just because he was a Hazara, a group they believed had no rights. Assef thinks that by doing this, Afghanistan should be cleansed of the Hazaras and only for the Pashtuns. Hassan was deeply affected by the sexual abuse he experienced, but he didn't know how to express his feelings. Instead, he chose to stay quiet and pretend that nothing had happened. This clearly shows that the Hazaras were mistreated, attacked, and treated like slaves in their own country.

Conclusion:

The study above is important because it shows a strong relationship to the legal, moral, and religious beliefs of the Afghan people. Even with the loss, betrayal, pain, government oppression, guilt, discrimination, and displacement shown in *The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini's book still offers a lasting

hope for a better future for the people of Afghanistan. *The Kite Runner* focusses on connections. The story shows a complex connection between the main characters: Baba, Assef, Soraya, Rahim, and Sohrab, as well as between Hassan and Amir.

Betrayal and discrimination are common in the relationships featured in the book. For example, Amir is a child who receives a lot of love and care. He betrays and discriminates against his close Hazara friends just to seek recognition from his Baba. Unlike most popular books that focus on sexual abuse of females, Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* is unique because it addresses sexual assault on a male. In Afghanistan, sexual issues were mostly limited to adults. Sexual abuse, especially sodomy, was often seen as foreign and unacceptable, going against natural norms and thought "bad." It is clear that both Hassan and Amir experience sexual abuse. Hassan is the victim, while Amir just witnesses it. This shows that Amir was ready to betray his half-brother and best friend Hassan just to win the love and heart of his Baba. Right after he thinks he has betrayed Hassan, Amir feels sorry and guilty for his actions. In *The Kite Runner*, it can be concluded that Khaled Hosseini effectively shows how the characters' actions harm both the victims and the wrongdoers. He highlights the harsh realities of life in Afghanistan, which is filled with betrayal, guilt, forgiveness, and discrimination that individuals face throughout their lives.

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