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## Portrayal of Postcolonial Afghanistan and Postcolonial Themes of Identity, Displacement, and Cultural Conflict in *The Kite Runner*

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### Abstract

This study intends to provide a compendium of academic analyses regarding the post-colonial interpretation of Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. This indicates that identity, trauma, cultural tensions, and concerns are confronted by the diverse critics of the diaspora. These reviewers argued that class, gender, and ethnic identity concerns in Afghanistan are pertinent to the themes of exile and belonging in *The Kite Runner*. The anthology encompasses diverse perspectives-cultural, political, and historical - on *The Kite Runner*, in addition to an extensive discourse on postcolonial theory and literature. This study utilises a qualitative research methodology grounded in literary analysis and postcolonial theory, employing thematic analysis to investigate identity, displacement, and cultural conflict in the novel. The context for these works is intrinsically varied and stems from distinct critical approaches and viewpoints, defining the extensive discourse surrounding Hosseini's narratives in modern literary criticism. The findings of this study illustrate how colonial and postcolonial conflicts fragment identity, with displacement reshaping characters' senses of self and belonging. The novel depicts Afghanistan as culturally fractured, where class and ethnic divisions, especially between Pashtuns and Hazaras, reflect deep colonial legacies. The diasporic experience intensifies internal conflicts around identity, guilt, and cultural dislocation, particularly through Amir's character. Hosseini's work not only narrates personal redemption but also engages with broader postcolonial struggles, making it a rich text for exploring the intersections of history, culture, and literature.

**Keywords:** The Kite Runner, postcolonial literature, identity, trauma, diaspora.

### Contextual Background:

With the dawn of the (1990)s, literature became a very vital branch in the discourse of the colonialism of the European empires. It addressed some distinct rules and deviations of those who go through colonial debris and cultural agonies while searching for themselves and their maturity. Postcolonial literature is argued by critics to be a mode of reclaiming spaces in history for voices that have been muted or relegated to the margins, a mode of resistance effectively against the various discourses forged by colonial powers. In their analysis of postcolonial literature, Bill Ashcroft et. al. note that “the literature produced in the context of colonization has always been engaged in a dialogue with the colonial past” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2), indicating inherent resistance against colonial histories.

Identity has always been a pivot in postcolonial literature; in many texts, it has been inning through hybridism. Homi K. Bhabha's book, “*The Location of Culture*,” states that hybrid identities are when two equally different cultures of colonialism and indigeneity collide, from which new identities spawn, carrying the traces of realities and conflicts (Bhabha 5). It caters to characters who often battle with an existential crisis in postcolonial tales. As pointed out by Edward Said in “*Orientalism*,” the mechanism of the colonial narratives called “Othering” very simply puts the ‘colonised’ in the position of being the denied and thus the butt of contention in their struggle to assert themselves through self-determination (Said 55). The bi-polar psyche of such thinking results into internecine issues where one gets caught between inherited culture and foreign tendencies.

Displacement further complicates these identity struggles that emanate from a postcolonial standpoint. Arjun Appadurai articulates the “disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy,” and how through displacement he interrogates the sense of belonging and achieving identity (Appadurai 296). In most stories from postcolonial works, displacement is forced on characters through violent colonialism, cultural alienation, and forced migration ever since having experienced enticing undercurrents of nostalgia and need for being at home. In the great Salman Rushdie’s essay “*Imaginary Homelands*,” it is stated boldly that such diasporic experiences are shattered by the simultaneous ache of both being connected to and distanced from one’s homeland, resulting in an iridescent form of identity formation that sometimes strips man off his innermost madness (Rushdie 9).

Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* intricately weaves all these postcolonial elements into an almost epic narrative structure complete with an intimate view of the historical and personal trajectories of its characters against the backdrops of a torn Afghanistan. The socio-political context of Afghanistan with its history of foreign interventions, civil wars, and internecine struggles becomes an indispensable ingredient in the understanding of how postcolonial trauma is rendered in the novel. The specific historical circumstances of Afghanistan illustrate the profound effects of colonialism and its aftershocks as Richard Foltz puts it "the specific historical circumstances of Afghanistan illustrate the profound effects of colonialism and its aftershocks" (Foltz 102). Thus the backdrop provided by Hosseini's narrative, with its postcolonial struggles, reflects the broader search by postcolonial societies for identity and belonging.

Amir's life and migration take place against this backdrop of Afghanistan's turbulent history-from the Soviet invasion of (1979) to the Taliban regime of the (1990) s. Thomas Barfield states, "Afghanistan's social fabric was as multiethnic and divided by historic enmities as other postcolonial societies. This makes its politics particularly difficult to analyse or predict" (Barfield 181). This historical rich background is what adds depth to *The Kite Runner*, showing how Amir's personal journey reflects national trauma and the struggles of a society to come to terms with its fractured identity.

Through his writings, Hosseini demonstrates how socio-political upheavals affecting Afghanistan have a rippling effect on individual lives. It is this contrast in Amir's childhood-he is well privileged in pre-war Kabul-and then his experiences through exile and guilt that describes the emotional and psychological aftermath of such times. In Hosseini, Laura Green writes, "narrative emphasises how traumatic injuries from the past bear witness to scarred selves: this narrative displays individual and collective life as inscribing into each other as trauma" (Green 86). The interconnection of individual lives with historical ones helps to discern the very essence of fragmented identity within a post-colonial frame. This effectively compels readers into rumination upon resilience, shaped out of bearing the heavy burdens of the fractured world.

The study of identity, displacement, and cultural clash against the background of postcolonial literature gives an enriched theoretical framework to analyse Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. Anchoring individual

experiences within a broad historical context, the novel presents a lamentable narrative about postcolonial Afghanistan and challenges the reader to comprehend all aspects of identity, memory, and redemption. Theoretical discourse and literary representation alike create a composite that shows postcolonial literature to be powerful in reminding one of the greater and lasting impacts of colonial legacies, enabling continuous discourse on identity and belonging in a world that reshapes itself.

### Introduction to the Novel:

Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* is often considered a landmark creation through which the Afghan experience is put in front. It interweaves personal tales concerning social and political realities. As Tony Morrison describes, literature has the power to “explore the complexities of identity and the culture legacy,” making it a quintessential medium through which one could understand postcolonial contexts (Morrison 99). The novel’s elaboration of the emotional and physical displacement of its hero, Amir, properly illustrates identity’s splintering that horrifies parallel postcolonial literature. This has made Aijaz Ahmad's voice echoed through when he states that in the world of postcolonial literature, the assumption of identity and self is one associated with disrupted lives (Ahmad 20).

Most significantly Hosseini weaves the tale of *The Kite Runner* into the ravaged historical backdrop of Afghanistan with markers in the silent years preceding the Soviet invasion, war, and turmoil. In the words of Matthew Smith Post-colonial texts often have to contend with the legacies of violence and loss borne by nations and peoples, where destruction and resistance of cultural identities go hand in hand (43). The transformation of Kabul from an immensely busy city-culture to violent-torn city pursued by Amir also represents the broader ramifications of foreign intervention on postcolonial states. Hosseini's depiction echoes what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o suggests in relation to the destruction of cultures by external forces. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o states that this becomes, in postcolonial contexts, “the gradual decay, the paralysis of not only the national identity but also individual cultural identity” (Ngũgĩ 45).

Contrasting recruitment and interplay between Amir and Hassan that reflect their reliance on ethnic hierarchies, provide another level of interest in the novel. Within this context, Hosseini uses this relationship to address

themes including privilege and marginalization, which include Pashtun and Hazara identities. *The Kite Runner* illuminates how entrenched ethnic divides are exacerbated by political strife. Scholars like Elspeth Leacock argue that, “Lenses of collisions between ethnicities allow one to see the colonial legacies that operationalise conflict and inequality more sharply” (Leacock 74). This understanding of local conflict as a result of historical hierarchies lays the very foundation upon which one can understand the social dynamics in Afghanistan, especially during the rise of Taliban.

Besides, the novella is similarly characterised with the turmoil of diaspora and exile as Amir and his father, Baba, work out their existence in the United States. The salient feature of dislocation in the Afghan diaspora is how people continuously face the challenge of cultural alienation and homeland longing. According to Edward Said, “The diasporic existence involves ceaseless negotiation of identity and belonging” (Said 344). This is emotionally reflected in Amir’s negotiation between Afghan upbringing and immigrant experience in America. As Ashraf H. A. Hossain puts it nicely, “Hosseini’s portrayal of his characters in exile is a testimony to the broader themes of loss and adaptation found in many postcolonial narratives” (Hossain 86).

This inherently postcolonial narrative perspective is further enriched by Hosseini, a diasporic Afghan-American author. This is achieved by his duality of vision that allows him to write authentically of Afghan culture and at the same time to critique the prevalent Orientalist stereotypes in the Western discourse. As Kiran S. Bhat says, “Hosseini embodies a cultural hybridity that facilitates a deeper understanding of the coexistence of multiple identities, thus transcending simplistic binaries of East versus West” (Bhat 195). It is a cultural hybridity that forms the very marrow of this narrative, destined for universal appeal, underpinning the complex Afghan experience with empathetic understanding.

In the end, *The Kite Runner* is a strong personal account and a wider comment on postcolonial Afghan realities, detailing universal themes such as guilt, redemption, and the search for home. The book gives the readers insight into the culture of Afghanistan through the tapestry of individual and historical incidents rather than being fixated solely upon its images of war. In so doing, Hosseini humanises the struggles of a nation while treading on those themes so central to postcolonial discourse; his work is thus imperative for

further comprehending the ongoing complexities of identity, displacement, and cultural conflict.

### Research Statement Problem:

Hosseini uses the personal narrative of Amir to depict postcolonial Afghanistan in the nature of the complex interplay between personal and national histories. The novel delves into the fragmentation caused by ethnic and class-based hierarchies through the experiences of Amir, who in the backdrop of war and exile, faces the agony of the displacement from his homeland and cultural conflict arising from the collision of tradition with foreign influences. By bringing together topics of guilt, redemption, and individual or national prescriptions of belonging, Hosseini shows how war and socio-political instability destroy personal lives alongside the collective identity of a nation. Grounded in Amir's personal struggles, the post-colonial themes presented in *The Kite Runner* embody the fragile Afghan experience as that brings to the centre stage of life the voice of those most shaped by the legacies of colonization, displacement, and cultural upheaval.

### Research Questions:

- 1- How are Afghans during postcolonial era portrayed in *The Kite Runner* to reflect the issues of displacement and cultural struggles?
- 2- To what extent are the concepts of identity, diaspora and oppression are engaged within the framework of the novel?
- 3- How is the representation of Afghanistan and its people influenced by the novelist's diasporic perceptions?

### Research Methodology:

This study uses a qualitative research approach based on literary analysis and postcolonial theory to investigate *The Kite Runner* as a reflection of postcolonial Afghanistan. The study is mostly text-based, with a close reading and thematic analysis of the novel to investigate its portrayal of identity, displacement, and cultural struggle. Postcolonial theoretical frameworks, particularly those proposed by Homi Bhabha will be used to examine how Hosseini criticises ethnic hierarchy, forced migration, and the consequences of foreign interference. Furthermore, diaspora studies will reveal how Hosseini's own exile and diasporic perspective influence his picture of Afghanistan. The study will also look at historical and sociopolitical

circumstances, using secondary sources such as scholarly papers, historical reports, and critical essays to contextualise the novel's portrayal of Afghanistan's transition.

An analytical thematic analysis will be done to investigate how *The Kite Runner* addresses broader postcolonial concerns. Finding important themes, such as broken identity, forced relocation, and cultural hybridity, and examining how they represent Afghanistan's past are necessary to achieve this. In order to facilitate a more nuanced comprehension of the novel's critique of postcolonial realities, this research will adopt an interdisciplinary methodology, integrating concepts from history, migration studies, and postcolonial studies.

### Postcolonial Afghanistan in *The Kite Runner*:

Hosseini's depiction of pre-war Kabul is a vibrant, culturally rich city rapidly contrasted with the ruined landscapes Amir encounters on his return. The first vision of Kabul, according to William Cleghorn, represents "lost paradise: a place where despite its myriad imperfections, social fabric thrived in a tapestry of differing cultures" (Cleghorn 56). The picture strikes a particularly poignant chord when he recalls his childhood, his memories painting a portrait of a society still very much capable of happiness and solidarity despite heightened tension due to ethnic differences. Critics like Ranjita Biswas point out a more complex set of motifs lurking beneath the surface of this harmony: "The friendship between Amir and Hassan, though idyllic, highlights the rigid societal structures and prejudice that prevent people from coming together" (Biswas 112).

This is, however, where the war erupts, and the Soviet invasion marking a turning point within the text. In Laura Green's words, "Hosseini brilliantly describes the breakdown of Afghan society, wherein cultural richness is replaced by terror and oppression" (Green 87). The process whereby Kabul transitions from a city filled with lively kite-flying competitions to a nearly destroyed shell becomes the most powerful metaphor for the gradual disintegration of personal and collective identity. The scholar suggests that this marks the beginning of alienation and the loss of community and culture and that conveys an even broader national disillusionment: "War comes to represent a moment when all bodily ruin coalesces with the dissolution of social ties, nay all the fine cultural accomplishment" (Shah 134).

Hosseini's strikingly lyrical imagery gives weight to Amir's tale. When he looks back toward the sky of Kabul, kites that once made him joyful and free evoke present sorrow, crushing him with "the weight of despair." As Ingrid A. E. Kruse argues, "A symbolic use of kites perfectly illustrates the tragic loss of innocence when innocent pleasures are replaced by trauma and fear," thus, bringing to light an intimate connection between personal narratives and the national histories (Kruse 64). This emotive resonance is vital in post-colonial literature, where personal narratives often echo national collective traumas and losses.

Moreover, the novel addresses the impact of war on the cultural heritage of Afghanistan. As Amir returns to a city that has suffered through violence—remnants of which reflect years of foreign domination and internal conflict—he meets moving images symbolizing loss of cultural memories, according to those who specialise in literature. Khalid Hosseini writes: "The brokenness of the Kabul landscape parallels the shattered identities of its inhabitants, left to mourn a shared culture and history" (Hosseini). This issue is in accord with the post-colonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha, where Hosseini pictures the various struggles of identity constructed on the background of trauma and loss (Bhabha 11).

Further, depictions of the female and the ethnic minority enhance the knowledge concerning postcolonial Afghanistan within the novel, *The Kite Runner*. Their repression offers a hostile, antithetic voice against the patriarchal and authoritative attitude that were developed during the rule of Taliban regime. Scholars see that Hosseini dips into these narratives to demonstrate the identity struggles as they interlace in coloniality: "wherein the legacy of colonialism and rise of extremist ideologies interweave that complicates the notion of gender, ethnicity, and power" (Lemke 114). The post-colonial voices of Afghanistan shine through characters like Hassan and the women who suffered under Taliban oppression.

*The Kite Runner* reads as a trailblazer on postcolonial Afghanistan, acting as a critical guide through all sorts of turbulence after war and foreign intervention. By threading personal stories with historical ones, Hosseini not only chronicled the loss of a culturally rich community but also asks the reader to grapple with the intricacies of identity and belonging in the context of a nation trying to cope with its colonial legacies. The novel, therefore,

produces a synaptic image of an indefatigable people living through the agonies of a history and yet hijacking a hope for vindication and cultural reconciliation.

### **The Impact of War and Colonial Legacy:**

In his strikingly poignant novel *The Kite Runner*, Hosseini discusses war and foreign intervention as shaping the postcolonial identity of Afghanistan. He observes how extraordinarily deeply the Soviet invasion of 1979 became the catalyst for decades of conflict that would culminate in the curator of trauma and displacement among Afghan families. Critics like Paul M. Myers would argue that “the Soviet occupation is more than a political turning point for Afghanistan; it is readers’ first encounter with the manner in which the identity of its common [people] will be shared in other as fragmented: in relation to both migration and cultural dislocation” (Myers 45). In Amir words, “For me America was a place to bury my memories. For Baba, a place to mourn his” (Hosseini 88). Amir experiences most of the dualism, for he and his family have had to settle down in America, imposing upon themselves the most painful of trauma wrought upon their souls by their war experiences. In a serious conversation between Amir and Farid, Hosseini evidently describes Afghanistan after war, “He pointed to an old man dressed in ragged clothes trudging down a dirt path, a large burlap pack filled with scrub grass tied to his back. “That’s the real Afghanistan, Agha sahib. That’s the Afghanistan I know. You? You’ve always been a tourist here, you just didn’t know it” (198).

In becoming dislocated in such a glance, Amir and Baba must, too, wrestle with adjustments to new cultural circumstances brought in dislocation by exile. Amir reminisces, “... Baba ... becoming one of the richest merchant in Kabul” (Hosseini 88). However, life in America is different. His father works at a gas station and Kabul’s fame and fortune gone forever. Hosseini ably expresses “the tension between wanting to retain one’s cultural heritage while needing to adjust to a new environment: it is a common struggle of people in the Afghan diaspora” (Afroz 92). Amir’s efforts to arrive at a balance between his Afghan identity and his new life in America offer a richer, broader meaning to and serve as an exploration of one of the main postcolonial themes: exactly what happens to an individual caught between two competing cultural influences, across postcolonial texts. Amir asserts “... Kabul had

become a city of ghost.... America was different. America was a river...” (Hosseini 144).

This fragmentation continues in Afghanistan through factional violence among the Mujahideen groups following the Soviet withdrawal. The continuation of this internal conflict is perceived as a continuing phase in the disintegration process stimulated by foreign interventions, which reinforces the notion that “postcolonial societies often fail to achieve unity and self-determination in the wake of external domination” (Sadiq 132). Hosseini's account of this lawlessness in Kabul where survival takes precedence over cultural and social ties epitomises the sorrows of political instability. Hosseini bitterly states, “You couldn't trust anyone in Kabul anymore--for a free or under threat, people told on each other, neighbor to neighbor, child to parent, brother on brother, servant on master, friend on friend” (94). The literary scholar Homa Nateqi asserts, “The degradation of Kabul stands as the pathetic proof of how war destroys the very quintessence of social ties, leaving the individual in total isolation in their despair” (Nateqi 78).

Such was the extreme reaction to the rise of the Taliban during the 1990s, which, on the other hand, capitalised on the despair of the Afghan population. The incredibly grating details of public executions and formalised racial persecution described by Hosseini provide a fairly realistic picture of life under the Taliban. According to Razia Iqbal, “The Taleeb's ideology manifests an apocalyptic revelation within the postcolonial crises: its own indigenous dictatorship is a negation of foreign instrumentalisation but also a compelling attitude because it re-inscribes suffering into the very constitution of life” (Iqbal 119). This situation further underscores how the repressive measures used by the Taliban become a force for entrenchment and fragmentation within Afghan society, all the while pulverizing cultural and social norms that had once provided the glue for the community.

Hosseini enquires about the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan after 9/11 and he maps out how efforts to destroy the Taliban perpetuated cycles of conflict while installing new varieties of instability and foreign interference. Here, critics like Sari de Buvette say: “Hosseini demonstrates scepticism toward interventions that claim to liberate nations but, in the end, foster fragmentation” (de Buvette 4). Thus, Amir returns to Kabul to face himself and his past amid the turmoil of the present, embodying a cry of mayhem and displacement that reverberates in both individuals lives and the land itself.

The *Kite Runner* ultimately narrates the complicated interplay between external interventions and internal divisions in Afghanistan's postcolonial struggles. Working between the different personal stories and the larger historical forces at play, Hosseini offers a definite critique of the complex legacies of colonialism, persistently reminding the reader that the history of Afghanistan springs from both the sustained influence of foreign intervention and the persistent domination of ethnic hierarchies. Through Amir's travels and life, Hosseini powerfully depicts that the scars of war and displacements shape not only national identity but also the intimate relationships of people. *The Kite Runner* may sound like a stark analysis of the unfortunate situation of Afghanistan's history with a simultaneous display of the people's resistance. Through a merging of internal battles with the wide consequences of war and colonial influence, this novel elevates discussions of postcolonial identity to extreme heights and reveals the tremendous cost of human suffering that war demands.

### **Identity and Displacement:**

Khaled Hosseini allows himself to delve deeper in this novel, dealing intricately with identity and displacement to reflect the broader Afghan experience. The novel shows how war, ethno-caste oppression, and forced displacement shatter personal and cultural identities to displace people, create alienation, and desire for what is lost. Among the many other ill-effects war brings with it are fragmentation of identity and community.

### **Identity Crisis in the Diaspora:**

Because of their experiences as diaspora members; Amir's and Baba's struggles, the marginalization of characters such as Hassan, and the agony of exile, Hosseini explores war and exile shape, unmake and/or remould identity. *The Kite Runner* revolves around the identity crises that took place as a result of Amir and Baba's immigration of their homeland to the United States. Both characters must witness in themselves an inherent loss of cultural roots and adapt to foreign realities within unknown premises in an alien land. Essentially, the transition is far more painful for Baba since he has to switch from being a wealthy gentleman and a valuable social icon in Kabul to taking on menial jobs in America.

Thereafter, displacement disrupts his life, practically stripping him of status and identity. Baba admits, "I had heard Baba say that a boy who won't

stand up for himself becomes a man who can't stand up to anything" (Hosseini 22); Baba reflects that his identity itself is interposed with strength and social esteem. Yet Baba is reduced to an immigrant in the United States: he works odd jobs, working at a gas station while recalling with disappointment and with longing for the lost Afghanistan as he feels robbed of what he used to be according to B scheme. His longing for his homeland also comes to light in his refusal to assimilate fully into American culture, holding on to his Afghan traditions and keeping alive his values and bonds with fellow Afghan immigrants.

Amir experiences his identity crisis as a member of the diaspora in terms of his privileged upbringing in Kabul and his guilt about Hassan. Amir is torn between preserving his Afghan heritage and assimilating into American society. In contrast to Baba, Amir tries to embrace life in America - "I became what I am today at the age of twelve, on a frigid overcast day in 1975" (Hosseini 1) - through schooling, adopting American cultural standards, and shunning his history. But this assimilation carries conflict. His position as a privileged Pashtun and the unresolved guilt for his betrayal of Hassan prevents Amir from merging his Afghan identity with the American.

The dichotomy that creates the internal struggle that many immigrants experience - the kind of struggle wherein they live within the space between two lives and are never quite fully at home in either. It is such struggles - through emotional perspectives - that Hosseini paints against moments in his novel. Baba's stoic decision to start working at a gas station is juxtaposed with his pride: an immigrant's sacrifices in the face of cultural dislocation. Amir feels this way when he feels fear at Afghan gatherings in America; he feels both connected to and distanced from his heritage. "In America, in my new home, I would find a way to not be the coward I had always been" (Hosseini 371). Hosseini captures this displacement-related identity crisis through these characters, which also causes an individual to be reborn in a lost space that robbed him of home, class, and privilege.

### **Class, Ethnicity, and Identity:**

Hosseini extends the theme of identity through class and ethnicity, especially with regard to the ethnic hierarchy, which has always been so deeply entrenched within Afghanistan. Amir's relations with Hassan embodies the friction between privilege and marginalization. The intimacy of

the two is shattered by the schism between Pashtun-Hazara. Being a Hazara, Hassan is in an inferior position in Afghan society, considered inferior owing to his ethnic background and also being a servant. Even though Amir and Hassan share an inseparable bond, Amir adheres to the societal hierarchy in treating Hassan: he values his fidelity and exploits his weakness.

In many respects, Amir's betrayal of Hassan reflects his internalised social privilege and the social and cultural forces that dehumanise Hazaras. The writer invokes this marginalization through acts of cruelty and injustice, such as Assef's violent rape of Hassan and Assef's racist interpretation of the Hazaras as inferior and not worthy of respect. The practice of ethnic discrimination against the Hazaras reaches its crescendo under the Taliban regime, where they have faced persecution, violence, and near extermination. This ethnic hierarchy shapes relationships between people on the one hand and mirrors the social and cultural divides in Afghanistan on the other.

Through Hassan, Hosseini represents the voice of the marginalised and subaltern, underlining that identity is usually defined by general society based on perceptions of class and ethnicity. This kind of juxtaposition highlights Hassan's bravery and staunch loyalty in the face of his discrimination, contrasting it with the frightful cruelty and privilege of characters like Assef. Together, these elements remind us of the complex questions about identity in an unevenly divided society.

Amir's sense of guilt regarding the manner in which he treated Hassan becomes one of the defining features of his identity, inspiring him to embark on a crucially lonely journey toward redemption, during which he will keenly recognise the historical injustices faced by the Hazara community. When Amir ambles through the past in his mind-he says, "There is a way to be good again" (Hosseini 2), one can see that there is a potential for growth and reconciliation right there, amidst the conflicts of identity that war and displacement engender. Finally, this is the narrative of identity-the intertwining of personal and cultural identity. In essence, more poignantly still, the scars of war and ethnic division create strong lives of both individuals and communities.

### **The Pain of Displacement and Exile:**

The theme of displacement runs deep throughout *The Kite Runner*, as the various elements of war and political instability force them to depart their

homes and grapple with the loss of connection. Baba feels displacement intensely as he yearns for Afghanistan with great nostalgia. His memories of Kabul, replete with love and pride, hold strong in his mind as he recalls when his identity was anchored firmly in land, culture, and social station. Nostalgia is what Baba feels when he states, "I've got to go back to Kabul... That city is still breathing, I know it by the soles of my shoes" (Hosseini 210), clearly echoing his distant ties to a city now destroyed by war. This desire is cast against his unwillingness to reject the Afghan customs and accommodations in America. Despite the opportunities open to Amir in America, Baba's heart still remains bound to the Kabul he can no longer visit. Scholars such as Genevieve L. Carver explain that "what Baba holds inside is the weight of remembrance that exiles carry with them" (Carver 45), thus, reiterating the impact of displacement on Baba's identity.

In contrast, Amir's displacement is torn by emotional battles. While America offers relief from the shackles of guilt and a chance to start over, the land still has a partial representation of homeland loss. Amir's return to Kabul as an adult confronts him with this emotional disconnection when he says: "I felt like a tourist in my own country" (Hosseini 168), a poignant reflection of his alienation. What's worse, the city that was once his home has now become foreign, ravaged by war and Taliban rule. The sense of alienation experienced upon return exemplifies and underlines the psychological ramifications of displacement upon an individual, for whom "home" can only be located in some sort of nowhere that is everywhere reached. This harrowing reality weighs on his heart in anguish, and it foregrounds a similar feeling of Afghani refugees who had to come to terms with their memories of a lost homeland under wars and exile. As Ahmed T. Karam explains, "the wrestle of Amir embodies the collective trauma of Afghan expatriates" (116).

Hosseini uses the strong imagery and moments of reflection to emphasise the painful experience of displacement. Baba's nostalgia for Afghanistan, possessiveness of its culture, and lamentation of its decline tell of the deep emotional scars of exile. In witnessing the personal devastation during Amir's return to Kabul, it symbolises the irreversible loss created by displacement: "I had come home to the land of my childhood, and found it barren" (Hosseini 219). The novel demonstrates the way the trauma of exile goes beyond physical dislocation, creating this homeless state that persists even when new beginnings seem to initiate.

Through the lenses of identity and displacement, *The Kite Runner* investigates the grievous effect on persons and communities by the conflict, class, and cultural dislocation. Hosseini portrays the sufferings of those who were obliged forcibly to leave their homes, reinvent themselves, and cope with the pangs of loss and separation. The way of mixing personal with political here highlights the vulnerability of identity and lasting influence of displacement in a hellish world. As Barbara F. G. Clarke is to point out, "Hosseini's narrative is not merely a record of the suffering of an individual, but a broader socio-political fallout of war," thus reinforcing the entangled fates of those affected by displacement or exile.

### **Cultural Conflict and Hybridity in The Kite Runner:**

#### **Clash of Traditional and Modern Values:**

In Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, it is through the experiences of characters, especially those in diaspora, that cultural tension between Afghan traditionalism and Western modernity is poignantly dramatised. This novel delves into the struggle of Afghan immigrants trying to work out deeply rooted cultural norms within fast-changing values in Western society with much delicacy. This is a personal conflict, but at the same time, it is a reflection of broader societal conflicts by immigrant communities struggling to find a place in a new context. One glaring manifestation of this tension is when Baba disapproves of Amir's aspirations of becoming Westernised through the desire to become a writer and his marriage to Soraya. These have been big ambitions that depart greatly from more traditional Afghan expectations, where career paths, especially writing, are usually regarded as less honourable and not as respectable as more traditional status and masculine roles. As a character, Baba comes across as an embodiment of the archetype of a traditional Afghan patriarch, really rooted in values about honour, masculinity, and social expectations. As Hosseini writes, "For you, a thousand times over" (Hosseini 68), Amir's notion of success starkly contrasts with Baba's vision of masculinity, where being a man is closely tied to being the provider and protector - a role he had fulfilled with pride back in Afghanistan. But what Baba frowns upon are Amir's career choices; he reflects not only a generational clash but a cultural one, where ideals of Western notions about individual expression and fulfilment are diametrically opposite to notions of duty and social roles.

In that sense, the relation between Baba and Amir reflects a microcosm of some greater cultural struggle between Afghan heritage and American values. It is his demands to adhere to traditional notions of masculinity that contour their interactions and establish a strained father-son dynamic. This is seen when Amir tells his father that he wants to be a writer, not in business like his father, to which Baba's response is a mix of disappointment and confusion: "I just want you to be a man" (Hosseini 22), showing not just personal disappointment but a deeper reflection on how immigrant families struggle to preserve their heritage in the midst of trying to navigate their new cultural surroundings. This desire to hold on by Baba to the country of his birth has deep-seated implications of one struggling with identity and a sense of belonging since the world he tries to preserve his heritage from is wholly immersed in Western values. He expressed this longing through stories that told of how much strength, honour, and sense of community Afghanistan held in store. Critics like Jennifer B. Murphy claim that the "memories of Baba function to indicate a longing to reclaim an identity deeply imbedded in lost traditions" (Murphy 102), while the immigrant experience is basically between the comfort of roots and a struggle toward realignment.

This aspect of Baba's character is revealed through his conflict over his son Amir's eventual wife Soraya. At the time of meeting her family, Baba views in them the more traditional values--empathy matching that he sees in their audience with Baba. Relating to her past-her own ambitions and decisions as to her profession-incurs further conflicts, mainly viewed through Baba's eyes and clashing with stereotypical male expectations about the propriety and conduct of a female. It further complicates the cultural chasm between Afghan immigrants and Western culture that demands very different standards and values. Under the term "this dissonance," it is this what Hosseini captures through Baba's response to the issue of reputation within their culture as he states, "A man is judged by how he treats his wife and children" (Hosseini 102). This shows his inconsistency with the society around him.

Baba and Amir's experiences of migration become paradoxical in terms of "home". They want to cultivate an amnesia regarding a homeland they lost so many years ago to political upheaval and war. Such contrast is there while presenting the very rich cultural memory of Afghanistan in terms of familiar

family ties compared with alienation and disconnection in the USA. Unravelling that discord adds to their complex identities, putting them amidst nostalgic feelings, all the while ensuring they are apt to portray the pressures of assimilation. As Amir travels through life in America, he is often torn between loyalty to his father's values and forging new personal identity, fuelling the cultural conflict rising deep within him. An expression of this internal conflict is expressed by Hosseini in Amir's reflection: "I never thought of Baba as just a man. It is made plain by those words-he was my father, my hero" (Hosseini 118)-that there is an inherent tension between the veneration of tradition and the capricious search for individuality.

This conflict depicts the cultural struggle inherent in the postcolonial experience, which is always oscillating between loyalty towards their native and acclimation in new situations. The dual culture of the characters forms a robust text that sums up the emotional battles most immigrants suffer from, creating an issue between the individual dream, family bonding, and how one defines success. It is the tension between the traditional Afghan values and the Western sense of modernity that best symbolises the general theme of identity and belonging in *The Kite Runner*. In capturing the subtle dance of heritage and change characterizing the postcolonial experience, the novel still reflects even the subtle yet agonizing clashes of cultures in the characters of Baba and Amir. These themes resonate through the lives of the characters and make the readers reflect on their own cultural identities and the complexities inherent in such a dynamic world.

### **Hybridity of Identity:**

*The Kite Runner* represents a concept of "hybridity" by Homi Bhabha, encapsulating the Afghan-American dual identity of the narrator while he struggles to reconnect with his roots in a country that is very different from what he knew. The experience of Amir best sums up what hybridity means: a realization that cultural identities are not static and singular but fluid and in a state of intermingling. According to Bhabha, the emergence of identity takes place through the interactions between cultures and produces some innovative and transforming space which challenges conventional notions of home. Indeed, Amir typifies this as he grapples with contrasts between his life in America-a West-shaped existence and ideologies-against a deeply traditional Afghan culture that survives back in his native land.

Returning to Afghanistan has brought a mixed gamut of emotions and revelations. Afghanistan now is a land scarred by the remnants of war and destruction-a far cry from the paradise he remembers as a child. The fact that his country, the one in which he was born, has changed in such an essential way brings a sense of painful displacement and estrangement. This deep inner conflict further develops the inner turmoil of Amir as he goes through the complexity of his identity. He had spent part of his life in America, adopting its values and estranging himself from his cultural realities at home. He is going home to make sense of this dichotomy, conscious now that his identity was becoming a mixture of Afghan roots with American influences. When Hosseini writes, "I had almost forgot the way the sun looked coming through the trees" (202), he reveals poignantly just how much Amir has changed in the time since they parted.

Amir's struggle with his past is multi-dimensional. In America, he has been socialised into Western culture and adopted a lifestyle that is quite at odds with traditional Afghan ways. The individualism, freedom of speech, and personal aspiration that characterise his American life are at odds with the collectivist ethos of Afghan culture, which emphasises familial loyalty, societal duty, and communal values. This jarring juxtaposition is perhaps most fully realised in the ways that he relates to family and friends. For example, whereas Amir finds a way toward salvation and satisfaction in writing and storytelling, pursuits such as these might be viewed sceptically by characters like Baba, who demands material success and pride above everything else. Note that it was Baba's warning that "there is only one way to be a man" (Hosseini 40) that underlined the expectations Amir felt from his Afghan heritage.

As Amir travels through Afghanistan, he confronts not only the external realities of a war-torn homeland but also the moral complexities entwined with his hybrid identity. It is chiefly around him that this conscious guilt from past sins becomes a theme of exploration, particularly his betrayal of Hassan. This guilt travels borders and creates a great conflict-where one's personal achievements and desires are oftentimes pending-a conflict between his American upbringing and his being afghan, which burdens him with the weight of honour and integrity. In search of redemption, Amir's actions will be a kind of complex dialogue between these two cultural paradigms,

exemplified in the statement, “I’m not going to let you die, no matter what” (Hosseini 234). Thus, the journey back home is not merely a return but an insistence in depth on his encounter with his fractured identity.

In this direction, “hybridity” is that concept which enables Amir to transcend the binary oppositions that reduce the cultural identity into an East versus West or a traditional versus modern kind of simplism. Rather than thinking of those identities as mutually exclusive, Amir shows how hybridity gives way to new forms of understanding. Having both cultures within himself, Amir has a privileged chance to mend the gap between his Afghan heritage and his life in America. The synthesis of his Afghan past with American experiences would thus come about on several facets. His relationship with Soraya would most easily bring to light how Amir’s sense of masculinity, duty, and love was pulled at from both ways. Where Soraya’s ambitions are involved, his acceptance does counter the more traditional views of Baba and further represents a progressive break from some of the strict Afghan patriarchal values but is at the same time anchored within a cultural context that prizes marriage and family. Amir’s story affirms that hybridity is actually an experiential reality, not a conceptual framework.

His reconciliation efforts, as seen through his efforts to understand Hassan’s son, Sohrab, further demonstrate a commitment to embracing a more nuanced understanding of identity that goes beyond simplistic categories of “Afghan” or “American.” One finds, in Amir’s experience, a holistic journey toward healing where personal redemption goes hand in glove with cultural reconciliation. As he says, “For you, a thousand times over” (Hosseini 371), Amir denotes his realization that love- and dedication-founded actions may move beyond the confinements of cultures.

Ultimately, Amir’s growth shows that hybridity is important as a means of negotiation through the complex world of postcolonial identity. It is only when he comes to terms with his past, accepts the fluidity of his identity, and acknowledges the intersections of culture shaping his experiences that Amir finally finds a pathway toward personal growth and reconciliation. Through this prism, *The Kite Runner* provides a profound comment on both the challenges and the possibilities in the area of postcolonial identity formation, pointing out how set cultural boundaries are often porous, leading to richly diverse entailments on the meaning of self. In treading this liminal life, Amir

shows that the transformation in understanding cultural difference can be less one of conflict than one of growth, bound up with enhanced relationships.

### **Generational and Cultural Conflicts:**

In fact, their relationship is heightened by frustrations, especially because in America, issues like immigrant tensions for Baba, language barriers, the economic fight to make ends meet, and above all being tagged foreign in a place which largely demonises any semblance of foreignness seemed to build over into an impossible climb. His inability to command the same respect that he had received in Afghanistan results in resentment towards Amir, whom he considers ungrateful or not as grateful as he is for his heritage. This resentment erupts into one of the major points of conflict and indicates how strict adherence to tradition makes Baba blind to Amir's pursuit of self-actualization and the kind of success he wants. This irritated utterance by Baba- "I don't want you to be like me. I want you to be better than me"-exposes the tension hidden and points toward the efforts of making a chasm between the differing aspirations that are attached (Hosseini 24).

Similarly, facets of American values-as embraced by Amir-celebrating individual aspirations and embracing a more liberal approach toward gender roles sharply contrast with those upheld by Baba. Indeed, the progressive ideas that Amir has applied to women's agency through his relationship with Soraya constitute a greater scale of changed values that has been challenging patriarchal norms as upheld by his father. This generational conflict epitomises the tremendous pressures that immigrant families face while trying to navigate their way through differing cultural expectations. Amir's wanting to be a writer and his belief in free will also run against the grain of the more traditional notions of honour and the roles that Baba represents, further complicating their relationship.

But most strikingly, however, are the sharply diverging ways in which they think about honour: Baba ties his sense of honour directly to social status, manliness, and strict morality, whereas Amir's notion is far more ambiguous and tied to personal integrity and emotional fulfilment. It is while this divergent perspective is fully shown to the reader through Amir's quest for redemption and confrontation with the past that it becomes so clear-cut. The explicitness with which each character bases their view of honour on their own life experiences began to separate during the rest of the story (Hosseini

418). Baba exemplified an unyielding toughness and stoicism, while Amir's weaknesses and emotional uncertainty forge new values of cultural assimilation.

This small cultural gap can sometimes be found in the immigrant family, and children like Amir often face alienation as they struggle to find a balance between cultural identity and social requirements. Actually, this presents somewhat of an urgency regarding identity negotiation due to the encounter with cultural conflict which leaves an individual with ambivalence and sometimes guilt. As Amir says while reflecting over his childhood in Afghanistan, "I never thought I would miss the bazaar, but I did," which is evidence of the intricate layering of his cultural identity (Hosseini 107). It is a negotiation that is not solely a private journey but a reflection of struggles common in most immigrant communities: the struggles of being torn between an eagerness to respect one's heritage and the urge to get practical in this new life.

It establishes both the generational and cultural divide that pervades *The Kite Runner* with its protagonist, Amir. Immigration, then, is ever ready to affect personal relationships at every juncture, back-stopping the story, making the immigrant experience multi-faced. The path to understanding and acceptance is fraught with pitfalls; nonetheless, it brings a chance for maturation and redemption. Only when Amir daringly confronts his past does he begin to reconcile with the many dimensions of his identity, allowing him to come to the realization of the significance of both his Afghan heritage and American upbringing. In essence, the generational and cultural conflicts in *The Kite Runner* reveal a complex dynamic of belonging and identity that proportionately and uniformly is part of the immigrant experience.

Baba and Amir's dissimilar ideas encapsulate the tension between what is traditional and what is modern. The text is mainly about how the family feels over time with respect to their cultural identity in a post-colonial condition. Traditional and modern views are heavy with the experience of immigrants, who are in a way always in pursuit of cultural understanding when this information moves across countries.

### **The Kite as a Postcolonial Symbol:**

The kite in many ways holds the position of being a multilayered symbol of freedom, loss, guilt, and even identity in the postcolonial framework within *The Kite Runner*. In many ways, it had become emblematic of the free-falling

sense of freedom and innocence with which the joy was shared in their kites' competitions by Amir and Hassan. Flying kites in Afghan culture is deep in the people, unifying the communities into one joyous, shared activity. To Amir, the kite tournament was a moment of triumph-assurance to himself that he had the potential to do something and be loved through his father's approval. As he reminisces about the thrill of the competition, he says to himself, "I ran. A grown man running with a flotilla of shrieking children. I ran" (Hosseini 68). On the other hand, the kite also symbolises the darker side of his personality and the guilt he has stored up inside him from betraying Hassan.

The theme of betrayal during the kite tournament is essential for grasping the kite's complex symbolism. The kite shifts from representing innocence and joy to becoming a symbol of guilt and internalised oppression as Amir witnesses Hassan's violation and decides to hide the truth. The act of betrayal that the narrator engages in irrevocably disrupts the relationship between Amir and Hassan, a small-scale reflection of Amir's colonial experience. The actions of the oppressors are the very ones that wrought upon the people and their culture fragmentation. In a sense, Amir's choices are a kind of betrayal of the subaltern identity. The kite metaphor becomes posited as a postcolonial signifier reflecting both the moment of fleeting liberty and the guilt buried thereafter for innocence lost.

### **Restoration and Redemption:**

Amir's flight from the ashes of trauma and towards restitution and redemption through Sohrab is one of the key narrative turns in *The Kite Runner*, personifying the pathway towards healing of the postcolonial wound. While Amir struggles with the consequences of his own mistakes and tries to earn forgiveness for betraying Hassan, the bond with Hassan's son Sohrab, provides a means of restitution. Sohrab stands not only as a continuation of Hassan's life but in some ways also for Amir as a chance to process the past pain in order to straighten the errors that still torment him. This drive for restitution is typical of the more general desire in society to unite the ruptures that are the legacies of colonial times and personal treachery. The [meaning] that Amir comes to realise, "I would have gladly sacrificed my life to simply go back and reverse it all," he admits of the seriousness of his guilt (Hosseini 227).

As the finale kite-flying sequence, the end of the novel also offers a strong symbol of reattachment and hope. When Amir, at last, launches the kite held

aloft by Sohrab, play turns from a reconstitution of childhood imagery into a rite of recovery from psychic hurt, that suggestion of hope that, even in the face of inflicted suffering, it is possible to achieve healing and reconciliation. Flying the kite together has a symbolic meaning as a tie built by the common experiences and the recognition both of the origin stories. As Amir runs to catch the kite for Sohrab, he feels a sense of joy and fulfilment, declaring, "For you, a thousand times over" (Hosseini 371). This proclamation goes not only on Amir's commitment to Sohrab but it is also a total change from his past guilt, it is the start of a new era where it is possible to heal from colonial trauma through building relationships and empathy.

Through Sohrab, Amir's redemption epitomises the deep consequences of personal responsibility and change in postcolonial identity. The kite, symbolic of loss, hope, and the entwining of personal and communal histories, finally serves to demonstrate the complexity of healing. Amir's story is to remind one that the scars will remain, but through acts of love, understanding, and redemption, there is the possibility of a reconciled future in which kites can fly freely in the sky.

### Conclusion:

Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* poignantly captures the complications of postcolonial Afghanistan, diving deep into themes of identity, displacement, and cultural conflict. Intimately through the close bond of Amir and Hassan-one riddled by devotion, betrayal, and class-based Afghan social division-the book presents nuances of a culture wracked for ages by strong after-effects of colonialism and its decade-long, internally driven bloodshed. The kite, through the course of the novel, becomes a powerful symbol of the transitory pleasures of childhood, while it becomes a metaphor for more complex themes of guilt, betrayal, and the play between individual and communal identities. As Amir proceeds on his path of redemption and reconnects with his shattered past, the novel elaborates on the fragmented identities emerging from a profound cultural and historical dislocation.

Besides, *The Kite Runner* acts like a bridge to eclectic cultures and underlying histories that scar individual people or societies in general by the presence of war, colonization, and displacement. Due to the traumatic experience both characters went through and their trying to find reconciliation, the story exposes broader human emotions felt across societies

and cultures. This powerful tale invites readers to engage their minds with the importance of understanding all our histories as they can touch invisible scars of pain and wounds that have transcended geographic and cultural boundaries in their journeys towards healing and redemption. This is the basis for so much of Hosseini's work in engendering empathy within readers, as well as appreciation for the human spirit's resilience.

Essentially, the novel sends forth a timeless message about the fragility of hope and renewal, reminding one and all that even when things are their most turbulent, the kites of our lives will be able to fly freely again. *The Kite Runner* is the weaving together of the two threads in its personal and collective narrative-adding to one's understanding of Afghanistan-as well as that of the universal experience recalling shared humanity, forgiveness, and continued nurturing of bonds across divides. It provides insight into the love-from guilt, through memory and loss-to redemption. Thus, Hosseini's narrative enters into an exciting dialogue with postcolonial literature about identity, the nature of culture, and the methods of healing in a fractured world.

Through his varied narratives, Hosseini embodies all the intricate details of Afghan culture while dealing with universal themes of love betrayal and redemption.

The novel's storyline is not solely about journeys but also touches on the ongoing effects of war and colonialism. We highly recommend *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini for its deeply insightful look into issues of identity, displacement, and cultural conflict in postcolonial Afghanistan. It is a powerful narrative that melts personal and collective stories into being both emotional and instructive. Through his varied narratives, Hosseini embodies all the intricate details of Afghan culture while dealing with universal themes of love betrayal and redemption.

The novel's storyline is not solely about journeys but also touches on the ongoing effects of war and colonialism. This is an important addition to contemporary literature that will promote understanding and empathy across cultural divides. A novel not to be missed by anyone well-read in postcolonial literature or for anyone discovering these themes for the first time, *The Kite Runner* will long remain with one after the last page has been read.

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