

## **SURVIVAL AMID VIOLENCE AS ILLUSTRATED BY KHALED HOSSEINI**

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### **Abstract**

In the midst of all the chaos in Afghanistan, Khaled Hosseini came up with his enlightening stories, which went on to become an international literary sensation. *The Kite Runner* was not only regarded as a captivating work of fiction for pure enjoyment, but it also served as a resource for learning every facet of the Afghan socio-cultural atmosphere. In addition to being literary treasures, Hosseini's works serve as a source of entertainment and information for people all over the world about the ongoing Afghan tragedy. Immigrants bring their native culture with them. However, they encounter a wide range of issues; nevertheless, they must adapt to and grow in the congregational nation. Hosseini wrote about Afghanistan, which is often associated with the Soviet War and the Taliban in the minds of many people in the west. Khaled Hosseini intended to bring attention to the fact that Afghans have been able to live in quiet anonymity. The book depicts the shattered identities of the oppressed, victimized, and downtrodden with sympathy and shows a desire and fight for survival. The central theme of all of his works is the theme of broken identity and survival. Hosseini's main characters are incredibly alone, worried, baffled, and lost. The majority of the characters experience emotional sterility and temporary loss of human goodness because of painful social interactions with a hostile environment and extremely violent and harsh domestic situations. This paper examines the author's varied motivations for writing, focusing on his desire to highlight the positive aspects of even the most difficult situations.

**Keywords:** Survival, Identity Crisis, Struggle, war, and Isolation.

### **Introduction**

The structures of power that are culturally, politically, religiously, and socially dominated by men are what denigrate, devalue, and subjugate women and children in Afghanistan. Both sexual and socio-cultural violence has been perpetrated on the Afghan women depicted in the works of Khaled Hosseini. The focus of this paper is on how resistance has resulted in survival and empowerment. The primary female characters experienced patriarchal oppression in the form of gender inequity, forced marriage, rape, domestic abuse, lack of independence, and identity. The Taliban regime's laws further worsened their difficulties. Women stopped being active in public life. The status of women's rights in society declined. The study's goal is to illustrate the violence and survival issues in the works of Khaled Hosseini.

**Objectives:** Violence and survival is the basic theme of Khaled Hosseini's novels. His characters, Hassan, Sohrab, Mariam, and Laila face both internal and external violence. His fictions are political and social narratives. The main aim of his works is justice, freedom, equality, race, gender, prejudice, etc.,

**Review and Discussion:** *The Kite Runner* was the first fictional English-language book about Afghanistan

Afghanistan was battling these turbulences. Because *The Kite Runner* was released after the 9/11 events, its success was crucial. America waged a limited war against terrorist organizations in Afghanistan in retaliation to these attacks. The desire to learn anything about Afghanistan as a country was quite strong and shared by people all around the world. They sought information on the insurgency, extremism, Islam, and the ongoing problems in Afghanistan.

The story depicts regular people, who have previously been oppressed, mistreated, and victimized with compassion. Through this story, Hosseini hopes to demonstrate that Afghanistan is not only associated with Soviet occupation, the Taliban, and American intervention; it also shows other manifestations of existence amid complex and terrible circumstances. He is successful in drawing attention to the normal Afghans and all the nuances of their lives from the darkness of anonymity. Through this book, Hosseini reveals and portrays the true nature of Afghan culture, social structure, taboos, rituals, and political and religious beliefs. The inaccurate and misleading perception of Afghans as only "bearded gunmen" is dispelled in Hosseini's book.

The majority of other writers, according to Nina Farlina, tend to write about despair, cultural shock, and isolation. Readers' eyes can be opened by Hosseini to the reality of Afghanistan's life, which has long been hidden from the outside world. Hosseini wished to bring attention to the peaceful existence of Afghans. According to Hosseini, the Afghan people are not leading 'human' lives; rather, they are on the verge of collapse, and their struggle for survival has become a daily occurrence rather than a passing stage in their lives. All their behaviour is focused on ensuring their survival in such a harsh environment. Hosseini describes the political and historical processes in a precise and open manner. He threads them throughout various stages in the lives of the numerous people in his story. The innocence of childhood marks the novel's opening, its depiction of childhood trauma serves as its climax, and its restoration of innocence in another foreign country serves as its epilogue. The protagonists all have to go through an extremely cruel and harsh survival struggle in this pathos-filled tale.

Hassan is victimized by both the type of group violence and interpersonal self-directed violence. In the novel, he experiences every heinous kind of abuse possible, whether it be physical, mental, emotional, or psychological. Hassan is seen by Malik, Shah, and Mahmood as exemplifying the "sacrifice, surrender, and injustice" idea alluded to by the lamb metaphor.

However, Hassan exhibits certain unique qualities and a remarkable drive for survival. Even in extreme situations where his life is in danger, he maintains his composure and survival. In his fictional tale, Hosseini draws attention to many forms of violence and varied coping mechanisms used by victims in response to the conditions that prevail in Afghanistan. However, the fact can't be ignored that Amir, the story's narrator, is Pashtun by ethnicity, and deals with several extraordinary hardships endured by three generations of the same family, which means the trials and tribulations that thousands of Afghan people have faced throughout the years as they have struggled to survive were not only faced by Hazaras or Pashtun, but all of the communities were equally involved in this agony.

According to Hosseini, the struggle for existence in Afghanistan is not a common trend. Races and faiths are separate categories. The openly discriminated-against racial groupings are in a truly appalling and miserable position. The burden of upholding social bonds falls mostly on the oppressed rather than the oppressor, which makes life more difficult for them. Between Hassan's and Amir's war, Hosseini draws a line. According to him, surviving is a long-term effort for people like Hassan and Amir because whereas people of higher or lower ethnic standing must battle foreign invasions, the destitute and oppressed must constantly struggle against suffering inflicted upon them by their countrymen.

Khaled Hosseini has not portrayed any of his characters as a terrorist, conservative, liberal leaders, or members of the Taliban, contrary to what the reader may have hoped. He is only involved in caring for youngsters in the war-torn country of Afghanistan. This interest may be because Hosseini himself views his country as the place where he spent his early life. As a result, he worries more about kids and thinks more deeply about how to safeguard them. He writes about several young characters, including Amir, Hassan, Mariam, Laila, Abdullah, and Pari, but Sohrab is the one who is most often seen in terrible and helpless circumstances. He represents the most awful childhood experiences in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is generally known for being a country that has been decimated, fractured, ravaged by war, mentally broken, and in turmoil. In these conditions, it is simple to assess the seriousness of the dramatic impacts on childhood.

Sohrab skilfully lays forth all the concerns of the persecution and survival of childhood in Afghanistan in *The Kite Runner*. Numerous hardships affect Afghan children, including high rates of infant mortality, child labour, child marriage, malnutrition, parent loss, pitiful conditions in orphanages, begging, exposure to extreme ideologies promoted by terrorists and jihadis, and, most importantly, child sexual abuse. As the external wounds are probably addressed with medication and the inside wounds continue to bleed throughout life, sexual assault on a child goes beyond physical harm. Sohrab, the son of Hassan and Farzana, is virtually a carbon copy of Hassan in terms of appearance and personality. He stands for the unjust. He continues to represent Hassan's situation after his death.

**Resistance to Violence in A Thousand Splendid Suns:** In the book *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the three generations of female characters Nana, Mariam, and Laila experience both sexual violence and violence influenced by the prevalent religious dogma. When Jalil's family learns that Nana, the housemaid of the affluent businessman, is expecting, she is sacked from her position. Nana is the mother of Mariam. Jalil claims she will not be the parent of the child she gives birth to. He disputes introducing himself to young Mariam. Mariam longs for a father figure's love and protection because she has endured being labelled as a bastard all of her life. Because of his daughter's behaviour, Nana's father, a simple stone carver, leaves his town and is never seen again.

Mariam experiences a lot of the same things her mother did. She's married to Rasheed, who is 20 years her senior. She experiences assault on all fronts—physical, sexual, and emotional. When Mariam wed Rasheed, she was only 15 years old. Mariam always tries to flee Rasheed's grasp out of fear. “There is no shame in this Mariam”, he says while pushing himself on her and apologizing for it. “Married individuals typically do it. The Prophet and his wives carried it out. Shame is not present” (76). Mariam, who is half as old as Rasheed, was forced into a sexual connection with him, and Rasheed justifies this behaviour by citing the Prophet.

Rasheed also abuses Laila verbally, physically, and sexually. She does not, however, give in to Rasheed's harshness. Two children are born to her—one from Tariq and the other from Rasheed. Rasheed is disappointed that Laila delivered a daughter because he had hoped for a son, therefore he starts acting violently toward Laila. He would eventually discover that Laila was seeing Tariq, her childhood friend. Rasheed beats Laila severely; Mariam steps in and kills Rasheed as he tries to victimize Laila. Mariam, who has never expressed any desire to rebel against Rasheed and his brutal beatings, eventually found the strength to retaliate and kill Rasheed. By accepting responsibility for the killing of Rasheed, Mariam offers the greatest sacrifice on behalf of Laila and her kids.

This murder signals the end of her husband's power and control and represents Mariam's rebellion against his brutal despotism and suffocating oppression. When she was brought to the Ghazi stadium for her verdict, she was more terrified:

Mariam represents a Christ-like figure in the book. Even though Mariam has been oppressed and disregarded since infancy, she rises from the dead like a phoenix and declares her existence to the world. Laila and her children's peace and happiness are nothing more than a priceless gift from Mariam. She is genuinely enjoying her life to the fullest in Laila and her children's hearts when she succumbs to death.

Mariam and Laila fight against patriarchy, gender-based violence, and prejudice by using education, female friendships, and sisterhood as weapons. Laila and Mariam, who were both victims of the same event and experienced similar sorrow and pain, developed a loving sisterly friendship and served as each other's protectors. Laila's father emphasized the need for education for women since he had progressive ideas and wanted Laila to be independent. He sent Laila to school. However, when the Taliban came to power, the political climate of the nation shifted, and the schools were closed to women.

Mariam and Laila become so close to each other that they both find themselves in each other. "Laila began to laugh, and Mariam joined in. They laughed like this at each other's reflection in the mirror, their eyes tearing, and the moment was so natural, so effortless, that suddenly Mariam started telling her about Jalil, Nana, and the jinn." (Hosseini 249)

Mariam and Laila's close relationship could be compared to the concept of female sisterhood. Feminists refer to the tie between women who are not related biologically but who are together in solidarity as a sisterhood.

Laila's father forbids her to attend school because of the difficult living conditions brought on by the conflict between the Mujahedeen and the Soviets; during the time the Mujahedeen took control of Kabul, bombs were dropping everywhere, making it unsafe for civilians to be there.

The educational backgrounds of the women in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* appear to be highly disparate. Mullah Faizullah teaches Mariam Al-Qur'an while also teaching her how to read and write. He visited her once or twice a week to teach her the five prayers and Arabic terms;

"It was Mullah Faizullah who had taught Mariam to read, who had patiently looked over her shoulder as her lips worked the words soundlessly, and her index finger lingering beneath each word, pressing until the nail bed went white, as though she could squeeze the meaning out of the symbols. It was Mullah Faizullah who had held her hand, guided the pencil in it along the rise of each alef, the curve of each beh, the three dots of each she." (Hosseini 16)

Mariam aspires to attend college. Mullah Faizullah does not criticize her for just wanting to study and tries to persuade Nana to allow her daughter to attend a formal school by saying, "If the girl wants to learn, let her." Let the girl go to school (Hosseini 17). When Mariam inquires about going to school, Nana is adamant that the only lesson she needs to learn is to survive. This demonstrates the social bias against women who have been forced to develop endurance skills since they were young.

Laila starts to hear about good things happening in Kabul, such as the reconstruction of roads and schools and improvements for women, after the events of September 11, 2001, and the following American invasion. She wants to be a part of it. She still has the passion that her father set in her: "You can be anything you want, Laila, he says. I know this about you. And I also know that when this war is over, Afghanistan is going to need you" (Hosseini 343). It is necessary to gradually reorganize the social, cultural, and political systems that sustain the marginalization, devaluation, and violence against women. Afghan

women are not always voiceless and powerless, despite the country's predominant patriarchal culture and therefore more oppressive conditions for them.

### Conclusion:

Khaled Hosseini's novels represent a deep look into the issues in the prevailing society of Afghanistan. He enlightens the issues like children and women abuse deeply rather than portraying them in a simple form. Violence is powerfully represented in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, *The Kite Runner*, and *And the Mountains Echoed*.

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