

Betrayal in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *The Kite Runner*

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Abstract:

This paper entitled "Betrayal in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *The Kite Runner*" attempts to study the betrayal of the Afghans in Afghanistan. Hosseini, in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *The Kite Runner* describes the betrayal present in the Afghanistan family in an extraordinary manner. Strong bond in the family relationships builds a healthy society. Through characters, Hosseini presents the betrayal in the family relationships. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *The Kite Runner*, he portrays betrayal of a daughter, father, husband and brother in a realistic manner.

Keywords: Betrayal, family, relationship, father, brother.

Every individual depends on another individual for the harmony of life. Trust is an important factor for the cordial relationship between the individuals and it is a qualitative process which nurtures every day. Greed makes an individual to break the trust of another individual and betrayal emerges from it. In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, the stabs of the senate members do not make the Roman general Caesar down, but the stab of the Brutus does. Because Brutus does not stab Caesar with dagger but he stabs Caesar with betrayal. In the assassination, Caesar tolerated the physical pain but he cannot tolerate the psychological pain of Brutus' betrayal. Betrayal is sharper than a sword and it is worse than death. Betrayal is one of the important elements in Afghanistan Literature. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *The Kite Runner*, the Afghan American writer Khaled Hosseini presents the betrayal seen in the family.

Family is the basic part of a society and it plays a vital role in shaping a person's character. Khaled Hosseini describes the betrayal present in the family through the characters of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *The Kite Runner*. Betrayal present in the family is a bitter one. Family contains various relationships and betrayal in the family contaminates family relationships. Hosseini classifies betrayal present in the family into: betrayal of a daughter, betrayal of a father, betrayal of a husband and betrayal of a brother.

Through Mariam, Hosseini portrays the betrayal of a daughter. In *A Thousand Splendid Sun*, Nana loves her daughter Mariam. For Nana, Mariam is the only hope in her life. Nana describes her love towards Mariam thus: "I'm the only one who loves you. I'm all you have in this world, Mariam and when I'm gone you'll have nothing. You have nothing. You are nothing" (ATSS 27). But Mariam loves her father Jalil more than Nana. Nana asks Mariam not to visit Jalil's place. But Mariam disobeys the words of Nana and visits Jalil's house. Nana considers Mariam's action as a betrayal, because she considers Mariam is the only person in the world whom she loves the most. Due to Mariam's betrayal, Nana commits suicide. "Mariam caught a glimpse of what was beneath the tree: the straight-backed chair, over-turned. The rope dropping from a high branch, Nana dangling at the end of it" (37). Hosseini portrays that the pain of betrayal from the person one loves the most is intolerable. Especially, the betrayal of a daughter to her mother is an agonizing one.

Father is the head of the family. Hosseini brings out the betrayal of a father through the characters Jalil in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and Baba in *The Kite Runner*. Love is a natural bond present between father and child relationship. Mariam is the illegitimate daughter of Jalil and she shows true love and affection towards him. But Jalil displays a pseudo love towards her. As Mariam is the illegitimate daughter of Jalil, he arranges kolba, a shelter outside the city for Mariam and her mother Nana. "In the clearing, Jalil and two of his sons, Farhad and Muhsin, built the small kolba where Mariam would live the first fifteen years of her life" (10). Jalil sends food products to Mariam's kolba through his sons. The food products satisfy the physiological need of Mariam's hunger "The wheelbarrow came once a month, filled with rice, flour, tea, sugar, cooking oil, soap, toothpaste" (13). Mariam and Nana live a poor life in kolba whereas Jalil lives a luxurious life in a luxurious house with his wives and children. Mariam out of love and affection towards Jalil comes to see him at his house. Though Jalil is in his house he refuses to see Mariam because, he loves his family and his status in the society than Mariam. Jalil is an elite person in the society, he does not want to show Mariam as his daughter in the society because, he considers that would spoil his name in the society. He also orders his driver to drop Mariam in her house. Jalil's driver describes to Mariam thus: "Jalil Khan says that I need to take you back now. Right now. Do you understand? Jalil Khan says so" (34). Jalil's actions breaks the heart of Mariam.

After the death of Nana, Jalil Khan provides shelter for Mariam in his house. Jalil says "You can stay with me, Mariam jo," (38). Jalil Khan and his family consider Mariam as a "...embodiment of their shame" (48). They do not like Mariam's presence in their house. Without her willingness, Jalil Khan arrange her marriage with a forty five age widower Rasheed when she is fifteen because "...this was their chance to erase, once and for all, the last trace of their husband's scandalous mistake" (48). Mariam asserts the unwillingness of her marriage thus:

"I don't want to," Mariam said. She looked at Jalil. "I don't want this. Don't make me." She hated the sniffling, pleading tone of her voice but could not help it. "Now, be reasonable, Mariam," one of the wives said. Mariam was no longer

keeping track of who was saying what. She went on staring at Jalil, waiting for him to speak up, to say that none of this was true. (47)

Mariam believes that her father would oppose her marriage with Rasheed. But when she comes to know that it is Jalil who arranges the marriage with Rasheed, she considers Jalil a betrayer. Mariam cannot digest the betrayal of her father Jalil, the person who she loves the most. After marriage with Rasheed, Mariam does not like to be in touch with her father Jalil. She says to Jalil thus “ “It ends here for you and me. Say your good byes.” ” (55). Jalil’s betrayal make a huge impact on Mariam and breaks their father and daughter relationship.

In *The Kite Runner* Hassan is the illegitimate son of Baba. Baba love Hassan than Amir and he keeps Hassan close to his heart. Hassan is born with a harelip in his face. “Baba never missed Hassan birthday” (TKR 41). Baba’s love for Hassan made him take the initiative for Hassan’s lip surgery as a birthday present. Hassan undergoes a lip surgery and after the surgery Hassan regains his smile. As Baba holds an elite position in the society, he hides the identity of Hassan as his son. He frames his servant Ali as Hassan’s father and make Hassan to work in his house as a servant. Amir, the legal son of Baba shares a friendly bond with Hassan. When Amir comes to know that Hassan is his half-brother from Baba’s business partner Rahim Khan, Amir cannot digest the betrayal of Baba. Rahim Khan describe Baba’s reason to hide Hassan as his son “It was a shameful situation. People would talk. All that a man had back then, all that he was, was his honor, his name, and if people talked...” (206). Amir expresses the pain of Baba’s betrayal thus: “I was learning that Baba had been a thief. And a thief of the worst kind, because the things he’d stolen had been sacred: from me the right to know I had a brother, from Hassan his identity, and from Ali his honor. His nang. His namoos” (208). Though Baba loves Hassan, he hides the identity of Hassan and betrays him. Jalil and Baba betray their children Mariam, Amir and Hassan respectively. Jalil and Baba are timid to reveal Mariam and Hassan as their own blood, because they hold high status in the society. Jalil and Baba think that revealing the identity of Mariam and Hassan would diminish their status in the society.

Through Rasheed, Hosseini describes the betrayal of a husband. After Mariam’s marriage with Rasheed, Mariam loves him more than a wife. Mariam considers Rasheed as her world of love. But Rasheed betrays his wife Mariam and marries Laila. Rasheed marries Laila because Mariam is childless. Rasheed’s betrayal hurts Mariam in an extreme level. Mariam describes her pain of betrayal while hearing Rasheed’s marriage proposal with Laila thus “... I don’t want this,” Mariam said, numb with contempt and helplessness” (ATSS 208). To shatter the mind of Mariam, Rasheed asks the help of Mariam to marry Laila. Mariam asks the wish of Laila in a half hearted manner. Laila loses her parents and brothers in war. Due to helplessness and safety from the external world, Laila agrees to marry Rasheed. “He wants an answer by this morning,” Mariam said. “He can have it now,” the girl said. “My answer is yes” (210). Mariam feels extreme grief due to the betrayal of her husband’s marriage with Laila.

Through Amir, Hosseini describes the betrayal of a brother. In the opening of the novel *The Kite Runner*, Amir and Hassan share a love bond between each other without knowing they are half brothers. Hassan loves Amir but Amir betrays Hassan to gain respect of Baba. “Betrayal

is a vicious human act resulting from negative feelings of envy, greed and lust. It is part of the human nature” (Shafiq 88). Hassan saves Amir from the clutches of Amir’s rival Assef and Assef wants to take revenge on Hassan for saving Amir. Assef and his friends lock Hassan in the street and physically harasses Hassan. Amidst Hassan’s physical harassment, Amir does not come forward to help Hassan. Instead of saving Hassan, Amir hides himself and watches the happenings. Leaving Hassan in the hands of his rival Assef, Amir betrays Hassan.

After the physical harassment of Hassan, Amir regrets to face Hassan due to guilt. He wants Hassan to move out of his house and he accuses Hassan a stealer in front of Baba. Though Hassan knows that Amir betrays him, his love towards Amir admits Amir’s false accusation and leaves the house with his namesake father Ali. In the midst of Amir’s betrayal, Hassan’s brotherly love towards Amir remains the same. Amir describes his betrayal thus “Hassan knew. He knew I’d seen everything in that alley, that I’d stood there and done nothing. He knew I had betrayed him and yet he was rescuing me once again, maybe for the last time” (TKR 98). In *The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini pictures the betrayal of Amir in a phenomenal manner.

The characters in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *The Kite Runner*, represent the wounds of betrayal within the family relationship in a vibrant manner. Hosseini makes his characters as a tool to reveal the pain of betrayal. He represents the betrayal that exists in the family in his work *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *The Kite Runner* in a realistic manner.

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