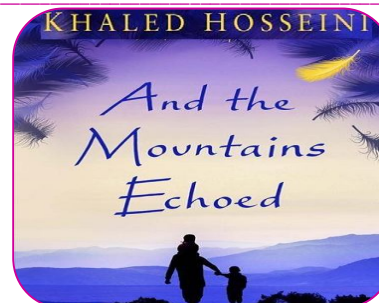




A POST-MODERN STUDY OF KHALID HOSSEINI'S, AND THE MOUNTAIN ECHOED.

Hanifa Omar

Student , M.A. (English) , Lovely Professional University.



ABSTRACT:

The paper studies how the memories of childhood become a set of disruptive and wavering images..As a postmodern writer the author depicts the true and real life of Afghanistan and America through his characters. His expression brings out the true meaning of postmodern life in front of the present world. This research paper is a postmodern study and analysis of Khalid Hossini 's work – ‘And The Mountains, in context with the family dynamics, power and wealth, memory and forgetfulness and also how the decision of one individual affects the others across space and time. Through this article we will study how various elements of postmodernism such as, fragmentation, paradox, contradiction, discontinuity, social class, ethnic and cultural conflict, hegemony, domination, indeterminacy, and alienation are skilfully portrayed through each character in Hosseini’spopular work. Moreover, he portrays how human beings suffer from meaninglessness and absurdity in their life.

KEYWORDS : postmodernism,fragmentation, paradox, contradiction, discontinuity, indeterminacy, and alienation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE: All the texts of Hosseni were read and also consulted search engines like PROQUEST and JSTORE to study others writers views on Hosseini’s works.

INTRODUCTION

Postmodernism is a term coined by Arnold Toynbee (1889- 1975) which means "after modernism". New skepticism is also called Postmodernism. It focuses more on presenting the theoretical and scientific stance, rather than on a historical event. Also it shows great stress and struggle of human beings for legitimization in a hypocritical society.

Postmodernism aims at challenging the existing paradigm about fragmentation, paradox, contradiction, discontinuity, social class, ethnic and cultural conflict, hegemony, domination, indeterminacy, exploitation and alienation etc. By studying and presenting the possible existence of contradictions existing in modern societies. We are applying the theory of postmodernism to the great work by Khalid Hosseini – ‘And The Mountains Echoed’.It is the third marvelous work of the author after the two bestsellers: ‘The Kite Runner’ and ‘A Thousand Splendid Suns’

Postmodernist writers seek out different principles, theories, practices and rituals, which exist in their own existentialist thoughts and with the help of postmodernism they seek out the human situation which is considered the most refined form. They rip to employ a form that can fully assimilate human existence, which is capable of rectifying the meaninglessness, purposelessness and absurdity of human existence.

A postmodern writer aims to reduce the importance of history as much as possible, and does not see his role as being only a witness to what is happening and to record the facts (Ali N. Elaati, 3). Khalid Hossini is one of the most prominent postmodern writers. He is given a place in the postmodernist movement because he writes about modern subjects which present the real life of modern people. His works are autobiographical and he uses his own experiences and knowledge gathered during his journey of life. For instance, *And The Mountains Echoed* surpasses Hosseini's other novels, from a literary standpoint and by its ability to illuminate or clarify about happenings and existing human life in Afghanistan and tries to bring into light the real Afghanistan.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The aim of this study is to show the possibilities of eradicating the social evils and disturbances persisting in one culture or nation by giving evidences of better living conditions and practices in other cultures, societies, religions, ethnic groups or nations. It can also help in erasing certain myths and assumptions attached to particular cultures, religions, states and social strata.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Approach to this research work is qualitative. Subjective review of existing literature on the topic of a postmodern studies of Khalid Hussein's *And The Mountains Echoed* and the postmodern theory has been taken as the main source of information. So the data collection entails library browsing, supplemented with information from the net. The method which is required for this paper is based on the theory of postmodernism.

MAIN ARTICLE

And The Mountains Echoed is one of Hosseini's most celebrated works, in which he mangles several generations with different characters from first world and third world. The story of this book starts in a country side of Afghanistan which is known as Shadbagh, which is in terrible state and extremely impoverished. The story tells about a man named Saboor, who is a labourer and gives one of his adorable children, Pari, to a childless rich couple named Saliman Whadati and his wife, a Westernized poet, Nila Wahtati, in order to save the rest of his family from poverty. But Saboor himself is skeptical about his decision that he wants to victimise his little four year child. He is not confident that his decision will be helpful in bringing them out of the financial distress. Hosseini's works portrays the real life of labourers in Afghanistan which is based on the saying, "Cut the finger and save the rest of hand" (Hosseini, 12).

The story of Saboor's life with his children Pari and Abdullah is spread over nine chapters of the book. While we glance through the life of Pari and her brother Abdullah, we can find various elements of postmodernism in their tragic life. For instance, Pari's stepmother Nila, is half Afghan and half French. Her father hails from Afghanistan and mother from France. Her father is a fanatical, zealous person. He does not like the unconventional women. On the contrary Nila behaves opposite to what is demanded. Her carelessness, disparagement induces her father to imprison her in four walls of their home.

The author says, "The front gates opened and black-haired young women emerged. She wore sunglasses and a short-sleeved tangerine-colored dress that fell short of the knees. Her legs were bare, and so were her feet. I did not know whether she had noticed me sitting in the car, and, if she had, she offered no indication. She rested the heel of one foot against the wall behind her and when she did, the hem of the dress pulled up slightly and thus revealed a bit of the thigh, beneath. I felt a burning spread down from my cheeks to my neck" (Hossieni, 79,80).

Moreover, when Nila gets married to Sliman Wahdati, a rich man, he is also having an affair with his driver Nabi, who is uncle of Pari. As her husband is indifferent to all of her life's affairs, she is full of sorrow and broken-hearted, because she is dominated by the patriarchal role of her father and her husband. She feels alienation in her own homeland because she is not able to accommodate herself with Islamic culture

and tradition of Afghanistan. She used to enjoy much more freedom as compared to a Muslim woman who lives in an Islamic community. Finally she leaves Afghanistan with her adopted daughter Pari and goes to Paris.

Nila begins her new life in Paris which again remains meaningless, purposeless for several years. Consequently, she gets fed up with the loneliness of her life. She argues with her adopted daughter (Pari) who insists her mother to do away with all her affairs. Nila tells Pari that she is not her real mother biologically (stepmother). After hearing this Pari leaves Nila forever. Nila's three boyfriends leave her one by one and lately, she becomes fastidious from absurdity in her life. She develops suicidal tendencies. On the other hand Pari is compelled to find out a shelter which can give her real affection and be honest towards her. She is in a state of shock as she has lost her identity, her virtue, her culture. She is suffering from her past life's bad experiences and thinking who will be her guardians and parents.

She searches to figure out her identity as who she is and to which country she belongs to. Meanwhile, she marries a non-Muslim man named Eric taking no consideration of religious and cultural boundaries. The three of their children represent the intermingling of religion and culture. Fortunately, Pari receives a letter from Morkos who belongs to Greece and works in a hospital as a doctor in Afghanistan. This letter is sent by her uncle Nabi and he emphasizes Morkos to let Pari know that she has a guardian as her brother and his name is Abdullah who lives in America.

Khalid Hosseini, as a postmodern writer, beautifully depicts the postmodern society of both first world (European) and third world (Afghanistan) in detail. He shows in his novel *And The Mountains Echoed* the situation of immigrants whether they are settled willingly or unwillingly in alien countries. He portrays in his work how a small decision fragments the life of whole family. This decision is neither beneficial to the victim who is a small child forced to stay away from the family nor to the rest of the family who is suffering because they cannot bear the separation of their child from them. The author also depicts in his novel some other important elements of postmodernism; such as contradiction, paradox, hegemony which exist among the members of family and kinfolk. It shows how the affection, honesty and sympathy are used to gain personal benefits even when characters representing all this belong to same family. They only think on winning the game. Hosseini elaborates the story of *And The Mountains Echoed* so passionately that each paragraph and line of text expresses the truth and absolute reality of postmodern people. For instance, when we look through the characters of Parwana, who is second wife of Saboor, and her sister Masoma who is more beautiful and adorable as compared to Parwana. Both sisters love Saboor. Masoma finds the chance to get engaged with Saboor. But Parwana's jealousy compels her to cause Masooma to fall from branch of a tree causing the injury that leaves her paraplegic. Parwana never thinks that she is her sister, from her own mother, she destroys Masooma's life merely to fulfill her own desire. Parwana left her paraplegic sister lonely and continued her life with Saboor after getting married with him.

"In every corridor Parwana would see men's eyes snapping to attention when Masooma passed by. She saw their efforts to behave matter of fact, but their gaze's lingered, hapless to tear away" (Hosseini, 63).

Furthermore, Idris and his cousin Timur, both of them come from America in order to get their family property in Kabul. These two relatives have a sense of hegemony between each other. Each of them tries to gain an upper hand among their kinfolk.

Theme of memory and forgetfulness is also touched upon frequently in the novel. It begins with a story within a story, in which Baba Ayub drinks a potion that makes him to forget about his son, Qais. Here, there is an undercurrent of forgetfulness as a kind of blessing which is preferable to pining or longtime resentment, and yet as in the context of Baba Ayub's, forgetfulness is never complete and something always remains as a reminder. Then we have 'Pari' forgetting her blood relations especially her brother Abdullah, who even names his daughter 'Pari' in her memory. Like Ayub in the story she remembers Abdullah faintly and after a long interval.

Thalia, whose face is horribly scarred by a dog during her childhood is able to forget and forgive her adolescent tormenters, and move on to happier life as adult without any resentment. While, Roshana intentionally 'forgets' to mention the false promise of Idris in her book. The feather that nostalgic Abdullah saves for his sister Pari alludes to the fact that when someone holds on to a memory, it doesn't take into account how the subject might have changed due to effect of time and interaction with people and new places. Ironically it is Abdullah who suffers memory loss due to Alzheimer's disease and forgets Pari in the end.

In *And the Mountains Echoed* stark reality of harshness of life is juxtaposed with the inherent goodness of human being. Boundary between selfishness and selflessness blur when people resort to be of assistance to others in order to mitigate their own guilty conscience or to gain individual happiness. As it is true in many situations, the novel reflects the fact that, one finds it tougher to practice good manners on the family members than on the strangers. Dr. Markos fails to find compassion for his own mother but has no reservation in dedicating his life to unfortunate collateral damages inflicted on the people of Kabul, Afghanistan. In stark contrast to dogma, the action of apparently selfish and arrogant Timur in offering to save Roshana reflect that feeling of compassion alone is not enough, it has to be accompanied by action to be effective.

The novel challenges the traditional concept of what constitutes a 'family'. Here the bond of blood and marriage doesn't seem to be the all-powerful foundation on which the family is built. Pari, Abdullah, Saboor and Nabi are family by blood but Pari, Nila and Mr Wahdati becomes a family by arrangement. Yet Hosseini's portrayal of enduring love and affection between the siblings and non-functioning family set up of Nila and Markos Abdullah goes on to confirm the old adage that 'blood is after all thicker than water'. The next point which Hossini depicts in his novel is Power and Wealth . In various instances in the novel we come across how the power of the wealthy people shapes the destiny of the poor ones.

From the beginning of the novel we come across the instance where Baba Ayub decides to leave his son, Qais, so that he is able to enjoy higher standard of living. In a parallel event Saboor leaves Pari with the Wahdati. Mrs. Wahdati says, "It is for the best" that family bond between the trio is broken. It is also evident that power of wealth changes perception of the other people as well as the one who is endowed with it. Pari seemingly forgets her father and brother when she becomes adult and considers her maternal uncle 'Nabi' as a servant. Power of the wealth acts the barrier between relations but it can also act as the bridge between the people. Timur arranges the fees for Roshana's surgery.

Power of the knowledge also comes into play when Dr Markos uses his knowledge in medicine to help the poor, providing his service free of charges. Other power relation can be seen between paralyzed Masooma and Parwana, Mr Wahdati and Nabi, and the love triangle of Julien, Nila and Pari.

CONCLUSION

Khalid Hossini is the author of wonderful novels like *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Sun*, and the recent one, *And The mountains Echoed*. Also, he is well known as the most prominent novelist in the postmodernism, because he depicts the experience and reality of his life and his homeland through the context of each of his novels. Especially in each character of *And The Mountains Echoed* the reader can find the element of postmodernism such as, fragmentation, paradox, contradiction, discontinuity, indeterminacy and alienation. Also he elaborates in his works that how we take care of one another, and how the choices we make resonate through generations. In his work he is revolving around not just parents and children but brothers and sisters, cousins and caretakers as well., Hosseini explores the many ways in which families nurture, wound, betray, honor, and sacrifice for one another; and how often we are surprised by the actions of those closest to us, at the times that matter most.

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**Hanifa Omar****Student , M.A. (English) , Lovely Professional University.**