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**From Kabul to KP: The Timeless Burden of Being a Pukhtoon Son as Depicted in The Kite Runner by Khalid Hosseini**

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**Abstract**

*This literary study navigates and matches the cultural Psycho-analysis of the father-son relationship as revealed in Khaled Hosseini's novel The Kite Runner with the father-son relationship in Pakistani Pukhtoon society. This work sheds light on how parents in Pukhtoon society emotionally distress their children by comparing them with others and how this practice impacts on their cognitive development. The consequences of such comparisons in Pukhtoon society are far more severe than its impact presented in the aforementioned novel. Furthermore, this study examines the struggles of a child in Pukhtoon society who seeks to win their father's affection. Such children constantly strive to fulfill their paternal expectations.. This study reveals similarities in the socio-political aspects of the father-son relationship across two different cultures. Throughout human history, men have suffered due to societal assumptions about stereotypical masculine roles, which reflect the timeless nature of social problems. The aim of this work is to academically examine these similarities in father-son relations and to contribute to social change through the power of words. The data were collected from a thorough reading of the original text of the novel and from the author's social observations within Pukhtoon society. The methodology employed is qualitative narrative analysis of the text to develop a deep understanding of how the novel presents these ideas, interpreting and analyzing the information based on personal human experiences, observations, behavior and emotions in non-quantified form. This groundwork concludes that how parents in Pukhtoon society slowly intoxicate their children by failing to support their individual potentials, instead indulging them in activities for which they have no genuine interest. .*

**Key words:** Socio-political dynamics, Pukhtoon society, emotionally distress, awful, stereotypical masculine roles, intoxicate, individual potentials, indulging.

**Introduction:**

Cultural Psycho-analysis is a literary approach that studies literature from the lens of psychology. It explores how childhood experiences, fears, and internal conflicts influence characters. Parental expectations can significantly influence a child's psychological growth (Freud, 1961). In short, cultural psycho-analysis helps to reveal the deep psychological layers behind literary texts in different cultures.

The Kite Runner is the one of the best-known Afghan novels written in English by the Afghan-American novelist Khaled Hosseini, first published in 2003. He wrote this novel from his personal experiences. His novels have been translated into different languages and widely studied

throughout the world. As an Afghan writer, his literary works are widely studied in Pakistani literature in English because of the fact that the characters in his works are switching between the countries, coming to Pakistan and then going back to Afghanistan, much like moving from one city to another within the same country. Additionally, the themes of his works are relevant to the themes of Pakistani literature such as identity crises, friendship, betrayal, guilt, redemption, diaspora and displacement, hybridity, cultural mixing and war etc.

Socio-political dynamics refers to the complicated interactions and relationships between social and political factors that shape individual personalities, communities and even societies. This concept illuminates that how power and social interactions leave long lasting influence on a person's life. This novel is evidence of the socio-political impact on an individual life, particularly in the father and son relationship. The strained relationship between Baba and Amir shapes Amir's identity and emotional development (Hosseini, 2003). This study is a cultural psycho-analysis of the father-son relationship in Afghan society in comparison with father-son relationship in Pakistani Pukhtoon society, highlighting the social and political disconnections present in the father-son relationship of both societies and their impacts over children.

The Kite Runner provides valuable insight into the emotional challenges faced by sons who grow up seeking parental approval. The comparison with Pukhtoon society reveals important similarities regarding emotional distance, social expectations, and parental authority. The study concludes that healthy communication, emotional support, and appreciation are essential for the psychological and social development of children. Parents who encourage rather than compare can help their children become more confident, responsible, and emotionally stable adults. (Bandura, 1997)

As a member of Pukhtoon society, I have deeply observed all of these challenges that are faced by sons in their relationship with fathers. This is the reason why I wrote this work to bring about change through literature for the betterment of society.

### Overview of the novel

The protagonist and narrator of the novel is the key character, Amir. He narrates the story in a well-structured way. He discussed his own experiences in his very small family. In this novel, he explores familial relationships in-depth. The change in his character drives the plot. In his family there is only himself, his father Baba and their Hazara servants Ali and his son Hassan. His father raised him alone because his mother died. It is a coincidence that his friend Hassan also has no mother. Amir lives with his father and Hassan lives with his father within the same house. Amir is round character who changes throughout the plot, while Hassan is a flat character who remains the loyal, forgiving and good-natured in the novel-just look at the way he narrates this novel:

Friendship → Betrayal → Guilt → Redemption

Father-son relation is one of the key theme of this novel. The father is Baba and the son is Amir. They are respectable and quite wealthy Pashtuns of Afghanistan. Amir's mother passed away just after few days of his birth. She was a literature lover, lecturer in a university, wrote a lot of poems and having a lot of stuffs about literature in the home which Amir used to study in his childhood. Due to this reason Amir takes interest in literature and simply we can say that he inherited the love for literature from his mother. He is very competent in reading stories and he is having a strong expertise in reading and remembering poetic verses. He is quality candidate in a school poetic competition and every team wants him on their side. Once he confronts the whole class and he wins the battle of poetry. The competition was that you have to start a verse from the ending word of the poetic verse by the opposition team.

But the trouble is that his father never appreciates his love for literature and not encourages his potential to write. This is a unique quality he is having, his creativity, imagination, observations, eloquence, storytelling tendency, character development, discipline and emotional intelligence. He knows how to play with words. His father wanted that he should be interested in things he used to be in his own childhood. He says to Amir that real men do not waste time on writing poetry and even do not listen to it.

Baba blames Amir for the death of his mother because she died just after few days of her death. Amir does not fit his father expectations of masculinity. He also disturbs him by saying that you lack the qualities of a real boy. You are not bold, cannot take stand for yourself and you do not like sports. You love literature which is not the sign of a real man. Your personality is completely different from Hassan. He is bold, brave and can take stand for himself as well as for others. Baba always compare Amir with Hassan and splash that Hassan is better than you. This thing lead to the main conflict in the father-son relation within the highlighted novel. Amir thinks that how can Baba compare me with our servant and considers him better than me.

Being a literature lover, Amir likes living with peace and love. He do not fight with other children even if they shoved him in the streets. He just let everything and move on. But his father considers this thing in a negative way and thinks that he is coward. He always underestimates the abilities of his son. This thing makes Ali sorrow and he thinks that what to do that my father starts believing me that yes I can achieve something that I want with the potentials I have. For a good relation you should have to care and love for the person. Unfortunately, this thing is missing in father-son relation of Baba and Amir in this novel but present in others like Ali and his son Hassan. Amir always wish for a good relation with his father, even he works for it but always get disappointment because of his father behavior.

Amir knew that the only person loves him boundless is Hassan. Hassan always appreciate him for his writing works, used to listen his stories and encouraging him that you would become a great writer one day. Helps him in the tournaments by kite running. Hassan always took stand for Amir, but Amir never took stand for Hassan just like he takes for him. On one side Amir is in a friendship with Hassan but on another side Hassan is his target to get rid from just to get the attention of his father which is always diverted from him to Hassan.

The consequences of comparing your children with others is always negative. Social comparison may negatively affect self-esteem and confidence (Festinger, 1954). In this novel Amir accused Hassan as a thief. But this was his extreme level of loyalty that he accepts it without resisting and stand for himself because if he denied that I did not rob anything, they would start doubting Amir due to the fact that Hassan never lied in his entire life. Amir did all these things just to gain the attention of his father by presenting Hassan dishonest and weak in front of his father that the person you are considering better than me is basically a thief. By this way he lost his precious friend like a diamond, who he always missing in his life later. He destroyed forty years of his father friendship with Ali in a seconds. He feels guilt for what he does and always thinks about the redemption of his act.

After seeing Hassan and his father sorrow faces, Amir was not feeling satisfying because hurting someone was not in his nature. He did not favor anything because of which someone gets hurt. But what to say, his father behavior with him compels him to take such step for gaining his attention.

After the war started in Afghanistan, when Amir and his father was leaving. When a Russian soldier demands for a young girl who is travelling with them in the truck. His father gets up and take stands for the girl even he did not know her by stopping this decency from taking place. Amir realized and wished that I could take the same stand when the boys were fighting and

physically abusing Hassan during the kite running. He realized that my father is right I am not like him in reality. This is the point where he accepts that I lack the qualities of my father.

When they are spending their life in America, baba diagnosed with pulmonary cancer due to excessive smoking. After the death of baba, Amir starts working and focusing on his writing career. He completed his first novel and successfully published it. His novel was studied and people really appreciate him for his work through a positive feedback. Then this journey is going on and he wrote four novels in his writing career along with hundreds of short stories he started writing in his childhood. The dream of his becoming a great writer is finally achieved. Imagine, if he had the support of his father from his childhood, what would be his position in his writing career.

Later on Amir always miss Hassan in different moments of his life. At the time of his marriage, at the time when his first novel is published and at a lot more different situation of his life. He reminds the words of Hassan that one day you will be a great writer. He saw a lot of things, achieved a lot of things but still he is longing for Hassan. Missing him and feeling guilty. He thinks that how I can pay the price for the guilt I am feeling. This quality shows that how descent, wise and literary person he is. People hurt others and then forget but he always remembers.

At the end of the novel, Amir receives a call from his father friend Rahim khan who tells him that Hassan's son Sohrab is carried to orphanage by Afghan mujahedeen after killing his parents mercilessly. Amir thinks that this is the time to save Hassan's son by moving to Afghanistan back. Sohrab is a substitute for Hassan and a symbol of hope for redemption with Amir. He saves him and by this way he atoned for the past activities because of which he was feeling guilt for his entire life. Redemption in literature often requires meaningful action rather than regret alone (Felski, 1995). So, the novel started with friendship, followed by betrayal, then guilt, and ended with the redemption

### **Statement of the problem**

It is hypothesized that the result of comparing your child with someone else is not good as echoed in *The Kite Runner*. Pukhtoon fathers in our society are also frequently involve in emotionally distressing their children by comparing them with others. They suppressed the individual potentials of their children. They imposed their own ambitions on them, without considering their areas of interest. That is why the outcomes are then like the novel or even more severe in our Pakistani Pukhtoon society.

The father-son relation is the one of the most important theme of this novel. Different researchers have studied different aspects of father-son relation in this novel. Meanwhile, my research is matching the cultural Psycho-analysis of the father-son relation of the Afghan society with our Pakistani Pukhtoon society based on socio-political aspects. What are the key ideas which are similar in both the societies and this study will show that this relation is quite unpleasant in our Pukhtoon society than what are discussed in the novel about Afghan society. This work will navigate more about the nature of fathers in Pakistani Pukhtoon society that how majority of the guardians deal their sons.

### **Research questions**

- How do parents in Pukhtoon society emotionally distress their children by comparing them with others and its consequences?
- What are the struggles of a child in Pukhtoon society to win their father affection by functioning on their paternal expectations?

## Objectives

- To explore similarities among the father-son relation in the novel and in our Pukhtoon society on academic level.
- To investigate the psychological impact on child's cognitive development due to the socio-political disconnection of father-son relation.

Research objectives are the goals that this research tends to achieve. Obviously, this relation is not good because of high expectations from the child. So we want to change the society through writing and to inculcate the parents of our society that doubting the abilities of your children is not good. This work shows the universality of the art that problems are universal. Social problems are mostly not specific to a particular geographical location. Parents particularly fathers have set a specific level in their minds that if their children achieve that level, they will be happy and successful. This study will show them that no this is not good, everyone have their own interests in their life. If they work on that, they will be happy and having the real meaning of life.

## Significance of the study

Comparison is the killing of your child creativity and critical thinking. To spread the awareness among the Pukhtoon people to not experience their children the same things they experienced in their life. This is only hope through which we can change the society. The stereotypes going on in our society from the ancient ages which are right according to people but basically are wrong. These issues are too enormous and its impact is quite bad but nobody is giving attention to it. People will understand that how pressurizing and suppressing their children create negative impact on their cognitive development. Additionally, they will realize that how the emotional needs of a child is not fulfilling due to the behavior of the fathers. Youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow. Their choices and actions will shape the future of the coming generations.

## Research methodology

A systematic process of collecting, interpreting and analyzing information to solve a problem. The methodology used is descriptive qualitative narrative analysis of the text for deep understanding that how this novel presents these ideas based on human personal experiences, observations and emotions in a non-quantified form. The information is collected using primary and secondary data.

This research uses qualitative textual analysis. Passages from *The Kite Runner* are examined and interpreted through cultural and psychological perspectives. The findings are then compared with common social practices found in Pukhtoon society. (Creswell, 2014)

## Literature review

Khaled Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner* explores the socio-political relationships of father-son in the Afghan society. The existing research have discovered different aspects of this novel. It is proved that the relationship of father-son is not good as well as its impact on the development of the child. Baba's character represents a dictatorship and Amir's character represents the struggle to achieve these high expectations. Key things are the dictatorship of father, struggle of the child to win their father's affection and the long lasting impact of father's behavior on their children. The research gap is to match-up the socio-political dynamics of father-son relation of Afghan society described in the novel with the relation of father-son in our Pukhtoon society. The opinion of literary scholars varies based on the complex relations of father-son in *The Kite Runner*. Kumar (2022), believes

“A gripping and emotional story of betrayal and redemption, *The Kite Runner* had me thrilled and moved, both at the same time. It tells the story of Amir and Hassan, the closest of friends, is good as brothers, and also experts in the art of kite flying. The two young boys live in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, and this year they are going to try harder than ever to win the local kite-flying tournament.... A popular Afghan pastime and this is Amir’s one hope of winning his father’s love. But just like the kites battling in the sky, war comes to Afghanistan, and the country becomes an extremely dangerous place. The literature which favor the friendship relation particularly in between Amir and Hassan which is one of the dominant theme of this novel.

“Hassan and I fed from the same breasts. We took our first steps on the same lawn in the same yard. And under the same roof, we spoke our first words”. Book (*The Kite Runner*).

According to Rebecca Stuhr (2009), “There are many ways to describe this novel, but Hosseini calls it a love story, however. It is the story of love between two friends who are servant and master; the sins of commission and omission that tear the friendship apart; and the loyalty and altruistic love that survives in spite of everything. It is also the story of love between father and son, husband and wife, and parents and child. The novel takes place across generations and continents, offer adventure, and provides a fresh look at the country and culture of Afghanistan”.

Literature which shows the betrayal ideas of the novel. Amir betrays Hassan to prove him a small person to his father because Baba always favors him in front of Amir.

An American theater director Eric Rose (as cited by Roe, 2013) says, “Themes of betraying your best friend for the love of your father are similar to Shakespearean literature”.

A certified educator, Susan Hurn (2011, as cited in Akhtar, 2023, p. 50) believes, “Baba’s treatment of comparing his son with Hassan creates a deep insecurity and jealousy that leads to his betrayals of Hassan, his true and loyal friend. The subsequent shame and self-hatred almost destroy Amir”.

Amir thinks, “May be Hassan was the price I had to pay, the lamb that I had to slay, to win baba. Was it a fair price?”

Comparing your child and doubting his competence level is having no positive outcomes.

“Competition is the law of jungle, while cooperation is the rule of human society”.

Russian philosopher and scientist Peter Kropotkin’s work, “Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution” (1902).

Literature about the guilt in the novel that Amir always remember in his later on life and feel uncomfortable for what he does with Hassan.

Edward Said’s work *Culture and Imperialism*, discusses how personal guilt and societal expectations can intertwine to shape individual identities. Amir’s suffering is intricately connected to his feelings inadequacy, both as son and as a human being. Research paper (How Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner* portrays the transition from suffering to healing).

Quotation from the novel, “I ran because I was a coward; I was afraid of Assef and what he would do to me. I was afraid of getting hurt. That’s what I told myself as I turned my back to the alley, to Hassan. That is what I made myself believe. I actually aspired to cowardice, because the alternative, the real reason I was running, was that Assef was right: nothing was free in the world. May be Hassan was the price I had to pay, the lamb I had to slay to win baba. Was it a fair price? The answer floated to my

conscious mind before I could thwart it: he was just a Hazara, wasn't he?" (The Kite Runner).

"As I turned out, Baba and I were more alike than I'd ever known. We had both betrayed the people who would have given their lives for us. And with that came this realization: that Rahim Khan had summoned me here to atone not just for my sins but for Baba's too. Book (The Kite Runner).

Literature which shows the redemption in the novel, Amir is doing the kite running for Sohrab just like Hassan used to do for him in their childhood.

Rita Felski notes in *The Gender of Modernity*, "A redemption is not merely an internal affair but also requires tangible actions that affirms one's moral stance in the world". Research paper (How Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* portrays the transition from suffering to healing).

"Do you want me to run that kite for you? .... His Adam's apple rose and fell as he swallowed. The wind lifted his hair. I thought I saw him nod. "For you a thousand times over," I heard myself say. Then I turned and ran. It was only a smile nothing more". Book (The Kite Runner).

From all these researches it is cleared that this topic for the research is valid. Comparing the socio political dynamics of these both societies is the research gap. Investigating all these aspects are very essential to highlight the similarities in the cultural analysis of these two Pukhtoon societies.

### **Analysis and discussion**

Textual analysis is a broad term for various research methods used to describe, interpret and understand text. The detailed text analysis of the novel and comparing it with our Pukhtoon society is here:

In the novel, navigating the socio-political dynamics is the aim of this work. Baba always compares his son Amir with the son of his servant Hassan due to which he feels jealous. Never appreciate his love for literature. Do not give him time. Never discuss anything with him. Always remind him that Hassan is brave, can take stand for himself and favors him more than Amir. Because of these features Amir irritate from his father behavior.

Sometimes I asked Baba if I could sit with them, but Baba would stand in the doorway. "Go on, now," he'd say. "This is grown-ups' time. Why don't you go read one of those books of yours?" He'd close the door, leave me to wonder why it was always grown-ups' time with him. I'd sit by the door, knees drawn to my chest. Sometimes I sat there for an hour, sometimes two, listening to their laughter, their chatter. (Novel)

From these lines, it is clear that whenever Amir wants to talk to his father, spend time with him and share his own thoughts with him. Baba denied by saying that go and do your homework stuff, we are busy and he would close the door. On the same say in our Pukhtoon society fathers also do not give time to children. Do not care about their social development. Never give them time to discuss something, never share his own personal experiences with them. There is a huge emotional detachment between father-son social relations in our Pukhtoon society as it is there in the mentioned novel. This emotional detachment causes anxiety and depressions in children. This thing deeply damages their self-confidence and worth. Again and again denying your child when he wants to talk with you can hurt him emotionally. Children face all the troubles of their life individually because they cannot share anything about what is going on in his life with his father because of the social gap. They are always worry about what to do and how to do. They are compelled to take decisions by themselves and to handle everything by their own.

Sometimes, they took some very bad decisions because of the lack of experiences and then they feel unsatisfied in their entire life. Without the support of their fathers, sons lack the proper guideline in their life. Listening to your child builds trust and reliability. Proper social connection is very much important among father and his son, so that the son can share anything with his father without feeling hesitant and nervous. Whenever, a person is not bold in social interactions, it means that the person is brought up in a family where he lacks the social interactions with his father and others elders of the family. So, the fathers do not have time for their son in our Pukhtoon society as Amir's father have not for him in the novel. It has negative and long lasting effect on the growth of children but parents do not give any attention.

I remember the day before the orphanage opened, Baba took me to Ghargha Lake, a few miles north of Kabul. He asked me to fetch Hassan too, but I lied and told him Hassan had the runs. I wanted Baba all to myself. And besides, one time at Ghargha Lake, Hassan and I were skipping stones and Hassan made his stone skip eight times. The most I managed was five. Baba was there, watching, and he patted Hassan on the back. Even put his arm around his shoulder. (The Kite Runner)

Baba always remember Hassan, whenever they go anywhere for outing. Baba used to mention Hassan again and again in front of his son Amir. This thing irritates Amir. Amir thinks that why Baba always care and serve for Hassan, instead on focusing and spending time with me. Baba used to appreciate Hassan for his small works. In the highlighted lines, Amir skips five stones and Hassan skip eight times during the skipping stones at the Ghargha Lake, Amir deserves appreciation but instead Baba appreciates Hassan by patting him at the back and put his arm around his shoulder. By seeing this thing, Amir got jealous that being my father why he is treating Hassan with such a love, instead I deserve the appreciation. Amir start thinking that what I should do to get the affection of my father and then he decided to do something wrong with Hassan his loyal friend. In our Pukhtoon society fathers also exaggerate the qualities of those with whom they are comparing their sons. Here fathers believe on the qualities of the neighbor's child who is of no work but do not believe on the qualities of their own competent sons. In the school results, they always hurt their sons by saying that someone got more marks than you and someone got a position. By this comparison they want to tell them that you are inferior and not competent. Due to this thing most of the sons become over-competitive, trying to prove their competence level which sometimes leads to dealing with a massive stress. On the other hand, some children just give up by realizing that no one is encouraging their efforts because of the lack of proper motivation from their guardian side. These things have several negative emotional effects on the children. Because of this the children become the victims of inferiority complex. By this way the fear of rejection is putted into the mind of the son and in future he always scared of taking decisions in his life. He lacks the potentials to take a bold decision in his life. Emotional distance is created between fathers and their sons which weaken the father-son relation bond. Their self belief and confidence level is killed and they start doubting their potentials. Then they always think that I lack the ability of this thing, I cannot do this thing and a lot more. Which became the biggest obstacle in their way of progress. Praising the abilities of your children is very much essential for the emotional development of your children.

They were sitting on the dock, feet dangling in the water, fishing poles in hand. I asked Baba why they grew their hair long, but Baba grunted, didn't answer. He was preparing his speech for the next day, flipping through a havoc of handwritten pages, making notes here and there with a pencil. I bit into my egg and asked Baba if it was true what a boy in school had told me, that if you ate a piece of eggshell, you'd have to pee it out. Baba grunted again. (The Kite Runner).

In the novel, when Amir is asking something from his father, Baba would mind and did not give the answer. Amir feel not good because of his father this habit and it adversely affect the relation of Amir with his father. On the same way, first of all in our society child are quite hesitant and they don't dare to ask question from their father. Asking questions from your fathers and going against their decisions made for you is the violation of our cultural traditions. Whenever the child wants to ask something from their father, they ignore them just like Baba ignores Amir in the novel. Children wants to have a friendship relation with their father, but fathers do not cooperate and that the social gaps are built. By not answering the children questions, fathers discourage their children and destroy their curiosity and innovative thinking of learning something. Then they stop asking questions from parents, from their school teachers even if they do not understand anything and do not ask for their rights whenever someone violate their fundamental rights. If father do not take his son questions serious, the son starts doubting his intelligence level which affect their confidence level. They are fighting the battle of their life solely, no one is there to listen to them, motivate them and support them with words or actions.

Midway through the speech, the wind knocked his hat off and everyone laughed. He motioned to me to hold his hat for him and I was glad to, because then everyone would see that he was my father, my Baba. He turned back to the microphone and said he hoped the building was sturdier than his hat, and everyone laughed again. When Baba ended his speech, people stood up and cheered. They clapped for a long time. Afterward, people shook his hand. Some of them tousled my hair and shook my hand too. I was so proud of Baba, of us. (The Kite Runner).

A small act makes the children proud of their parents. As Amir is pleased when Baba motioned towards him to hold his hat during the opening ceremony of the orphanage build by his father. In front of people when fathers favor and give compliment to their children, this act made them so strong mentally and psychologically strengthen them. But unfortunately in our Pukhtoon society whenever the fathers become aggressive they reveal all the weaknesses and flaws of their children in front of people without considering its consequences on the mental health and behavior of their children. Their social image is destroyed by their own father. The child feels embarrassed which leads to social anxiety. Insulting your child in public challenges his self-belief and he feels insecure. The son then doesn't share anything with their father because of the fear of judgement. Benjamin Franklin says that, "most people die at 25, we just don't burry them until they are 70". This thing is going on in our society. Parents kill their children by either comparing them with someone else or repeatedly reminding them their weaknesses or some flaws they did in the past. To avoid this thing, parents have to discuss the weaknesses of their children with in private. Children deserve respect and value even if they are weak in something.

Baba heaved a sigh of impatience. That stung too, because he was not an impatient man. I remembered all the times 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. (Novel)

In the novel, Baba used to come home very late in the night after finishing all his daily activities of business and construction etc. In our society, fathers are also busy in their works either jobs or businesses and they come home very late in the night just like Baba in the novel. This is the basic reason that they have no time to spend with their children. They become exhausted because of the daily activities and when their children try to ask a question or discuss something with them they become annoy and say let me take a rest.

When Baba was six, a thief walked into my grandfather's house in the middle of the night. My grandfather, a respected judge, confronted him, but the thief stabbed him in the throat, killing him instantly--and robbing Baba of a father. The townspeople caught the killer just before noon the next day; he turned out to be a wanderer from the Kunduz region. They hanged him from the branch of an oak tree with still two hours to go before afternoon prayer. It was Rahim Khan, not Baba, who had told me that story. I was always learning things about Baba from other people. (Novel)

In the novel, Amir learn about his father and grandfather from the friend of his father Rahim Khan. Baba would not share anything about his elders, his childhood and his life time precious experiences which would definitely of great work for Amir. In our society, children also learn about their grandparents and great grandparents from others people of their family rather than their parents. Even they don't know their names, their works and achievements of their life. Knowing your history is very crucial to know the reputations of your family. If there were someone great in your family, you would love to adopt his qualities and features to make your family proud of you and to appreciate and encourage your struggles and efforts.

In school, we used to play a game called *Sherjangi*, or "Battle of the Poems." The Farsi teacher moderated it and it went something like this: You recited a verse from a poem and your opponent had sixty seconds to reply with a verse that began with the same letter that ended yours. Everyone in my class wanted me on their team, because by the time I was eleven, I could recite dozens of verses from Khayyam, Hafez, or Rumi's famous *Masnawi*. One time, I took on the whole class and won. I told Baba about it later that night, but he just nodded, muttered, "Good." (Novel)

Amir in the novel is having a high competence level of poetry. Reading poetry and remembering of poetic verses was has natural quality. No one in the class would compete him. Everyone wants him in their group in order to win the battle of this competition. When he came to home and that I encountered the whole class in *Sherjangi* and I won the battle. His father just nodded by saying good not intentionally because his father believes that a real man should not write poetry and not even listen to it, real men play football just like he does when he had been young. According to him poetry is the wastage of time and false imaginations about the one who did not exist in reality. Amir becomes discourage by his father behavior of not appreciating his achievement. On the same way, in our Pukhtoon society fathers not appreciate their children in the fields in which they are expert and having interest in that. They just asked from other educated people that which subject is better for my child. Unfortunately, educated people also not recommend them to go and ask your children that in which discipline he is interested, that would be better for him. Whatever someone say to them they compel their children to have their career in that field to become successful in their life. A lot of students who interested in one field and getting learning in other fields just because of their fathers. Those who are interested in sports are not appreciating to play sports, they are insisted to do professional degrees by force. Those students whom competence level are low, they are putted in such degrees by their parents by giving a huge amount where clearing a paper is not possible for them because it need a lot of study and they do not study much and cannot. At the end of forcing your children to do a professional or others degrees the students commit suicide and get rid from the anxiety they are living with and who are responsible for it, just their own fathers.

"Sometimes I look out this window and I see him playing on the street with the neighborhood boys. I see how they push him around, take his toys from him, give him a shove here, a whack there. And, you know, he never fights back. Never. He just... drops his head and..."

Baba says to Rahim Khan his friend that Amir is missing something which is the self-defense. He doesn't fight back by taking stand for himself. Hassan is able to depend himself and he always take stand for Amir. Comparison makes a straw person an opposition in front of you, whom you want to compete with. You attack and want to finish that. The concept of inferiority complex is there, whenever fathers compares their sons with someone else they feel themselves inferior and start doubting their potentials. Baba says, "A boy who won't stand for himself, becomes a man who can't stand up to anything". How he will be able to run my business in future. Amir is not violent, not hurting someone and not make issue from small acts because when baba see scraps on Hassan's face that ask how he got these, Amir says 'he fell down'. Amir's avoiding violence is considered his cowardice by his fathers. In our Pukhtoon society a large number of children are victims of inferiority complex due to comparing them with others in the society.

که شوک مي وژني لاس ئي هم نه نسيم  
زما په يو حالت کي شر نه لکي

(گران، 2014)

اکرام الله گران

#### Translation

If someone kills me, I won't even touch their hand,

I don't like violence in any situation.

(Gran, 2014)

Fathers in our society also want violence in their children, they say to their children, whenever someone beats you, beat them even hard. If someone is not good in fighting with other then they always remind him that you are not brave and you are not able to depend yourself. That guy is better than you in fighting. No one says to their children that living with love is good than leading a life with no satisfaction, fights and hatred. Spreading hatred and antagonism are the false traditions of our Pakistani Pukhtoon society. Pashtuns are brave, worrier, violent and they love conflicts. This is false stereotype that affected them very deeply and heavily because most of the people are believing in this, whenever you tell them that Pashtuns are brave then they can do anything for you without thinking about the consequences. The more strong the stereotype is, the more problems will be there which is known is the empty stereotype.

He lowered his voice, but I heard him anyway. "If I hadn't seen the doctor pull him out of my wife with my own eyes, I'd never believe he's my son."

This is core theme of this research to find out in the novel as well as in our Pukhtoon society. This sentence is phenomenal and it relate to the idea of my research. Just look to the father of Amir, he is using such harsh words for his son and unfortunately it is heard by Amir. This is an extreme level of pukhtoons masculinity and authority. He realizes that how my father hates me, he doesn't believe in me and he wants that I should his clone. The same qualities he is having should present in me. This thing hurt Amir deeply and why not, how can a father use such words for his son. This is how the conflict tension start between father and son in the novel. In our society mostly the fathers also criticize their sons by not having their qualities. They believe that son should inherit all the qualities of his father but they don't know that all qualities cannot be inherited, some qualities are built after social interactions of the person and with the passage of time he learns it through social interactions in the society.

"Survival of the fittest" is the key concept in Charles Darwin's theory of Evolution through Natural Selection. In the world only those species are able to survive who have the ability to adapt changes according to the need of their environment. In human society this survival of the fittest is not important, some people will lead their life with ease and others may face certain challenges, but survive all and can lead their life by the way they want.

"What is it, Amir?" Baba said, reclining on the sofa and lacing his hands behind his head. Blue smoke swirled around his face. His glare made my throat feel dry. I cleared it and told him I'd written a story [...] Baba nodded and gave a thin smile that conveyed little more than feigned interest. "Well, that's very good, isn't it?" he said. Then nothing more. He just looked at me through the cloud of smoke [...] I probably stood there for under a minute, but, to this day, it was one of the longest minutes of my life. Seconds plodded by, each separated from the next by an eternity. Air grew heavy damp, almost solid. I was breathing bricks. Baba went on staring me down, and didn't offer to read.

When Amir takes his first initiative by writing the first short story of his writing career, by telling his father he just wrote without appreciating his work. Amir waits for the appreciation but Baba goes down the stairs while staring him. This thing makes him very much disappointed and discouraged. He literally becomes mad after seeing his father's response, even Baba doesn't bother to read his son's first written story. Similarly, in our society fathers also do not appreciate the initiatives of their children, which makes them psychologically weak.

"Most days I worshiped Baba with an intensity approaching the religious. But right then, I wished I could open my veins and drain his cursed blood from my body".

This is another sentence in the novel by Amir about the behavior of his Baba. This statement is exactly concerned with my research topic and idea. According to Newton "every action there is always an equal and opposite reaction". It shows the intoxication of a son after seeing his father's behavior and treatment. This is how the tension is built between father and son. When Amir experiences the behavior of his father repeatedly and hears his father say if I hadn't seen the doctor pull out him from my wife I would not believe that he is my son. This is basically the reaction of Amir to his father's behavior and the way he treats him.

Amir says, "When they left, I sat on my bed and wished Rahim Khan had been my father". Why he is wishing that Rahim Khan, his father's friend, would be his father because he always calls him politely Amir Jan with too much love that his own father didn't. Rahim Khan used to support him in everything, especially in his writing works. He gifted him notebooks to write in, appreciated his written works by reading and encouraged Amir to write by saying that I will read your stories. So, whenever the love of your father you receive from somewhere else that it leads to the conflicts in the father-son relations.

The concept of helicopter parents is there meaning those who care more than needed for their children. They involve in everything and surveil their children every time. This thing is good, this is bad and never let children think about what is better for them. What are the areas of their interest, what are the things they enjoy while doing. This thing adversely affects the independence, creativity, self-confidence and problem-solving tendency of their children. As the world is changing rapidly, we should change ourselves. We should give space to our children to explore different things, appreciate their independence to understand responsibilities, encourage their efforts without considering the outcomes and communicate openly with them. Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis theory, believed that a father plays an essential role in a child's psychological development. This is only possible when a father deals with his child like a friend. Try to listen to him, wisely answer all his questions. Whenever he is having difficulty in something, he assists him. If he is taking interest in something, then the father appreciates him and celebrates his tiny achievements. Give proper time to them, discuss different ideas with them and ask about their daily activities. Share his own experiences with them. The responsibility of a father is not only to support their children financially but also to support them psychologically. They should be able to know what is going on in the mind of their children.

Few qualities are genetically but the rest are related to the social and political exposure of an individual in the society. The more you are exposed to such things, the more you can strengthen these qualities in yourself. Baba says in the novel that Amir is not interested in playing football and criticizing his masculinity by this, although he is very good in kites flying and take part in the kite tournaments. Just like this popular statement that “the more you are going to challenge yourself, the more you are going to learn”. By continuous practice and working on yourself, you can adopt the rest of the good qualities in yourself. It is not mandatory that all the qualities of father will be present in son. Everyone is born with special qualities which are unique in them.

The love between Baba and Amir in the novel is a conditioned love. Whenever parents set conditions to their children that if you achieve this thing in this way I will do this thing for you. When Amir in the novel won the kite tournament in the winter season, Baba gifted a lot of things to him but he is having no interest in all these because he thinks that all these would be not gifted to me if I would not win the tournament. Amir says “Baba would have never thrown me a party like that if I hadn’t won the tournament”. So, these are the gifts for the victory not for me. On the same way, in our Pukhtoon society fathers also do conditioned love with their children. If they achieve something by their own without the support of them, they will appreciate them for their achievement. But if they lose then they start reminding him again and again that you are the loser, you lost because of this and that reason instead of appreciating and encouraging them that mistakes are positive things and failures are part of learning. Making mistakes means you are trying and will learn everything with the passage of time slowly and gradually. The more you are exposed to your target, the more you have the chances to overcome all the mistakes and errors that you were doing in the past.

The love of fathers should be unconditioned with their sons. It does not matter your child is the winner or the loser. Father are the only person whose support matters a lot for his son. Love in reality is not that you support and like your child when he is successful and achieving different things in life, real love is that your love turned your loser son into the winner through your unwavering support, encouragement and motivation. To make him sure that if the results are in favor of you are not but my support, my love and everything that I have will be with you in every harsh circumstances of your life. When son realize that my father is with me, he believes in me and he will be with me without considering the outcomes, then no one can stop him from development because his confidence are build and he starts believing himself and his qualities. In our Pukhtoon society, fathers behavior are too much patriotic that even the child is not allowed to vote the leader he loves. He is forced to give vote to the one who is favored by their fathers. Their political rights are violated by their own guardians. In the aspects of marriage, love marriage is not appreciated. Love marriage is considered a sin. They force their children to marry the girl they selected for them without asking for their consent and refusing marrying the girl who is selected by your parents are considered a blunder that should be avoided and no entertain to take stand for yourself. There would be no best example of the socio-political disconnection of father-son in our Pukhtoon society then that sons wait for the Eid festivals to hug their fathers. The importance of father hug is only understood by all those who cannot hug their fathers freely. This thing give confidence, trust and calmness to the children but unfortunately sons in our society are deprived.

Examples of father patriotism in Pashto literature are too broad. In Gulalai novel the parents of Karim want to marry him with his cousin but he likes Gulalai, so the conflict which arise due to this marital conditions are not good. A Few dialogues from the Pashto novel, *Gulalai* (2005), show the patriotic behavior of fathers in Pukhtoon society are:

ارشاد: دا د احسان خبره نه ده رورکيه! دا ستا اخلاقي او فطري حق دے خو څه وکړو زمونږ غلطو رواجونو زمونږ بڼو ته بېرې اچولي دي. زمونږ سترگې ئې پټې کړې دي. دښه او بد پېژندگلو ئې ورکه کړې ده. او د خاندان هر مشر لکه دا فرعون ځان ته خداي وائي خوا که دا چا زړه چوي او تن ئې سوزی خو چي دا دغه فرعون يانو انا سر کوزی او سر ټيټ نه شي. يا که ټوله دنيا فنا شي. ويښې او بهيرې يا دا چا مظلوم سره ظلم او شي خو چي دا دي مجازي خدايانو خواهش او آرزو پوره شي (شبنم، 2005، م. 52)

Translation

**Arshad:** This is not a favor, brother! This is your moral and natural right. But what can we do? Our wrong customs have put chains on our feet. They have blinded our eyes. They have taken away our ability to distinguish good from bad. And every elder of the family acts like a Pharaoh, calling himself God. But even if someone's heart burns and their soul aches, this Pharaoh's ego will not bow or lower its head. Even if the whole world perishes. Blood will flow, or an innocent person will be oppressed, just so that the desire and wish of these false gods are fulfilled. (Shabnam, 2005, p. 52)

عبرين: يقين وکړه خانه که خبر يم. زما په زړه څه تيريري تاته څه پته ده. زما لکه دکل شان وريره کوز سترگې پاتې شوه او دکرمي خوار پړق، وربشې خور لور به د خان اينگور شې. وه ئې ژړل او مخ ئې بل طرف ته ستون کړو. رحيم خان: هغه دڅه شي خان دکوم خان اينگور دا خيالات دي نن نه پس بدل کړه رور دي راغلي وو او پاکه پاکه خبره مي ورسره کړې ده چي که دکرمي لور اخلي مونږ به پرپردي دامي دا خداي سره وعده ده چي ژوندی يم نو سترگې به پری ونه لگوم. (85 م، 2005، شبنم)

Translation

**Anabreen:** Believe me my dear I don't know. What I am going through in my heart, how would you know. My niece like a flower is rejected by my son and Karamat who is a financial struggler, his daughter will become the daughter and law of a lord. She cried and turned her face to the other side.

**Rahim Khan:** What, who will become my daughter and law, change your thoughts. I cleared everything with your brother today that if Karim Khan wants to marry Karamat's daughter, then he will have to leave. I promised the creator that whenever I will alive I won't look to his face. (Shabnam, 2005, p. 85)

سردار خان: هيڅ نه کيږي کنه زه دومره ليوني نه يم لکه چي تاته ښکاريږم اوس هر څه چي دي دا خبره منل دي او کوم کار چي په روغه کيږي هغه وړانول نه وي پکار. رحيم خان: نوښه ده ستا خور ئې دي او ته ئې زماواري. زما دا طرفه دا نن نه په کور بند، د جائداد نه عاق او په درشل به مي قدم نه ږدي. دا خو ئې زما ناموس خراب کړو خلق به څه وائي چي دا رحيم خان زوي دا کرامت لور واده کړه. (81 م، 2005، شبنم)

Translation

**Sardar khan:** Nothing can be done in it now, I am not that much non-sense as you see. Now we have to accept this reality and to make the things better rather than to destroy.

**Rahim khan:** Right, he is your nephew and you are responsible. From my side he is not allowed to my home, I disowned him from my property and he is not allowed to my doorstep. He is ruining my reputation. What the people will say that my son married Karamat's daughter. (Shabnam, 2005, p. 81)

Baba is a loving and polite person in his social life but he is quite harsh and disciplinarian in his private life. He is a well-known wealthy businessman and his relation with his friends is quite pleasant but his social behavior at his home with his son is not pleasant. Baba is an example of dichotomy because his behavior in the social life is different from his personal life in which he always thinks from patriarchal perspective. In the Pukhtoon society fathers are too polite persons

in their social life outside home and treat everyone with care, respect, and love but when they return home from their working places, they switch their attitude to become dictators whose orders should be obeyed and no one is allowed to gainsay. This is the reason which creates the communication gap between fathers and their sons in their social life with each other which later results into different conflicts owing to the socio-political disconnections.

The concept of macho-mentality is there in the comparison of these both the societies. Macho-mentality is the combination of attitudes that shape the masculinity of males in the society. In the novel, Baba believes that men should be confident, have the ability to depend on themselves by taking stand and should love and do the sports that are suitable to them as men. Whereas, in our society fathers also believe that their sons should be tough, competent, dominant, and should have all the traits of a brave male. Due to this reason mal-adjustment takes place which is the inability to cope with the societal demands and expectations from you. When the children realize that they lack the expected qualities which make them being considered as complete men in the society they start doubting themselves for not fitting in the society. They believe that we would not be able to face the challenges of life and hence consider themselves weak. The consequences of their doubting their own potentials have also a bad impact on their personalities as a result of which they develop emotional struggles, behavioral issues and functional difficulties.

Exception proves the rule; all parents and their socio-political relations with their children are not like the ones we discussed. Similarly, in the novel, there are conflicts among Baba and Amir in their father-son relation, but in the case of the father-son relation of Ali and Hassan and Hassan and Sohrab, they are quite pleasant, understandable and supportive. There are parents who are aware of these social problems and they try their level best to avoid these hazards for the proper cognitive development of their children. But most of the parents are not aware of this thing and they do not know the consequences of these social problems. Only a few are the lucky children who did not face such social problems in their life.

Overall, navigating such type of relations in the Pashto literature is very hard. During a conference with one of the Pashto and Urdu iconic writer of this time, Parwesh Shaheen, at his residence, on this research paper topic, he said, "This issue is very crucial in the Pukhtoon society but in the field of literature it had never been portrayed so clearly as it has been done by Khalid Hussein." (Parwesh Shaheen, personal communication, May 16, 2026). My words on this topic have the backing of the enlightenment from many more informal discussions that I had with different people and from my own observations and experience.

## **Conclusion**

Every starting has its end. This research paper tried to make the point that comparing your children with others' children or considering someone better among your children is not good and its impact is also not wholesome. This work inculcates to the guardians that doing such is not better for the future of you children. In our society a father and a son have a strong blood relation but they do not hold emotional and psychological attachment. Such comparisons to prove your child inferior lead to the suppression of their curiosity, creativity and critical thinking. To avoid this thing from happening, you need to make friendly relations with your children, give time to them and never compare them with someone doing better than them. The person with whom you are comparing your child may be excellent in many aspects but remember that your child is the only one with his own uniqueness and qualities typical to him. Allah almighty has created every individual with some unique qualities and hence everyone is competent in their own place. You cannot judge the competence of a fish on climbing a tree because it is not its field

and it does not make any sense. Everyone has interest in a particular field and has a knack for it. Always appreciate the individual potentials of your children because the interests of everyone are different and if you encourage them in their own interested area rather than pushing them towards activities mismatching their interest, they will successfully stride forward and excel. Praising and appreciating your own children by motivating and encouraging them has a vital role on their emotional development.

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