

The good, the bad and the ugly

Sociology



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Throughout History, Social class has become a barrier for many people; Amir and Hassan are of no exception. Creating a wall between people within societies, shows that the concept of social class still exists today. One that is evident between the characters in the novel, Kite Runner. Amir's mistreatment of Hassan caused by his status of being a Hazara, Hassan being stigmatized as a degradation in the society and Assef continuously showing superiority over the Hazara's all tie into the author's intention in writing the novel, Kite Runner.

Khaled Hosseini uses the characters Amir, Hassan and Assef to criticize the treatment of the Hazara's by the Pashtuns, as seen through the differences in social classes within the culture. Inferiority Complex is the lack of self-worth and the doubt and feeling of not measuring up to society's standards. The inferiority Complex is eventually developed by Hassan as we see Amir's treatment towards him throughout the novel. This can be seen by Amir's Perception on his friendship with Hassan. " But he's not my friend! I almost blurted. he's my servant! "(41).

Even though they grew up as brothers, Amir still perceives Hassan as a servant more than a friend. Although Hassan's loyalty towards Amir has continuously been shown throughout the novel, Amir still hesitates to consider it more than an owner-servant relationship. This displays the obstacle that Hassan must overcome because of social classes. Another time Amir mistreats Hassan due to his social class is when Amir mock's Hassan's Ignorance. " ' Well, everyone in my school knows what it means,' I said. ' Let's see. imbecile. It means smart, intelligent. '"(29).

Hazara's receive little education and most of the time had been decided the moment they were born to be illiterate. Being knowledgeable of Hassan's ignorance, Amir still ridicules his unintelligence, finding himself to think better and superior than Hassan. Similarly, the religious differences also tie in with how social classes have been structured. Likewise, the religious barriers between Amir and Hassan also influence the negative treatment towards Hassan. Amir says " In the end, I was a Pashtun and he was a Hazara, I was a Sunni and he was a Shi'a, and nothing was ever going to change that.

Nothing. " (25). As the Sunni-Shi'a differences are displayed throughout the novel, it manages to rise up a conflict between their friendship. Moreover, Amir always feels as if him and Hassan are dissimilar in many ways, including race, ethnicity and social class. He is also unwilling to accept Hassan for who he is, which also raises up complications in sustaining their friendship. The mistreatment Hassan is given by Amir due to his social class demonstrates the author's criticism of the way Hazaras are treated amongst the Pashtuns.

As seen throughout the novel, Hassan is treated differently since he belongs to a lower social class, in that he is a Hazara. The Hazaras in Afghanistan are considered to be looked down upon and are disregarded as we see that through Hassan's character. The way Hassan is treated while living in the house with Amir and Baba had presented the inappreciative behavior towards the Hazaras, which is evident through Amir's selfish reasons for gaining his dad's love and attention. " I'd make a grand entrance, a hero, prized trophy in my bloodied hands...

Then the old warrior would walk to the young one, embrace him, acknowledge his worthiness. Vindication. Salvation. Redemption. "(67). Being a Kite Runner, Hassan was never given credit what he had done. Amir becoming the spotlight of Baba's attention after winning had left Hassan unrecognized for his efforts in helping win the kite tournament. As shown in the novel, Amir had often taken credit for Hassan's work in order to place himself higher in Baba's eyes. It also shows how Hassan's character is slowly deteriorated as Amir rises in his Father's perception.

Moreover, Hassan is treated negatively than the others when he is Harassed by Assef and the other boys in the neighbourhood. " ' We are the true Afghans, the pure Afghans, not this flat-nose here. His people pollute our homeland, our watan. They dirty our blood. " (40). In this passage, Khaled Hosseini tries to relay the mistreatment of the Hazara boy; Hassan, who is impotent and left powerless amongst Assef and the boys. Given the reason of being a Hazara, one can see how Hassan is being stigmatized as a degradation to the society where Pashtuns have ruled for decades.

Subsequently, the events and his treatment by the Pashtuns had lead Hassan to develop the inferiority Complex. This can be seen When Rahim Khan calls Hassan back to take care of the house in Afghanistan, he had once lived in. " But he would not. He said it was a matter of ihtiram, a matter of respect. He and Farzana moved their things into the hut in the backyard, where he was born. " (208). Overtime, the constant mistreatment of the Hazaras has mentally affected Hassan. The Lack of self-worth and knowing where he fits into society's standards has imprinted into his mind.

Hassan still chooses to stay at the servant's hurt because he realizes he would never be worthy or respected enough to live in the house. This displays how Hassan respects and accepts his state and considers it to be taken as an insult to Baba if he stayed. This can show the reader how he psychologically feels inferior or subordinate in the social class system. Hassan's ignorance and treatment by the Pashtuns emphasizes Hosseini's implication of presenting the two adverse treatments between the social classes.

Contrasting with how the lower class of the society feels, those belonging to the upper class feel the need to show supremacy to conceal their feelings of inferiority. As shown through Assef's Character, where as he bullied and sexually assaulted Hassan; A Hazara belonging to the lower class. Prior to the rape incident, Assef had said to Hassan " ' Because to him, you're nothing but an ugly pet. Something he can play with when he's bored, something he can kick when he's angry. Don't ever fool yourself and think you're something more. ' " (72). Assef views it as an advantage over Hassan as part of being a Pashtun.

He repeatedly tries to duress or provoke Hassan in order to feel superior or better about himself. This shows how badly the Hazaras were treated by the Pashtuns because they were considered more as pets or toys rather than human beings. The unfair treatment can also be seen amongst the two major social classes as Assef is placed or ranked as a higher status amongst the Talibans because he is a Pashtun. " The sight of him drew cheers from a few spectators. This time, no one was struck with a whip for cheering too loudly.

"(271). As a Pashtun, Assef is given the opportunity to be ranked at a higher authority.

This shows that the Pashtuns were more favored and powerful when compared to the Hazaras because the Hazaras were unable to join the Talibans; an Islamic fundamentalist political movement. Since many Hazaras were thought to bring dishonor to the country, they were not trusted to be part of any political activity because they would represent it negatively. This type of mistreatment by the Pashtuns is also shown in the novel when Hassan was serving drinks to Assef and the other boys, even after they had sexually assaulted him. " I saaw something I'll never forget: Hassan serving drinks to Assef and wali from a silver platter. (100). This short scene in the book highlights the oppression, the lower social class have to deal with. The fact that Hassan is absolutely incapable of doing or saying anything shows how Assef as a Pashtun holds more power and control. The way Hassan is being treated as a waiter shows that the Hazaras belonged to a lower, insignificant class who were impotent and overpowered by the Pashtuns. The superiority Assef tries to impose over Hassan explicitly implies Khaled Hosseini's intentions in criticizing the way a Pashtun was privileged and perceived in the society when compared to a Hazara.

Amir mistreating Hassan, Hassan being disdained by the society for being a Hazara and Assef overpowering the Hazaras all link together to support the author's intentions of showing the unfair treatment between the two social classes. Khaled Hosseini uses Amir, Hassan and Assef to criticize the mistreatment of the Hazaras by the Pashtuns through the social class barriers within the culture. " Let him who expects one class of society to

prosper in the highest degree, while the other is in distress, try whether one side; of the face can smile while the other is pinched.... " (John Keneth Galbraith).