

ISSN : 2347-503X

# Research Chronicler

International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

Vol II Issue I : January 2014

**Editor-In-Chief**

**Prof. K. N. Shelke**

[www.research-chronicler.com](http://www.research-chronicler.com)

# Research Chronicler

A Peer-Reviewed Refereed and Indexed International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

**Volume II Issue I: January – 2014**

## CONTENTS

Sr. No.	Author	Title of the Paper	Download
1	Dr. M. Ravichand S. Pushpa Latha	Bigger Thomas – The Hero in the Novel <i>Native Son</i> by Richard Wright	2101 PDF
2	Sushant Chaturvedi	The Kite Runner through Wayne Booth's Evaluative System	2102 PDF
3	Ms. Upasana Dugal	Multi Touch: A Finger Synchronized Screen	2103 PDF
4	M.K.Sharma Ankur Kulshreshtha Richa Sharma	Formulation of Linear Programming for Cost Optimization in Soap Stone Powder Industry	2104 PDF
5	Dr. Archana Dr. Pooja Singh	Spousal Violence: A Woman's Destiny	2105 PDF
6	Dr. Sutapa Biswas	Interpreting the 'World Within': A Psychoanalytical Study of the Characters from <i>The God of Small Things</i> and <i>Cry, the Peacock</i>	2106 PDF
7	Kamna Dubey Naveen Kumar Pathak	Nayantara Sahgal: A New Perspective to Women's Writing in India	2107 PDF
8	Dr. Sahebrao B. Ohol	Challenges before Co-operative Dairy Industries	2108 PDF
9	Ramchandra R. Joshi	Rethinking Classics, English and Indian: A Comparative Approach to Milton's Satan in <i>Paradise Lost</i> Book I and Bhasa's Duryodhana in <i>Urubhangam</i>	2109 PDF
10	Dr. Krishna Mohan Jha	Sarjanatmak Bhay Ki Kavita	2110 PDF

11	Mr. Anant Singh	Manpower Planning in Pharmaceutical Companies in India	2111 PDF
12	Shamrao J. Waghmare Miss. Vijaya D. Bidwai	Ngugi's <i>A Grain of Wheat</i> : a Saga of Common Masses Struggle	2112 PDF
13	Ms. Deepali Agravat	The Concept of 'New Woman' in the plays of G.B. Shaw & Vijay Tendulkar	2113 PDF
14	Dr. Anurag Agnihotri Rajkumar	Empirical Study of Indian Export and Exchange Rate Elasticity	2114 PDF
15	Ms. Richa Pathak Dr. Aparna Tiwari	Empowered Indian Women in Selected Novels	2115 PDF
16	Vijay Lingayat	A New Media to Explore English Language Learning Skills: A Perspective Approach	2116 PDF
17	Dr. P.B. Patil	Migratory Modes in <i>The Shadow Lines</i>	2117 PDF
18	Dr. Hasmukh Suthar Prof. Vishal Joshi	Importance of Correlation in Rural Higher Education	2118 PDF
19	Dr. Meenakshi Kaushik	The Role of HR as a Knowledge Facilitator	2119 PDF
20	Dr. V. A. Patil	Feminism without Illusions	2120 PDF
21	Dr. Prakash M. Joshi	The Role of Linguistics in English Language Teaching	2121 PDF
22	Dr. Keyur K. Parekh	Rasa Theory	2122 PDF
23	Mayur Wadhvaniya	Philosophy of 'Marjaranyaya' through the characters: An Analysis (With special reference to <i>The Cat</i> and Shakespeare)	2123 PDF
24	Ms. Nisha Chanana Dr. Naresh Kumar	Organizational Role Stress among Management Teachers: A Comparative Study	2124 PDF
25	Harshad K. Bhosale	The Promise and Peril of Civil Society in Russia	2125 PDF

## The Kite Runner through Wayne Booth's Evaluative System

Sushant Chaturvedi

IMS Unison University, Dehradun, (Uttarakhand) India

### Abstract

Literature is considered to be the reflection of human life. The literary artist imitates whatever happens in human life, good or bad. However, he/she uses the method of selection and omission to add literary qualities to the events and incidents chosen from ordinary human life. While writing a work of art, it is observed that, the artist tries to set certain parameters for his characters and their behavior as it can influence the behavior of the readers. Taking clue from this fact, the present paper attempts to study Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* in the light of Wayne C Booth's belief in the ethical function of a book. Booth in his *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (1988) says that a book has a huge impact on its readers. For Booth a novel is like a companion, a human companion. He stresses the point that it is highly necessary to choose the right kind of book we read, like companions.

**Key Words:** ethics, influence, culture, function of novel

One of the little known aspects of Wayne C Booth is his focus on the ethical side of fiction. For Booth a novel is like a companion, a human companion. He stresses the point that it is highly necessary to choose the right kind of book we read, like companions. In his book *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (1988) he lays down clearly the role of fiction in the lives of readers. Booth is a moralist and advocates the moralistic function of the stories and people that inhabit in fiction. He goes to the extent of saying that we are what we read.

In this paper, I will examine Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* in the light of Booth's ethical criticism. The questions that this paper raises are as follows-

A. What message does the reader carry after going through this novel? Is it an ethical enterprise that he undertakes?

B. How far is this novel a receptacle of cultural experience?

C. What issues does the novel raise? Are these issues merely social and history-specific or are they issues that take care of the deeper patterns in human nature?

A statement that disturbs Amir the narrator of this novel is one that has been put to him by Rahim Khan, his father's friend. The statement is- "There is a way to be good again."

The novel raises the basic question of what is right or good for an Afghan to do in the particular historical context in which the novel is set. There are the Russians that have Afghanistan and then there are the Taliban extremists that are plaguing the Afghans. Amir's father referred to as "Baba" by him is an aristocrat who decides to escape to America with his son because life is insecure in the times depicted in the novel. This insecurity in Afghanistan runs through Hosseini's other novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as well. The question that the novel seems to ask is what is the right code of conduct for a

dignified, honorable and well to do Afghan at such a time? The fact that Amir and his father have escaped successfully to America where the father dies and then Amir is left with his wife, is shown to be a basically wrong choice. Should the best people of a country leave it alone to suffer and burn in destruction or should they stay back to burn in its destruction? Since, Hosseini himself is a migrant in America living comfortably there as a writer, Amir's situation is rather autobiographical. We know that Amir is also a writer and his first book, has just been published in America. Hosseini seems to suffer some guilt in leaving his country to burn in the flames of extremism and foreign aggression. Guilt is the theme of this novel.

Booth agrees with Kenneth Burk that literature is equipment for living. This statement is so evident in *The Kite Runner* because this novel is nothing but an attempt to analyze what the best course of action in the current situation could be for Amir. Since, Amir is guilty and his guilt takes on extreme proportions, we are made to realize that that the Afghan who leaves his country at such a time is like a traitor. This guilt, which is of a patriotic nature, then gets clubbed with guilt that Amir has allowed his servant-friend Hassan to be physically tortured and sexually abused by certain police the chief of whom is Assef. But this is not enough and Amir's guilt is to grow still further when Rahim Khan informs him that Hassan was Amir's half brother and not merely a servant. Hassan's mother and Amir's father had slept together because of which Hassan was born.

Amir realizes how much smarter than him Hassan had been both mentally

and physically. Amir was educated, Hassan was not and yet Hassan had a natural genius for life which Amir lacked.

The reader is gripped by the company of his companion, Hosseini's novel, because of the gradual unfolding of the tale with newer shocking, amazing discoveries cropping up throughout. Booth equates a novel with a human companion and a companion is more desirable when he/she is more interesting. Hosseini's novel turns out to be a fine companion for the reader. It can therefore, be maintained that this novel lives up to the basic requirement laid down by Booth.

Coming back to the message of the novel that has unfolded very gradually, it is evident that Hosseini wants the reader to grapple with the disturbed situation of his alien country and contemplate the plight of the inhabitants of Afghanistan.

The reader is forced to think whether it is right to stay in Afghanistan and perish in the process or to escape and live on? Rahim Khan has escaped to Pakistan and has survived for several years. Amir and his father had similarly survived in America. Hassan, however, has not escaped. He has lived on in Afghanistan and paid the price for staying back behind. The thought of leaving the country has probably never a reason in his mind. He and his wife are brutally killed by the extremists and his son, Sohrab has been orphaned and captured by the villainous Assef and his gang who are now part of the Taliban movement.

When Amir returns to his ransacked country and discovers his true relationship with Hassan and Sohrab, he decides to save Sohrab from the clutches of Assef and to take him to America with himself. All this requires a tremendous

readjustment in Amir's life and value system. There is growth and evolution in Amir's character if ever there is growth in a literary portrait. Amir is shaken up by his own and his father's wrong doings and decides to make amends. He suffers, is beaten up brutally but he does not give up the effort to save Sohrab. This is a changed Amir- one so different to the one who had left Hassan to be tortured and assaulted by Assef and his two friends about a decade or more earlier. Hosseini has done what Wayne C Booth would expect of a novelist. In the third chapter of *The Company We Keep* Booth discusses how we come to the act of judging a novel. He says that the logic of evaluative criticism involves;

... neither deduction from clear premises... nor induction from a series of precisely defined and isolated instances. Rather it is always the result of a direct sense that something now before us has yielded an experience that we find comparatively desirable, admirable, lovable or, on the other hand, comparatively repugnant, contemptible or hateful. (p. 71 *The Company We Keep*)

Booth considers reading fiction a reciprocal and responsive act. It is an endeavor in which criticism is a continuing conversation. The reader is constantly being pulled into the narrative and asking questions the answer to which he/she receives as the narrative advances. Booth is also conscious of the threat of subjectivism which the reader is always faced with in his response to the novel. Booth says that we might even conclude that a reasoned ethical criticism is very hard to arrive at. In the light of this statement it may be said that Amir's earlier guilt, coupled with that of his father's is

set aside by the daring and unselfish acts that he shows in saving Sohrab. The reader is left with the difficulty of evaluating Amir's character in ethical terms. Booth could see that a novelist who can create a character that defines a clear-cut and ethical evaluation would prove to be attractive for the reader. This is what happens in the case of Amir. We cannot clearly take sides about whether he is right or wrong. If he was clearly right or wrong he would be less real and less interesting for the reader. Hosseini's vast popularity in making this a bestselling novel can be partly the result of this ambiguity in Amir's character.

## II

Cultural experience is the very life of *The Kite Runner*. Culture is made up of civilized behavior, moralistic values even nationalistic and patriotic aspirations can be part of a particular culture. Hosseini exposes us to the savagery that inheres in large section of Afghanistan society. He shows us a male world that completely lacks the feminine touch. He even exposes us to the brutal cruelty with which an erring woman can be stoned to death. He reveals the anarchy of a religion that is intolerant and which sees nothing except its own tenets. The reader is brought face to face with a situation in which a man seems to have remained quite as stunted as he must have been during medieval times. Hosseini then shows how American culture can offer refuge to this cultureless situation. *The Kite Runner* takes us to a world where one experiences life in its elements. There is little place for refinement and cultured existence in this world. It is very similar to medieval world order and there seems to be a total lack of cultural advancement. The possibilities in

America that the second part of the novel introduces us to is a fine contrast to the near savage conditions in the male world order of Afghanistan. By juxtaposing the two civilizations, Hosseini makes us conscious of what is missing in Afghanistan. The typical Afghan reader will become curious of which way his country ought to develop. Thus this novel shows us how certain parts of the globe are still so uncivilized and they need to be civilized with proper education and enlightenment.

### III

*The Kite Runner* is a remarkable work of word jugglery. It manages to take the reader at two levels; (a) it focuses on Afghanistan as it was in the period of 1975. Thus it paints a picture of a particular society at a particular point of time. It gives in detail the picture of the place with its various social divisions, customs and traditions. Kite flying is shown as a symbol of the well being of Afghan society. When everything is well kites are seen in the skies but after a certain point there are no kites seen in the skies- this being evidence of Afghanistan's ailing health. (b) There is however another significant level at which Hosseini pitches the reader. He shows us human nature at its worst- a nature that could be the very

same in another country like Russia or America. Cruelty and selfishness form his picture of human nature. Even children are cruel. Amir's treatment of Hassan shows how cruel even friends are towards each other. Assef and his friends' treatment of Hassan hammer the last nail in the coffin of human goodness.

The adult world is no better. Amir's father cannot acknowledge Hassan as his son publicly. He has been quite a waster-given to drinking, kite flying and a luxurious life in general. Amir's father-in-law is even worse as a human being. He never hesitates to make Amir feel small about his relationship with Sohrab. Assef and the rest of the Taliban, the Russian soldiers, and the Afghani sentries are all inhuman people bordering on criminality. A Professor in Kabul has been reduced to a beggar on the streets. The orphanage is used for lust of the Taliban males.

Reading this novel, one is drawn towards two opposite directions. On the one hand, one is made curious of the plight of Afghanistan and on the other one is given a glimpse of the darker side of human nature. The same animosity that is part of the male world in this novel, surfaces in Hosseini's second novel where men are like butchers.

### Works Cited

1. Booth, Wayne C. *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988. Print.
2. Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner*. Anchor Canada: Toronto, 2004. [ISBN 978-0-385-66007-5](https://www.isbn-international.org/view/title/978-0-385-66007-5)