

# Emotional and Cultural Resonances: A Nostalgic Analysis of Khaled Hosseini's Selected Novels

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## Abstract

*This paper explores the nostalgia experienced by major characters in Khaled Hosseini's selected novels, *The Kite Runner* and *the Mountains Echoed*. The study employs a qualitative-interpretive research methodology while applying textual analysis as a research method for data analysis, including Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity as the lens. The protagonists of the novels leave their homeland (Afghanistan) to pursue a better life in the host countries away from the turmoil of their native land, but they find the new lands antagonistic to their expectations, and as a result, they are confronted with various problems, including nostalgia, a pervasive theme that prompts the diasporic struggles of the immigrants and keeps challenging and problematizing their identity and lifestyle in the new world. This research seeks to unearth the nuanced layers of nostalgia in Hosseini's storytelling, shedding light on the emotional and cultural resonances that have made his novels enduring classics.*

**Keywords:** Khaled Hosseini, Diaspora, Identity, Postcolonialism, Displacement, Nostalgia.

## Introduction

Nostalgia is a universal phenomenon and an essential part of diasporic narratives. Holbrook and Schindler (1991) defined nostalgia as a preference (general liking, positive attitude, or favorable effect) towards objects (people, places, or things) that were more common (popular, fashionable, or widely circulated) in the past (e.g., in early adulthood, in adolescence, in childhood, or even before birth). Loh (2009) believes that nostalgic feelings become

*“Paradoxically a source of comfort and inspiration” (p. 152–53).*

Since nostalgia is frequently connected to joyful experiences from the past, it can also be conceived of as the memory of happiness. In times of sadness or distress, it may provide solace. However, nostalgia is not just about happy memories; it can also be about longing for a time when things were simpler, or for a time when we felt more connected to others. According to Stern (1992) there are two different types of nostalgia: personal nostalgia, which is a yearning for the past that one has personally experienced, and historical nostalgia, which is a desire to escape from the present by going back to a period in history that is regarded as being better than the present. Nostalgic characters must confront the terrible reality that their country's great past is lost forever. Writers who identify as exiles or immigrants try to go back and recapture their history because they are

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tormented by a sense of loss. In the realm of literature, few contemporary authors have harnessed the evocative power of nostalgia as masterfully as Khaled Hosseini. His celebrated novels, including *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *And the Mountains Echoed*, are more than just stories; they are vivid tapestries of Afghan history, culture, and personal narratives that resonate with readers across the globe.

Khaled Hosseini, an Afghan-American novelist, has captivated readers with his poignant tales of love, loss, and redemption in a war-torn land. His narratives often explore the interplay between the past and the present, and in doing so, nostalgia emerges as a central theme weaving through his works. In this research article, we embark on a journey to delve deeper into the pages of Hosseini's selected novels, examining the intricate ways in which he uses nostalgia as a literary device to connect characters and readers to their personal histories, the history of Afghanistan, and the universal experience of longing for what once was.

Through a careful examination of key passages, characters, and narrative techniques, we aim to uncover how nostalgia operates as a thematic and emotional undercurrent in his works. By the end of this journey, we hope to gain a deeper appreciation for the power of storytelling and the profound impact of nostalgia in the realm of literature, as seen through the lens of Khaled Hosseini's storytelling mastery.

## Literature Review

*The Kite Runner* is Khaled Hosseini's debut novel, which was published by Riverhead Books in New York in 2003. It was later turned into a 2007 movie in Hollywood, a stage play, and a graphic novel ([www.khaledhosseini.com](http://www.khaledhosseini.com)). According to Raza (2014), the novel and the film adaptation both got the highest attention at the White House; however, it was banned in Kabul because the government claimed that

*“the film presents the ethnic groups in “a bad light,” and therefore could trigger an ethnic and sectarian controversy” (p. 1).*

*The Kite Runner* was well received in the United States but not in Afghanistan. However, the fact that it is outlawed in Afghanistan and some American schools has drawn a lot of criticism (Agnello et al., 2009). It received positive feedback from the majority of readers, who gave it favourable ratings in chronicles, reviews, and newspaper articles, complimenting it. Kakutani (2007) claimed it as a world bestseller that has sold more than 12 million copies almost everywhere in the world except Afghanistan. For two consecutive years, this novel was *The New York Times*' first-ranked best seller. The Daily Telegraph declared,

*“It speaks the most harrowing truth about the power of evil, personal and political, and intoxicates, like a high-flying kite, with the power of hope” (Hosseini, 2003, cover page).*

*And the Mountains Echoed* is the third novel by Khaled Hosseini. It was published in 2013 by Riverhead Books, and because Hosseini decided not to concentrate on any particular character, it departs from the style of his first two novels. The novel is a collection of short stories, divided into nine chapters being told from the perspective of a distinctive character Gupta (2014) analyzed and found *And the Mountains Echoed* divided into several interconnected stories with the themes of sacrifice and abandonment. Its foundation is built on the relationship between ten-year-old Abdullah and his three-year-old sister Pari and their father's decision to sell her to an issueless couple in Kabul, an event that ties the various narratives together. *And the Mountains*

*Echoed* focuses on the relationship between siblings, continuing the familial subject introduced in his earlier novels.

Said (2019) analyzed the significance of the absent mothers and the present fathers. He contends that *And the Mountains Echoed* intends to strengthen patriarchy by replacing motherhood with fatherhood through the absence of mothers (and women) and the presence of fathers (and men). The characters of Soraya, Sofia, and Sanaubar serve as examples of how women are unneeded in the work. A feminist interpretation of the mental fortitude and willpower exhibited by the female characters in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And the Mountains Echoed* was made by Prathibha (2020). The novel portrays distinctive female characters that are subjugated by the repressive patriarchal Afghan society, like Nana, Mariam, Laila, Nila Wahdati, Amra, and Pari. The author criticises the social and cultural institutions that uphold the subjugation and devaluation of women through his amazing heroines. Ahmad and Khan (2020) portrayed the cultural and sociopolitical environment of Afghanistan and revealed the Afghan patriarchal ideology and traditions that are in opposition to and challenge liberal feminist theory in *And the Mountains Echoed*.

### Methodological Framework

Methodology, according to Dew (2007) refers to

*“The principles underlying particular research approaches, as distinct from “methods”, which are ways of collecting data” (p. 433).*

The methodology determines a method for researchers to produce data for analysis (Carter & Little 2008). Qualitative research must be situated within a methodological framework, which is related to the research method used in the study, wherein the researcher explains the procedure of the research. Qualitative researchers have a responsibility to create methodologically convincing narratives by providing a strong case for their work that is founded on a deep comprehension of a methodological framework (Miller & Crabtree, 2005). Without methodological frameworks, qualitative research may lose its validity and significance (Carpenter & Suto, 2008).

The current research is qualitative which is

*“Concerned with understanding the meanings people attach to a phenomenon within their social worlds” (Snape & Spenser, 2003, p.3).*

Qualitative study collects and works with non-numerical data that seeks to interpret meaning from the data that help understand social life through the study of targeted texts, populations, or places (Pernecky, 2016). The objective of qualitative research is to understand, interpret, and give meaning to data. According to Blaxter et al. (2010), the collection and analysis of information in the form of non-numeric data is the focus of qualitative research. To put it another way, qualitative research is genuinely interested in data that is described in words rather than in terms of measurements or statistics. Because of this, the purpose of qualitative research is to characterize specific phenomena or circumstances that form the focus of research. Therefore, the present study used the texts of *The Kite Runner* and *the Mountains Echoed* as a primary source for analysis while articles and books were used as secondary sources to support the research. Accordingly, the researcher selected the qualitative method of inquiry and inductive approach to explore the representation of nostalgia and memory within these novels.

### Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*

*The Kite Runner* opens with the protagonist, Amir, recalling his childhood in Kabul, marked by the innocence of youth and the camaraderie he shared with Hassan. He reflects on his early recollections of Afghanistan, particularly Kabul, where he was born and raised. His nostalgia for his childhood home and culture is a source of comfort for him in the United States. For Amir, the past is always with him, from the novel's first sentence, when he says he became what he is today at the age of twelve, to its final sentence.

*"I became what I am today at the age of twelve, on a frigid overcast day in the winter of 1975" (Hosseini, 2003, p.1).*

He defines himself by his past and refutes the common perception that man forgets memories with time. In the very first paragraph of the novel, Amir says:

*"I remember the precise moment, crouching behind a crumbling mud wall, peeking into the alley near the frozen creek. That was a long time ago, but it's wrong what they say about the past, I've learned, about how you can bury it. Because the past claws its way out. Looking back now, I realize I have been peeking into that deserted alley for the last twenty-six years" (Hosseini, 2003, p.1).*

When Amir receives a call from a friend in Pakistan named Rahim Khan, who asks him to come to Pakistan to see him, he suddenly recollects his childhood because he knew it wasn't just Rahim Khan on the line (Hosseini, 2003, p. 1) rather it was the recollection of his past. After receiving the phone, he takes

*"A walk along Spreckels Lake on the northern edge of Golden Gate Park" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 1).*

Notices kites flying, and thinks of his past, including his friend Hassan, which makes him nostalgic:

*"Then I glanced up and saw a pair of kites, red with long blue tails, soaring in the sky. They danced high above the trees on the west end of the park, over the windmills, floating side by side like a pair of eyes looking down on San Francisco, the city I now call home. And suddenly Hassan's voice whispered in my head: For you, a thousand times over. Hassan the hare-lipped kite runner" (Hosseini, 2003, p.1).*

The kites flying high above San Francisco remind Amir of his childhood in Afghanistan and the people he knew there. They symbolize his early life, his desire, the desperate efforts he would make to feel his father's love and acceptance, and his relationship with Hassan.

Amir is thinking about everything when sitting on a park bench and says,

*"I sat on a park bench near a willow tree. I thought about something Rahim Khan said just before he hung up, almost as an afterthought" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 2).*

He remembers words spoken to him by Rahim Khan that "there is a way to be good again" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 2) and redeems himself for his past mistakes. He attempts to escape his painful memories of Afghanistan and longs to go back to the time before he betrayed his friend Hassan.

*"For me, America was a place to bury my memories. For Baba, a place*

*to mourn his” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 140).*

It represents Amir’s wish to reclaim the innocence he lost, and his longing for a return to the time when he was innocent and happy before the trauma and guilt of his past weighed heavily on him. However, his nostalgia for his homeland and his guilt over his past actions continue to haunt him. Amir in the United States recollects the memories of the places where he spent his childhood in Afghanistan especially the house where he and Hassan grew up. It was the most beautiful house having marble floors, wide windows, a crystal chandelier hanging from the ceiling, a two-acre backyard with rows of cherry trees, and a small vegetable garden:

*“Everyone agreed that my father, my Baba, had built the most beautiful house in the Wazir Akbar Khan district, a new and affluent neighbourhood in the northern part of Kabul. Some thought it was the prettiest house in all of Kabul. A broad entryway flanked by rosebushes led to the sprawling house of marble floors and wide windows” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 4).*

The description of the house gives the reader a sense of who Amir’s father was and what his living style in Afghanistan was. However, when Amir returns to see the house, it is not what he remembered it to be, and therefore, he says

*“The house itself was far from the sprawling white mansion I remembered from my childhood” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 284).*

Amir finds that all that he remembered from his childhood has changed. Amir is also nostalgic about his playful activities in the company of his friend, Hassan, in Afghanistan. As children, they would climb trees and reflect sunlight into their neighbors’ homes to annoy them, or else shoot walnuts at a neighbor’s dog with a slingshot. Hassan never wanted to do these things, but he would not deny Amir if Amir asked him and if they were caught, Hassan would always take the blame:

*“When we were children, Hassan and I used to climb the poplar trees in the driveway of my father’s house and annoy our neighbors by reflecting sunlight into their homes with a shard of mirrors. We would sit across from each other on a pair of high branches, our naked feet dangling, our trouser pockets filled with dried mulberries and walnuts. We took turns with the mirror as we ate mulberries, and pelted each other with them, giggling, and laughing” (Hosseini, 2003, p.3).*

Amir begins to recall a day long ago when he and Hassan were flying a kite before Hassan’s rape and the rift between Hassan and Amir. At this point in the story, the kite symbolizes happiness and a warm, pleasant, “simpler” past for Amir. He imagines himself and Hassan flying a kite together in a lovely field of blooming mulberry trees:

*“Hassan and I stand ankle-deep in untamed grass, I am tugging on the line, the spool spinning in Hassan’s calloused hands, our eyes turned up to the kite in the sky. Not a word passes between us, not because we have nothing to say, but because we don’t have to say anything—that’s how it is between people who are each other’s first memories, people who have fed from the same breast. A breeze stirs the grass and Hassan lets the spool rolls. The kite spins, dips steadies. Our twin shadows dance on the rippling grass” (Hosseini, 2003, p.133).*

Amir longs for the pleasant seasons which he, as a child, would enjoy in Kabul particularly winter which he liked the most:

*“I loved wintertime in Kabul” (Hosseini, 2003, p.53).*

It is the best time of year for boys in Kabul because the schools close for the icy season, and boys spend this time flying kites. Baba would take Amir and Hassan to buy kites from an old blind who makes the best in the city:

*“Winter was every kid’s favorite season in Kabul, at least those whose fathers could afford to buy a good iron stove. The reason was simple: They shut down school for the icy season. Winter to me was the end of long division and naming the capital of Bulgaria, and the start of three months of playing cards by the stove with Hassan, free Russian movies on Tuesday mornings at Cinema Park, sweet turnip qurma over rice for lunch after a morning of building snowmen” (Hosseini, 2003, pp.52-53).*

The highlight of the winter is the kite-fighting tournament, because

*“Every winter, districts in Kabul held a kite-fighting tournament. And if you were a boy living in Kabul, the day of the tournament was undeniably the highlight of the cold season” (Hosseini, 2003, p.54).*

It is something enjoyed by all the people, including kids, young people, and older people from all over Afghanistan and Kabul City:

*“The kite-fighting tournament was an old winter tradition in Afghanistan. It started early in the morning on the day of the contest and didn’t end until only the winning kite flew in the sky—I remember one year the tournament outlasted daylight. People gathered on sidewalks and roofs to cheer for their kids. The streets filled with kite fighters, jerking, and tugging on their lines, squinting up to the sky, trying to gain position to cut the opponent’s line” (Hosseini, 2003, p.55).*

The most memorable physical setting that Amir recalls in the United States is the pomegranate tree. As children, Amir and Hassan spent a lot of time together around that tree. Using a kitchen knife, Amir carves their names on the tree, which represents that the tree belongs to Amir and Hassan and that they are becoming better friends; although at times, Amir is oblivious to this:

*“There was a pomegranate tree near the entrance to the cemetery. One Summer day, I used one of Ali’s kitchen knives to carve our names on it: Amir and Hassan, the sultans of Kabul. Those words made it formal: the tree was ours. After school, Hassan and I climbed its branches and snatched its blood-red pomegranates. After we’d eaten the fruit and wiped our hands on the grass, I would read to Hassan” (Hosseini, 2003, p.30).*

Many years later, when Amir returns to rescue Sohrab, he goes to the tree which held so many memories for him, good and bad. Although there is destruction all around, the tree is still alive, and Amir sees that their names are still there.

*“The carving had dulled, almost faded altogether, but it was still there:*

*Amir and Hassan. The Sultans of Kabul*” (Hosseini, 2003, p.286).

Even through all the physical changes the house and landscaping had endured over the many years away, the proof was in the tree that the time they had spent there was real.

Amir uses many beautiful memories about the good old days in Kabul as motivation and a point of reference as he establishes his life and profession in the United States. Amir, being a motherless boy, always finds solace in his late mother’s collection of literature:

*“That was how I escaped my father’s aloofness, in my dead mother’s books. That and Hassan, of course. I read everything, Rumi, Hāfez, Saadi, Victor Hugo, Jules Verne, Mark Twain, Ian Fleming. When I had finished my mother’s books – not the boring history ones, I was never much into those, but the novels, the epics – I started spending my allowance on books”* (Hosseini, 2003, p.21).

His childhood memories represent his nostalgia for the relationship he had with his father before he betrayed Hassan, which resulted in a strained relationship between them.

*“I will never forget Baba’s valiant efforts to conceal the disgusted look on his face as he drove in silence”* (Hosseini, 2003, p. 23).

However, as he reflects on his past, he realises that he can never fully return to that time and that his actions have had lasting consequences, which creates a sense of conflict between his desire to embrace his Afghan heritage and his need to integrate into American culture. Amir reminisces about the former peace of Afghanistan, the smells of Afghan food in the markets, and the pomegranate tree he once sat under with Hassan. In the last scene of the novel, when Amir kite-fights in the United States with Sohrab, he imagines “white-clad trees” and smells “sawdust and walnuts” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 399), markings of his home country. Hosseini’s inclusion of these nostalgic details implies that Amir will never escape his country of origin.

Baba seems to experience nostalgia more than his son because of the sharp contrast between his modest existence in the United States and his wealthy background in Afghanistan. He is nostalgic for his homeland and the way of life he left behind. He often speaks fondly of Afghanistan and the values of honour and respect that he enjoyed there. In Kabul, he was a wealthy and respected businessman, but in the United States, he is reduced to working menial jobs as he works

*“As an assistant at a gas station owned by an Afghan acquaintance”* (Hosseini, 2003, p. 141).

In California, he earns low wages as a dirty and rugged laborer, having

*“His nails chipped and black with engine oil, his knuckles scraped, the smells of the gas station—dust, sweat, and gasoline—on his clothes”* (Hosseini, 2003, p. 140).

He has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. He decides to return to Afghanistan to die, hoping to be buried in the land he loves. He does not fit in with the surroundings, and he does not enjoy the food’s flavour. He misses the scenery and the people who share his ideals and ancestry:

*“He missed the sugarcane fields of Jalalabad and the gardens of Paghman. He missed people milling in and out of his house, missed walking down the bustling aisles of Shor Bazaar and greeting people who knew him and*

*his father, knew his grandfather, people who shared ancestors with him, whose pasts intertwined with his” (Hosseini, 2003, p.140).*

Baba misses not only the sugarcane fields of Jalalabad, the gardens of Paghman and the hustle and bustle of Shor Bazaar, but also the Afghan communities and the people he and his prominent families have been in contact with. Baba always longs to return to Afghanistan and to the memories of his home there. When Amir reflects on his father’s condition, he describes his position of being a diaspora in the following words:

*“Baba was like the widower who remarries but can’t let go of his dead wife. He missed the sugar cane fields of Jalalabad and the garden of Paghman. He missed people milling in and out of his house, missed walking down the bustling aisles of Shor Bazaar and greeting people who knew him and his father, knew his grandfather, people who shared ancestors with whose pasts intertwined with his” (Hosseini, 2003, p.129).*

Baba keeps connecting through nostalgia with his cultural roots and Afghan identity. He craves for the happy days when there was peace and tranquillity in Afghanistan, and he finds it difficult to reconcile his love for his country with his choice to leave and make a new life in the United States. His nostalgia also reveals the conflict between his traditional values and his wish for his son to assimilate into American culture. Baba’s nostalgia is rooted in his memories of Afghanistan as a land of opportunity and freedom. He struggles to reconcile his idealised memories of Afghanistan with the reality of the country that he left behind. This creates a sense of tension between his desire to maintain his Afghan identity and his recognition of the limitations of that identity in a new cultural context.

### **Hosseini’s And the Mountains Echoed**

And the Mountains Echoed is based on the recollections of siblings, Pari and Abdullah. They experience nostalgia in their host countries for their shared past, particularly the time they spent together before their separation. They are haunted by the past and by the memories of the village, Shadbagh, a fictitious place in Kabul, Afghanistan. Shadbagh is the village from where the whole plot of the novel has originated. *Shad* means happy and *bagh* means garden; therefore, the town’s name is suggestive of the lush surroundings and happiness which home provides.

According to Hosseini, this village is similar to many other villages in Afghanistan as it is remote, dusty, and has little square-shaped dwellings with smoke coming from their roofs. Even after many years have passed, its residents still find this village to be a delightful location. It is surrounded by a massive oak tree that dominates Shadbagh. It is the most ancient object in the community and could have

*“Witnessed the emperor Babur marching his army to capture Kabul” (Hosseini, 2013, p. 28).*

Another specialty of Shadbagh is “one particular grape” (Hosseini, 2013, p. 85), which is a highly sweet grape that exclusively grows in this particular village. Moreover, the old windmill that towers ominously over the mud walls of the village becomes a significant landmark in the recollections of its citizens. Iqbal describes this village to his kids as if “he was describing Paradise” (Hosseini, 2013, p. 259). Thus, in the mind of the writer from the diaspora, an ordinary



Afghan town gains the status of a holy homeland. An ordinary writer can be transformed by a diasporic writer's experience of exile and given "profound creative empowerment" (Said, p. 42). Pari, as a child, is taken from her family and adopted by a wealthy couple. She fully integrates into her new life, adapting to a new language and culture while creating a new family. However, as she grows older, she begins to feel a sense of detachment from her past and her true identity and becomes overwhelmed with nostalgia for her past life in Afghanistan. As fleeting recollections from her past reappear in her nightmares, Pari feels nostalgia for her native Afghanistan. She feels emotional emptiness when the memories vanish since the familiarity of those glimpses fills her with a sense of longing and loss. Her memories, meanwhile, are also coated with remorse and melancholy. She remembers the day she was separated from Abdullah. She remembers her brother, Abdullah, and the loving relationship they had as children, and she cannot do anything but mourn:

*"Well, it is hardly a mystery, mom amour, Maman had said. You miss your father. He is gone from your life. It is natural that you should feel this way. Of course, that is what it is. Come here. Give Maman a kiss. Her mother's answer had been perfectly reasonable but also unsatisfactory. Pari did believe that she would feel more whole if her father was still living, if he were here with her. But she also remembered this way even as a child, living with both her parents at the big house in Kabul" (Hosseini, 2013, p.189).*

Pari also recollects her memories about her foster father, Suleiman Wahdati, who was a kind and gentle man who loved his children deeply. She has been posing various questions regarding her family and especially about her father. She asks about his hobbies, his favourite colour, his choices and his overall personality, but she is kept unaware of her origin, and she only visualizes her past memories:

*"She remembers him chasing her once through a room. Rolling her around on a carpet, tickling her soles and belly. She remembers the smell of his lavender soap and the shine of his high forehead, his long fingers. His oval-shaped lapis cuff links, the crease of his suit pants. She can see the dust motes they had kicked up together off the carpet" (Hosseini, 2013, p.218).*

She recalls that he decorated the side of an armoire for her with giraffes and long-tailed monkeys. In her room, she keeps photographs of her father. She occasionally looks at a picture of herself sitting on her father's lap. Through her memories, she is able to reconnect with the love she once felt for Abdullah and her father:

*"Sometimes Pari found herself gazing at one of his old photos, particularly a black-and-white of the two of them, she and her father, standing before an old American car. He was leaning against the fender, and she was in his arms, both of them smiling. She remembered she had sat with him once as he painted giraffes and long-tailed monkeys for her on the side of an armoire. He had let her color one of the monkeys, holding her hand, patiently guiding her brushstrokes" (Hosseini, 2013, p.189).*

Pari is separated from her foster father and brother at a very premature stage of her life. That is why she questions her position as an Afghan woman who knows nothing about Afghanistan and its culture. She thus experiences a general sense of absence, but her memory rekindles in

occasional flashes when she reaches her teenage life, and she consciously becomes curious about herself whenever she sees her father's pictures:

*"Seeing her father's face in those photos stirred an old sensation in Pari, a feeling that she had had for as long as she could remember. That there was in her life the absence of something, or someone, fundamental to her own existence. Sometimes it was vague, like a message sent across shadowy byways and vast distances, a weak signal on a radio dial, remote, warbled. Other times it felt so clear, this absence, so intimately close it made her heart lurch" (Hosseini, 2013, p.189).*

Pari experiences nostalgia for her early years in Afghanistan, but her memories are blurred and fragmented. Despite the vagueness, she longs for a connection to her past, feeling sentimental about the warmth and kindness she once experienced there. Pari also recalls other memories of her childhood life; one of them is the song that her brother used to sing for her to calm her down whenever she is frightened. Pari feels so strange and weird whenever she suddenly remembers the song, she knows nothing about the song, but somehow, it seems to her that she was so familiar to the song itself. The recalling memories moments have become the trigger for Pari to finally decide to go back to Afghanistan and try to solve the mysterious feeling in her forgotten childhood life. She is away from her ancestral village, Shadbagh, as well as from the city of her childhood, Kabul, hence twice removed from her homeland. She feels curious about the missing episodes from her past, and she desires to visit her birthplace to know about her origin. She says,

*"I don't care about the hashish, but I do want to travel to the country, see where I was born. Maybe find out the old house where my parents and I lived" (Hosseini, 2013, p. 203).*

In other words, Hosseini's characters are left vulnerable to a flood of nostalgia because they are unable to overcome the influence of the past.

Abdullah also feels nostalgic for his sister, Pari, and their childhood memories in Afghanistan. He is haunted, even in the colourful environment of California, by memories of his childhood. He is unable to do away with his childhood memories until he falls victim to dementia. His grief for losing his sister, Pari, is still

*"Like a birthmark on his face" (Hosseini, 2013, p. 348).*

He spends much of his life searching for her and longing for their reunion. He carries the tin tea box carrying the feathers to Pakistan and then to the United States because his love for Pari and everything connected to her is so intense. When the siblings shared a home in Shadbagh, the box was Pari's most prized item. Its feathers are fragile remains of the old country. For Abdullah, the box serves as a remembrance of a lost yet unforgettable past:

*"Back home, in Shadbagh, Pari kept underneath her pillow an old tin tea box Abdullah had given her. It had a rusty latch, and on the lid was a bearded Indian man, wearing a turban and a long red tunic, holding up a steaming cup of tea with both hands. Inside the box were all of the feathers that Pari collected. They were her most cherished belongings. Deep green and dense burgundy rooster feathers; a white tail feather from a dove; a sparrow feather, dust brown, dotted with dark blotches; and the one of which Pari was proudest, an iridescent green*

*peacock feather with a beautiful large eye at the tip” (Hosseini, 2013, p. 20).*

Abdullah lives in California with his wife, Sultana, and daughter, Pari, and runs a restaurant called Abe’s Kabob House. He loses Pari in his teens, and the separation from her makes him sick and restless throughout his life. To find her, he is willing to

*“Walk as far from Shadbagh as his feet would take him” (Hosseini, 2013, p. 49).*

That is why he and his wife named their only child Pari after his long-lost sister. He leaves Kabul and moves to the United States, but he never gets peace and rest. They settle in different countries throughout the world: Pari settles in France, whereas Abdullah settles in the United States, but they constantly feel like a piece of them is missing, exactly like the rhyme they used to sing together as children that is absent.

Abdullah frequently indulges in nostalgia, reminiscing about the moments he spent with Pari in Walnut Grove during their childhood. As time passes and they continue to be separate, his desire for those cherished memories deepens, leaving him feeling incomplete and nostalgic for the relationship he had with his sister. The memories of their close bond and the joy they shared evoke a bittersweet longing, causing his heartache and a sense of loss for those cherished moments. His nostalgia revolves around his desire for Pari to come back. His need for her presence grows as he waits for a reunion that seems improbable. He longs for the times when they were together.

Their village of Shadbagh is a source of nostalgia for Abdullah. A strong desire for the simpler and better times they formerly had is evoked by the lovely surroundings and cherished memories of their childhood playing among the mulberry trees.

The novel also explores the idea of collective nostalgia as the people of Afghanistan reflect on the changes that have taken place in their country over the years. Hosseini portrays Afghanistan as a land of great beauty and culture, but also one that has been scarred by war and conflict. The characters in the novel long for a time when their country was peaceful and prosperous, and they mourn the loss of what they once had.

## Conclusion

Khaled Hosseini’s novels *The Kite Runner* and *And the Mountains Echoed* vividly portray the profound impact of nostalgia on the major characters, unravelling the complexities of their diasporic struggles and the nonstop challenge to their identities. The novels delve into the characters’ deep connections to their homeland, Afghanistan, and the contrast between their nostalgic yearnings and the harsh realities they face in their host countries.

In *The Kite Runner*, Amir’s journey is inextricably linked to his memories of Kabul, which functions as a constant backdrop that shapes and defines his identity. His nostalgic thoughts on the past, ranging from pleasant moments spent with Hassan to the unsettling incidents that led to their breakup, offer a powerful lens through which Amir deals with guilt, atonement, and self-discovery. The novel’s moving depiction of Kabul’s landscape, from the marble-floored house to the pomegranate tree and the kite-fighting tournaments, emphasizes the lasting influence of nostalgia on Amir’s sense of his heritage.

Another dimension to the story is provided by Amir’s father, Baba, who personifies a strong sense of longing for the Afghanistan of his childhood. His battle to reconcile the extreme disparity between his modest upbringing in the United States and his previous wealth in Kabul emphasizes the conflict between maintaining cultural identity and adjusting to a new setting. Baba’s yearning

for the gardens, sugarcane fields, and busy marketplaces eloquently conveys the sentimental weight of nostalgia and the enduring influence of the motherland.

In a similar vein, Pari and Abdullah's experiences in *And the Mountains Echoed* reveal the complex fabric of nostalgia. When the siblings part ways, it becomes a heartbreaking source of longing as both characters struggle with memories of their Shadbagh upbringing. Pari's journey, characterized by a search for her identity and a yearning for her brother, who has vanished, exemplifies the emotional void that nostalgia may create when a person is cut off from their history.

Abdullah, on the other hand, is always struck with nostalgia, thinking back on the walnut orchard and his relationship with Pari. The fragile feathers of the tin tea box become tangible artefacts of nostalgia, representing the everlasting yearning for connection and the frailty of beloved memories.

By deftly using nostalgia as the thematic thread that unites the characters to their cultural background, Hosseini enables readers to experience the deep emotional resonance of the characters' yearning for the past. The novels go beyond their individual stories to provide a more comprehensive analysis of Afghanistan's past and the lasting power of nostalgia as a literary motif. Hosseini's narrative crosses cultural barriers by delving into themes of personal, familial, and collective nostalgia, striking a chord with readers and highlighting the enduring force of yearning for one's origins.

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