

## Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, Gender Equality and Quality Education in the Novels of Khaled Hosseini

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### ABSTRACT

In the pieces of literature of Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*, and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* the theme of love and relationships, peace and justice, unfairness, and injustice is portrayed. His constant urge to spread peace all over Afghanistan is shown strongly. How his characters struggle for love and relationships, how they fight for gender inequality, how they constantly struggle for being targeted for racism and ethnicity. The intersection between political events and private lives is also shown in the novels. Religion has played a pivotal role in the novels. The characters practicing Islam are shown, and how that one religion has its influence on different types of people. Throughout his novels, racism is depicted precisely.

The theme of sacrifice is majorly reflected in the two novels. The struggle by men and women in the novels and their constant urge to maintain peace and have justice is shown. One of the major themes is also sin and forgiveness. One character from each novel is constantly fighting for peace and justice. There are many instances in the novels, where after a struggle, one attains peace and justice. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, Gender Equality, and Quality Education are one of the major themes in the novels of Khaled Hosseini.

**Keywords:** *Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, constant urge to spread peace, quality education*

### THE KITE RUNNER:

This novel has the theme to search for redemption, to search for truth, to search for peace, to eradicate the quest of racism, and eradicate the quest of gender inequality. An instance when Hasan is trying to resolve a matter with mischievous boys of his city, he first tries to resolve it by making peace with them. He politely asked for the kite, but his innocence is not considered. Then the boys beat him, why? Because he was asking politely. Khaled Hosseini here shows us that in a country like Afghanistan, making peace is not considered to be the best option. Rather, people choose violence if anyone tries to make peace. *The Kite Runner* is just one of the instances Khaled has portrayed about

Afghanistan. The mentality, the rage shown in this novel is where the hidden peacemaking factor is.

Baba says "This is grown ups' time. Why don't you go read one of those books of yours?"

This intext suggests that Amir has always been that kid who reads a lot, so Baba didn't want to indulge him in any work that includes older men or politics, because he knew it was very difficult to survive in Afghanistan when you are deeply involved in all these.

With the constant urge to make his father happy, Amir in this novel struggles a lot to make his father proud. He always feels he is not acknowledged by his father and constantly makes an effort, like Amir does the things

which he doesn't like, tries to study more, tries to be nice to people, and many more instances. The relationship between fathers and sons in this novel is full of love and tension, they always try to make strong institutions to make each other happy, but somehow one gets hurt by the other, and peace is not maintained. Hasan's son Sohrab, when Amir comes to know about him when he visits Kabul. In the compensation, that Hasan was his brother and he treated him like a servant throughout his life, he adopts Sohrab. This shows that there is nothing more he can do to make their lives better.

"I ran because I was a coward. I was afraid of Assef and what he would do to me. I was afraid of getting hurt. ...I actually aspired to cowardice, because Assef was right: Nothing was free in this world."

Amir in *The Kite Runner*, when he was a child is shown as the coward and very uptight personality. He did not take a stand of Hasan and was also afraid of taking stand for himself. Maybe that is the reason Baba left Afghanistan and Amir didn't want to go back to the same place he was raised.

Talking about the government in Afghanistan, which flourished in the initial years, but after the Taliban took over, the situation there became worse. The constant urge for peace by people living in Afghanistan was the real struggle. The political parties were fighting to take over the whole country, but their goal was not to spread peace all over. This raged over people living there, they were influenced by it, this affected their minds, and every person became violent. After the arrival of the Soviets, the situation in Afghanistan got worse. The situation got worse, so Amir and his father had to flee to California. This shows that a person spending his whole life there has to move to some other place for the sake of mental and physical peace. Hasan lived his whole life in Kabul and was killed there. This shows that on one hand, Amir and his father left for the betterment and Hasan lived there for the sake of a country. He did not think about the repercussions. He was the child of a servant, so he was treated like one, later on, we come to know that Baba is the father of Hasan. So for his whole life, Hasan with a brave heart and huge smile unknowingly tolerated every injustice he faced. Baba is never prejudiced between Amir and Hasan. Wherever Amir would go, Hasan would go hand-in-hand. So the justice made by Baba was fair from his side, but not everyone knew that Hasan was also the son of Baba, so all the efforts made by Baba were made keeping in mind that Hasan is the son of his servant.

"beyond those to whom we are related by ties of kith and kind, or even the more formal ties of shared citizenship"

In the article 'To be good (again): The Kite Runner as allegory of global ethics', *Journal of Postcolonial*

Writing by Jefferess, David has given the reference of *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* by Kwame Anthony Appiah has given that how in the emerging phase of that country, they were constantly struggling to keep up with the whole world. Due to poverty, war, and many other worst situations, people who lived in Afghanistan did not actually live in Afghanistan; their homeland was foreign land to them.

The endurance of the past seen in the characters of the novel is noteworthy. Talking about Sohrab, Hasan's son, who had a very traumatizing childhood. His father was killed, he suffered from physical abuse, and that ruined his present life. Whenever Amir, in a very affectionate way, touches him then he gets terrified. This shows that a child gets affected when they are not treated like a child. The place where he used to live after his parents were killed was an orphanage. The orphanage is the place where a child is supposed to feel safe, but Sohrab tried to attempt suicide when Amir told him he might have to go back to the orphanage. That place haunts him very much.

"physical features, gene pools, and character qualities"

In the article *The Kite Runner and the Problem of Racism and Ethnicity* by Akram Sadat Hosseini and Esmail Zohdi suggests that racism in Afghanistan has continued for many years, maybe that is the reason why peace is not an option till the date.

Peace, Justice, and Strong Institution are strongly depicted in *The Kite Runner*. The constant struggle to attain peace is shown here. Justice Amir was struggling throughout the novel and is shown in a way that the reader gets affected by the past experiences of the characters. Amir adopts Sohrab and shows the Strong Institutions he has made to secure the future of a child. The constant urge to attain peace in Afghanistan is beautifully shown in this novel. Also, they fought constantly between the focus on moral and psychological growth in the characters of this novel.

### THE THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS:

The novel *The Thousand Splendid Suns* revolves around two female protagonists Mariam and Laila. Mariam is a calm character whereas Laila is very confident throughout her life. They are constantly struggling to achieve gender equality throughout their lives. That is the main centre of this novel. Their constant struggle to attain justice is also shown here. How they leave their toxic husband in search of peace is also portrayed here. Women in Afghanistan are portrayed here. Many novels have portrayed femininity as a very soft and poised gender, this novel defines femininity as strong and their courage is loud.

Talking about gender equality in this novel, women here even struggle to control their own lives. Because they are constantly controlled by the government, ruled by their husband, and not able to take part in any societal activities. In short, they were animals living in a zoo, constantly being tortured. Yet through their perpetual efforts, they overcome every obstacle.

“There is only one, only one skill a woman like you and me needs in life, and they don’t teach it in school . . . Only one skill. And it’s this: tahamul. Endure . . . It’s our lot in life, Mariam. Women like us. We endure. It’s all we have. Do you understand? Besides, they’ll laugh at you in school. They will. They’ll call you harami. They’ll say the most terrible things about you. I won’t have it. . . There is nothing out there for her. Nothing but rejection and heartache. I know, akhund sahib. I know.” (pp. 17-18; Here is the reality of life of Afghan females that Nana highlights early in the novel.)

Feminism take is explained in the article Resistance, a Facet of Post-colonialism in Women Characters of Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, how women were suppressed in Afghanistan and sadly in the present times too. Mariam and Laila are two fierce women fighting against the odds of the world.

Everyone reading this novel considers Laila as the main character, but when looked closely, Mariam is the main character. She changes more than anyone else in the novel. She is a harami which means she is the illegitimate child of a businessman and a house worker, so she did not get any benefits like a normal child. She didn’t get any love of family, home, or acceptance. She was always called harami and that haunted her throughout her life.

Mariam’s childhood was traumatic, but talking about her marriage life, it was worse. Her husband Rasheed was a toxic man. Mariam was infertile, which means she didn’t have any children. Going through her whole life, she struggled just to survive. Every problem of the world had occurred to her. Comparing her life, her nature was full of motherly love. She always craved love, peace, and affection. Hence, we can say Mariam was the mother figure to Laila. And she showed much affection to Laila’s children. She always tried to make peace with Rasheed even though he hit her. The mentality of people at those times was very toxic, that when Rasheed hit her, Mariam felt it was his right to hit her. When Laila came, she showed interest in standing up for herself. She is proved to be the rock in this novel. Many people around her made her lose interest in life. Jalil, Rasheed, Political leaders, etc. Marrying Rasheed was her life-turning moment. She was motivated by Laila to at least stand for herself. Her epitome in the whole novel is considered when she kills Rasheed and

lets Laila move on with peaceful life shows that, what she has not got, Laila and her children should get. If one wants to survive in a country like Afghanistan, then standing up like Mariam will help them conquer the world, or at least stand up for themselves.

Laila, since her childhood, was very smart and confident. The concept of gender equality is mainly shown in the story of Laila. She is a girl who was confident since childhood, she struggled a lot after her parents were killed in an attack by the Taliban. She was married off to an abusive husband Rasheed, the same husband as Mariam. From the beginning, she knew to take a stand for herself. Laila has always been a smart girl, but after marrying Rasheed, she was not herself. She was traumatized by her parent's death. Rasheed on the other side married her because Mariam was infertile.

Laila was smart because her father Babi was a well-educated man, he always motivated her to study more and educate more. Education has always been a priority to Laila. Her friends were married off in their early ages, and they always tell Laila that she is a very bright girl and she will never be like them. Which means that she is very bright and will never end like them. This means that she was different from others in the room full of mediocre.

Most believe that burqa “protects them and gives them a freedom they feel they could not have without it”

Religion matters when involved in any community then clashes are bound to happen. In this novel, burqa is considered to keep the women safe from evil eyes (terrorists) and so they are supposed to wear otherwise they will be executed. This shows that women in Afghanistan are unsafe in burqas.

After her parents were killed, she was forced to marry Rasheed, she didn’t want to, but she had to. Her dreams were shattered. Her love, Tariq, was also lost due to attacks. The situation in Afghanistan became worse after the Taliban took over. Women in Afghanistan were very bright before the Taliban took over. One of the women is Laila. Many citizens opposed this rule, but they were killed for speaking. All characters in the novel are tied to Afghanistan in different ways. Everyone wishes to leave Afghanistan but stayed due to unavoidable circumstances.

Laila and Tariq were friends and then turned lovers. Their love is defined as pure, unlike Mariam and Rasheed. This shows that not all men are as bad as Rasheed. Some men are like Tariq. Healthy relationships are shown in this novel. Unhealthy ones are there too.

Women empowerment is shown in this novel. Laila took her stand in front of her abusive husband, left him, and started a new life with her old lover. This scenario here shows that you need not be a man to start a new life.

The themes of the novel are male dominance, female subjugation, war, extremism, and many more. Characters in the novel *The Thousand Splendid Suns* are from very different genres. Laila and Mariam give us the scenario that if a person is in a bad situation, it does not mean that their whole life will be like this. But fighting for the right will give strength. This novel is heartbreaking and heartwarming. A few instances from this novel are the reality of Afghanistan.

### Conclusion:

Sustainable Development Goals fourth, fifth, and sixteenth are applied in the novel *The Kite Runner* and *The Thousand Splendid Suns*. How in Afghanistan people were trying to find peace, justice and few were trying to spread peace through different institutions. How gender equality is shown in the novel *The Thousand Splendid Suns*. How Quality Education became important in both novels is shown in both the novels and is related in this paper.

### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

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