
Guilt and Perseverance as the Motivation in the Kite Runner

The present paper explores guilt and perseverance in *The Kite Runner* as the motivation for an individual to seek redemption and attain the satisfaction of self-fulfillment. Unfolded through the first person narrative mode, the novel is structured like the memory lane of the protagonist Amir whose sense of remorse and guilt over the sin of leaving behind his ever loyal friend Hassan, for reasons far too vague, force him to commit acts of expiation through return. Amir's return to homeland, tarnished and tattered by war, fundamentalism and the turbulence of a Taliban led regime unfolds his journey towards self-identity and redemption. Unlike Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, in *The Kite Runner*, Amir faces no sense of identity crisis in the adopted homeland. Rather he feels himself a stranger when he returns to the changed realities of his home town, Kabul. Amir's journey home in search of Hassan's surviving son, Sohrab is replete with conflict, violence and violations.

In the novel, the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is a volatile plane of clash and confrontation of identities and loyalties. As Seyham describes, border carries intrinsically within itself an idea of perpetual motion and confrontation (201). The border thus turns almost into a real space in which the confrontations between cultures, nationalities and languages take place, and in which, ideally the culture of hybridization replaces the traditional idea of a national identity. Amir is a cultural hybrid which makes him distinct and unique. Thus the novel revolves around the central axiom of personal selves permeated by political prejudices and permutations.

In a lifetime, everyone will face personal battles and guilt, some large and some small.

Such as guilt over sneaking out, not doing homework, or telling your parents a little white lie. People find peace of mind through redeeming themselves, in other words, we do something that makes up for the cause of guilt. Khaled Hosseini's novel "*The Kite Runner*" revolves around betrayal and redemption. Redemption is the act of saying or being saved from sin, error or evil, which the main character Amir seems to need the most. Amir lives with the guilt he has built up over the years because of one incident from his childhood. Amir's father's words still echo through his head "A boy who won't stand up for himself becomes a man who can't stand up to anything". pg. 24. Although Amir destroyed the lives of many people, and he has had more than one opportunity to redeem himself of his guilt, he is not the selfish little boy he once was. How often does one stop and think, "How will this affect everyone else in my life?" Amir had a chance in the alley, to put Hassan first and change the path of both their lives, but he made the decision to turn around and run because it was what he thought was best for him: "I had one

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last chance to make a decision. One final opportunity to decide who I was going to be. I could step into that alley, stand up for Hassan the way he'd stood up for me all those times in the past and accept whatever would happen to me. Or I could run. In the end, I ran. I ran because I was a coward. I was afraid of Assef and what he would do to me. I was afraid of getting hurt. That's what I told myself as I turned my back to the alley, to Hassan. That's what I made myself believe. I actually aspired to cowardice, because the alternative, the real reason I was running, was that Assef was right: Nothing was free in this world. Maybe Hassan was the price I had to pay, the lamb I had to slay, to win Baba."

Amir's selfish ways were a result of the lack of his father's affection in his life. As a young boy, he was forced to deal with his father's disinterest in him, which made him incredibly jealous of Hassan. Amir could not understand at the time, why his father adored his servant's son more than his own son. As the tension increases between Amir and Hassan, Amir can no longer stand to see Hassan every day because of what Amir had not stopped and he could not bear seeing his father showing Hassan love and not him. Hassan and his father are forced to leave their home after Amir places his watch under Hassan's pillow and accuses him of stealing it. Hassan did not even deny the accusations because he had figured out what Amir was doing. "Hassan knew. He knew I had betrayed him and yet he was rescuing me once again, maybe for the last time." pg.111 Even after the alleged theft of the watch, Amir's father is willing to forgive Hassan, which stunned Amir, and made him see that the love his father has for Hassan is greater than he imagined.

Amir did not just ruin Hassan's life; he also ruined the lives of many people with his decisions after the incident in the alley. Baba lost a chance to watch his son, Hassan, grow up and also lost the chance to bring him to America so he could start a new life. Sohrab lost both his parents to war because they were still living in Afghanistan, lost his childhood to war, and tried to commit suicide as a result of Amir going back on his promise to keep him safe from orphanages. Soraya lost her right to the truth when Amir kept his past a secret even though she opened up to him about hers. It is one thing to destroy your own life with guilt, but it is a completely different issue when you destroy the lives of others.

Before Amir can go on the road to redemption, Amir must realize that he can't go back and change what he has done as a child, and he must find inner peace. Although if it was not for Amir's actions as a child, Sohrab never would have needed to be saved in the first place but by saving Sohrab, the last piece of Hassan's life, does make a difference. From the moment he chose to turn his back on Hassan, there were many chances where "There's a way to be good again" pg.238 for all his wrongdoings, but he chose not to take any of these. Sohrab was his last and only chance for redemption. "I have a wife in America, a home, a career and a family". But how could I pack up and go back home when my actions may have cost Hassan a chance at those very same things? And what Rahim Khan revealed to me changed things. Made me

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see how my entire life, long before the winter of 1975, dating back to when that singing Hazara woman was still nursing me, had been a cycle of lies betrayals and secrets.” pg.238

Amir admits that he cost Hassan a chance at a good life and that he had many opportunities to change the outcome of Hassan's life. But at this moment he realized he could lose everything he has built in America, but for the first time in his life, Amir did not care about only himself, he came to terms with what he had done, and he was ready to redeem himself at any cost.

Amir finally became the man who stood up for himself and his sins. Throughout his childhood, Amir looked for his father's affection and he never could get it. His father had said "I'm telling you, Rahim, there is something missing in that boy." pg.24 Amir's father would have been proud of him at this very moment because that was all he had wanted from him. The guilt that was built over the years was finally put to rest at the safety of Sohrab. In Afghanistan when Amir stood up for Sohrab and Assef aggressively beat him up, Amir had said "My body was broken just how badly I wouldn't find out until later but I felt healed. Healed at last. I laughed." pg.289 which showed Amir had come to terms with what he had done as a child and was finally felt relieved. Although he was getting beat up, it did not matter anymore, he just wished he had stood up to Assef years ago, and maybe he would have earned his redemption in that alley.

In chapter seven, an unthinkable things happen: Hassan is raped in an alley by a bully, Assef, and Amir does nothing to stop it. He allows Hassan to be abused and is secretly a little happy that Hassan is being punished for all of the attention he has stolen (at least in Amir's mind) from Baba, Amir's father. He runs away from the awful scene and says, "The real reason I was running, was that Assef was right: Nothing was free in this world. Maybe Hassan was the price I had to pay, the lamb I had to slay, to win Baba".

Things get even worse in chapter nine when Amir's guilt, shame, and anger are so great that he wants nothing more than for Hassan to be gone. Amir tries several tactics, but none of them work. Finally he frames Hassan by planting a watch and some money under Hassan's bed. Baba is finally forced to ask Hassan directly about the incident.

Baba came right out and asked. "Did you steal that money? Did you steal Amir's watch, Hassan"? Hassan's reply was a single word, delivered in a thin, raspy voice: Yes. I flinched, like I'd been slapped. My heart sank and I almost blurted out the truth. Then I understood: This was Hassan's final sacrifice for me. If he'd said no, Baba would have believed him because we all knew Hassan never lied. And if Baba believed him, then I'd be the accused; I would have to explain and I would be revealed for what I really was. Baba would never, ever forgive me. And that led to another understanding: 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.

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Amir wanted to get rid of Hassan, and Baba now sends Hassan away because of Amir's lie. We find out later that Hassan is also Baba's son, so Hassan is being betrayed by both Amir, his brother, and Baba, his father. Despite that, Hassan remains loyal and loving to them both.

The opening lines of the book speak of Amir's guilt and remorse: That was a long time ago, but it's wrong what they say about the past, I've learned, about how you can bury it, because the past claws its way out. Looking back now, I realize I have been peeking into that deserted alley for the last twenty-six years.

Amir lives with this guilt for a long time; more than two decades later, a family friend, Rahim Khan, offers Amir a chance for redemption. He wants Amir to come back to Afghanistan to rescue Sohrab, Hassan's son, from an orphanage. Hassan died in another act of loyalty to the family. Amir finally agrees to rescue the boy who, it turns out, is in a much worse place than an orphanage by the time Amir finds him.

That was supposed to be the end of his obligation: Amir would rescue his nephew, Baba's grandson, and leave him with a nice family in Pakistan. Instead, Amir is moved to bring Sohrab back to the United States and raise him as his own son. This act of rescue serves as an act of redemption, both for his own sins and his father's against the true and loyal Hassan.

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