

**DISCUSSION ABOUT AFGHAN CULTURE AND SOCIETAL NORMS INFLUENCE
THE PORTRAYAL OF FATHERS IN KHALID HUSSAIN'S WORKS**

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ANNOTATION: This article explores how Afghan culture and societal norms shape the portrayal of fathers in Khaled Hosseini's literary works, especially in *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. By analyzing the father figures in the context of traditional Afghan values, gender expectations, and the sociopolitical backdrop, the study highlights how patriarchal norms and cultural identity are reflected in Hosseini's narratives. The paper employs a qualitative literary analysis method, integrating cultural studies and postcolonial theory to understand paternal roles in Afghan society.

KEY WORDS: Afghan culture, Khaled Hosseini, fatherhood, societal norms, masculinity, patriarchy, *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, postcolonial literature.

INTRODUCTION

Khaled Hosseini, a prominent Afghan-American novelist, presents complex and emotionally rich portrayals of family relationships in his works. Among the most pivotal of these relationships is the role of the father figure. In traditional Afghan society, fathers are seen as symbols of authority, honor, and social guidance. This paper investigates how Afghan cultural norms and societal expectations influence the characterization of fathers in Hosseini's novels, particularly in *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. It aims to explore the tension between traditional paternal authority and the emotional needs of children, while also addressing how war, displacement, and changing gender roles reshape paternal identities.

METHODS

The study adopts a **qualitative literary analysis** methodology, focusing on close readings of the texts and thematic analysis of paternal figures. The works are examined through the lens of **postcolonial theory** and **cultural criticism**, with secondary sources on Afghan culture, gender roles, and sociopolitical history informing the interpretation. Primary sources include Khaled Hosseini's novels; secondary sources include academic articles, interviews, and sociocultural studies of Afghanistan.

DISCUSSION

1. Patriarchal Authority in Traditional Afghan Society

Afghan society is deeply patriarchal, where fathers hold substantial power in both familial and societal contexts. In *The Kite Runner*, Baba represents this traditional, authoritative father figure. He is respected in Kabul for his masculinity, generosity, and pride. However, his emotional distance from Amir reflects the cultural discomfort with overt emotional expression, particularly among men.

2. Emotional Disconnect and Cultural Expectations

Baba's relationship with Amir illustrates how Afghan norms often prioritize honor and pride over emotional intimacy. Baba's disappointment in Amir's lack of bravery stems not only from personal expectation but from societal ideals of masculinity. This creates emotional conflict and identity struggles for Amir, who yearns for affection and approval.

3. Alternate Father Figures and Cultural Contrasts

Characters such as Hassan's father, Ali, and Rahim Khan serve as contrasts to Baba's rigid masculinity. Though less powerful socially, these figures demonstrate compassion, moral strength, and emotional support. Their portrayals suggest Hosseini's critique of traditional Afghan masculinity and a preference for a more nurturing form of fatherhood.

4. Fatherhood in A Thousand Splendid Suns

Although less centered on fatherhood, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* also reflects Afghan societal norms through the absence or failure of father figures. Mariam's illegitimacy and rejection by her father shape her psychological trauma, while Laila's father is a rare example of an educated, progressive paternal figure who encourages her schooling. These examples highlight how cultural norms restrict or enable women's lives based on paternal attitudes.

5. Impact of War and Migration

Hosseini's narratives often intersect with historical and political upheaval. The fall of Kabul, the rise of the Taliban, and forced migration challenge traditional paternal roles. Baba's emigration to the United States weakens his societal power, but it also humanizes him as he adapts to a new role where emotional resilience becomes more valuable than social dominance.

CONCLUSION

Khaled Hosseini's portrayal of fatherhood is deeply embedded in Afghan cultural and societal frameworks. Through multifaceted characters, he exposes both the strengths and limitations of traditional paternal roles. His novels critique rigid gender norms while offering alternative visions of masculinity based on empathy, humility, and emotional connection. By doing so, Hosseini not only reflects Afghan realities but also contributes to a broader discourse on the

evolving nature of fatherhood in transitional societies.

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