

TERRIBLE CONDITIONS OF AFGHAN REFUGEES IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF KHALED HOSSEINI

Author: Mrs. G. Ramya Sri

Reg. No: 21111274012013

Research Scholar, Department of English

St. John's College, Palayamkottai

Affiliated to MS University, Tirunelveli

Mail id: mgramyasri@gmail.com

Co-author: Dr. J. Pinky Diana Evelyn

Assistant Professor of English

St. John's College, Palayamkottai

Affiliated to MS University, Tirunelveli

Abstract

This article analyses the terrible conditions of Afghan refugees through the characters in Khaled Hosseini's novels *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *And the Mountain Echoed*. Hosseini is a well-known Afghan-American author. He has written three novels and one collection of short stories. All the three books investigate the significance of Afghan culture. Those books, in particular, reflect the situation and suffering of Afghans, particularly Afghan women. Faith, heritage, identity crises, cultural traditions, and way of life are all important components of the Afghan people. Human misery is the most prominent feature of Afghan society. Women who become refugees face numerous challenges, including a difficult journey, the loss of family members and property, and different cultures in the country of immigration. The majority of Afghans in the United States are unable to return home because to persistent political upheaval in their nation, which has the world's largest refugee population. Psychological distress can manifest itself in a variety of ways in different persons. Because of the circumstances surrounding their departure from their home country, some refugees have a unique aversion to persons in positions of power.

Key Words: Trauma, Refugees, Afghan Women, Culture, Terrible Conditions

Khaled Hosseini is one of the most well-known Afghan-born American authors. He has three novels and one collection of short stories to his credit. All three books depict Afghans as human beings, emphasising their challenges as women in particular. In this paper, I use references from Khaled Hosseini's novels *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *And the Mountain Echoed* to depict the predicament of Afghan refugees.

A refugee is someone who has crossed international borders to avoid violence or persecution because of their ethnicity, religion, nationality, or membership in a particular social or political organisation. It is protected by a number of international treaties. Refugees are a particularly vulnerable group that is predisposed to mental health problems for a variety of reasons. This includes horrible occurrences in their countries of origin and escapes from them, difficult times in camps or during transit, cultural disputes, difficulty adjusting to life in the country of resettlement, and multiple losses, including those of family members, countries, and ways of life.

The number of Afghan refugees has risen to nearly 6 million, making them the world's largest refugee population since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Even while refugees in Iran and Pakistan are beginning to return home, Afghanistan's continued political upheaval, combined with possibilities for children to assimilate and acquire an education, will keep many Afghans in the nation indefinitely. They face a variety of refugee-related concerns, such as language barriers, work issues, and substantial difficulties adjusting to American culture, society, and families.

Afghans, like many immigrants, prefer to settle in locations where a large percentage of their ethnic group already resides. In certain circumstances, this has made it more difficult to coexist with surrounding communities of people of various races, particularly in states like California where anti-immigrant views have prevailed. Furthermore, they frequently settle in less prosperous and perhaps dangerous places than those to which they are accustomed. As a result, many of those most vulnerable, such as the very young and the very old, remain indoors, contributing to estrangement and delaying cultural integration.

Women refugees face a number of challenges, including unpleasant travel and the loss of family members and property. They must contend with substantial cultural contrasts in their new home. The majority of Afghans living in the United States are unable to return home because to ongoing political upheaval, making them the world's largest population of refugees. Refugees have faced a variety of extraordinarily harsh situations as a result of political or religious tyranny, violence, migration, and resettlement. Because refugee trauma frequently happens prior to the primary war-related event that motivates individuals to flee, categorising all of the numerous types of traumas that refugees have encountered is difficult.

Amir and Baba's experiences as immigrants in the United States are the most similar to those described in *The Kite Runner*, which includes some autobiographical reflections.

Both Hosseini and the book's characters struggled to fit in with the new society and relied on charity for a time. He also recounts the neighbourhood flea market, where Hosseini and his father, like Amir and Baba in the novel, worked for a while. He, like Amir, returns to his homeland after a long absence, discovers his father's old house, the place where he was raised, and sees how brutality and conflict ruined some of the most beautiful sights.

Cities in the United States are particularly interesting in this sense due to the large number of ethnic enclaves and diaspora areas. Khaled Hosseini is concerned about how Afghani people's personal identities are altering as a result of their immigration to the United States during the Taliban struggle. Amir, the primary character of *The Kite Runner*, is the most visible example of Asian diaspora in American cities. In a few lines, he summarises the natural and man-made landscapes of the United States:

Almost two years had passed since we had arrived in the U.S., and I was still marveling at the size of this country, its vastness. Beyond every freeway lay another freeway, beyond every city another city, hills beyond mountains and mountains beyond hills, and, beyond those, more cities and more people. (*The Kite Runner*, 126)

The Kite Runner vividly depicts how attempting to leave one's native country is the first clue of how tough immigration truly is. Baba and Amir are two of many Afghans who are attempting to flee; they do it at night, when it is unknown where they will travel next, and they take calculated risks. Of course, some immigrants die before reaching their new homes. In addition to the hardships of living in a new nation, immigrants must contend with how those who remained behind perceive them.

As Amir returns to Afghanistan, he realises the truth. Finally, while adjusting to a new country, it is critical to maintain customs and a component of one's own culture. This extends beyond simply comprehending the language. Baba loses his rank but keeps his preconceptions from the old world, emphasising the difficult balance between the old and the new. Soraya and her mother also demonstrate the difficulty that women face in maintaining a balance between the standards of an ancient society and the realities of the modern world.

In the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the never-ending conflict is revealed to have entirely ruined every aspect of Afghan life. As a result of this cruel war, many Afghans were forced to escape their homeland. Babi's love for his nation was restored after packing the essentials and getting Laila's pledge that they would return home as soon as the war ended. Laila looked up and noticed Babi. He was sobbing. She wrapped her arm around his waist,

“oh, Babi. We’ll come back. When this war is over. We’ll come back to Kabul, inshallah. You’ll see” (*A Thousand splendid suns*, 186).

Being a refugee is challenging for everyone. Because of the war, the bulk of Afghans fled to safer countries around the world on their own. Like Tariq, who returns to his own nation after ten years as a refugee outside and in prison. Naturally, every refugee retains knowledge of his or her home country’s culture. In the novel’s last chapters, news of Afghanistan’s return diverts Laila’s focus. She now longs for her home nation and the city where she grew up. She is homesick as a result of her memories of her homeland. She misses the hustle and bustle of Shor Bazaar, Babur’s gardens, and the cry of the water carriers hauling their goatskin bags, “She misses the garment hagglers at Chicken Street and the melon hawkers in Karteh- parwan” (*A Thousand splendid suns*, 378).

A Thousand Splendid Suns depicts both the spring of 1994 and the planned day of Laila and Mariam’s escape. Mariam and Laila are waiting for Rasheed to leave for work. Aziza follows them as they take a taxi to the bus terminal. Both women are quite worried but optimistic. Finding a man to accompany them to Pakistan will be their first challenge because, according to the law, no woman may travel alone unless accompanied by a male relative. They will have difficulty entering Pakistan because Peshawar is already flooded with Afghani refugees.

In Hosseini’s third novel, *And the Mountains Echoed*, Abdullah relocates to California and opens Abe’s Kabob House. He and his wife had named their lone kid Pari after his long-lost sister. The plot revolves around the relationship of two siblings, Abdullah and Pari. They establish themselves in France and America, two separate countries. But, like the other half of the rhyme they sang as youngsters, they continually feel that a piece of themselves is missing. Pari, the youngest, will dream about her father and his missing sister being reunited. Hosseini adds a number of anecdotes that parallel those of Abdullah and the older Pari.

Pari Wahdati stayed a week with me at the house in Kabul. I gave her a tour of it when she arrived from Paris. She had last seen the house back in 1955. And seemed quite surprised at the vividness of her own memory of the place. Its general layout, the two steps between the living room and dining room, for instance, where she said she would sit in a band of sunlight midmornings and read her books. She was struck

by how much smaller the house really was compared to the version of it in her memory (*And The Mountains Echoed*, 330-331).

A range of difficulties frequently limit the screening and treatment of refugees. Psychological anguish can manifest itself in a variety of ways in different persons. Some refugees have a unique aversion to persons in positions of authority because of the conditions that forced them to from their home country. Language barriers could also be an issue. Furthermore, even when a translator is present and the immigrant speaks a similar language, the discourse is likely to be influenced by complicated religious and ethnic ties. Over the last few decades, there has been a remarkable growth in the number of people living as refugees. This shift has coincided with an increase in awareness of the mental health concerns that come with being a refugee.

For nearly three decades, the Afghan refugee situation has been among the worst in the world. Millions of individuals become refugees in other countries as a result of oppression, conflict, scarcity, and other circumstances. Refugees frequently experience physiological and psychological stress that is medically significant, long-lasting, and unpredictable, and it occurs not just in their home country, but also in refugee camps and host nations. Many refugees are forced to live in dangerous, impoverished metropolitan areas. In addition to the difficulties, refugees endure a lot of losses. These include the loss of close family, social ties, cultural significance, means of livelihood, and any respect acquired in one's own country.

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