

Racial Discrimination Portrayed in Khaled Hosseini's "The Kite Runner"

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Abstract

Khaled Hosseini's first novel, The Kite Runner, which tells the tale of two young boys in Kabul, Afghanistan, was published in 2003. It demonstrates how the main character of the novel endures pain in order to receive love and devotion from his father Ali and his bond with Hassan. The Taliban's control over the Afghan people is discussed. It also mainly discussed about the two ethnic groups of Afghanistan. Pashtun and Hazara are the ethnic groups. When the Taliban take over, life becomes a desperate struggle against poverty, brutality and anxiety. The novel The Kite Runner's title, "Racial Discrimination," makes it very evident how the oppression of the Hazara people affected humanity. Since racial discrimination is predicated on factors such as race, color, national origin and ethnicity, it serves to hinder the equal recognition of human rights and the fundamental freedom of public life in the spheres of politics, the economy, culture, and society. The story examines the different ways that the Pashtuns discriminate against the Hazaras on the basis of their lower social position.

Keywords: Racial Discrimination, Pashtuns, Hazaras.

Introduction

In the novel 'The Kite Runner,' Khaled Hosseini depicts the life journey of marginalised and voiceless characters constrained by their personal fears. It highlights the traits of Hassan, his father Ali, and his son Sohrab. The government dictatorship and the Taliban carry out ruthless and vicious crimes as a result of these people's fight for their rights.

Racial Discrimination

Racial discrimination is linked to psychological and sociological issues in *The Kite Runner*. Discrimination is a common issue in literature. Due to discrimination, many Afghan immigrants have experienced various sorts of violence and abuse, and many have been deprived of their basic rights to food and housing. Since they are located in certain regions to meet their basic needs, they are frequently isolated from society. According to John F. Dovidio et al., discrimination is the most harmful mindset, characterized by acts that directly disadvantage and injure other groups. Discrimination is more than just a conviction; it is the act of putting that idea into practice. A harmful act committed by members of one group against members of another is known as discrimination. According to Dovidio (2017), discrimination is defined as an attitude or behavior that favors one group over another.

Although Pashtuns make up the majority, Hazaras are considered a minority ethnic group in Afghanistan. Pashtuns have extensive authority in a number of domains. However, the Hazaras have little power in any area because they are a marginalized and vulnerable population. Being the majority ethnic group, the Pashtun frequently uses this to discriminate against the Hazaras and restrict their involvement in a variety of firms. In order to preserve their identity and status within the tribe, the Pashtun people display this discriminatory behavior.

In this perspective, the Hazaras' physical attributes are relevant. The Pashtuns are descended from Sunni Muslims, whereas the Hazaras are Shia Muslims. The Hazaras' ancestry is connected to the Mongols and the Uyghurs of western China, which explains their Chinese characteristics and flat nose. According to earlier depictions of Pashtun culture, people typically had prominent cheekbones, a variety of eye colors, and noticeably light complexion with a large nose. Because of their Mongol-Persian ancestry, the Hazaras share certain features.

It is made clear throughout "The Kite Runner" that Amir is aware of the Hazaras' unequal treatment and frequent lack of respect in society. It shows how Pashtuns have always made fun of Hazaras wherever they go. Hassan was referred to as "flat-nosed Babalu," which means to "monster with a flat nose," when he first approached some soldiers in the neighborhood. "Hey you flat-nosed Babalu, who did you eat today? Tell us, you slant-eyed donkey!" (TKR 36)

Pashtuns always believe that their ancestors are superior to those of the Hazaras. They always think of themselves as superior to the Hazaras because they are richer, smarter, and better behaved. Since his father is among the wealthiest people in their Kabul district, Amir, a Pashtun child, enjoys a luxurious lifestyle.

It implies that Hassan, the son of Ali, Amir's servant, was frequently present to help him with his daily tasks. Amir never thought of Hassan as a buddy, as the deeper sense reveals. For him, Hassan was merely a servant. "The curious thing was, I never thought of Hassan and me as friends either. (TKR 24) "But he's not my friend! I almost blurted. He's, my servant! Had I really thought that? Ofcourse, I hadn't. I treated Hassan well, just like a friend, better even, more like a brother. But if so, then why, when Baba's friends came to visit with their kids, didn't I ever include Hassan in our games? Why did I play with Hassan only when no one else was around? (TKR 38) The above quotation states that Amir could never regard Hassan as equal to himself.

In the field of education, discrimination is also evident. There are differences between the educational systems used by Pashtuns and Hazaras. According to the novel "The Kite Runner," only Pashtun children are allowed to go to school because of their high socioeconomic status. Amir uses his literary skills and knowledge to make Hassan feel weak and unworthy. The main characters, like Hassan and Ali, are illiterate Hazaras who haven't had the chance to learn how to read and write. It was never possible for Hassan to get a formal education. But the wealthy Amir has the luxury of reading poetry and literature. Assef, the antagonist in this book, holds grudges and shows racial hostility toward Hassan.

He is a brutally cruel and conceited boy who regularly uses his strength and position to torture other kids. He has blue eyes and blond hair and reveres Adolf Hitler. According to Assef, only Pashtuns have the right to live in Afghanistan. Assef committed the horrible act of raping Hassan along with his accomplices Kamal and Wali. Consequently, Hassan refuses to give up the kite in return for his freedom. For this reason, Assef is against Hassan and the Hazaras. Pashtuns utilize violence and terror to take the homes and territories of many Hazaras. Hazaras work only to support themselves and their families; they are not paid for their labor. As servants, Hassan and Ali's life serve as an example of this dilemma. Amir and Hassan represent their common historical experiences and cultural viewpoints of the Afghan people in this piece. Because many civilizations, like Afghan culture, have their own unique languages, literature, ethnic groups, and traditional games. Hassan and Amir follow Islamic customs.

During the first three days of Eid Al-Adha, or Eid-e-Qorban as Afghans term it, in addition to the tenth day of Dhul-Hijjah, the last month of the Islamic calendar, this event honors the prophet Ibrahim's son's near sacrifice for God. Every year, Amir, Hassan, and their fathers usually congregate in the backyard to perform this ritual. Three portions of the meat are traditionally divided on Eid Al-Adha: one for the family, one for friends, and one for the less fortunate. According to their customs, they would give the animal a sugar cube to make its demise more agreeable and made sure the sheep didn't see the knife. Kabul people dressed in their best and newest clothing and traveled to see their family during Eid, the three-day celebration that follows the holy month of Ramadan. People hugged and kissed and greeted each other with "Eid Mubarak." Happy Eid. Children opened gifts and played with dyed hard-boiled eggs (TKR 41)

Every winter, districts in Kabul held a Kite-fighting tournament and if you were a boy living in Kabul, the day of the tournament was undeniably the highlight of the cold season. I never slept the night before the tournament. I'd roll from side to side, make shadow animals on the wall, even sit on the balcony in the dark, a blanket wrapped around me. I felt like a soldier in Kabul, fighting kites was a little like going to war (TKR 46-47). According to the above quotation, Afghanistan has a traditional kite fighting contest every winter. Since each kite fighter had an assistant, it began early in the morning. Amir's assistant, Hassan, continued the kite fighting sport feed line. This demonstrates how inferior Hassan is to accept everything for his high-ranking boss, Amir. According to Amir, Hassan is the most skilled kite runner in Afghanistan; he consistently moves as quickly as he did before the kite touched the surface. This demonstrates Hassan's inner strength and vivacity.

The Hazara group's physical characteristics are typically completely distinct from those of a true Afghan, or Pashtun, tribe. Hassan's identification as a Shi'a Muslim and Hazara is similar to that of his father, Ali. The male line is the source of the Hazara kinship's lineage-based order. Males in a particular area are said to be descended from a common ancestor. While eating mulberries and pelting each other with them while laughing and giggling, they alternated using the mirror.

I can still see Hassan up on that tree, sunlight flickering through the leaves on the almost perfectly round face, a face like a Chinese do chisel form hard wood, depending on the light, gold, green, even sapphire. I can still see his tiny low-set ears and that pointed stub of a chin, a meaty appendage that looked like it was added as a mere afterthought. (TKR 3).

The racial discrimination against Hassan, who has a round face resembling a Chinese person, was depicted in the aforementioned quotation. He has a wide nose, thin slanting eyes that resemble bamboo leaves and tiny low-set ears that change color depending on the light, gold, green, or even sapphire. His traits are inherited from the Moguls. Baba came right out and asked, "Did you steal money? Did you steal Amir's watch, Hassan?" Hassan's reply was a single word, delivered in a raspy voice: "Yes". He flinches like I'd been slapped. (TKR 98).

The cultural difference between them is emphasized by Amir's internal conflict over his jealousy of Hassan. Amir, who comes from a more affluent background, claims that Hassan stole his money and watch. The source of Hassan's sexual harassment is eliminated by Amir. Hazaras are also wiped off in large numbers as a result of ethnic conflict. As a marginalized ethnic group in Afghanistan, the Hazara frequently face enmity, including taunts and dehumanizing animal analogies. Regardless of the honor of the Pashtun people, Baba kept the fact that Hassan is his half-brother a secret from Amir for the rest of his lifetime. The Pashtun people's continued familial ties to the Hazara people are a great disgrace. Baba, the story's Pashtun protagonist, has a high sense of self-esteem because of his affiliation with this ethnic group.

Conclusion

The three main protagonists in Khaled Hosseini's "The Kite Runner," Amir, Hassan, and Assef, form the framework of the story. Hassan's mental and emotional health is impacted by racial discrimination. The first sign of hope for Amir and Hassan's son, Sohrab, appears at the end of The Kite Runner. When Afghans gather in an American park, Sohrab helps Amir with his kite-fighting and laughs when Amir offers to fly the winning kite. As a result, Amir succeeded in getting back to Kabul, rescued Sohrab from Assef, and finally demonstrated Sohrab's devotion by running a kite for him and promising to do it a thousand times. The novel, "The Kite Runner," portrays the struggle for identity and the domination over other ethnic groups, illuminating racial prejudice, cultural identity, and ethnic conflict.

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