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Object Relations: Insights of Eros and Thanatos in the Select Novels of Khaled Hosseini

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Abstract

Discourse of human instincts is an ever challenging notion in psychology. These challenges paved a way for new exploration. One of the significant endeavour on Object Relation Theory is Melanie Kleinian model of psychical development, is the infant seen as coming into the world with life and death instincts. Phantasy, Projection, Introjection, Sadism, Epistemophilia, Reparation, Symbolism in which Klein sees life and death instincts in the human condition. Literature provides a rich platform to explore human psyche since ancient times. Khaled Hosseini's works are one of such entity to explore human instincts. His two novels, *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*'s characters Mariam, Amir, Hassan, Sorob, Soroya, and Ali had experienced bitter childhood days in their past. The characters of Hosseini's have suffered from Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which haunts them throughout. The present study focuses on how the Eros and Thanatos frame the personality of selected characters with the fear of their past and to constrain their purpose in life.

Keywords: Object Relation, Psychoanalysis, Instincts, Kelin and Hosseini.

Childhood is an important storehouse which retains the early life of every individual. This reconstructs the present which is also connected to the past. Khaled Hosseini in his interview expresses his views on childhood. He discussed his childhood which makes him to write the novel and it is not a happy childhood rather it is disturbed due to his ethnic identity and war.

Khaled Hosseini is an Afghan-born American novelist and physician. He has published three novels, most notably his 2003 debut *The Kite Runner*. *The Kite Runner* is the story of Amir who struggles to find his place in the world. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), *And The Mountains Echoed* (2013) are the top of *The Times* list and remained on it for 33 weeks.

Amir, the protagonist of the novel *The Kite Runner*, was a Pashtun and Sunni Muslim. He had a privileged upbringing and grew up accustomed to having what he wanted. Luxury dripped from every corner of his palatial home. His mother died giving birth to him. He was a pampered child. Though he was a child with a silver spoon, he was jealous of the way Baba (his father) treated Hassan, although Amir realized that Hassan socially had a lower place in society. He, consequently, behaved jealously toward anyone receiving Baba's affection: "I remember the day before the orphanage opened, Baba took me to Ghargha Lake, a few miles north of Kabul. He asked me to fetch Hassan too, but I lied and told him Hassan had the runs. I wanted Baba all to myself. And besides, one time at Ghargha Lake, Hassan and I were skipping stones and Hassan made his stone skip eight times. The most I managed was five.

Baba was there, watching, and he patted Hassan on the back. Even put his arm around his shoulder.” (KR, 13). This was clear that Klein’s patterns within various relationships with others were the key to understanding a person’s behaviour. Though Amir was a good child, his relationship and possessiveness about his Baba made him a brutal kid.

Amir used to feel insecure with his servant Hassan. Though Amir loves him “Hassan never denied me anything”(KR, 4), he longs for his Baba’s love and attention. Baba never discriminated between the two kids, Amir and Hassan, which Amir didn’t like. Amir wanted to be treated in a special way: “Baba would buy us each three identical kites and spools of glass string. If I changed my mind and asked for a bigger and fancier kite, Baba would buy it for me-but then he’d buy it for Hassan too. Sometimes I wished he wouldn’t do that. Wished he’d let me be the favorite.”(KR, 48)

Amir tried hard to live up to the expectations of his father, Baba. He was extremely desperate to win Baba’s affections. He longed for his father’s love and care. Amir craved for Baba. As the Eros arouse, Like any other child, he longed to spend time with his father: “I remember all the time he didn’t come home until after dark, all the times I ate dinner alone. I’d ask Ali where Baba was, when he was coming home, though I knew full well he was at the construction site, overlooking this, supervising that. Didn’t that take patience? I already hated all the kids he was building the orphanage for; sometimes I wished they’d all died along with their parents.” (KR, 17)

Baba wanted his son Amir to be a sportsman. He wanted him to be a “real” man who didn’t bury his face in books all the time. Baba was a die-hard soccer fan, but Amir hadn’t inherited a shred of his athletic talents. Finally, Baba accepted the hard reality that Amir was never going to either play or watch soccer. No matter how hard Amir tried, but he could not live up to the expectations of his father. Baba wanted to make Amir what he was not. Amir’s mother died giving birth to him. He felt a deep void in his life, and he threw himself into poetry and writing. Baba’s aloofness and indifference ignited the flame of literature in him which was a Thanatos. He found solace in poetry and his dead mother’s books: “That

was how I escaped my father’s aloofness, in my dead mother’s books. That and Hassan, of course. I read everything, Rumi, Hafez, Saadi, Victor Hugo, Jules Verne, Mark Twain, Ian Fleming.”(KR, 19) Amir’s childhood relationship with his father had a great impact on his adult years.

There have been many theories over the years about how the human mind is formed. Some believe that all knowledge is presented in the realm of existence, while others believe that people are born with unconscious processes.

It is important to understand how the Object Relation theory came to light, and it all starts with Freud. Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, believed that the unconscious determines the behaviour of conscious people, and that much of our behaviour stems from unconscious desires. However, not everyone accepted this idea. The Renowned psychoanalyst Melanie Klein took Freud’s work and took the leap to suggest that human behaviour does not depend on the inner workings of the unconscious. He believed that relationship patterns were the key to understanding human behaviour. She then created an object-relations theory.

Object-relations theory suggests that human behaviour is created by interpersonal relationships, as opposed to biological forces or unconscious desires. Both Freud and Klein believed that relationships with others influence behaviour, but Klein disagreed with the sexual pleasure aspect of Freud’s research.

Amir, as a son wished for his Baba attention and care and later when he knows that he had done a great sin of sending Hassan and his son Sorob away made him realise his own mistake. Amir as a motherless child longed for love and care. He thought that Baba was his Object and he started react accordingly. Amir was a lovable boy yet when Baba treated Hassan and Amir equally; he couldn’t accept it and failed to save Hassan when he was in trouble. As a child, Amir was insecure about everything. A fear that Baba will love Hassan more than him, made Amir to do a lot of crimes. He had lied, stolen, witnessed a rape and finally trapped Hassan to leave the house which made Amir a devil and guides towards Thanatos. Amir’s object was Baba and that made him possess over everything he has. Later when he met Soroya, his life got fulfilled as he always

longs for his mother's touch, love and warm. That worked as a remedy for his childhood wounds.

From the start and through his death, Hassan remains the same: loyal, forgiving, and good-natured. As a servant to Baba and Amir, Hassan grows up with a very particular role in life. While Amir prepares for school in the morning, Hassan readies Amir's books and his breakfast. While Amir is at school getting an education, Hassan helps Ali with the chores and grocery shopping. As a result, Hassan learns that it is his duty to sacrifice himself for others. Furthermore, by nature he is not prone to envy, and he even tells Amir he is happy with what he has, though he sees all the time how much more Amir has. Hassan comes across as the personification of innocence as a result, and this innocence is crucial in creating the drama and symbolism of his rape by Assef.

Hassan same like Amir, was a motherless child. Sanubaur, Hassan's mother eloped when she gave a birth to Hassan. His father Ali had taken responsibility to nurture Hassan. As a Hazara and a servant, Ali taught Hassan to adjust and sacrifice. As for Hassan, Ali was his Object. Just like Ali, Hassan too served for Amir's family. Even though Ali knows that Hassan was Baba's son, he still accepted the fact that he was a servant and he must sacrifice. And just like his father Ali, Hassan too sacrificed all his life to Amir.

Throughout the entire novel, there was never a time when Hassan had lost his temper not after he was raped, betrayed by Amir, had things thrown at him by Amir, or when he was teased by Amir. Instead, he tried to do the right thing, allowing his morality to decide what he would do.

In the case of the pomegranate tree where Amir had been throwing pomegranates at Hassan and screamed, "Hit me back" (KR,14) Hassan picks up a pomegranate and rubs it in his own face. Later when his mother sanaubar came "None of us seen Sanaubar since she had eloped with a band of singers and dancers in 1964" (KR,194) he accept her mistakes and started to take care of her. "They were catching up on all the lost years, I suppose. As far as I know, he never asked where she had been or why she had left and she never told." (KR, 195) Just like Ali, Hassan stands a moral figure. Hassan was guided with Eros throughout his life but was brutally dead at the end.

Sohrub, a son of Hassan. Just like his father, he too suffered a lot as a Hazara. After Hassan had shot dead Sohrub had taken to orphanage and got abused. When Amir saw Sohrub for a first time "His little hands swivelled at the wrists, his fingers snapped, and his head swung side to side" (KR, 257). Sohrub was a easy going guy as his morals were taught by Hassan. When he try save Amir with his slingshot from Assef he felt bad "Will God put me in hell for what i did to that man? My father used to say it's wrong to hurt even bad people. Because they don't know any better, and because people sometimes become good" (KR, 292).

Later when Amir explained to possibility of taking him to America and tough and he needs to be in orphanage for a while, Sohrub death instincts starts to pursuing him which leads him to commit suicide. He also felt glad "that they're not here anymore... because i don't want them to see me..... I'm so dirty" (293) which made Sohrub to reach Death instincts and Amir had promised "I won't ever get tired of you, Sohrub" (KR, 298)

Soraya almost seems like a combination of both Hassan and Amir. She's like Hassan, because of the harelip and the being nice stuff. She resembles Amir because she also has a checkered past. Amir finds this out pretty early on in their courtship and, perhaps, finds it attractive. "When we [the Taheris] lived in Virginia, I ran away with an Afghan man. I was eighteen at the time...rebellious...stupid, and... he was into drugs...We lived together for almost a month. [...]. Pader [General Taheri] eventually found us. He showed up at the door and...made me come home. I was hysterical. Screaming. Saying I hated him..." (KR, 207-208) Soroya as a child of General Taheri she was adamant yet of her father she was forced to do certain things and that made her to escape from her father and built a relationship with a American guy.

In the novel '*A Thousand Splendid Suns*' he presents the different aspects of Mariam's childhood through the interactions she has with the people in her life. Her interactions with Nana show the effects if being raised a harami "She understood then what Nana meant, that a harami was an unwanted thing: that she, Mariam, was an illegitimate person who would never have legitimate claim to the things

other people had, things such as love, family, home, acceptance.” (*A Thousand Splendid Suns*, 12) , with Jalil show her isolation and her naive attitude, with Mullah Faizullah her piety and with Jalil’s wives the reality of her poverty and low social status. This collates to portray a miserable childhood, with religion (and Mullah Faizullah) as her only source of comfort and happiness. Mariam as a Harami child falls for sugar coated words of her father, Jalil and cursed her mother Nana who hurts her with truth “Mariam could never tell. It did not occur to young Mariam to ponder the unfairness of apologizing for the manner of her own birth.” (*A Thousand Splendid Suns*, 23)

Mariam has had a tough life. She’s been beaten, abused, mistreated, and taken advantage of. “[Mariam] thought of her entry into this world, the harami child of a lowly villager: (*A Thousand Splendid Suns*, 31). From the beginning of the Novel and to the very end Mariam was haunted by the woe Harami. When Rasheed was asked to wear burqa she felt it was comfortable as none will call her as Harami. Her mother Nana words and the truth of her childhood days made her miserable.

In both the Novels there are similar situation which makes them miserable. Amir in *The Kite Runner* suffers from his childhood sins. It is same in Mariam, *A Thousand Splendid Sun*, She suffered from her haunting memory of her mother whom she misunderstood in the past and Mariam’s father undergone many psychological pain because of what he did in past to Mariam.

Of all the characters that Hosseini penned had a bitter childhood days because of the child wants to possess the object all the time. Amir wants his Baba attention, Mariam wants her Father Jalil’s love and

later found the truth that her mother was a loyal angel. Hassan who lost her mother still taught by Ali about the important character to be servant, made Hassan to sacrifice his life, Soroya wants freedom and she eloped. Amir, Hassan, Soroya, Sohrab and Mariam all had bitter past and that made them develop a mindset that they are their centre of universe. Due to their past, their present life turns life. All the characters were haunted by their past memories and that leads them to Post dramatic Disorder.

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