



PAUCITY OF MATERNAL FIGURES IN KHALED HOSSEINI'S WRITINGS

Dr. Anurag Joshi

Associate Professor Department of Humanities

-Shri Vaishnav Vidyapeeth Vishwavidyalaya

Dr. Roopa Shinde

Associate Professor Department of Humanities

-Shri Vaishnav Vidyapeeth Vishwavidyalaya

Prof. Pamila Neema

Assistant Professor Department of Humanities

-Shri Vaishnav Vidyapeeth Vishwavidyalaya

Nimisha Lall

Student of MA English,

The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda.

ABSTRACT

This research paper examines 'The Kite Runner', 'The Thousand Splendid Suns', 'And the Mountains Echoed' by Khaled Hosseini. The Afghan-American novelist explores the suffering of women via his multigenerational works. The 'master storyteller' runs a theme of pervasive injustice the Afghan women were subjected to in the times of war. The stories end happily after the long-sufferings on the part of women. Literature comes into play in Hosseini's novels as a vehicle to deliver the plight of its 'voiceless' women. The works of Hosseini prove this using lack of maternal characters in the lives of the protagonist. The mother figures who are subjugated are always nowhere found in the novels which lead to the anxiety of the

characters. This element leads to a lack of comfort in the situations of war. Hosseini shows how a mother figure is a key to the development of the child's psyche.

Keywords: *absent mother, emotional, redemption, hope, individualism*

RESEARCH METHOD

This study tries to focus on the absence of mother figures from the lives of Amir, Mariam, Laila, and Pari. This study applies the techniques of textual analysis. The data used for this research are found from books, research papers, and websites. The primary data is used to solve the problems of this research. The primary data here explains various facts taken from the novels *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *The Mountains Echoed*. The data is arranged in a sequence to explain the due course of the story. The story explores the lives of the protagonists to explain how they lived without their mother's absence. The study highlights the emotional distress of the characters. Amir, Mariam, and Pari feel that their mothers died due to them and are guilty of the same.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, it is suggested that multiple transitions in a family structure affect a child. The transitions may include the home of a single parent, remarriage, disruption of remarriage, or romantic's partner move in or out. Instability Hypothesis predicts that the children are disrupted by the changes as much as the type of family structure they experience. Many studies have shown that the transition of a child from a two-parent family to a single-parent family associates more behavior and emotional problems.

Through our literature, there are different kinds of mothers. There is this caring mother who takes care, guides, and protects her child. Then there is also a neglectful mother who does nothing for the benefit of her child. Regardless of these things, there is the existence of a mother. There is a mother to whom her children look up for emotional support. What happens when the mother-child relationship stands missing? How a child copes up in the presence of only one parent?

Amir goes through the turmoil of being accepted by his father. Amir suffers emotional conflicts when he sees Assef taking charge over Hassan. His anxiety and jealousy from Hassan do not make him step in between to stop the molestation. In Mariam's life, her mother's actions don't affect her until she is married off to Rasheed.

Similarly, Pari holds a grudge that her affair with her mother's ex-lover is the cause of Nila's death. Laila gets used to staying afar from her mother because of her overwhelming love for her other two sons.

The purpose of the study unfolds if the absence of a mother figure affects the lives of characters of a novel. It also reveals how characters deal with their inner conflicts to live life amidst the chaos. The methods used will be textual to examine the characters of Amir, Mariam, Laila, and Pari.

RESULT

The result of the study shows that how Amir, Mariam, Laila, Pari recuperates in their lives after the passing of their mother. Amir seeks a way for redemption, Mariam accepts her newly-married life, Laila finds a house for refuge after her parents' death, and Pari leaves Julien after her mother commits suicide. Life continues to move on and even these characters adhere to this knowledge.

DISCUSSION

The Kite Runner which exhibits itself as a story of a father-son bond somehow forgets the presence of women in their lives. Amir's mother Sophia who was a teacher at a university die giving birth to Amir. He feels that his father holds him guilty for his mother's death.

Amir knows that her mother's existence by looking at her mother's photograph and reading her old history books. Neither the photograph nor the books affect Amir the way his Baba's presence does. He always seeks validation for his doings from his father. This is because he never tasted the motherly affection physically and she existed only as his figment of the imagination.

Like Amir, Hassan's also a motherless child. His mother left him and his father Ali when he was young. However, Hassan looks out for motherly affection. His father is present for him to give him emotional support and is everything for him. This factor lacks in Amir's case whose father Baba is a rigid man. Therefore, he learns less of the elements of pity and respect for others.

Amir undergoes a circle of emotions for his father's distance from him and jealousy towards Hassan. He feels that the kite tournament is the only way he can win his father's affection for him. This results in him witnessing the harassment of Hassan by Assef. Maybe he longs for a mother who could make him understand that he is not alone in his world. If a maternal figure would have been in his life, he would not have been

driven away by jealousy. Perhaps, Amir reveals himself to be the most rounded character in the novel. The wrongs to Hassan in front of his eyes and his inability to stop it make him repentant of his actions.

A Thousand Splendid Suns shine for its theme of the mother-daughter story. The protagonist Mariam's mother commits suicide at the very beginning of the novel. Mariam is termed 'harami' by her mother, a servant who gets impregnated by her father. Mariam longs for her father who visits her on Thursday. She waits for her father Jalil by sitting 'against a wall, eyes glued to the stream, and wait.' After her father would take her fishing, help her draw, and taught her rhymes.

One day ambitious enough, Mariam walks out of Herat in search of her father in Kabul. She rants on her mother who often accuses her father of her miseries. Later, when she arrives back, she sees her mother dangling from a rope of a weeping willow. Mariam soon learns the importance of her mother when she is taken under the care of her father and his three wives.

She is guilty of not listening to her mother's words and gets to terms with the reality of the world overthrown to her by harshness. She is forced into marrying Rasheed, a widower thrice her age by her three stepmothers. Initially, Rasheed takes care of her but when she suffers multiple miscarriages he tortures her emotionally, mentally, and physically. This makes her a resentful, bitter, and fearful woman.

Nana's apparent suicide makes Mariam feel guilty and ashamed throughout her life and harbors regret about the way she dismissed Nana's warnings. Nana adores her daughter and does not even let her attend school to keep her close. Her protective demeanour reflects the hardships she faced after giving birth to an illegitimate child. She wants Mariam to face the realities by telling her the truth about her birth. But Mariam is unbothered and wanted to be accepted by her father's family. Her actions ultimately lead her to a much harsher life than Nana. Maybe her actions give her punishment for not letting her become a mother. She later finds motherly solace in Laila and her child.

The second female protagonist Laila also has a distant relationship with her mother. Mammy (Fariba) is not very stable in terms of her mentality. She has originally been a curious, joyful woman by the time Laila was growing up, but she is increasingly left depressed with her sons' departure to fight Mujahideen. She isolates herself in her room as a consequence. Her pain is further plagued when her sons get shaheed.

Mammy also contemplates suicide but she decides to take a step back until her son's wishes are unfulfilled. Even in her death, her life still revolves around her sons. Fariba is consumed so much in her pain that she associates Laila with her sons' disappearance. After the Fatiha of her sons, she confesses to Laila:

"You're a good daughter. And I haven't been much of a mother to you." (Hosseini, 2007, p. 129)

However, the absence of a mother makes Laila a confident girl. She marries Rasheed after being orphaned to give her Tariq's child a father's name. She paves her way to live a life. She knows exactly what she wants and even shows the guts to run away rather than being tormented by Rasheed. While Mariam feels difficult to accept life coming her way after her mother's death, Laila is unshattered by her parents' death. She thinks of a future ahead with her child.

Pari and Abdullah live in Afghanistan with their father Saboor, stepmother Parwana, and their step-brother Iqbal in *And the Mountains Echoed*. The novel starts to highlight how the coldness in the Afghanistan region perishes the lives of children. Saboor and Parwana lose their first child Omar to winters too. Abdullah, the ten-year-old boy tries to shower all his love to his sister Pari who is seven years younger than her. He tries to fulfill the void of their mother who died after giving birth to Pari.

However, their relationship ruptures when Saboor who is incapable to feed his family agrees to the adoption of Pari. Pari is taken to Kabul where her uncle Nabi works in the household of Wahadatis in the Fall of 1952. Nila Wahadati the wife of Suleiman Wahadati is adamant to take up the child after learning that her husband is homosexual. She does this to find a purpose in her life.

In 1955, when Suleiman suffers a stroke Nila leaves for Paris with Pari. Nila becomes a successful poet there and Pari is a mathematics student at Sorbonne. Nila admittedly regrets her decision to adopt Pari because she is nowhere close to her personality. According to her, she carries the ideas of liberalism and feminism which are not taken by her daughter seriously. She self-destructs herself with persistent drinking. After learning that Pari has an affair with her ex-lover Julien, she commits suicide. Nila says to Pari:

"I don't know who you are, what you're capable of, in your blood. You're a stranger to me." (Hosseini, 2014, p. 235)

Nila Wahadati is revealed to be a self-conscious lady who just leads a life according to her thinking. Rather than being a mother and looking after a child, she continues her series of affairs. She self-destructs herself. Her

ideologies of modern liberalism which made her move to Paris are reflected in Pari when she aspires to become a mathematician. But she belittles it. She recalls in her interview that Pari is a “punishment”.

Already, a motherless child Pari finds no comfort in her new mother as well. She takes care of her mother by visiting hospitals and looking after her injuries. She looks after her mother rather than receiving the same affection from her. Nila’s ideals are immune and to a life full of contradictions, and because she has lived a life justified by this very idealism. She is tragically flawed and is doomed to failure as a mother.

CONCLUSION

Amir, Mariam, Laila, Pari recuperates in their lives after the passing of their mother. Amir seeks a way for redemption, Mariam accepts her newly-married life, Laila finds a house for refuge after her parent's death, and Pari leaves Julien after her mother commits suicide. Life continues to move on and even these characters adhere to this knowledge.

Hosseini tries to free Amir, Mariam, and Pari from the clutches of motherly love to set them free. Free for their individuality. This helps them face realities that are often cruel seeing how young these children were. But they eventually carve their own identity to live life their ways. They also persistently seek redemption and finds happiness in the smallest virtues of life.

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