

MULTICULTURALISM AND DIASPORIC IDENTITIES IN KHALED HOSSEINI'S THE KITE RUNNER

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Abstract

*This paper aims to determine the multicultural aspects of *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini, located in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. Hosseini himself is a writer from the diaspora who fled his own country during the Russian invasion when he was eleven years old. His feelings are amply expressed in this book by the lead character Amir, who is forced to depart Kabul with his father because of the volatile political climate there. The feelings of Amir, his struggles with class differences, and the cultural differences between Afghanistan and the United States have all been vividly shown in this book, which will be thoroughly discussed in this article. The paper attempts to explore the central idea of multiculturalism in the context of the class contradiction as seen through the complex Pashtun-Hazara relationship between Amir and Hasan as well as in the east-west come into conflict of values and customs as seen through the immigrant journey of Amir and his father to America and their life there.*

Keywords: *Diaspora, Multiculturalism, Identity crisis, Class conflict, friendship.*

The concepts of multiculturalism and diasporic identities have gained significance in our intricately correlated world, altering societies and enhancing the fabric of everyday life. These ideas capture the fluidity of modern life, as people move about, interact, and change across national boundaries. The term "multiculturalism" may refer to the predominance of cultural pluralism in a setting characterised by the presence and continued functioning of a varied range of cultures in order to support each cultural community in maintaining its core principles and individuality. Diaspora nowadays refers to leaving one's native country and integrating into a foreign country. Every diasporic migration has historical value since it contains the germ of a country's history. Such a shift indicates alteration accompanied by the cultural and psychological risk of identity loss. The idea of diasporic substances hinges on possibly the most crucial element: maintaining identification in the host community. Thus, diasporic literature addresses the concepts of homelessness, a sense of nostalgia, estrangement, an identity crisis, and heterogeneity as a path towards realising, recognising, and expressing oneself. The *Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini's diasporic concept of "multiculturalism" is the subject of the current paper. In light of this, it is important to mention Hosseini's background and journey.

A person who is culturally proficient is able to communicate properly with others from different cultures by grasping the precise ideas that underlie their perspective, thought process, emotions, and behaviour. Reading multicultural literature can help one develop cultural competency since it fosters cultural sensitivity by raising attention. It contains context that the reader's life may readily relate to. By actively involving its audience, it creates an empathic reaction. By analysing and scrutinising their own culture, beliefs, prejudices, and behaviour, individuals may better understand how they feel about other cultures. He learns how the society in which he is raised has influenced his own attitudes and behaviours. After reading a variety of multicultural works, a person develops greater levels of cultural comprehending self-awareness, and global consciousness. All of these serve as the foundational idea for creating the attitudes and mastering the abilities required for successfully connecting with people from other cultures.

A person or group of people of a specific class, convictions, gender, belief system, or ethnicity may have their human rights violated, and multicultural literature exposes readers to such events in historical context, socioeconomic situations, and class disputes. They introduce readers to the cultural significance of a place as well as its physical circumstances through meaningful literary engagement and dialogue, which the readers would not otherwise have the opportunity to access and explore. These works have the capacity to completely engross the reader. Readers become so engrossed in the novels that they begin to understand the culture, tragedies, inhumane acts, and joys of the characters in addition to witnessing the tale and experiencing the incidents. Regardless of their own backgrounds, students encounter the new world and compare it to their own experiences to uncover parallels or contrasts. They identify with the culture, people, and instances, and as a result, they are moved both intellectually and emotionally by them. Multicultural fiction has the ability to connect with readers and generate reactions from them. The comprehension of the many cultures throughout the world is aided by these kinds of works of art.

It is universally recognised that writers from the Diaspora and immigrants have a double consciousness that consists of a pair of cultures, two worldviews, two languages, two perspectives, and two distinct types of experience. Hosseini, who was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1965, has a past filled with diasporic experiences. His father's line of work required him to travel to several locations, including Iran and France, until his family eventually relocated to the United States as a result of the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and made their

home there. Hosseini's background in the diaspora is so noteworthy and would be clearly apparent in his pieces of writing. The Kite Runner has the capacity to evoke strong feelings in readers from all cultures, spark contemplation, and touch their hearts.

Khaled Hussein gives us a subtle description of Afghan culture in addition to revealing the successes and failures of many personalities. He expertly weaves minor painful moments in the lives of the people affected with his writing about widespread global sufferings and violations of human rights. He includes a lot of topics from invasion to adventure to deception to competition to treachery to friendship to escape throughout the book. Hussein paints a horrible image of a war-torn Afghanistan, and as readers read, they turn into onlookers as they see streets crowded with beggars, elderly men, widows, and orphaned kids who are starving to death and live in continuous terror of bombardment and firing. Readers can actually breathe in the dust, smell the sewers, and hear the gunfire and the rattling of military trucks because to how compelling the story is. Hussein captivates readers and forces them to confront the horrors of war. This aids in fostering and evoking the reader's sympathy and, as a result, their comprehension of the Afghan people.

Because of its focus on the existences, instances, and circumstances of its protagonists within a heterogeneous environment, *The Kite Runner* belongs to the category of multicultural literature. This work of fiction is a tale that focuses on interpersonal challenges and differences in culture, relationships, atonement, social strata, and other topics that are often present in a well-integrated ethnic community with a diverse range of cultures. Amir, the book's main character and a Pashtun kid by ethnicity, and Hassan, a member of the Hazara community, grow up together playing and kite-flying in Kabul's tranquil streets. It is clear that Amir harbours jealousy for Hassan since he frequently believes that his father, Baba, prefers Hassan to him. Hassan is the servant's son. Rahim Khan, Amir's uncle, is the only person who truly knows him and encourages his desire to become a writer, and he has a great deal of affection and admiration for him. Hassan is responsible for finishing the game and controlling the kite for him when he wins a kiting competition. Hassan, a local predator who had threatened Amir with his shot while the latter was being bullied, gets captured and raped while running the kite for Amir. Amir does, however, witness the physical assault, but because of his fear, he cannot intervene to save his close friend. Amir fabricates a scenario in which he accuses Hassan of stealing because he is overcome with remorse. Even though Baba begs them to stay, Hassan and his father ultimately decide to leave the home. Amir and his father Baba had to flee to America in 1979 as a result of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. As they try to get by in the alien country, they encounter several challenges. As a refugee in a foreign nation, Baba was forced to work at a petrol station, where he encountered an abrupt difference from the life he lived in Kabul. After earning his degree from a public university, Amir marries Soraya. When Baba dies in 2000, Amir gets a call from his beloved uncle Rahim Khan, who shares information about his family's mysteries. It is discovered that Hassan was Amir's half-brother, and the Taliban group in Kabul captured his son Sohrab. Rahim Khan implores Amir to make an expedition of atonement back to Afghanistan.

The Kite Runner depicts the feelings of the protagonist Amir and his difficulties with social strata, American culture, and Afghan traditions. The Hazara kid Hassan is not only the lead character Amir's childhood friend (and the son of his servant), but he also represents Amir not just his existence but also the nation, loyalty, and hometown. Rahim Khan, Amir's father's friend and business partner, advises Amir that if he protects Hassan's orphaned son Sohrab from the Taliban's cruelties, he could turn virtuous again after betraying Hassan. The distinct cultural backgrounds of Hassan as a Hazara and Amir as a Pashtun have a significant influence on their relationship, reflecting the unpleasant ambiguities of Afghanistan's multilayered society.

Amir's father, an ardent opponent of communism, is compelled to flee Afghanistan after it is annexed by the Soviet Union and makes an extremely hazardous journey to America. Amir and his father, who are not acclimated to American culture, must deal with the two worst possible outcomes for a proud Afghan: loss of riches and loss of social standing. They struggle to survive, losing themselves in a sea of homelessness and destitution. Baba is more and more homesick for his nation and its citizens, the land where he once strode proudly, with each passing second. However, that time never comes, and Baba dies, leaving Amir to face his problems by himself. When Amir struggles to let go of the past or live in the present, he represents the conflicting diasporic predicament.

Because of the Taliban governance, Amir will have a great deal of difficulty when he returns to Afghanistan. Despite all the challenges, he adopts Sohrab as atonement for betraying his devoted friend Hassan. One aspect of a multicultural society that has been masterfully weaved into this novel is the agony of the intercultural struggle between the immigrant diaspora and the alien culture. Despite its difficulties, a person's diasporic displacement blends in with other cultural customs. Amir's reality, which is fragmented into different histories, ethnicities, and cultures, is reflected in the new meanings that are created. A person's movement from their native to their adopted country is accompanied by an interchange of ideas, social cultures, and personal identities. This is known as the diasporic condition and perspective.

It might be challenging to avoid going through an identity crisis because migrants are defined by their cultural hybridity and indeterminacy (Bhabha).

Diaspora implies both a significant socio-psychological displacement and a shift in geography. In situations like those in *The Kite Runner*, communities fluctuate between contradictory identities, traditional value systems, and even mindsets. One aspect of a person's identity is tied to the country and community they originally came

from, while another aspect is tied to the place they first settled. People who immigrate to the USA have had the challenge of attempting to assimilate the local culture and becoming a part of it from the early 1920s till the present.

When the protagonist and his father arrived in America in Hosseini's masterpiece, it was the commencement of an entirely new trip full of challenges and triumphs. Living in Fremont with his father seemed to be the only place Amir could escape his violent and troubled background. But for Baba, this location represented the polar antithesis of the wealthy, powerful life he had been leading in Kabul. While Amir made an attempt to acclimatise to his new surroundings, Baba's sole wish was to return to his home and his people. The difficulties the Afghan diaspora in America faces are portrayed in this section of the book.

The portrayal of Afghan culture in Hosseini's writing has made it a crucial instrument for defining the cultural boundaries of the communities. The voyage of the main character, Amir, brings the Afghan culture into focus for readers in a place that is strange to most other countries, as shown in the following lines:

"We chased the Kochi, the nomads who passed through Kabul on their way to the mountains of the north. We would hear their caravans approaching our neighbourhood, the mewling of their sheeps, the baaing of their goats, the jingle of bells around their camel's necks. We'd run outside to watch the caravan plod through our street, men with dusty, weather beaten faces and women dressed in long, colourful shawls, beads and silver bracelets around their wrists and ankles." (Husseini 26)

These facts depict a prosperous Afghanistan at a period before it was traumatised by the war with the Soviet Union and the events that followed. Owing to Hosseini's unusual selection of words and vivid description, readers can see the picturesque surroundings of Kabul as well as its inhabitants' culture. People from all around the world are exposed to the vibrant Kabul with its traditions, ceremonies, seasons, and festivities at a period of relative tranquillity and everyday life from an insider's perspective. The reader is led to believe what Amir says by the way he faithfully recreates minute characteristics of his own country.

The narrative also highlights the immigrants' struggles, including how they try to fit in with their new nation while yet maintaining their traditional beliefs. The main character makes an effort to adapt to the culture of the host country. For his father, though, the situation was much different. The affluent and powerful guy of the east was now merely an elderly man in needy circumstances working at a petrol station.

In the contents of his work, Hosseini does not omit to emphasise the value of traditions and community. The way Afghans gathered in a queue to pay homage to the departed at Baba's burial in Fremont serves as sufficient proof of the significance of communal values in Afghan culture. Amir became overwhelmed by utter devastation and grief after his beloved Baba passed away.

The protagonist's encounter with the Afghan immigrant society in the neighbourhood known as "little Kabul" in California, where a full description of the social world is presented, is a major theme of the novel that exemplifies multiculturalism. In order to maintain Afghan customs and culture, members of a particular ethnicity are seen supporting one another. In this regard, Amir and his wife Soraya interact with non-Afghan students at the public school they have become part of, and through his lectures on creative writing, Amir meets a group of young writers from various communities. Additionally, his wife begins working as a teacher at a school in America. Furthermore, Hosseini describes conventional Afghan rituals via the protagonist's romance and marriage to his spouse, which helps the readers have a more complete awareness of Afghan society and an immensely vivid vision.

The rivalry between the predominant Pashtuns (which is portrayed by the protagonist's society) and the excluded Hazaras (depicted by Hassan and his father) within the Afghani community itself serves as an important illustration of the novel's theme of the clash between Eastern and Western morals. However, readers are advised to take in mind that Amir's memories of his own country would undoubtedly differ greatly from those of a member of the Hazara group. In the context of diaspora narratives in order this is a crucial topic that cannot be disregarded.

The protagonist's (and readers') understanding of the historical clashes between his community and Hassan's is highly illuminating:

"For years, that was all I knew about the Hazaras, that they were Mongol descendants, and that they looked a little like Chinese people. School textbooks barely mentioned them and referred to their ancestry only in passing...I read that my people, the Pashtuns, had persecuted and oppressed the Hazaras. It said the Hazaras had tried to rise against the Pashtuns in the nineteenth century, but the Pashtuns had quelled them with unspeakable violence.' The book said that my people had killed the Hazaras, driven them from their lands, burned their homes, and sold their women." (Husseini 9)

Most Hazara people are represented by Ali and his son. Their generosity serves as an example for all Afghans, particularly the Hazaras. On the other side, their boss Baba defies Ali by having an extramarital affair with his wife Sanobar, although it is impossible to ignore his affection for the father and son. It transcends any divisions brought about by their social position. Despite the fact that Amir's love for Hasan is clear throughout the entire narrative, he repeats his father's error by betraying him when he most needs him. Hasan, on the other hand, is a shining example of mercy. He consoles his mother Sanobar by writing to Amir in an effort to keep their relationship strong.

Despite the brutality that has been done upon them, Ali and Hassan exhibit powerful feelings of benevolence and love. Other Hazara individuals, like Sanaubar or Assef, would prevent readers from drawing conclusions about the entire Afghan culture based on a single set of individuals. Through his characters, Hosseini has brilliantly depicted the complexities of Afghan culture as well as the inequity and oppression present in it. The Kite Runner emerges as a devastating emotional roller coaster that is also astonishingly illuminating in terms of narrative and character development. The sentiments of a sense of belonging yearning, admiration, sense of displacement, and a desire to start again without abandoning the past are combed through by the diasporic sensibility. One gets a glimpse of Edward Said's explanation of the relational equation between the West and the East in his explication of the characters' attempt to adapt to western society without being evaluated (Orientalism 208).

Hosseini persuades the readers to think that a cultural dispute can arise not just between the West and the East, but also between various ethnic communities living in the same area, as was the case with the Hazaras and the Pashtuns in *The Kite Runner*. It might be claimed that the protagonist of Hosseini's narrative has quite different recollections of Afghanistan than do the Hazara minority, who make up an economically and socially underprivileged segment of nation. It becomes extremely important to consider the various viewpoints of persons with the same place of origin but distinct societal roots while reading diaspora narratives. But despite everything, there is always faith, companionship, and room for forgiveness; this is possibly what keeps the spirit of mankind vital and willing to adapt and make accommodations. The book also assisted in giving a genuine picture of Afghanistan at a time when the mainstream media's coverage of the war on terrorism gave Afghanistan a misleading portrayal. According to Shaheen's (29) research, the media portrays the Arab community and other ethnic groups in an adverse manner. Watson claims that American media has presented Afghans as terrorists (Watson, 2). A society begins to believe that coexistence is challenging when preconceptions and the discomforts they engender have an impact on its worldview.

By eradicating all misconceptions about their culture, Khaled Hussein provides the readers with a prism through which to view and create a fresh cultural impression of his nation and take into consideration the people who live there. In contrast to those who portray Afghans as a community engaged in armed conflict and Afghanistan as a place of hostility and vengeance, he presents an alternative perspective on the country. Through Hussein's works, international students may also learn about Eurasia. They can gain knowledge of both contemporary and ancient history, improve their geographic literacy to become global citizens, and acquire the abilities needed to become culturally competent.

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