

# **THE ELEMENT OF REMINISCENCE IN *THE KITE RUNNER***

**Pintoo Dhillon**

**M.PHIL. NET (ENGLISH)**

**PRT & CCA COORDINATOR, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Hisar**

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper investigates the element of reminiscence through flashback in the novel *The Kite Runner*. *The Kite Runner* acknowledges the problems of war and agony in Afghanistan and Khaled Hosseini questions about the identity and nationality through reminiscence. The childhood is an important phase of life that builds the future. Reminiscence is an individual memory that makes emotional through flashback. Khaled Hosseini was migrated to America on returning back to his motherland Afghanistan, becomes sentimental and regretful remembering his childhood. He commentates on his personal incidents during the war period throughout the novel.

Key Words: Reminiscence, Flashback, Childhood, War.

In a real sense childhood is the most important part of one's life which preserves the early life and also form the base for emotional intelligence. This leads to present as well as future which is also connected to the past. Khaled Hosseini in his interview discussed his childhood makes him to write this novel and his is not a happy childhood rather it is agitated due to his struggle for nationality and war in Afghanistan. In the novel, Amir represents the narrator who also symbolizes the writer. Amir is a weak character in the novel, he does not stand with his friend Hassan who dedicates his complete life for his friend. But the novelists regret in the end that he could have been with his friend Hassan at the time of need. But Hassan stands with his friend in all aspects of his life. Amir left his friend Hassan alone in Afghanistan and moved to America with his father. But Hassan struggles to live in the war like condition in Afghanistan. Khaled Hosseini brings the present condition of Afghanistan: poverty, sexual harassment, war and trauma in detail in the novel.

Flashback is an important narrative tool that the novelist uses throughout the novel in order to explore the element of reminiscence in the life of narrator. The hero of the novel after returning back from America to find his friend, finds desolated Afghanistan but not find his friend and his friend's son in the city. He becomes very sad to recall his days with his friend who was very supportive and kind-hearted. On visiting his hometown and the places where he spent time with his friend in Kabul, he becomes nostalgic and goes to a flashback to recreate his memory. He regrets that he has not saved his friend from the Taliban.

The novel refers the transnational travel of the protagonist from Afghanistan to America and Pakistan. At the age of 18, Amir migrated to America with his father and settles there. He grown up there and one day Amir got a call from his friend in Pakistan and he suddenly recollects his childhood.

One day last summer, my friend Rahim Khan called from Pakistan. He asked me to come to see him. Standing in the kitchen with the receiver to my ear, I knew it wasn't just Rahim Khan on the line. It was my past of unadorned sins. After I hung up, I went for a walk along Speckles Lake on the northern edge of Golden Gate Park. The early-afternoon sun sparkled on the water where dozens of miniature boats sailed, propelled by a crisp breeze. (1)

The above passage admits how Amir indulges in the memory of his childhood with his friend and he becomes sentimental. He continues to yearn by looking at the kites in San Francisco:

Then I glanced up and saw a pair of kites, red with long blue tails, soaring in the sky. They danced high above the trees on the west end of the park, over the windmills, floating side by side like a pair of eyes looking down on San Francisco, the city I now call home. And suddenly Hassan's voice whispered in my head: For you, a thousand times over. Hassan the hare lipped kite runner. (1)

The kites in San Francisco make Amir homesick and he plans to visit his hometown after a long time. He has planned to visit and comes back. He heard many sad things that his friend has been murdered by his Taliban groups and Hassan's only son lives in the orphanage. He visits the orphanage to save Hassan's son Sohrab from the Taliban. Amir is hesitant weighing the risks. Rahim reminds Amir that Baba always said that one is not a man if he doesn't stand up to anything.

Throughout the novel, many characters reconstruct the past. Amir is constantly troubled by his memory of Hassan's rape and his own cowardice, and it is this element of reminiscence of childhood that leads Amir to his final quest for redemption. Baba is also haunted by his past sins of adultery with Ali's wife Sanaubar, and his memories made him both strict with Amir and charitable with his work and money. And so Baba treats both the children Amir and Hassan with equality. Ali and Baba have also maintained a good relationship. So the fatherhood is also disturbed in the trauma of war.

Your father, like you, was a tortured soul, Rahim Khan had written. May be so. We had both sinned and betrayed. But Baba had found a way to create good out of his remorse. What had I done, other than take my guilt out on the very same people I had betrayed, and then try to forget it all? (23)

Recalling his father and his childhood also nourishes the element of reminiscence.

Amir always goes back and remembers his friend Hassan and how Hassan was a good and disciplined boy. Hassan is working very hard at home and helping to Amir:

During the school year, we had a daily routine. By the time I dragged myself out of bed and lumbered to the bathroom, Hassan had already washed up, prayed the morning names with Ali, and prepared my breakfast: hot black tea with three sugar cubes and a slice of toasted nana topped with my favourite sour cherry marmalade, all neatly placed on the dining table. While I ate and complained about homework, Hassan made my bed, polished my shoes, ironed my outfit for the day, packed my books. (30)

The novel comes out with the element of reminiscence, childhood and war with flashback. Right from the beginning, Amir's ominous references to his childhood wrongdoing create a sense of inescapable regret.

“the winter that Hassan stopped smiling,” and how he “saw Hassan run a kite for the last time,”

At times Amir's sorrow combines with his nostalgia, not only for his once-idyllic days with Hassan, but for the Afghanistan and its youth. Amir longs for the former peace of Afghanistan.

The novel succeeds in the narratives of Childhood, friendship and reminiscence through the flashback. It also pictures the situation of war and the post-war period in Afghanistan.

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