

# Representation of Dynamic Parents – Children Associations in *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* – A Comparative Study.

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## Abstract

The present paper draws special attention to Khaled Hosseini's portrayal of varied family dynamics in two of his best known novels: *The Kite Runner* (2003) and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007). According to Murdock, a family is —a social group that shares —common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. Khaled Hosseini's description of familial ties is not ordinary yet very relevant and branches out to other themes, i.e. socio-cultural differences, sin and redemption, morality and righteousness etc. This paper mainly analyses the differences and similarities in parents – children relationship as delineated in the two novels.

**Key words:** Khaled Hosseini, Familial ties, Parent – Children Relationship

## Introduction

Khaled Hosseini was born in Kabul, Afghanistan. As an Afghan – American novelist, Hosseini wrote his award winning debut novel *The Kite Runner* in 2003 followed by *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) and *And The Mountains Echoed* (2013) both of which proved to milestones in Hosseini's writing career. While *The Kite Runner*'s style is idiosyncratic and immediate with an undaunted and hopeful tone, Hosseini's style in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is both sympathetic and repulsive. In both these novels, the writer has made exorbitant use of family relations especially parent – child relation to bind the whole plot of the story.

## Analysis

In *The Kite Runner*, the reader is introduced to Amir and Baba's strained relationship. Amir has always struggled to please Baba who is mostly found to be distant, disappointed and discontented with Amir. Amir's futility to gratify Baba bears his jealousy for Hassan. Baba's constant praise for Hassan frustrated Amir. Author's allusion to the story of Sohrab and Rustom which is about a father that fatally stabs an opponent not knowing until too late that the opponent is his son, as Amir and Hassan's favourite story, reinforces the idea of the disturbed father – son relationship. Amir was also conscious of the belief held by him that his father detests him because he was responsible for his mother's death.

A similar parent – child relationship can also be found in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. While Laila was taught good morals and progressive ideas by her father Hakim, her mother Fariba has been absent and distant. Laila evidently holds some hostility towards her mother's negligence. Laila feels that her mother is too busy in thinking about Ahmad and Noor that she does not even care about Laila which makes her feel robbed of a mother. The following passage represents Laila's anger as a child towards an ignorant parent.

“Sometimes Laila wondered why Mammy even bothered having her... A fit of anger claimed her” (Hosseini 119)

*The Kite Runner* majorly deals only with father – son relationship while there are various dynamics of fatherhood presented in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. A direct comparison can be drawn between the kind of relationship shared by Amir and Rahim Khan in *The Kite runner* and Tariq, Aziza and Zalmai in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Despite the fact that Amir could never get the desired fatherly love from Baba, he always found a compassionate and empathetic fatherly figure in Rahim Khan. Rahim Khan was Baba's friend and confidant who would read Amir's story when Baba would not, giving Amir the attention and approval he craved, and Amir even wishes at that point that Rahim Khan were his father. A similarity can be drawn between Ali and Hassan as well. Though Ali is not Hassan's own child, but an offspring of Baba and Alis's wife, he never let Hassan know the fact his Baba is his biological father. Ali's love for Hassan was selfless and it spoke volumes about Ali's character as well. Analogous to Rahim Khan and Ali in *The Kite Runner*, Tariq in *A Thousand*

Splendid Suns functions on the idea that that parenting is not only giving birth to a child but also loving them, even if they are not his. Though Aziza and Talmai are not Tariq's biological children, yet he has a great fervor for both the children. Tariq's compassion elucidated his idea of fatherhood which holds kindness and love and not disgust or hatred.

A stark contrast can be sketched between the relationship shared by Baba and Hassan in *The Kite Runner* and Jalil and Mariam in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The reader witnesses a very pleasant and amiable connection between the former duo while the latter one is of shame and veiled love. Hassan is Baba's illegitimate son from Sanaubar (Ali's wife). Though Baba was not very fond of his legitimate son Amir, his gestures of love and care for Ali always instigated Amir's hatred for Hassan. Amir became angry anytime Baba praises Hassan, and again when Baba pays for Hassan's plastic surgery. Baba never evaded his duty as a father and made sure that Ali lives a comfortable life in his house only. Baba's overt display of affection towards Hassan is contrasting to Jalil being ashamed of his daughter Mariam. Mariam did not live with her father as she and her mother were put in a home away from the town. Despite Mariam's constant requests and pleads to be taken to the movie theater that Jalil owned, she was never taken there by her father. However, Jalil's love for her daughter is revealed at the end of the novel when Laila finds the box with a copy of *Pinocchio* (the movie Mariam really wanted to go see as a child). But Mariam never got the chance to see this love because the box was discovered by Laila after Mariam's death. Jalil's version of fatherhood was that he was ashamed of his child, but ultimately still loved her because he took the time and the chance at saying her a box of things in hope that they would rekindle the bond between them.

It is imperative to note that while there is only father-son association in *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* divulges mother-daughter associations as well. Hosseini fortifies the parallelism between Laila and Mariam. Both Laila and Mariam are influenced by their mothers. The girls harbored resentment as well as empathy and affection for their mothers. Where on one hand Nana's reluctance to let Mariam study and her distaste for Jalil induced bitterness in the mother-daughter relation, there on the other hand Laila could never make peace with the fact that her mother was mostly absent from her life. However, both the girls also had a feeble penchant for their mothers. Considering Nana and Fariba's troubles, both of them cared for their

daughters but were unable to cope up with their own misery. Hence, they could not exhibit their love. Nana succumbed to Mariam's increasing independence and commits suicide while Fariba's trauma of her missing sons inhibited her to care for her young daughter. While Nana and Fariba experienced different losses in their lives, their inability to overcome them has a strong affect on their daughters' self-worth.

## Conclusion

Besides sharing the historical context and themes of friendship, love, violence both the novels present heterogeneous aspects of parent – child relationship. Hosseini has subtly delineated these relationships as multi dimensional ones by pulling through the ambiguity, dilemma and personality flaws in every character.

## References

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