

THE IMAGE OF “FATHER” IN THE WORKS OF KHALED HUSSAIN

*Rajabova O‘g‘iljon Odilbek qizi**Asian International University 1st year master*

Annotation: Khaled Hosseini’s works, including *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *And the Mountains Echoed*, depict complex father figures who influence the personal and emotional development of their children. His narratives explore themes of fatherhood, masculinity, sacrifice, generational trauma, and moral conflict. This study examines the portrayal of fathers in Hosseini’s novels and their impact on the protagonists' lives.

Keywords: Fatherhood, masculinity, sacrifice, trauma, generational conflict, redemption, Khaled Hosseini, identity, emotional neglect, parental influence.

Introduction

Hosseini was briefly a resident of Iran and France after being born in Kabul, Afghanistan, to a diplomat father. When Hosseini was 15, his family applied for asylum in the United States, where he later became a naturalized citizen. Hosseini did not return to Afghanistan until 2003 when he was 38, an experience similar to that of the protagonist in *The Kite Runner*. In later interviews, Hosseini acknowledged that he suffered from survivor's guilt for having been able to leave the country prior to the Soviet invasion and subsequent wars.

After graduating from college, Hosseini worked as a physician in California, a situation he likened to "an arranged marriage". The success of *The Kite Runner* meant he was able to retire from medicine in order to write full-time. His three novels have all reached various levels of critical and commercial success. *The Kite Runner* spent 101 weeks on *The New York Times* Best Seller list, including three weeks at number one. His second novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), spent 103 weeks on the chart, including 15 at number one while his third novel, *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013), remained on the chart for 33 weeks. In addition to writing, Hosseini has advocated for the support of refugees, including establishing with the UNHCR the Khaled Hosseini Foundation to support Afghan refugees returning to Afghanistan.

Khaled Hosseini’s novels often center on familial relationships, particularly the role of fathers in shaping their children's destinies. The portrayal of fathers ranges from distant and authoritative to nurturing and protective. This paper analyzes how Hosseini’s depiction of father figures contributes to character development, moral dilemmas, and the overarching themes of his works. It highlights Amir's longing to have his father's approval. Baba is the reason for Amir's guilt and is the one who causes Amir to let down Hassan. Here, father-son relationships are a perfect example of the challenges and triumphs of life and how consistent choices influence one's life. Amir wants to form the love of his distant father, Baba, a distance due to the secrets Baba keeps from Amir. Baba is forced to pay Hassan his full attention since Baba kept a secret about the fact to conceal the fact that Hassan was his child, a fact that Amir is not aware of. The apparent favoritism results in Amir leaving his friend for a long time and betraying the one who has always stood by him. Due to the varying focus, Baba's relationship with his sons leads to jealousy and betrayal among close friends. *The Kite Runner* is a somewhat realistic novel highlighting the issues of relations between fathers and sons. The

characters have gone through challenging circumstances, which made them understandable, responsible, and sometimes cruel to each other. The novelist Khaled Hosseini wrote this novel using some elements identical to those that were part of the author's own life, and this had a significant influence on showing the relations between the characters.

The Kite Runner (2003) was the top-selling book in the New York Times for over two years and sold more than seven million books throughout the United States. (npr.org, 2013). It was a huge success. Although it is an original novel, Khaled Hosseini initially wrote the novel as a story. The novel is a tale of a father and son, their relationship, and their attitudes towards one another. (Hosseini, 2003). If we consider this, there is a possibility that Kite Runner is a truly male dominant novel. The novel is about the relationship between men, father and son, and friendship between males. Amir's relationship with his businessman father, Baba, influences the story's arc. Amir is desperate for Baba's affection and acceptance; however, Baba's father keeps those things away from Amir. Baba is a more ferocious masculine type of person and does not like his son's gentler, book-loving manners. Baba is not able to provide Amir the attention which Amir needed as a son, who lost his mother shortly before his birth. As a result, Amir becomes jealous of his new acquaintance Hassan and is attracted to interest from Baba and Amir will not be able to pin the blame on Hassan which leads his friend to flee the house. So, Amir cannot earn Baba's respect and acceptance, leading Hassan to abandon his home (Amir later discovers that Hassan was Baba's son too). In order to pay for his transgressions following Hassan's death, Amir adopts Hassan's son, Sohrab, who is Amir's Akhter: Illustration of the Perplexed Relationship between Fathers and Sons in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner nephew in relation. Amir attempts to become a father figure to the boy, another instance of that father-son relationship fueling the plot of the novel. The Kite Runner is a father-son tale that Khaled Hosseini claims; this is supported by the existence of just two women in the novel. One of them is Suraya (Amir's wife) and Sanaubar (Ali's wife), who are escaping with a family of singers and dancers. The other characters are all male and play an essential part in resolving the problems in the story. For instance, the character Ali who serves as a servant of a rich man from the region (Baba), assists greatly. Despite initially appearing insignificant and despairing, this character plays a crucial role in the plot. Through his presence, readers can better connect with Hassan and understand the source of his calm and humble demeanor. He embodies the traits of a helpful and nurturing Afghan father, providing his son with essential education, patience, and unwavering support. In the book's opening, the twelve-year-old protagonist, Amir, reflects on his relationship with his father. As the family's only child, Amir holds a special place in his father's heart and is likely to be Baba's sole reliance. Amir enjoys popularity in the neighborhood and is regarded as one of the most esteemed boys. Their opulent house reflects Baba's effort to create an ideal environment for his only son. However, the nature of their relationship is depicted as somewhat deceptive throughout the novel. For instance, Amir's birthday celebration concerns Baba's social circle more than Amir himself. The gifts he receives show his lack of genuine interest, including the present from his father. Amir declares, "I did not want any of it – it was all bloody money; Baba would have never thrown me a party like that if I had not won the tournament" (p.51). This assertion proves Amir lacks interest in his father's gifts or how he behaves toward his father. The desire for revenge caused Amir to be crueler in his actions, which Amir regretted later. Amir was envious. Amir, that was his first opportunity; he could see the tears of his Baba's son on his face after the employees Ali and Hassan (who later is revealed to be Baba's son) decided to quit them. Nevertheless, Amir did not have any sympathy for his father or his servants. Perhaps it was an unintentional incident that

resulted in him becoming a slim Hassan to rob cash and watches. Baba spoke with Rahim Khan (a close friend of the family) about Amir and said: "He is always buried in those books or shuffling around the house as he has lost in some dream.; this was when Amir was disappointed in his father's affection and was unsure about his ability to ensure that his Baba felt happy about him. Hearing the story suddenly, Amir pressed his ear to the locked door and continued listening to his father say, "I was not like that

...' Baba sounded frustrated, almost angry" . There is a good chance that Amir may have had pessimism which grew into hatred for his father, and he began to doubt his capabilities. He was the true descendant of the King. The only hope Baba had for a better future was his son who was an avid art enthusiast. The Kite Runner is a highly realistic book focusing on the tensions between fathers and their sons. Ali and Hassan, Baba and Amir, are the characters who have gone through complicated circumstances, leading to them being understandable, responsible, and sometimes cruel to each other. The author Khaled Hosseini wrote the novel using certain autobiographical elements, as previously mentioned, and this was a significant influence in illustrating the relationships among the protagonists.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parents are someone who takes the responsibilities of children, provides them both mental and physical comfort, and shows them true insight into life, "Parents meet the biological, physical, and health requirements of children. Parents interact with children socially. Parents stimulate children to engage and understand the environment and to enter the world of learning" (Bornstein, 2002). The Kite Runner is not a story of war, violence, loss, and betrayal only, rather inspiring stories of resurrection also. The novelist Khaled Hosseini wrote this novel using some elements identical to those that were part of the author's own life (Hosseini, 2003), and this had a significant influence on showing the relations between the characters. "The article ends with the interviewer stating how Khaled wishes one day to be able to go back to his country with his two children and show them where their dad came from. He wants them to understand their father's stories and memories" (Jones, 2011). Khaled Hosseini's protagonist Amir is resurrected by achieving his identity as a father figure. Many literary scholars offer different views on the conflicting situations in the relationship between Amir (son) and Baba (father). For instance, according to director Eric Rose, who works on The Kite Runner for the theater: "themes of betraying your best friend for the love of your father were similar to Shakespearean literature." Additionally, a certified teacher Susan Hurn believes, "Baba's treatment of his two sons creates deep insecurity and jealousy in Amir that leads to his two betrayals of Hassan, his friend. The subsequent shame and self-hatred almost destroyed Amir" (Hurn, 2011). We are confident that Khaled Hosseini's concept of the world Akhter: Illustration of the Perplexed Relationship between Fathers and Sons in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner regarding manhood can be found here. Although he has repeatedly stated that it was not autobiographical writing, these events in the novel are nearly identical to those that were part of the writer's own life (Hosseini, 2003). Besides the relationship between Fathers and Sons, Hosseini also tried to show some differences in statuses, which actually worked as an influence on the relationships. "Using the characters of Baba and Amir on one side and Ali and Hassan on the other, he lays out of all the divisions-economic, ethnic and religious-present in the country during the late 1970s. Baba and Amir, for instance, are rich and live in a large mansion, while Ali and Hassan are poor and live in a small hut on Baba's property" (Jaya, 2017). In telling his story, there are a lot of themes Khaled Hosseini weaves into the story that emerges from the conflict. He does not consistently achieve it flawlessly. The protagonist's insecurities are revealed through a rousing dialogue and well-constructed characters whose actions are in line

Index: [google scholar](#), [research gate](#), [research bib](#), [zenodo](#), [open aire](#).

https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=ru&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=wosjournals.com&btnG

<https://www.researchgate.net/search/publication?q=worldly%20knowledge>

<https://journalseeker.researchbib.com/view/issn/3060-4923>

with the characters. Hassan has always been humble. He is always loyal and never apprehensive about what he has, to give his example. “Young Hassan, I agree, is an idealized figure, but that seems understandable given that the narrator is Amir. Amir’s guilt, and his discovery of a deeper connection to the boy than he had imagined, seem to call for that approach to the character. It is ironic, too, given that Hassan looked up to Amir in a way that went beyond the master/servant relationship” (StudyCorgi, 2021). The relationship between Amir and Baba is incredibly complex. Baba, as well as Amir, is complex as Baba can reveal his duties as a father, great friend, and adversary. Each of these creates strong emotions in Amir about his feelings toward his dad and how he views himself. The mix of negative feelings toward his father causes him much discomfort, yet it helps him discover himself and how he is his father's child in many ways. The relationship between Amir and his dad Baba starts at a turbulent phase. “Amir’s character grows, his desperation to please his father, which we have witnessed throughout the story, plays a significant part in causing the events of the section. Although Amir feels paralyzed by fear when he sees what is happening, he admits that his main reason for not intervening is selfishness” (Jaya, 2017). Although he was far from a perfect man, Amir’s father shows us the value of a father who can teach his children virtue. Amir was naturally inclined to be a coward and spent most of his life indulging that inclination. However, living with an example of manly courage as a father produced a healthy sense of shame within Amir. He had seen what it meant to be a brave man and therefore knew that he fell short. This meant that when Rahim Khan called and offered him a “chance to be good again” Amir was receptive. In the end, he becomes a brave man and uses that bravery to save an innocent child. *The Kite Runner* is worth a read for the insightful way in which it explores this transformation (Frey, 2021). As Amir reflected on his father's betrayal and deceit, he began to think of himself similarly. Amir discovered that his father was much like him than he thought, and that is when their relationship changed. He saw that they were one in identical. His thoughts about his father changed. “As it turned out, Baba and I were more alike than I'd ever known. We had both betrayed the people who would have given their lives for us” (p.192). But, it cannot be denied that Amir's lifespan and overall attitudes actually got changed only because of his father, Baba. “Amir's attitude changes throughout the novel of ‘*The Kite Runner*’ by Khaled Hosseini. In the beginning he doesn't listen to anyone that well and gets into trouble a lot. At the end of the book Amir changes attitudes and becomes more like Baba. After Baba died he remembers everything that his father taught him throughout his life. Amir learns from his father that he loves him and how to become a bigger man and stand up for what is right” (Warner, 2016). Some scholars directly accused Baba (Amir’s father) for the whole plot. “If Baba was a good father, easily accessible and open to Amir, even about him and Hassan being his sons, things would not have turned out the way they did in Kabul. Amir wouldn't have to bear so much pain for so long. Hassan may have even moved to the US with them” (Kalyan, 2020). Though the researcher of this paper is trying to cover the idea of ‘Relationship between Fathers and Sons’ described in ‘*The Kite Runner*’, but along with the main ideas of Bond of Fathers-Sons, another crucial thing provokes the reader to think as important as the written topic. “*The Kite Runner* is about fixing the things which were done during the immature times, when running from truths seemed like getting rid of nightmares like they never happened. It is not about saying ‘Sorry’ but it is about earning the apology and there is a huge difference in both” (Pearson, 2007).

Methods

This study employs a literary analysis approach, focusing on close readings of *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *And the Mountains Echoed*. The analysis considers narrative

techniques, character development, and thematic exploration. Secondary sources, including scholarly critiques and interviews with the author, are also referenced to provide context.

Results

Hosseini's novels reveal three recurring father archetypes:

1. **The Distant Father** – Represented by Baba in *The Kite Runner*, who, despite his love for Amir, struggles with emotional expression, leading to feelings of inadequacy in his son.
2. **The Abusive or Absent Father** – Seen in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, where Rasheed embodies toxic masculinity and paternal dominance, inflicting suffering on his wife and child.
3. **The Protective Father Figure** – Found in *And the Mountains Echoed*, where Saboor makes a heart-wrenching sacrifice for his daughter's well-being, showcasing love through painful decisions.

Discussion

Hosseini's portrayal of fathers reflects broader themes of cultural expectations, morality, and redemption. While some fathers impose psychological burdens on their children, others make difficult choices out of love. His works highlight how paternal relationships shape identity, personal guilt, and the quest for approval. The emotional distance between fathers and children often leads to internal conflicts and lifelong struggles for validation.

Conclusion

The image of the father in Hosseini's novels is multifaceted, portraying both the flaws and virtues of paternal figures. Through his storytelling, Hosseini offers a critique of patriarchal expectations while also acknowledging the deep emotional bonds between fathers and their children. His works emphasize that fatherhood is not just about biological ties but also about moral responsibility and emotional presence.

References

1. Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner*. Riverhead Books, 2003.
2. Hosseini, Khaled. *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Riverhead Books, 2007.
3. Hosseini, Khaled. *And the Mountains Echoed*. Riverhead Books, 2013.
4. Bloom, Harold, ed. *Khaled Hosseini's Fiction: Critical Essays*. Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2010.
5. Hosseini, Khaled. "On Writing and Family." Interview, *The Guardian*, 2013.