

Guilt and redemption in khaled hosseini's the kite runner

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Notions of sins and their corresponding atonement have permeated throughout Khaled Hosseini's incisive fiction *The Kite runner* as a major theme, where in the novel, the protagonist Amir's sin towards his father Baba and his best friend Hassan, as well as Baba's sin towards his best friend Ali are respectively disclosed, and their attempts for the realization of self-redemption have cost them at a considerably heavy price. The sins, together with their consequent retributions and subsequent atonements, intertwine with one another to form an everlasting karma cycle of morality. Within this cycle, admittedly, most of Amir and Baba's sacrifices for their remedies are highly worthwhile as which have alleviated their interior torments and retrieved their moral conscience, whereas a certain proportion of the sacrifices are beneath worthiness as they violate the original intentions of atonement.

The moral cycle starts within the elder generation, between Baba and Ali, who are respectively Amir's father and Hassan's nominal father. Because of Baba's selfish desire, he once had an affair with Ali's wife and gave birth to Hassan. In order to keep his nangs and namoos as a renowned figure, his hypocrisy had made him a thief which he detests the most, and deprived from Hassan his identity, from Ali's honor. In order to atone his sin towards Ali and Hassan, he makes enormous effort to keep them in his family. He treats Ali as a close friend with equal identity, regardless of their disparity in social hierarchy, and tried by all means to restore affinity with Hassan that a father and a son supposed to possess. When Ali decided to leave with Hassan due to Hassan's mental issue, Amir saw Baba do something I had never seen him do before: he cried. The two-words truncated sentence, he

cried, emphasizes not only the rarity of Baba's crying, but also his cherishment and gratitude for Ali and Hassan's sheer existence in his family, because only if they stay with him can he atone for his delinquency. He says please to them in pain, in plea, in fear, the repetitive phrase with the anaphora of in again emphasize Baba's desperation for their removal and his mental struggle for his atonement. The fact that Baba is unwilling to let Ali and Hassan leave to some extent proves that he regards his compensation for them is more than worthy since it pacifies his sense of sinfulness and helps him achieve a mentally peaceful state. Moreover, after Hassan heard of Baba's death, he wore black for the next forty days, where the numerical diction of forty days highlights Hassan's respect and yearning for Baba. He signs that Agha Sahib was like my second father, without knowing the truth, he still regards Baba as his father, this indicates that Baba's effort has eventually won the affection and affinity of his son, which again proves his atonement worthwhile.

Most focally, however, the tale devotes on depicting Amir's grievous atonement for not standing up for Hassan when he was in danger but expelling him away from his family instead. Although the process of his self-expiation is full of both physical and psychological anguish and agony, he still has not regret for the price he has paid. Long before Amir realizes that he should no longer become a man who can't stand up to anything as in Baba's comment, and that he should atone his guilt for Hassan by actual deeds, he has already subtly been doing his psychological atonement in the way of interior dilemma. When Amir discovers that his wife Soraya is unable

to conceive a child, he deems that perhaps something, someone, somewhere, had decided to deny me fatherhood for the things I had done., where the repetitive alliteration starting with some in his inner-monologue emphatically demonstrates that he infinitely believes the deprivation of his fatherhood is a punishment for what he has done to Hassan. He deems himself deserved and culpable of the punishment, because only to atone for Hassan at the cost of his mental tranquility or even his right of being a father, he can relieve himself from the relentless guilt he feels for his best friend. Furthermore, when Amir determines to return to Kabul and rescue Hassan's only child Sohrab from the child abuser Assef, in order to fulfill his maximal expiation, he has a bloody fight with Assef which made him scared with Ruptured spleen. Broken teeth. Punctured lung. Busted eye socket. Though helping Sohrab to get rid of Assef has destructively damaged his physical health, he consciously neglects his sacrifice because when during Assef's assault, for the first time since the winter of 1975, I felt at peace. The peace of getting revenge, the peace of compensating his sin, the peace of terminating the interior torment that he has been suffered for thirty years. To Amir, as long as he could retrieve his moral tranquility, anything he has paid for the atonement is worthwhile. This explains why when Amir sees the first subtle smile of Sohrab after his suicide attempt, he running with a swarm of screaming children, the high modality motion suggests his inner joyfulness and the ultimate liberation from the haunting past, which against reveals the worthiness of his costly atonement.

However, to some extent, the sacrifice for atonement can be excessive compared to the sin. Amir's mother hemorrhaged to death during childbirth, which makes Amir an indirect murderer and a sinner to his father for killing his beloved wife. In order to atone himself in front of Baba, he determines to win the kite fighting tournament, and asked Hassan to run the last kite for him to satisfy Baba and fulfill his self-esteem. Because his eagerness for redeeming himself is so intense, that he eventually sacrifices Hassan through his non-action when seeing him getting sexually abused by Assef. On his way home in victory, he thinks maybe Hassan was the price I had to pay, the lamb I had to slay. The rhyming phrases emphasize his desperation for gaining Baba's affection and atoning himself at all costs. This colossal sacrifice eventually leads to Amir's long-term psychological torment. Beyond the years his guiltiness haunts around him, floods into his dreams or even random thoughts. Once Amir dreamt about the scene that Hassan had got slaughtered while himself was the man in the herringbone vest as the killer, after he experienced the impoverished situation of Farid's family which made him imagine the analogous adversity Hassan's family had gone through only due to his selfishness of unwilling to take them to American, thus to disguise his crime. His internal struggle and turmoil has not been diluted but intensified over and over chronologically, which is represented by the flashbacks of his memory that disrupted the linear structure of the novel. Within these flashbacks, the disastrous post-sacrifice consequence is revealed, which strongly rejected the worthiness of the great cost of his atonement for Baba.

In Baba's friend Rahim Khan's letter to Amir, he outlined the significance of atonement by defining the boundary of good and evil: a man who has no conscience, no goodness, does not suffer. And apparently, Amir and Baba are inherently good in nature, hence most of the time they deem their atonement worthy, despite of the huge sacrifice they made, as their remedies have restored their goodness and conscience and saved them from the sea of painful psyche. Nevertheless, karma is fugitive. Sometimes blind sacrifice might be counterproductive and brings about more irretrievable sins they need to atone. Yet it is the unforeseen cycle of sins and atonements that add suspense to the Amir, Hassan and Baba's interweaving traces of lives, and to the novel *Kite Runner* as a whole.