

Navigating Cultural Borders: A Study of Diaspora in 'The Kite Runner'

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Abstract

This study explores Khaled Hosseini's poignant portrayal of the Afghan diaspora through the life of Amir, the protagonist. The novel delves into themes of identity, displacement, and assimilation as Amir, a Pashtun, grapples with guilt and redemption over the behavior of his Hazara friend, Hassan. Located in Afghanistan & America, Hosseini effectively blends ethnic complexity and social norms, emphasizing the difficulties immigrants experience in maintaining their cultural identity while changing to unfamiliar circumstances. The story illustrates how Afghan customs and westernization forces collide, offering insight into the larger experience of the diaspora. 'The Kite Runner' offers a profound commentary on the changing cultural landscapes caused by globalization and migration, as well as an exploration of the individual's quest for identity with Amir's journey of self-discovery and reconciliation.

Keywords: cultural complexity, immigrant experience, diaspora, social norms.

Introduction

The novel is highly spirited and brings to light an aspect of the Afghan way of life that is not well known. The novel is not merely about exploring the art of storytelling but it is about the act of storytelling and Hosseini's language is plain and powerful at the same time. When he begins to write, Amir seems to distance himself from the events in the narrative, as he is reading a novel and contemplating his own life.

Historical Context and Immigration

Before the 1965 quota laws were passed which opened doors to Muslim immigrants in the United States, most of the Muslim population of America had direct ancestors who had immigrated during the large influx of people in the late 1800s and early 1900s from the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East [1]. The far numerous groups of Poles, Italians, & Eastern European Jews that migrated around the same period went through processes of integration & acculturation as these descendants. The building of mosques in the USA began in the 1950s and 1960s when being a member of the community of believers was regarded a part of being an American.

New Identity Creation

"The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini addresses several issues including immigrants, displacement, acculturation, assimilation, imitation, the impact of science and technology, reciprocity, and the mixture zone. Additionally, it covers themes such as patriotism, loss of identity, homelessness, and exile. It is a historical account of Jewish immigrants in America during the holocaust in Europe. Muslim immigrants merge components of their native culture with some aspects of American culture. Jews who mingle with American society forfeit their genuine indigenous roots. But they are not able to completely forget. Sustain the two cultures that are in between them. The presence of two different civilizations brings a new and evolving culture referred as the third culture or the hybrid culture.

Cultural Identity and Its Formation

Identity can be regarded as a link between the inner self of an individual that consists of conscious and/or unconscious emotional states and/or reasonable and/or irrational desires and/or beliefs and/or values. It also helps to define the experience of these feelings and motivations in terms of age, ethnicity, and gender, which can be considered the social context. Everyone in this world has their own culture, religion, temper, and ethnicity, and they all live in different nations. They are his or her identity in society when people meet or interact in society, focusing on the differences. Besides, identity is used in ranking individuals in the social order by their race, ethnicity, marital status, and sexual orientation.

Ethnicity concerns identification with a particular race and the manner in which identification affects emotions and behavior. Specifically, cultural identity pertains to the self-aspect that results from an individual's understanding and positioning with their culture or cultural community [2]. These concepts lead to the rationale that cultural self-identity relates to the feelings of identification with a particular ethnic group. This issue also explains why a feeling of belonging is a major determinant of identity formation.

Diaspora and Its Challenges

The term 'diaspora' refers to the movement of people from their original country and assimilation into a new society. Such movements have a historical background & are associated with the psychological & cultural consequences of losing one's identity. Essentially, in diasporic creations, the ability to sustain one's identity from a host culture is crucial. This essay emphasizes the author's biography and tours, and while discussing the concept of 'multiculturalism' refers to the book. The duality of immigrants and writers from the diaspora entails two different societies, worldviews, languages, attitudes, and experiences. Hosseini was born in 1965 in Kabul, Afghanistan. Due to the Russian invasion, he was in Iran, Europe, and America, which gave him good exposure to the diaspora community. His family moved to France and Iran when his father took up a job in the two countries. His writings tell of his time in the diaspora. Figure 1 shows the diaspora challenges.

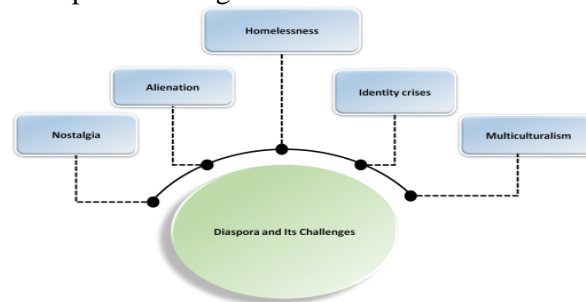


Figure 1. Diaspora challenges

Multiculturalism in 'The Kite Runner'

The lives and perspectives of characters from many ethnic origins are explored in the multicultural literary book *The Kite Runner*. Amir, the main character, is a Pashtun child, and Hassan, a member of the Hazara community, are friends who grow up playing & flying kites in Kabul. Rahim Khan, Amir's uncle, who encourages his desire to write, makes him feel both envious and respectful. Hassan gets assigned to fly Amir's kite after winning a kite competition [3]. Yet the local bully Assef, whom Hassan had threatened, finds him and rapes him. Though he sees the attack, Amir is too late to help his companion. Amir accuses Hassan of stealing under pretenses because of his overwhelming guilt. Even though Baba had told them to stay, Hassan & his father departed the house. A compelling examination of interpersonal challenges, cultural tensions, interpersonal interactions, and social classes in a heterogeneous society may be found in *The Kite Runner*. Amir and Baba escaped to America during the 1980s Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Amir still recalls his prior experiences with Hassan and feels guilty about them even though he is in America. In the United States where Baba works at petrol station, they encounter challenges. After Baba's passing in 2000, Amir's uncle Rahim Khan divulged facts concerning his family, including the fact that Sohrab was captured by the Taliban and that Hassan is Amir's half-brother. Rahim Khan reveals the truth regarding his family's background and invites Amir to embark on an expedition of atonement by returning to Afghanistan.

Class Differences and Cultural Norms

Amir, the main character of *The Kite Runner*, battles class differences and cultural norms in both Afghanistan and America while also struggling with his own emotions. Hassan, his boyhood buddy, represents his nation, allegiance, and whole existence. After Amir betrays Hassan, his father's buddy Rahim Khan gives him an opportunity to turn good by rescuing Hassan's young son Sohrab from Taliban

torture [4]. The complicated interplay between Hassan's Hazara identity and Amir's Pashtun identity reflects the multifaceted nature of Afghan society. Amir's anti-communist father is compelled to leave Afghanistan after the Soviet administration ends to escape the loss of his riches and social standing in America. They suffer from poverty and homesickness while trying to make ends meet. Anguished for his homeland and its people, Baba is a proud Afghan whose life ends short when he passes away, leaving Amir to battle his inner demons alone. This narrative emphasizes the contradictory diasporic predicament of being unable to either live in the current moment or distance oneself from the past.

Return to Afghanistan and Atonement

When Amir goes back to Afghanistan, the Taliban government presents difficulties. As retribution for losing his friend Hasan, he takes Sohrab under his adoption. Afghanistan represents to Amir the two faces of a coin—hatred and missing. These issues merge into one, which is his readiness to absolve himself of his guilt and atone for his transgression. The story highlights the difficulties of diasporic displacement and assimilation by examining the cultural struggle between the immigrant diaspora and foreign cultures [5]. Amir travels and exchanges ideas, concepts, social cultures, and personal identities. His world is fragmented into several histories, nationalities, and cultures. The story does a fantastic job of weaving in this heterogeneous culture. The cultural ambiguity and hybridity that migrants experience might cause identity crises because of the differences between livings in two different places at once. As demonstrated in *The Kite Runner*, diaspora entails both socio-psychological migration and geographic shifts. In these circumstances, communities frequently oscillate between cultural value systems, attitudes, and bipolar identities. Those coming to the United States since the 1920s have faced the difficulty of assimilating becoming a part of the new culture. Large-scale migration & relocation are part of the globalization process, which undermines the idea of the nation-state and blurs borders. The Post-Colonial Study Readers argue is presented in Figure 2. We should re-evaluate how relocation, displacement, and cultural transitions impact the formation of identity.

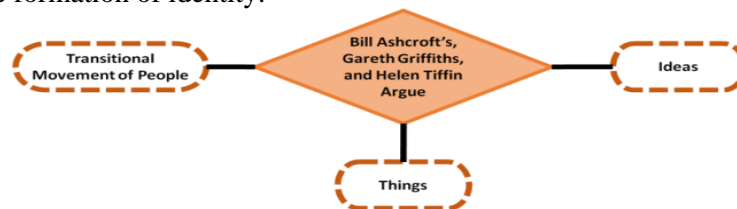


Figure 2. Argue of Post-Colonial Studies Reader

Cultural Problems and Integration

In postcolonial studies, the phrase 'cultural problem' is used to describe situations that endanger both people and society as a whole. It can happen in several industries are presented in Figure 3.

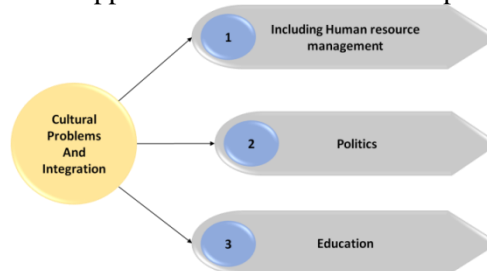


Figure 3. Cultural problems

For instance, Muslims lost their original cultures when they migrated from Afghanistan to America as a result of oppression and the Holocaust. They moved to a faraway country because they began to value living. They were unable to avoid being exposed to alien culture after they arrived in America. They were afraid of losing their culture [6]. They accept foreign cultures because of the extended duration of time, the open and easy culture, the freedom, and the absence of continuance. Migration might be forced or chosen. This is not something that happens naturally; instead, significant effort must be taken throughout,

sometimes to preserve one's own culture and other times with consideration for the host society. In another way, there are differences amongst these migrants in terms of their migration patterns, religious and cultural communities, and degree of social integration.

Depiction of Afghan Culture and Diasporic Journey

In Hosseini's book, Amir & his father are followed as they go out on a new adventure in America. Amir can put his violent past behind him because he and his father reside in Fremont. Baba, a Kabul resident, longs to go back to his community and get used to his new surroundings [7]. Hosseini's book does a good job of capturing Afghan culture and defining communal boundaries. The trip of the main character, Amir, highlights the importance of culture in forming the readers' cultural environment by bringing it to life in a distant place. Even though the country is unknown to most people, Hosseini's book does a good job of capturing Afghan culture and how communities are shaped through the journey of the main character, Amir.

Nomadic Culture and Afghan Traditions

We pursued the Kochi, a group of nomads that travelled through Kabul on their route to the northern mountains. As their caravans approached our area, we could hear their goats and sheep baaing and meowing, as well as the jingle of bells around the necks of their camels. We would sprint outdoors to observe the caravan passing by our street, the guys with weather-worn, dusty faces and the women with long, vibrant scarves and silver and beaded ankle and wrist bracelets. Even with the scars from the conflict with the Soviet Union, the book presents a thriving Afghanistan in a period of peace and normalcy [8]. They may experience Kabul's vibrant culture, people, and customs through Amir's distinctive language and striking imagery. Readers are encouraged to trust the author's statements because of his candid depiction of the complex aspects of his native country.

Immigrant Struggles and Community Importance

The story emphasizes the difficulties faced by immigrants as they integrate their native values and try to adjust to life in their new nation. Despite the protagonist's best efforts, his father—a wealthy and influential man from the East—perceives him as a destitute old man who is having difficulty making ends meet. Hosseini highlights the importance of community and customs in Afghan culture, as evidenced by the funeral of Baba, which highlights the reverence shown by Afghans and the devastation and loneliness Amir felt following the death of his beloved. Through the protagonist's experiences in the 'little Kabul' of California, where they assist in the preservation of Afghan customs and culture, the story emphasizes multiculturalism [9]. Amir exposes them to young authors from many backgrounds as they interact with non-Afghan pupils at a public school. His spouse begins working as a teacher at an American school. Through the protagonist's romance and marriage to his spouse, Hosseini gives readers a better knowledge and vivid picture of Afghan customs.

Socioeconomic Divide: Hazaras and Pashtuns

The Hazaras, a low-class, uneducated, and destitute group in Afghanistan, are often stereotyped as poor and illiterate due to their physical flaws. The novel, written by Amir, highlights the socioeconomic divide between the dominant Pashtuns and the oppressed Hazaras, addressing the conflict between Eastern and Western values. The protagonist's class symbolizes the powerful Pashtuns, while the Hazaras, originally from the Mongols and having Chinese ancestry, attempted to rebel against the Pashtuns in the 19th century.

Complexities of Afghan Culture and Forgiveness

Ali and his son, who demonstrate kindness and regard for all Afghans, embody the vast majority of the Hazara people. Their class division is highlighted when Baba, their boss, betrays Ali using his liaison with Sanobar. When Hasan, Amir's son, betrays him when he needs it most, he repeats his father's error. But Hasan, who stays close to Amir and consoles his mother Sanobar, is the epitome of forgiving [10]. By emphasizing the brutality done upon Ali and Hassan as well as the intense emotions of Sanobar & Assef, Hosseini's depiction of Afghan culture successfully conveys the complexities of the Hazara community as

well as the injustice and unfairness that exist there. Figure 4 shows the diasporic sensibilities and focuses of *The Kite Runner*.

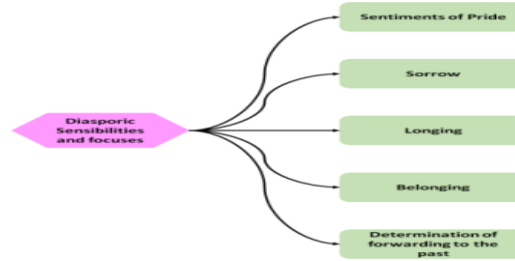


Figure 4. Diasporic sensibilities and focuses

Conclusion

In conclusion, "The Kite Runner" by Khaled Hosseini efficiently explores the Afghan diaspora utilizing Amir's fascinating journey. In the context of Afghanistan and America, it effectively addresses concepts of guilt, reconciliation, and cultural identity. Hosseini effectively demonstrates the difficulties faced by immigrants in balancing their cultural traditions with their unfamiliar surroundings, emphasizing the conflict between Afghan customs and Western influences. The novel offers significant insights into more general concerns of globalization, immigration, and cultural integration through Amir's restless journey for identity and reconciliation. "The Kite Runner" is a compelling story that highlights the fundamental human desire for self-understanding and belonging in situations of cultural change, while also providing exposure to the intricacies of life in the diaspora.

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