



SOCIO-CULTURAL REFLECTIONS OF DIASPORIC SENSIBILITY: A STUDY OF KHALED HOSSEINI'S *THE KITE RUNNER*

Mahwash Fatma, Dr. Manju Roy,

Research Scholar, Professor & Head,

Univ. Dept. of English

L. N. Mithila University, Darbhanga- 846004, India.

Abstract

Khaled Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner* gives a vivid picture of diasporic sensibility. This paper first gives a brief introduction to diaspora and then describes how it impacts people. In the novel, *The Kite Runner*, the main cause of displacement is the war and violence in the country. This paper seeks how cultural factors affect the lives of immigrants. They miss their homeland in the host country, but for the sake of betterment, they face all the hurdles. They have to deal with issues such as social stratification, cultural crises, rootlessness and nostalgia etc. They also suffer from mental trauma; they think that if they adopt the new culture of the host country, they will lose their own culture as well as their identity, so they always spend their lives in a dilemma of whether to be or not to be.

Key Words: Diasporic Sensibility, immigrants, social stratification, cultural crisis, rootlessness, mental trauma

Introduction

The term diaspora is a Greek word meaning to 'scatter,' it refers to a group of people who maintain their heritage outside of their country of origin. Diasporic literature is a very vast concept that includes all those literary works written by authors outside their native country, but these works are associated with native culture and background. So, diasporic sensibility majorly concerns social stratification, cultural clashes, alienation, marginalization, race, identity crisis and nostalgia etc. It also addresses issues related to the amalgamation or disintegration of cultures. As Sturt Hall suggests that Cultural identities are constantly evolving, developing, and transforming. He states,

The Diasporic experience as I intended it here is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of identity which lives with and through, not despite difference, by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (235)

Khaled Hosseini is a wonderful novelist and short-story writer. Originally an Afghani he is now an American citizen and lives in Northern California. He is currently a goodwill envoy for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Through the Khaled Hosseini Foundation, he provides humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. He was inspired to initiate this foundation when he visited Afghanistan in 2007. His literary works, including *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *The Mountain Echoed* have fascinated readers around the world. His bestsellers *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* were released in more than thirty different nations. Both these novels have been set in Afghanistan, showing Hosseini's devotion to his homeland extends beyond his writings. His activism for better Afghanistan is proof

of his love for the homeland. According to Nielsen BookScan, *The Kite Runner* secured the third-best selling position in the United States in 2005. In 2006 and 2007, he received the “South African Books Prize” for his debut novel, “*The Kite Runner*.”

METHODOLOGY

In the present analysis, the research problem is to investigate how socio-cultural factors expose the diasporic sensibility of Khaled Hosseini as reflected mainly in *The Kite Runner*. The data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The detailed analysis of the texts of Hosseini’s novel *The Kite Runner*, some critical writings and browsing on the internet give brief data to answer these questions.

THE PROCEDURE OF THE RESEARCH

According to the investigated extensive diasporic features, the analysis of the text has been performed from different perspectives; Socio-Cultural reflections of the diasporic sensibility and the psyche of the protagonist.

Discussion

The prime objective of this paper is to analyse the socio-cultural condition of the protagonist’s native land as well as his living in the U.S. This paper also highlights the sense of diaspora in the work of Khaled Hosseini.

DIASPORIC SENSIBILITY

Cultural crisis and rootlessness have been important themes in the novel. And this novel is something autobiographical too. The story revolves around the struggle of the protagonist and his father to adjust to a new place. They have to face issues like cultural crises and social establishment. In this novel, the theme of diaspora has been highly prominent. It also explains the individual’s relationship to former homeland and the present one, to a culture left behind and to a culture now assimilated. Basically, diasporic Sensibility is a person’s diasporic experiences and feelings. So, they experience cultural, geographical as well as emotional displacement that reflects the plural identity of the writer. Rebecca Stuhr, explains that in the intermediate stage, Amir and his father adjust to life in a new country, in a vastly different culture, and under reduced circumstances of life both in terms of their economic and social status.

In the novel, when the political situation in the country drastically changed, Afghanistan was under control by Afghan communist and Russian soldiers. Amir and his father were fleeing to Pakistan for safety. They leave the country at night and leave no evidence of their escape, even though they do not tell their servant because they think that in Afghanistan no one can trust anyone. The informers are everywhere:

You couldn’t trust anyone in Kabul anymore- for a flee or under threat, people told on each other, neighbour on neighbour, child on parent, brother on brother, servant on master, friend on friend.” (104)

When they departed from the country Amir thinks that his father is leaving the country where he planned his life, built his dream, and earned respect and only two things are going along - “...One disappointing son and two suitcases.” (114)

They eventually go to California after leaving Afghanistan. In California, they lived as an Afghan immigrant committee. Here his father faces a lot of hardship in their life adjusting to a new country which is different in culture. In America, they were living with blue-collar workers; most of the people were drivers, policemen, gas station attendants etc. His father also works in a gas station, which is lower than his status. He also says that his father was the only Republican in the building. One day when they went to the market area, his father felt embarrassed because he had no cash and he gave a check to the shopkeeper but the owner of the shop asked him for his ID. And also said to Amir’s father, I don’t want to see you here.

It turned out that Baba had no cash on him for the oranges He’d written Mr. Nguyen a check and Mr. Nguyen had asked for an ID. “He wants to see my licence, “Baba bellowed in Farsi. “Almost two years we’ve bought his damn fruits and put money in his pocket and the son of a dog wants to see my license.” (118)

Besides these hardships, his father is still adjusting to life in America for the sake of Amir. He thinks that he just wanted to tell how much his father was respected in his native country:

...I wanted to tell them that, in Kabul, we snapped a tree branch and used it as a credit card. Hassan and I would take the wooden stick to the bread maker. He'd carve notches on our stick with his knife, one notch for each loaf of naan he'd pull for us from Tandoor's roaring flames. At the end of the month, my father paid him for the number of notches on the stick. That was it. No questions. No ID. (119)

Their transition is cushioned because Amir and his father live in an area where most of the people were refugees from Afghanistan. They shared their customs, religion, language and food also. They also share their pain of exile and their longing for their homeland. But his father still misses their homeland. He missed the sugarcane field, gardens, people's greetings and the bustling aisles of the Shor Bazaar.

“...For me, America was a place to bury my memories.

For Baba, a place to mourn his.” (120)

Amir sees that most of the time his father feels loneliness or even feels empty or depressed inside. One day, when Amir asked his father to return to their native land, his father told him that the place was not good for him, so we have to live there for a better tomorrow. After one month in the U.S., his father got a job in a gas station, which was not suitable for him, but to adjust to a new country he has to do it.

Almost after a year, his father started working in a flea market every Sunday for extra money, making this new country feel more like home. Here he sold the thing for a very small profit, but he was satisfied because at least people know him and his good reputation.

The Afghan section of the flea market has a very interesting view because the immigrants maintained a way of life in an adjacent country. When Amir graduated, his father gave him a treat in an Afghan kabob house; this showed how much he misses their homeland. It was also located in the Flea market area. This flea market is something more than daily work because...

“The only thing that flowed more than tea in those isle was Afghan gossip. Tea, Politics, and Scandal, the ingredients of an Afghan Sunday at the flea market.” (128)

Another important aspect of the flea market in diasporic culture is Amir's meeting with Soraya. Soraya is the daughter of General Taheri, they lived in America, and there is also a cultural diversity between Afghan and American people. Their living standards were different but they married and tried to understand one another's culture.

The marriage scenes in Afghan and American culture were also totally different, even Amir doesn't know about Soraya's family until after the wedding:

In America, people here marry for love, family name and ancestry never even come into the equation. They adopt that way too, as long as the baby is healthy, everyone is happy. But in Afghanistan, these things were not normal. (172-173)

One day, when Amir's family friend Rahim Khan called him to see him. Firstly, Amir refuses when he tells a shocking truth about his friend Hassan and insists he come and save Hassan's son Sohrab from the hand of cruel people. Then he becomes ready to come back to Kabul. But when he comes back he feels like a tourist in his own country.

Conclusion

Thus, we conclude that the diasporic sense in *The Kite Runner* has its roots in the sense of loss and alienation due to war and violence and this becomes the result of migration and expatriation. They have always struggled with their dual language and cultural identity. As people move away they have a harder to maintain culture. And when they returned to their homeland they were unfamiliar with the things in the country they considered home.

References

- (1) Adhikary, Prasad, Ramesh. Crisis of Cultural Identity in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. *Sch J Arts Humanit Soc Sci*, 24 May 2021. Pp. 179-187.
- (2) Cosby, Matt. "The Kite Runner Plot Summary." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 9 Feb 2014. Web. 2 Mar 2022. Accessed 24 Nov. 2022.
- (3) Dilnoza, Ruzmatova. "Diasporic Features in Khaled Hosseini's Novels." *Historical Sciences, Journal <<Bulletin Social-Economic and Humanitarian Research>>*, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2650405>.
- (4) Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- (5) "Khaled Hosseini- Alchetron, The Free Social Encyclopedia." *Alchetron*, Apr. 08, 2018, <http://alchetron.com/khaled-hosseini>.
- (6) Rutherford, Johnathon. *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd; 1st Edition (1 Jan. 2003), 1990.
- (7) Stuhr, Rebecca. *Reading Khaled Hosseini*. Greenwood, 2009.
- (8) Thaxton, Cirrelia. "What is Diaspora? - Definition and Meaning." *Study.com*, 24 Nov 2021, study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-diaspora-definition-meaning.html. Accessed 24 Nov 2022.

