



EMOTIONAL SILENCE AND REPRESSION IN *THE KITE RUNNER* BY KHALED HOSSEINI – A FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY

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Abstract

The article seeks to explore emotional silence and repression as key psychological patterns in the novel *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini with a focus on the role of suppressed emotions of guilt, fear and desire in guiding individual behaviour. The article relies on Sigmund Freud's model of the human psyche consisting of the id, ego and superego to explain emotional silence. According to this model, emotional silence can be seen as the product of the interplay between instinctual drives and the limitations posed by moral and social constraints. The theory of human psychology helps to understand why characters behave emotionally silent and how this behaviour creates tension within them. The article implies that emotional silence contributes to a psychological burden and confronting suppressed emotions is vital for personal growth and redemption. The article concludes that the balance between the id, ego, and superego is a crucial factor in resolving inner conflicts emphasizing the significance of emotional expression for psychological healing.

Keywords: Emotional silence, Repression, Psychoanalysis, Redemption.

I. INTRODUCTION

Silence and repression of emotions greatly affect human actions especially when guilt, trauma, and moral dilemmas arise. This is evident in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* where the protagonist's character is defined by his silence on matters of his emotions. After the betrayal of Hassan, Amir's silence becomes a very pivotal moment. It shows how silence plays a critical role in accordance with Freudian theory, the act of repression is an attempt to suppress certain thoughts within the unconscious mind, which in turn causes inner strife and mental anguish. According to Sigmund Freud, the process through which the id, ego, and superego conflict often leaves the individual with a feeling of unresolved inner turmoil due to the denial of expressing his/her emotions. In this case, Amir's act of silence demonstrates this phenomenon since he is dealing with a conflict between his guilt and moral conscience. Thus, this research seeks to explore the role of silence as a form of psychological defence and social behaviour in order to establish the importance of emotional expression for healing and self-redemption influencing people's identities and their actions towards others. Repression of emotions is thus an emotional issue arising out of fear and societal expectations among others.

II. PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH TO EMOTIONAL SILENCE AND REPRESSION

Emotional silence and repression represented as an important psychological phenomenon that plays an integral role in shaping the internal self as well as behavioural responses in *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini. Emotional silence can be described as an act of voluntary or involuntary restraint of feelings in which an individual deliberately avoids expressing unpleasant feelings such as guilt, fear or desire. Emotional silence is characterized by internal conflict rather than the absence of feelings. Emotional silence in the narrative represents an important psychological phenomenon that plays an integral role in shaping the internal self of an individual in accordance with the idea that an individual's current personality is shaped by an important childhood experience (Hosseini 1). The idea suggests that suppressed feelings remain embedded in an individual's mind shaping his behavioural responses over time in accordance with Cathy Caruth's idea that suppressed feelings remain an ongoing psychological phenomenon in an individual's mind. (4)

The concept of repression, which is closely associated with emotional silence can be defined as the process by which unpleasant emotions are kept outside of the conscious mind despite the fact that the emotions are still influencing the person. Unlike silence, which is the refusal to express emotions, repression is considered to be a deeper process in which the person is not aware of the emotions. In the narrative the concept of repression can be viewed as a sustaining process in which the inner tension is increased by the emotions which are not expressed but are still influencing the person indirectly. This idea is reinforced by Lois Tyson, who asserts that the process of repression is the process of pushing unpleasant emotions outside the conscious mind yet the emotions are influencing the person (15).

Emotional silence and repression in *The Kite Runner* can be viewed as a psychological phenomenon that has been developed as a result of internal conflict in the character minds. This internal conflict can be viewed in terms of the characteristics of the id, ego and superego in the human mind as suggested by Sigmund Freud. The id in the human mind consists of desires and instincts that need to be gratified immediately. On the other hand, the superego consists of moral values and ethics that need to be followed. The ego acts as a mediator between the id and superego. It tries to strike a balance between the two. Emotional silence can be viewed as a result of the ego suppressing the characteristics of the id in accordance with the superego which leads to repression in the character's minds. In other words, the emotions are not openly expressed by the characters. Amir and Baba's in the emotional silence in the narrative is an enduring psychological state and product of the conflict within. The struggle for the ego to achieve balance involves the repression of emotions which may compromise the individual's moral judgment. For Amir the concept of emotional silence therefore represents the conflict between his instinctive feelings and his internalized judgment leading to repression. On the other hand, the emotional silence of Baba can also be understood as the superego where his adherence to his moral ideals prevents the expression of his conflict. The ego, in both cases serves as the mediator suppressing the expression of the individual's emotions to avoid any form of psychological distress. Freud's theory, therefore explains the active nature of the emotional silence where the conflict between the id, ego and superego leads to repression causing the emotional strain (30)

Thus, repression and emotional silence are used as interconnected psychological patterns which create psychological pressure as shown in the narrative as the repression of emotions such as guilt and fear only increases the level of psychological pressure. The concept of emotional silence also restricts the expression of emotions leading to defensive behaviour such as the repression of emotions. The psychological aspects of human nature also support the concept of repression and emotional silence as the repression of emotions has been found to increase the level of internal pressure, thus increasing the level of repression or defensive behaviour (Gross and John 349).

In the end, emotional silence is only resolved through the act of confronting what has been suppressed. The movement from silence to expression allows individuals to find a way to release built-up emotional strain and find psychological healing. The idea that "there is a way to be good again" (Hosseini 209) supports the idea that redemption is not instantaneous but is built upon a willingness to confront inner conflict. Emotional expression is key to this movement as it translates silence into understanding and allows individuals to transcend repression and find their complete self.

Therefore, the article is focusing on the idea that emotional silence is an important source of psychological burdens since the suppressed feelings are working beneath the surface causing more psychological distress. It is through the acknowledgment and articulation of the suppressed feelings that individuals can grow towards self-awareness leading to their eventual redemption. This is because by becoming aware of their suppressed feelings, individuals can comprehend their psychological burdens.

Moreover, the article implies that inner conflicts cannot be addressed through denial or repression but rather through finding a balance between instinctual demands, moral demands and rational demands. This is based on Sigmund Freud's model of the mind, which proposes the role of the ego as a mediator between the demands of the id and the demands of the superego. This is only made possible by the healthy expression of emotions rather than their repression, which allows for psychological stability.

Thus, the process of emotional expression has been depicted not only as a release but also as a transformational process by which individuals are able to resolve the conflicts within. Finally, the article has also depicted the importance of facing and expressing one's emotions in order to resolve the psychological conflicts and attain inner harmony.

III. CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the role of emotional silence and repression is evident in *The Kite Runner*, where both concepts affect Amir psychologically and morally. Indeed, Amir's unwillingness to talk about his betrayal of Hassan proves that unconfessed feelings contribute to psychological conflicts and emotional pain. The book shows that repression only increases the effects of trauma, which leads to an identity split and problems in communication with others. In this way, Amir's life experience shows that one cannot avoid emotional reality; hence, the need to confront it arises inevitably.

From the Freudian psychoanalytic point of view, as developed by Sigmund Freud, the process undergone by Amir is indicative of the conflict between the id, ego, and superego, and repression is viewed as an initial mechanism of defence rather than a long-term solution. In this regard, the protagonist's willingness to face his past implies that he has broken his emotional silence and embarked on a path towards psychological well-being. Therefore, it can be argued that redemption and self-improvement can only be achieved by acknowledging repressed feelings.

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