

## String of Relationship in the Sky of Multiculturalism: A Reading of Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*

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### Abstract

This paper proposes how the relationship that exists between different characters in his novels is experimented in diverse conditions and the characters are tested and tried to discover their unique paths of assimilation with their loved ones to the completion of their circle. Despite the spatial differences, each character is connected with a string of bond which portrays the 'similarity' of difference, yet humanity in need of understanding. The physical space and emotional space of Baba's beautiful house in the Wazir Akbar Khan district is contrasted with the shack of Hassan and Ali breaks the dichotomy of contentment and dissatisfaction. Simultaneously with the diversity of multiculturalism it creates fantasies of escape from ideological and cultural divisions altogether. Interconnected relationship and affections blur the ethnic, social, geographical and economic variances in individual. The characters all experience a personal journey for love in their own way through their words

and actions. The genetic ties to the geographies of privilege, ethnic difference and social status often challenged through the personal affinity. Troubled relationship like Baba and Amir, or an enigmatic friendship like Amir and Hassan or passive bond like Ali and Hassan or even a romantic relationship like Amir and Soraya are circulating the web of ontology. Relationship, assimilation and struggle of people cross path with desperate societies resulting a relief from haunting memories. The longing for love and to be loved draw the characters to find the web of their completeness and ultimately that give them the strength to fight back with their vulnerabilities, surpass their limitations, and eventually to purify their guilt through overwhelming acts of self-sacrifice.

Keyword: Multiculturalism, Cultural Diversity, Social Space, Human Behaviour.

Khaled Hussein's novels are imbued with dramatical representation of multiculturalism ranging from the support of equal respect to the various cultures, ethnic and religious groups in a society to strategies of promoting the maintenance of cultural diversity. In the era of globalization maintaining the distinctiveness of multiple cultures is often juxtaposed to cultural assimilation.

Khaled Hosseini's wildly successful *The Kite Runner* presents the web of relationship and love between father and son; master and servant; parent and child; elite and marginalized group and so far. This novel, with a fresh look at the country and culture of Afghanistan voyages across the boundaries of the world and opens a door to the imagination of the minds. Interconnectedness of the relationship between the being and becoming of the characters floats as the tail of the kite, the weight which helps to fly high. Troubled relationship like Baba and Amir, or an enigmatic friendship like Amir and Hassan or passive bond like Ali and Hassan or even a romantic relationship like Amir and Soraya are circulating the web of ontology. Perception of Man versus human nature is revealed through the actions of Ali,

Hassan, Rahim Khan, Baba and Amir who show varied examples and characteristics of friendships and relationships through their words, actions and silence.

Multifaceted bond of relationships between fathers and sons is one of the controlling threads of *The Kite Runner*. The father-son relationship pedals the flow of the novel. Rahim Khan who was more of a father to Amir than Baba ever was, plays a big role in Amir's life because of the emotional support he provides to Amir. For him Rahim Khan was the substitution in Baba's neglect toward him. Baba deprives Amir of a father-son relationship as a concern towards his own biological son Hassan. As he is his illegitimate son he cannot show his affection towards him openly. Baba is sensitive to Hassan with same or more tenderness with which he creates towards Amir. To get the love and care of his father he even sacrificed his friendship charging theft on Hassan. Amir was excited being the winner of kite running tournament only because it will be considered as a heroic deed by Baba and he will be proud of his son. Amir says dismally "Baba and I lived in the same house, but in different spheres of existence. Kites were the one paper-thin slice of intersection between those spheres (52)". Amir feels so neglected by Baba that his longing for Baba's love and respect are never considered. Often Amir says reflecting his longings "Sometimes, I too wondered if I was really "Baba's son" (101). After leaving Hasan and Ali, Amir enjoyed the fullness of his father yet there was a feeling of vacuum in him. The sadness of being lost as the sins of charge and omission that tear the friendship apart simultaneously is a relief as he is not there to question his existence. The feeling of relaxation in the pain of departure poses the question of which emotion to pursue. Apart from the various classifications it is a love story, the love between two friends who are also servant and master and the unselfish love and the loyalty that survives in spite of everything Hussein says "They are unorthodox stories of love where characters seek and are saved by love and human connections" (2003 interview).

Spacing and placing are inter-connected and its system will be changed from the perspective of each individual

Michel Foucault defines space as; “The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. ....we live inside a set of relations. (Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias)

The politics and kinship complicate the role of the ‘place’ for the boys. While the ‘space’ they occupy in the realm of their friendship, a bond between the two that transcends these boundaries. A strict hierarchy in cultural, economic and domestic is prevails in the society where the both physically occupy. These social spheres are often challenged through the personal relationships between the two boys. As the Wazir Akbar Khan district, a new and affluent neighbourhood in the northern part of Kabul is contrasted with residence area of Hazarajat ; Baba’s most beautiful house is juxtaposed with the shack of his servant physically. In emotional sphere of Amir it is the shack which gives him the warm and pleasing environment where he observes the father son relationship which he yearns from his father. Even after years when Hassan returns from Hazarajat as an adult, upon the request of Rahim Khan to live with in Baba’s estate, he occupies the hut in which he lived as a child instead of the mansion. It is out of the reminiscence of the sweet memories. That subordinate place in physical space has the capability to provide the beautiful retentions of his relationship with Amir, his soul mate. He has retained that ‘third space’ altogether in life even though he has been sent out by Amir claiming that he had stolen his money and watch.

During Baba’s funeral Amir realizes that he does not have an identity his own and to have an independent one. He feels more alone than before. He recognizes the transformation of his space in the society. He says, "Listening to them, I realized how much of who I was, what I was had been defined by Baba and the marks he had left on people's lies. My whole

life, I had been "Baba's son." Now he was gone. Baba couldn't show me the way anymore; I'd have to find it on my own.

Later in the novel when it reveals that Amir and Hassan are half-brothers, bring the changes in the space once they have occupied and it create the feeling that they are one family. It gives much relief to Amir as this secret surpasses the difference between their culture and social hierarchy. During the quarrel with Assef Amir's lip got slit and got a resemblance to harelip Hassan which resulted to realize Amir the similarity of their physical appearance. The spatial narrative techniques of Husseini go through the 'perceived space', 'conceived space' and 'lived space' (Lefebvre)

According to Henri Lefebvre, the French Marxist philosopher and sociologist, space is a social product, or a complex social construction (based on values, and the social production of meanings) which affects spatial practices and perceptions. In his "Production of Space" Historical notions of space are analysed on three aspects: the 'perceived space', 'conceived space' and 'lived space', First Space (Physical space/perceived space) "The spatial practice of a society secretes that society's space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it." Second Space (Mental space/conceived space) "Conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent -- all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived." Third Space (Social space/lived space) "Space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols."

In the social realm the bond between Amir and Hassan are that of labourer and master as their fathers do whereas in emotional realm they merge this bond many ways. Often through the personal relationships between the two boys the cultural hierarchy of the domestic sphere are challenged. For example, when the boys leave the dominating confines of the house in order to climb poplar trees or wander just outside of the estate they forget all restraints and feel like siblings or intimate buddies. A set of relationships that juxtapose them, set them in opposition or link them together, so as to create a sort of shape (Foucault)

When Amir was ten years old, he was interested in reading and writing. However, when he went to show his father the story he wrote, he was indifferent towards him. But it was to Hassan, whom Amir rushed down to tell the story. After hearing the story, Hassan foretold that Amir would be world-famous someday. However, he also pointed out a plot hole in the story.

The course of the novel portrays how Amir is fed up with pretension and fabricating stories in order to hide someone's so-called honour. When General Taheri addressed Sohrab "Hazara boy" Amir and told him off never to call him. He solely states the facts "You see, General Sahib, my father slept with his servant's wife. She bore him a son named Hassan. Hassan is dead now. The boy sleeping on the couch is Hassan's son. He's my nephew. That's what you tell people when they ask" (315).

Hosseini's belief in the universality of human condition makes him explore the theme of cultural differences in a variant facet. His drawing of pre-revolutionary Afghanistan is tense with the friction between the nation's different ethnic groups but also rich with the interconnectedness of love and attachment despite of social, ethnic, cultural or economic background. The dichotomy between the dominated and subjugated; rich and poor; cowardice and bravery are all blurred with true love and affection. The splendour and anguish of a

tormented nation is revealed as the narration of an dubious friendship between two boys from opposite ends of society, strained but enduring relationship between a father and a son and of loyal attachment between a master and a servant. People experience their lives against the backdrop of their culture where the spatial differences bring light to the physical and emotional spheres of the individuals. The widespread socio-political condition of Afghanistan is masterfully depicted in all novels of Hosseini. And more creatively, the focus of attention in his novels is the impact that human relationships have on a society which has to consistently undergo adverse as well as overwhelming changes owing to conflict

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*hosseini*