

Humanistic Analysis of the Character of Amir in The Kite Runner

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Abstract—Khaled Hosseini's famous novel, *The Kite Runner*, is the story of Amir, a fairly complex character who grows from a selfish child to a selfless adult. The novel depicts how Amir finds his place in a world of turmoil and transition. The major themes explored in the novels are father-son relationship, sin and redemption, race, class, war, as well as friendship and loyalty. In the present research paper, an attempt has been made to analyze the fictional character of Amir from the novel *The Kite Runner*. This research paper intends to study the psychological development of Amir and analyze his behavior from the point of view of Humanistic psychology. In the present work, an attempt has been made to show from the humanistic perspective how the human character progresses, how the development towards betterment is the natural tendency of humans and how the societal obstacles in the achievement of such potential creates bad or undesirable behavior.

Keywords: Humanism, Amir, Psychology, Childhood, Development, Behavior.

Introduction

Amir, the protagonist of the novel *The Kite Runner*, is a great character to study the tenets and domains of humanistic psychology and also to understand the strands and dilemmas of humanity in general. Humanists aim to study Psychology with keeping humans in the center and understand their mind, behavior, and daily dispositions.

Amir had a series of meaningful and also unfortunate events that made him the person he was. To understand his life course, his primary mindset and dispositions, one needs to understand the roots of his early life and upbringing. Amir's life witnesses a drastic contrast between his adulthood and childhood. During childhood, he is provided with all the luxuries by his father, but the basic requirements like the warmth of a mother or the unconditional acceptance of a father is missing. In Amir's case, the readers witness how he felt the lack of his maternal love because he lost his mother at a young age. At the same time, he felt rejected and not loved by his father. Amir craved for Baba. Like any other child, he longed to spend time with his father:

I remember all the time he didn't come home until after dark, all the times I ate dinner alone. I'd ask Ali where Baba was, when he was coming home, though I knew full well he was at the construction site, overlooking this, supervising that. Didn't that take patience? I already hated all the kids he was building the orphanage for; sometimes I wished they'd all died along with their parents. (Hosseini 17)

His father was strong and a man of honor. He had predefined notions about how a man should be and those notions were everything Amir wasn't. Amir, at an early age, did feel the lack of paternal love, but was strong enough to pursue things he liked. Here, it is pertinent to mention that Amir didn't receive unconditional positive regard in the form of complete love and acceptance from his father and that is bound to create flaws in his character.

On the other hand, Amir's basic needs were fulfilled. He had everything that a well-off family has- a house, a roof over the head, food to eat, and security from the outside world. These basic primary needs were fulfilled by his father. What Amir lacked was the need to belong. The primary aim of the person becomes to fulfill that need and replace that lack with satisfaction. These are the primary instincts we humans have. In Amir's case, this is exactly what happens. On one hand, he did everything to gain acceptance from his father and also belonged and relied upon his childhood friend, Hassan. Amir was subconsciously looking out for ways to fulfill the need for belongingness.

The humanists have focused immensely on how environment can be a dominant factor in shaping a life. The environment and events of childhood shape a person's lasting personality and humanists decoded its mechanism. Some of the traits that a child possesses at an early age tend to last for a longer span of time. The humanists also study deeply the effect of the conscious mind on the person. When a person has a motive, he also has a psychological reason behind it. When a negative event takes place, a person either activates defense mechanisms or rationalizes the event in his mind in order to

protect the self-esteem. Amir did the same in the incident of Hassan's rape.

This chapter of Amir's life ended when Hassan, along with his father, left the house and disappeared forever. Though they were gone forever, Amir still could not get over that horrible incident involving Hassan. He always thought about it. He grew into a guilty and self-conscious person who no longer felt the need for affection from his father, but felt the need for getting rid of the shame and guilt that had taken a home in his heart.

After an unfortunate death of his father, Amir grew more anxious. Amir is seen as a person who is fixated on his past. He felt that he himself was responsible for all the wrong things that happened in his life. He related the loss of his father and Soraya's inability to conceive a baby to the sins he had committed in the past. Amir always felt empty when he wondered about his past. He was psychologically affected by that childhood incident. The environmental situations had affected Amir in a way that he was not able to cope very well psychologically. If a person is given a favorable environment, he or she develops a positive outlook or traits in character. If the environmental conditions are not favorable, a person can suppress his innate nature and grow with faults and negative approach in life. The maximum emphasis is given on circumstances in childhood. That is the time when most of the ideas about self and others are made.

The next big event that changed the entire psyche of Amir occurred when Rahim Khan made a revelation. Rahim revealed that Hassan was not Ali's son and so, he was not a lower class person as people assumed him to be. Hassan was, in fact, the son of Baba and Amir's half-brother. None could imagine the shock Amir received on hearing the news. Everything that Amir thought to be true was not true anymore. Amir soon realized that his life was a lie. All the wrong things he did to Hassan haunted him. He realized that he was immensely loved and cared by his half-brother, Hassan. This realization resulted in a radical change of Amir's heart. He realized what he always had, but didn't care about. This unconditional love and sacrifice initiated a change of heart in Amir. This explains the importance of how unconditional love can help a personality evolve and how positive traits can be imprinted on a persona. When Amir got to know the truth about Hassan, he experienced the change of mind and the change of psyche that led to a change in his personality in a

positive manner. He became empathetic and felt guilty for mistreating Hassan and took a vow to rescue Hassan's son.

Amir was well off and led a luxurious life, but lacked unconditional positive regard from his father. That lack created a void in his life and everything that followed later in his life was a direct result of his conditioning in childhood. Each and every motivation arises from within him because of his childhood. His actions against Hassan, his need for approval from his father, and his ignorance towards the suffering of Hassan, are all because of poor positive regard in his childhood. Also, for the rest of Amir's life, he tries to fight off the guilt that stemmed from his actions in his childhood. He grew up to be an individual who changed his ways and stood up for Hassan's child and all this happened because he felt the need and motivation to do something right in life. And as humanists always say, the innate basic nature of a person is good and he will always walk in the direction of being the best version of himself. So, even if Amir's actions were contradictory to his conscious nature, they were in alignment to his innate nature as a human being.

References

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