



VIOLENCE ON IDENTITY AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES ILLUSTRATED BY KHALED HOSSEINI

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Article Received: 28/02/2020

Article Accepted: 27/03/2020

Published online: 31/03/2020

DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.8.1.507](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.8.1.507)

Abstract

America is a destination place for immigrants from many countries. These immigrants come along with their original culture. However, they face many kinds of problems in the host country. Nevertheless, they have to adopt and develop in the host country. This is proved from their success in literature. They showed that their work is good as well as the other writers from the origin of America. The writer who truly succeeded to become an established writer is Khaled Hosseini. Hosseini wrote about Afghanistan before the Soviet war because that is largely a forgotten period in modern Afghan history. For many people in the west, Afghanistan is synonymous with the Soviet war and the Taliban. Khaled Hosseini wanted to remind people that Afghans had managed to live in peaceful anonymity. The novel is a sympathetic delineation of the crashed identity of the downtrodden, oppressed and victimized common people. The theme of broken identity and survival is the major or core concern of all his works. The protagonists of Hosseini are terribly lonely, distressed, perplexed and bewildered. Most of the characters suffer from sterility of emotions and human goodness, be it for a short while, which is attributable to a traumatic social interaction with the hostile surroundings and very oppressive and violent domestic conditions. His works have universal appeal in the sense that the concerns discussed by him in his works are ubiquitous, depicting an amalgam of the human world and also mirrors the cosmopolitan experiences of life. The paper explores the multifarious intentions the author's work has been written with, especially to show the silver lining in the darkest of circumstances.

Key Words- Immigrants, Identity, Survival, Ubiquitous, Cosmopolitan Experiences

Khaled Hosseini came up with his stories at the backdrop of such commotion and became a worldwide literary sensation. Not only was it considered a riveting fictional story for pure entertainment, it also became a source of understanding of every aspect of Afghan socio-cultural climate. Hosseini's publications are not only a literary treasure in the world of literature but also an infotainment element for readers around the world about the contemporary Afghan saga.

In addition to the above-mentioned details, The Kite Runner was an Afghan-born American novelist's first fictional work on Afghanistan in English language. The whole of Afghanistan was combating these turbulences when Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner came onto the tables. The Kite Runner's success was very critical because it was published after the attacks of 9/11. Retaliation to the attacks America launched certain degree of war in Afghanistan against the terrorist groups.

Citizens around the world is concerned in learning anything about Afghanistan as a nation and the urge was very strong. They wanted an insight into insurgency, fundamentalism, Islam and current Afghanistan conflicts.

The narrative is a compassionate delineation of the common people who have already been downtrodden, marginalized and victimised. Through this narrative, Hosseini seeks to express that Afghanistan is not only synonymous with Soviet occupation, Taliban and American interference; it also depicts various embodiments of life in the midst of violent circumstances that are multi-layered. He succeeds in highlighting the typical Afghan people from the obscurity of anonymity, with all the facets of their lives. Hosseini unblocks and visualizes the Afghan culture, customs, rituals, taboos, social structure, political and religious views in their true colours, through this novel. Hosseini's novel shatters the flawed and distorted image of Afghan people as mere 'bearded gunmen'.

Nina Farlina advocates: It is very different with other writers that most of them tell about alienation, culture shock and depression. Hosseini can open the eyes of the readers to know Afghanistan life truly, which for a long-time is closed from outside. Hosseini wanted to remind people that Afghans had managed to live in peace. Hosseini conveys that Afghan people are not living a 'human' life rather they are on the edge of break-down, and the fight for survival is not a mere passing phase in their lives but it has become a routine affair. In such a hostile environment all their actions are oriented towards survival. Hosseini says in an accurate and candid way about the historical and political processes. He weaves them through different phases in the lives of his novel's various characters. The novel begins with the innocence of childhood, reaches its climax when detailing childhood victimization and eventually concludes with the restoration of innocence in a foreign land once more. The story is full of pathos and all of the characters must go through a very bitter and gruesome survival struggle. As the number of characters in the novel is limited, Khaled Hosseini has ample room at his disposal to deal with the psychological structure as well as its relationship

with external predicaments and the struggle of each in individuality. That character symbolizes a different collection of ordeals and difficulties which pose a threat to his life. Every character is one example of a true tale of hardship, gritty determination and perseverance. Hosseini weaved all the stories in a very elegant and exciting way. The characters do have some common grounds and traits; all face extremely violent and horrific situations, all battle back courageously to defend their dignity, and manage to preserve their 'normal' character with complete strength to preserve an 'authentic life' (Warnock) as a survivor in the midst of unthinkable and intolerable miserable conditions.

Tilwani remarks about the characters: "They persistently attempt to gain the existence of authenticity by uniting with each other." Amir occupies the central space in *The Kite Runner*, which in real life circumstances represents an ideal survivor. He holds all sorts of characteristics; good or negative, and uses them all as and when necessary for his survival. He is a complex character which defies any simple analysis, being a mixture of various attributes. Nina Farlina enlists his early characteristics as: "Liar, envious, obedient, betrayer, and coward" but he undergoes a complete transformation towards the end and becomes a brave, confident, true, honest and loyal person.

In this sense *The Kite Runner* is a bildungsroman that depicts its protagonist's developmental path. This trip in some ways resembles Hosseini's autobiography. Later in the novel, Amir doesn't exhibit heroic qualities but slowly becomes like a hero. He combats both internal and external circumstances. Amir is entangled in multiple disputes and anxieties. He is struggling to develop a closer relationship with his father and is dealing with memories of a traumatic incident in his childhood. He faces rejection from his family, and at the early stage of his life he experiences numerous violent incidents. His father's appreciation is a yearning and 'goal' for him, even in his dreams, to achieve. Yet he finds himself too weak to carry out these brave acts in real life. He devises various defensive mechanisms in these knotty situations to prevent psychological stress and pressure. He rejects truth and he withdraws himself

from real-life circumstances in his dreams. Such defensive mechanisms give him ample time and space to cope with the assaults and impediments mentally. He trains himself mentally to fight against the obstacles but crosses the threshold of reason in such a dynamic setting. Gradually, he outgrows his defenses and learns to deal sensibly and tactfully with the circumstances. He uses the projection system as a self-defence. He redirects the rejection of Baba against Hassan, and gradually becomes emotionally abusive. His confidence may possibly be linked to his emigration from Afghanistan; the hub of terror, America and the predicaments he encountered during his exile. Soviet Union's arrival and his escape enabled him to bear the burden of losses. Now he experiences the agony of losing his house. He also comes to realize that his previous self-defense mechanisms: repression, regression, denial, rejection, and projection are merely a short-term escape from reality, and in the long run these make him incapable of acting. He admits a person must cope with both internal and external threats. He acknowledges conflict is possible in Afghan-like conditions. He visualizes that, in order to survive in extreme violence, one must tolerate the violence and can retaliate in self-defense where possible. Unnecessary escape or denial, or long rejection, just exacerbates the severity of anxiety and fear.

In America, Amir confidently and openly makes his choices, be it his career or his family. Therefore he is gazing into the eyes of Baba to guarantee that his son in Afghanistan has put all of his cowardice, pusillanimity and meanness behind him. In his life in exile he does not depend on his father for his fight for survival. He needs to show that he is a human as powerful as his Baba. He returns to Afghanistan, courageously and intrepidly to atone for his remorse.

In his open battle against aggression, he is willing to pay whatever price and suffer every amount of risk. He needs to boldly take on the repercussions. He agrees that it is counter violence which paves the way for survival in extreme conditions of conflict. He embraces the challenge of saving Sohrab from Assef, being well conscious that it could cost his life. Assef beats him severely but in comparison to his childhood fears and incapacities,

Amir finds it very calming. He thinks his blood has washed away his sins, and henceforth there will be no emotional struggles except a need for sense except suffocation. He now knows that dignified life requires real success. He takes Sohrab to America and feels relieved of his misdeeds towards Hassan. He comes to know the value of determination, sincerity and truth in life. He finds that life becomes easy when we make decisions with complete determination and truthfulness.

Hassan is the perpetrator of interpersonal self-directed, as well as the form of group violence. He faces all imaginable hideous types of abuse in the narrative, be it physical, mental, emotional or psychological. Malik, Shah, and Mahmood consider Hassan demonstrating the "sacrifice, surrender, and injustice" concept reflected through the lamb metaphor. A deep analysis reveals that the key factor behind his victimization is racial bigotry that has been widespread for a long time in Afghan social set-up. This gets intensified and accentuated, profoundly multilayered and increasingly multidimensional under the threatening circumstances of global conflicts, insurgency and fundamentalism. Hassan's victimization is so intricate and interwoven that survival becomes nearly impossible.

Yet Hassan shows certain special characteristics and outstanding commitment for survival. It is his gritty determination that he keeps his life intact even during intolerable life threatening conditions. In his fictional story, Hosseini points out different types of oppression and varying coping methods pursued by victims according to the demands of the situation that prevails in Afghanistan. However, the story is narrated by Amir, a Pashtun by ethnicity, yet it significantly deals with various extraordinary trials and tribulations tolerated by three generations of the same family, symbolic of travails and ordeals undergone in the course of struggle to survive by thousands of Hazara people, generation after generation over the years.

Hosseini believes that the survival struggle in Afghanistan isn't a standardized trend. Both religions and races are distinct. The really deplorable and wretched state of racial groups who are openly

discriminated towards is. The responsibility of maintaining social ties is mostly on the victim rather than the oppressor, making life more painful to them. Hosseini draws a direct dividing line between Hassan's war and Amir's. He asserts that survival is a long-term process for people like Hassan as ethnically superior people have to struggle against foreign invasions but the poor and the downtrodden are always in a fight against hardships inflicted upon them by their own countrymen.

In Afghanistan, injustice and prejudice are typically conducted as a daily matter. Both the suppressor and the suppressed find it normal. The suppressor loves it although it is inescapable for the suppressed to remain alive.

To make the conditions too harsh for them to fight, they simply have to succumb to injustice and prejudice in order to live and exist. The socio-ethnic inequality in Afghanistan is rife on a wide scale. Master-Slave relationship is not the thing of the past as this book discusses such relationships as well. Even the system which is now the new world is what has changed.

Khaled Hosseini is a man with organic sensibility who often looks beyond a normal human being's boundaries. His interests are also the survival of the downtrodden, marginalized and the ordinary Afghan people who have been victimised.

In comparison to the reader's hopes, he has not depicted any of his characters as a militant, conservative, liberal leader or taliban. He is too busy with children living in Afghanistan's violence-ravaged climate. The explanation behind this fascination may be that Hosseini himself considers his motherland as his childhood home. Therefore he is more worried for children and more sensitively fills his mind with the protection of children. There are numerous child characters in his writing, such as Amir, Hassan, Mariam, Laila, Abdullah, and Pari, but among them, Sohrab is one who is depicted in most piteous and helpless situations. He is epitomizing very disgusting childhood circumstances in Afghanistan. As a country, Afghanistan is well known to be destroyed, shattered, war-ravaged, mentally broken and violated. Under these

circumstances it is easy to gage the severity of the dramatic effects on childhood.

The Kite Runner through Sohrab dexterously unfolds all the issues concerned with the victimization and survival of childhood in Afghanistan. Afghan children suffer from a plethora of adversities like high rates of infant mortality, child labor, child marriage, hunger, and loss of parents, pathetic life in orphanages, begging, and victims of radical ideology pursued by terrorist and jihadis, and above all, child sexual abuse. Sexual assault on a child is not merely physical, as the outer wounds are likely to be treated with medicines, but inner wounds go bleeding throughout life. In appearance and character Sohrab is the son of Hassan and Farzana, almost a facsimile of Hassan. He symbolizes Third Wave injustice. Even upon death he continues to be the embodiment of Hassan's plight.

Khaled Hosseini has objectively and sympathetically presented the bacha bazi problem, portraying it as one of the multiple strata of the fight for survival. The question is dealt with more validly than any newspaper reporting, case study or history book. He also refers to certain other children's issues in Afghanistan such as child labour, homelessness, deprivation, starvation, analphabetism, fundamentalism and even circumcision practice. Both these things are interlinked, and can be traced largely to fundamentalism, extremism and conflict. A host of issues make the children's lives miserable beyond description and their fight to sustain their life is particularly bleak. Hosseini will not miss any topic that applies to the lives of Afghanistan's children. In fact, Khaled Hosseini gives a message to the readers world-wide that, "there are a lot of children in Afghanistan, but little childhood" (277).

A children's life in Afghanistan is shrouded in difficulties. Sohrab's life symbolizes the lives of thousands of Afghan kids. Sohrab not only faces challenges, but also has the knack to make choices and adjust to the awful and demanding conditions. He tries to make changes as Assef is exposed to cruelties but all of a sudden, as he gets a chance, he retaliates for his life. This shows that Sohrab is a tough guy from inside and he didn't give up on sexual

harassment for good, but instead secretly bid the opportunity to strike back and avoid embarrassment and indignity.

A Thousand Splendid Suns has come up with two heroines who have driven the male protagonists to limits in terms of survival pain and stamina. We are viewed as heroes because of the way the villains accept and bear their brutality. They tend to build a sense of solidarity with each other, and behave heroically to give each other and the children warmth. A Thousand Glorious Suns is primarily concerned with portraying women's plight, their determination and courage to survive, along with portraying Afghan-life as a whole during violence.

A remarkable point about this book is that it says that Hosseini has an unparalleled insight into the female psyche; he is excellent at dealing with female characters. In the book he never manages to miss any of the feminine desires and feelings. In Afghanistan, a woman has to confront all the kinds of violence that a male faces, and alongside all the traditional forms of injustice, she also has to face sexism, sexual harassment, and much of the burdens of customs and taboos.

Throughout the novel, Hosseini comes to assert that beneath a burqa, there is a breathing human being who has been so encapsulated that nobody from outside can peek into. He puts that a woman, just like man, has emotions, impulses, aspirations and expectations in her life, but Afghan social set-up and on-going political circumstances and violent conflicts have enclosed them in a non-breakable closet where, "they are displayed through the Islamic cultural lens of females, which causes the readers to sympathize with them" (Dar).

The story primarily focuses on two female characters but the novel is enormous as far as the time and magnitude of the description of devastation and survival is concerned. They have always devised their own ways to survive as Kazemian further states: "Women were capable of organizing around gender-related survival strategies and became aware of more gender-specific concerns. They worked together in groups and organizations and generated the networks, norms and trust in their communities" (20). Rostami

advocates Kazemiyan saying: "Women in Afghanistan have bravely shown their capacity to devise ways of coping with life even under the most extreme forms of coercion. As social actors, women have experienced 22 years of war, civil war, and violent conflict and have sought alternative ways of surviving and formulating their objectives within a context of restricted resources and restrictive cultural practices."

People of A Thousand Glorious Suns are the real-life persons and the novel's most compelling theme is their existence. A character is not exposed to a particular kind of violence alone; he / she has to confront the different forms, intensities, and levels of violence at various stages of her life. Furthermore, a character's resilience is not uniform; individual characters display varying abilities to survive the type of aggression. In a desolate Kolba (hut) with her mum, Mariam, the daughter of a half-mad lady Nana, lived a tragically wretched life.

Hosseini's very first word used to describe her is 'Harami' and predicts she will face very difficult, rough and bitter living conditions. During her life, she undergoes a cycle of various kinds and styles of abuse, which consistently committed domestic violence against her and corrupted her wealth, though sporadically it affects her through group brutality.

Mostly confined to the four walls of a home, apart from a life of destitution, poverty and privation, Mariam experiences physical, sexual and psychological abuse. Her mother loves her but she continuously targets her to give vent to her own suppressed frustration. She continuously lambastes her with stinging barbs, but she seems true to some extent about the pathos of women, when she says: "Of all the daughters I could have had, why did God give me an ungrateful one like you . . . what a stupid girl you are . . . A man's heart is a wretched, wretched thing, Mariam. It isn't like a mother's womb. It won't bleed, it won't stretch to make room for you" (Hosseini 21).

Nana believes that women need sisterhood but her approach is incorrect because Mariam isn't mature. Some of the key reasons responsible for spoiling Mariam's life back throughout her youth is

the whimsical personality of Nana, and her nagging behavior appears to torment her throughout her life. But Mariam is different, she has a strong determination and an unrelenting desire to overcome all obstacles and never yield to tension. Instead of cribbing over and brooding about life's misfortunes and pressures, she tries to resolve them so that she can resume her life.

Hosseini explains: "Over the years, Mariam had learned to harden herself against his scorn and reproach, his ridiculing and reprimanding . . . Sweating, tightening the belt around his fist, the creaking of the leather, the glint in the bloodshot eyes" (234). She exercises her unswerving ability to survive in the midst of blood-chilling miseries and incredibly cruel brutality, unbearable and intolerable suffering, emotional as well as physical. With her strength and resilience she is able to hide from any form of crisis.

In Mariam it is worth noting the combination of defensive systems and coping strategies. She is successfully applying defenses and tactics in the nick of time. In defending her safety, Mariam's defenses play a significant part. She knows that in the violently-torn bigotry-ridden Afghan culture she is impotent, powerless and weak. She firmly opposes her status as 'Harami' and never encourages herself to be 'unwanted' by the idea. She doesn't remain in a denial state for long though; instead, she discovers a plan to physically improve herself. She constantly takes recourse to denial for her survival to preserve her consciousness. She rejects the ruthlessness of her father, and establishes a romantic friendship with him that prevents her from becoming a victim of nihilism and existential crisis. Greta Smith summarizes: "Laila and Mariam's relationship begins as pure hatred, until they realize that they need the other to survive. They stick together in order to cope with their problems, including dealing with her secrecy of emotions in this specific culture." Mother-daughter, Mariam and Laila's companionship paves the way for her future. The birth of Aziza brings important significance to Mariam. Mariam finds that only love and companionship are what give an identity to a person, particularly to an Afghan woman. She recognizes that all practices and beliefs are against

womanhood, and that human life can only be possible for Afghan women by cracking the shackles of patriarchal domination. Mariam continues to feel that marriage is a kind of license for women to commit crime. Taliban hands over both women to Rasheed to face the consequences of elopement. By outrage, Mariam does not lift a outcry and cry; she resigns herself to her destiny instead. Her surrender and submission to sexual abuse shows that the woman has been oblivious to domestic cruelties and oppression in the long run. This violent period portrayed in the novel normally doesn't end.

For the first time, Mariam responds to violence, giving up the habits of ignorance and abject surrender to ruthlessness. She faces aggression, and heightens the confidence to strike back. She analyzes the violent cause and condemns herself for encouraging her husband to brutalize her. She remembers how much she hated till then and admits that she is accountable for her portrayal as a stereotypical Afghan woman. She knows, for the first time, that she was never wrong; it's Rasheed, her friend, who has always wronged her. She rationally analyses her life and questions herself: "Has she been a deceitful wife . . . A complacent wife? A dishonorable woman? Discreditable? Vulgar? What harmful things has she willfully done to this man to warrant his malice, his continual assaults . . . Had she not given this man her youth? Had she ever just deserved his meanness?" (338).

She gives only one solution for all the questions that Mariam asks herself that she has done nothing wrong which would excuse abuse against her. She believes that it is the masculinity of Afghanistan that causes her husband to beat her only to fulfill his whims and fancies and the predominant inclination to abuse. Hosseini establishes that women, particularly their husbands, are vulnerable to senseless violence imposed upon them by men. We are terrorised and forced into positions of slavery and servility. Mariam's former convictions are being deconstructed and she wants to battle through her wretched situation.

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