

The Use of Literary Devices in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*: An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The literary devices are mainly the literary techniques and archetypal structures which are frequently applied and used by the authors in their literary works to put into words their messages in an uncomplicated approach to the readers which are vitally important for the readers to interpret, analyze, exemplify and above all, contextualize and conceptualize the texts of any literature of any author. In Khaled Hosseini's well-known and most celebrated novel *The Kite Runner*, the readers get the right of entry to explore many literary devices with a view to providing authentic argument, criticism and elucidation regarding that text as well. This article is indeed an endeavor to show and probe with appropriate analysis and interpretation how the literary techniques are relevantly used and contextually substantiated to different characters and events in the novel with proper unbiasedness and impartiality along with suitable cohesion and coherence to the text too.

KEYWORDS

Symbolism, Allusion, Imagery, Flashback, Irony, Metaphor, Hyperbole, Parallelism, Point of view and Language

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Kite Runner is a moving work of fiction where the Afghan-American novelist Khaled Hosseini deals with the life of Amir, the protagonist of the novel, and instantaneously, the writer sketches the universal appeal of 'friendship' between Amir and Hassan very enthusiastically. When the narrator describes the life of Amir, the narrator coincidentally and very artfully elucidates Amir's hatred, betrayal, meanness, love, loyalty and above all, the great form of repentance and redemption and essentially, it is the redemption that makes him great again. The author further interprets the struggle and survival of Amir's life very warmly and passionately by using active, effective and elusive stylistic devices i.e., allusion, imagery, flashback, satire, the first person point of view and so and so forth. These literary techniques act and work as a facilitator and catalyst in the novel slowly but truly to stimulate reader's feelings, emotion and curiosity regarding Afghanistan and the history, politics and culture of the country as well.

SYMBOLISM AND THE NOVEL

Symbolism is a system of symbols and symbolic representations which is used to convey and express abstract and latent ideas through the symbolic use of images. It also refers to the usage of words or objects to stand for or to signify other things. In the novel *The Kite Runner*, the emblem in the story is the Kite. The kite is implied and symbolic as the reason for a sacrifice and dedication of Hassan for Amir. At the commencement of the novel, Amir becomes successful in a kite fighting contest which is taken place in his neighborhood. This successful event seems unimportant to many people but it is very significant to Amir, Hassan and 'Baba' too. The narrator says regarding this aspect,

"In Kabul¹, fighting kites [*is*] a little like going to war..." (Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*)

The kite actually signifies more than just the war between the people in Afghanistan and Russia; it also characterizes the war within Amir himself. He battles with and against his thoughts and ideas about how to gratify Baba and to challenge Hassan sometimes and later on, the decision to adopt Hassan's child Sohrab.

At the denouement of the novel, Amir has pardoned himself and met all of his battles. He fights with kites more than one time with Sohrab and is now, on a fresh voyage. The kite embodies the rebirth of an association between Amir and Hassan as well as Amir and Sohrab. Amir is now, the care taker of Sohrab, the

¹The capital city of Afghanistan where the national game of Afghanistan 'kites running' is frequently arranged.

son of Hassan, in the similar manner Hassan cares for him. With a turn and twist of irony, the roles are overturned as Amir questions,

"Do you want me to run that kite for you?" (Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*)

Symbolism is inborn in the title of the *The Kite Runner*, the kite is figurative of the bond of Hassan and Amir. In the inauguration of the novel, their affiliation is like the arising kite; it has a breeze behind hand and even though the breeze is not stable, it will finally, on a good day, raise the kite to a top position. This top is at the Kite fighting competition when Amir downs the last Kite and says "I was throwing my free arm around Hassan and we were hopping up and down, both of us laughing, both of us weeping. You won, Amir agah! You won! We won! We won! Was all I could say?" (Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*). Amir and Hassan are strained together and Amir disproves his usual master position over Hassan insulting a true friendship. Hassan is born with a 'cleft lip,' which means that he will have it of his entire life, a sign of his deficiency and the preconception he will face. Baba, Amir's and Hassan's father, contributes Hassan with a beautiful gift for his birthday which is like giving for an operation to repair his malformation. When Amir combats with Assef for Hassan's son Sohrab, it is he who blows hard in the face of Assef with the 'same brass knuckles' that Assef once threatened Hassan and Amir with when they were children. When Amir is in the hospital to reconcile, he finds out that now, he has a fault in the same place that Hassan does. This is indeed a beautifully done example of irony, as Amir and Hassan are now alike not only by lifeblood, but by the fact that they are both altered so much by the oppressor of Assef.

The pomegranate tree where Hassan and Amir sat under to share story is a sign of harmony and heaven and they met in their time there. When Amir returns to his tree, it is already deceased and "hasn't born fruit in years" which shows that the concord is gone and his old life disappeared."

Above all, Sohrab is one of the most noteworthy signs in the novel. He signifies an emblem of redemption to Amir. By redeemable to Hassan's child, Amir will be a debt he owes, indeed.

ALLUSION AND THE NOVEL

The term Allusion refers to a passing orientation in a work of literature to something outdoor the text; it may comprise other works of literature, myth, historical facts or biographical detail. In this novel, the name Amir² is used as an instance of Allusion. Amir's name in modern term means Prince. This is an allusion to his status from the outset of the novel; however it is also ironic owing to Amir's spineless nature. The most prominent of all allusions in the novel is that of *Rostam and Sohrab*. This is not only the story of the glorious king Rostam who kills his unidentified son *Sohrab*, the favorite story of Amir and Hassan as children, but its plots bring into light with the lives of both of the boys. The most obvious of resemblances is the unknown relation of Amir and Hassan as 'half-brothers' which is only exposed after their father's demise and that of Hassan names his child Sohrab in memory of his preferred story. The deeper relations to the story are found in both the structure and commentary of the novel. Similar to how Rostam hosts a royal burial for Sohrab, Amir narrates a novel for his late friend Hassan, in a sense of glorifying his life.

Furthermore, the whole novel is a likeness of *Rostam and Sohrab*, the mark of Hassan and Amir's connection. Throughout the novel, Amir describes various scenes in connection with this story. On astounding his father with the losing kite from his winning rivalry, Amir's liking is prospect to "Rostam and Sohrab which symbolizes each other up" (Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*). Amir also compares the loveliness of Soraya to "that of Tahmineh, Rostam's wife and Sohrab's mother from the *Shahnamah*" (Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*). The application of *Rostam and Sohrab* is seen all through the novel as the important relation of Hassan and Amir's infantile into their adult lives. When Amir makes a plan regarding money and a watch in Hassan's bed to make him guilty of theft, Amir is thinking, "I wanted to tell them all that *I* was the snake in the grass..." (Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*). This has an amalgamation to the biblical story of how Adam and Eve try to deceive God, prompted by a snake in the grass. Amir is misleading his father into thinking Hassan and Ali is crooks, becoming the strength that prompts them to leave Baba's property.

IMAGERY AND THE TEXT

The word imagery stands for the descriptive language which uses images (picture in words) to make actions, objects and characters more vivid in the reader's attention. Metaphors and similes are instances of imagistic language. In the novel, it has been observed the presence of imagery. In a particular point, the narrator expresses,

²Traditionally, a military commander, leader, governor, or prince. Historically used in the title for caliphs, 'amir-ul-momenin' (commander of the faithful). In modern times, the title denotes membership in the ruling families of the monarchs governing Muslim countries (i.e., Saudi Arabia, the Gulf countries, Brunei) and means "prince."

"RUBBLE AND BEGGARS...they squatted at every street corner, dressed in burlap rags, mud-caked hands held out for a coin" (Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*)

This example of imagery clearly portrays the filth and quarrel that Afghanistan had faced when Amir had to leave his country. The description is small but delivers a very unforgettable image of the condition that the people of Afghanistan are now living in.

IRONY AND THE KITE RUNNER

The term irony is used to imply the humorous or ironic use of arguments to imply the opposite things of what they normally mean; the strangeness between what might be predictable and what actually happens; the ill-timed arrival of an event that has been hoped for. The one piece of advice that Baba always discusses upon Amir is the sin of theft. Once Amir reached adulthood and Baba was gone, it is discovered that Baba himself is indeed, a thief.

Through his matter with Ali's wife, the stealing of Ali's pride and manhood, Baba becomes father to Hassan, stealing his knowledge of his true father. He is also responsible for not telling Amir of his lies for his entire life, leaving the truth to be told shockingly by another person. When Amir was a child, Baba said of thieves,

"I spit on such a man. If I ever cross paths with him, God help him" (Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*)

The irony of Baba's treatment of thieves while knowing he himself is remorseful of such action that discloses the difficulty of his character and how Baba is not as charitable as he seems to be. This hatred of thievery Baba exhibits also appears to be his "way to be good again", or redemption, to ease his guilt over Hassan's complex situation.

Hassan has continually been a light and happy child, his smile is apparently permanent on his face even through nuisance. However, once Baba granted him the gift of operation to fix his hare-lip, he was no longer content. Amir reflects, "By the following winter, it was only a faint scar. Which is ironic? Because that was the winter that Hassan stopped smiling" (Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*). When Hassan's lip is fixed in position, he is imaginary to show his new-fangled, visibly perfect smile. However, after the processes of operation come to a wounding winter that will retain him from smiling so sincerely thereafter.

FLASHBACK AND THE NOVEL

Flashback is frequently used in the novel. The term flashback suggests to a scene or event from the past which is related as an aside during a story set in the present. When a character recalls a past event that is relevant to the current action of the story, flashback is taken place by the narrator. There is a moment of flashback in Chapter seven of the novel when Amir remembers that he and Hassan have 'fed from the same breast making them bonded by a brotherhood.' When Amir stays in the U.S.A., he tries to remember the past experience of his life very passionately. Hosseini, the narrator references this to make the next scene even more of a tragedy.

METAPHOR AND THE TEXT

The term metaphor is to suggest an implicit comparison between two different things. It is an opposition part of simile. It also refers to a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object, a character or an action which does not literally belong to it, in order to imply a resemblance and create an unusual or striking image in the reader's mind. In the novel, Kite is regarded as a metaphor to clarify the life of Amir. The kite as metaphor actually indicates the friendship of Amir, the childhood of Amir, the reunion of Amir with Hassan's soul, Sohrab. Through kite, Amir tries to be repented. Sometimes, the kite as metaphor indicates the impending danger of Amir's land, the sudden invasion by the Russian military. Above all, the kite as metaphor reflects the life of Amir tied up with memory, friendship and redemption.

HYPERBOLE AND THE NOVEL

The term directs the exaggerative description. It focuses the extravagant embroideries of fact or of possibilities. It is usually used to denote serious or ironic or comic effects of the theme or characters. When Rahim Khan refers the father of Amir as 'Toophan³ agha' or Mr. Hurricane, it has been presented as the touch of exaggeration.

PARALLELISM AND THE KITE RUNNER

The term parallelism refers to the likeness by virtue of correspondence and communication. Parallelism is used in numerous and different ways. Amir does not stand up for Hassan when Assef rapes him. Later in the book, he has to combat with Assef to save Hassan's son from him. Amir is cut on the lip necessitating it to be

³A type of serious and devastative form of storm with flood like hurricane storm.

stitched up. Hassan has been born with a hare lip and has to have it sewn up. At the end of the story, Amir and Hassan's son fly the kite. Hassan had always been Amir's kite runner. Amir runs for the kite for Hassan's son now. It has been found the parallelism at the end of the novel albeit the beginning is different.

POINT OF VIEW AND THE NOVEL

The phrase *Point of View* refers to the type of narrative whether it is first or second or third person narrative. In this novel, it is experimented that the narrative style or point of view is the first person and the story is narrated by Amir. The use of 'I' is prevalent throughout the text that makes the novel almost a symbol of autobiography of Khaled Hosseini, the narrator. The third person point of view is regarded as the most authentic and impartial view. The first person narrative usually focuses the personal affiliation of the author with the text.

LANGUAGE AND THE TEXT

In *The Kite Runner*, we observe the uses of the Farsi⁴ language in some specific paragraphs. The novelist uses the Register of Farsi in *The Kite Runner*. By using this technique and method, the novelist actually provides the intense experience of the Afghan society to the reader and audience. The usage of Farsi words generates usual touch in discussion and conversation. It improves the familiar and informal level of the novel. For this purpose, the author uses the following Farsi words like- 'Baba', 'Baba Jan', 'Inshallah', 'Naan' and the names of the characters like 'Amir Jan' together with other too. The novelist uses words like 'Baba' or 'Baba Jan' instead of 'dad' or 'father'. He also uses words such as 'Inshallah' and 'Naan'. The reader will understand these words through the understanding of the context of the novel, indeed.

II. CONCLUSION

To sum up, it is justifiably depicted that *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini is above all, featured with many literary characteristics which are vital for the criticism and consideration of a text. Without the using of literary devices, the audience can never be able to decipher the connoted, denoted, implied and suggestive meaning of the text. It is even hardly possible to elucidate the text theoretically without the helping of literary devices too. Therefore, the use of stylistic or literary devices or literary techniques provides much more room and space for the readers to encode, decode and deconstruct the meaning of the text indeed.

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⁴The term refers to the language spoken by the people of Iran, and the surrounding parts of Iran.