Betrayal and Redemption: A nostalgic study of Hosseini's The Kite Runner

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ABSTRACT

It is true that nature is universal but it is surely undeniable that surroundings have a deeper impact on our minds. One's behaviour is a direct outcome of one's social scenario. No matter how hard we try to reconcile with our past, a wishful yearning for happiness is always there. The more you love a memory, the stronger and stranger it becomes. You can go other places, you can live on the other side of the world, but you cannot ever leave home. It takes a lot to free yourself from the burden of past.

Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner deals with deeper struggle to reconcile with the past. The protagonist in the novel tries constantly to come to terms with his past actions. Amir struggles to find his place in the world because of the aftereffects and fallout from a series of traumatic childhood events. Amir's unending struggle to forge his relationship with his father and to free himself from the guilt of his act of cowardliness for not protecting his dear friend Hassan.

Apart from dealing with inner conflicts, the book also deals with the issues of ethnic and religious divisions. Reminiscent of the past incidents which keep haunting Amir, the whole story is replete with events that show how his conscious is awake of the nostalgia to coming to terms with his past and in a way redeem himself.

The Kite Runner is a novel containing sociological and psychological issues. The story describes how the social barrier between Pashtuns and Hazaras in Afghanistan society makes a coward and inferior boy such Amir, the main character, experiencing a lot of conflict. Conflicts experienced by Amir lead him to experience anxiety. A big anxiety experienced by Amir happened when he sacrificed Hassan, Amir's beloved Hazaras servant and friend, letting Hassan got raped by Assef. Sohrab is his half brother, who accepted Rahim Khan request to take Sohrab, Hassan's son, out from Kabul to redeem his betrayal toward Hassan. Fourth, when Amir chasing the kite for Sohrab as he wants to get Sohrab's trust after he broke his promise and made Sohrab commit suicide. The motives that appear in Amir's life change his personality from a coward to be an optimistic, sly, even to be a caring person.

In a fiction story and play, conflict considered as one of the most important intrinsic elements. Conflict is a key to build the story, to describe the characterization of the character within and to send a moral message to the reader in the end of a story. As stated by Perrine (1984:42), conflict is a clash of action, ideas, desires or wills. It means a conflict can be a visible and invisible clash. They may be physical, emotional even mental. Based on the explanation above, a conflict can be classified into two, namely external and internal conflicts. External conflict is a conflict showing the main character against another character as a person, society and its rules, and nature. While, internal conflict is a conflict arises within himself. Many external conflict experienced by a character may lead him or her to experience an internal conflict at the same time.

Amir's external conflict happens as result of the clash of idea and physical between him and person around him Hassan, Baba, Rahim Khan, Assef, Raymond Andrews, Omar Faisal and Sohrab are people whom Amir experiences external conflict with.

AMIR'S ANXIETY

Based on Freud Anxiety's theory, anxiety is divided into three, namely realistic, neurotic and moral anxiety. In The Kite Runner, Amir as the main character of the story experienced those anxieties. In addition those anxieties reveal too Amir's characteristic and conflict behind his anxiety.

REALISTIC ANXIETY

Realistic anxiety is described as an anxiety or emotional response which man produced when he sees a dangerous or unpleasant thing from the external world. In The Kite Runner, realistic anxiety experienced by Amir happens three times. First, when Amir saw Hassan was trapped by Assef and his
Dealing with the definition and explanation above, Amir’s anxiety that caused Amir run away from the alley, because of his fear after imagining Assef’s punishment he will get if he saves Hassan, can be seen as neurotic anxiety.

The id of Amir is his willing to save Hassan from Assef by wanting to say something to make Assef knows that Amir is there to save Hassan. So that, saving Hassan from Assef should be Amir’s ego. Unfortunately, in the process of thinking whether Amir would save Hassan or not, Amir’s anxiety about the consequences and punishment that Amir imagines will get from Assef, made Amir afraid. Therefore, the worry Amir got by imagining a punishment he would get from Assef, if Amir’s ego cannot control his id to save Hassan, belongs to the neurotic anxiety.

In addition, the neurotic anxiety Amir experienced, represents Amir’s general description as a coward person, since, that neurotic anxiety makes Amir becomes a person who lack of courage to face unpleasant situation such Hassan’s sexual harassment and to save Hassan from Assef. Furthermore, this Amir’s neurotic shows the internal conflict arises within him dealing with unpleasant situation he sees. I opened my mouth, almost said something... In the end, I ran. I ran because I was a coward. I was afraid of Assef and what he would to me. I was afraid of getting hurt. (Hosseini, 2003:68)

**MORAL ANXIETY**

Moral anxiety is an anxiety or the emotional response that appears when the ego threatened by punishment from the superego. A person experiencing a moral anxiety means he does not follow his superego which has already given him a true moral direction but prefers to follow his id for certain reason. Later, this anxiety leads the person experiencing the feelings of shame, guilt or self-condemnation as the superego punishment.

Dealing with the definition of moral anxiety above, Amir as the main character in the story, seen as a character who experiences some moral anxieties after betraying Hassan for his own purpose. Becoming an insomniac, cannot see the word Amir carved in Amir and Hassan’s favorite pomegranate, feel guilty when uttering Hassan’s name, being confused to judge Amir himself as a murderer of Hassan, are the example of Amir’s moral anxiety in *The Kite Runner*.

According to the explanation above, the first Amir’s moral anxiety appears when he became an insomniac and tried to tell to anyone who sleep near him that he watched Hassan got raped by Assef. Being an insomniac, can be seen as the result of Amir’s anxiety he got after letting Hassan got sexual harassment from Assef. In addition, Amir also said in his monologue, the reason he wants someone hear his confession is he hope he would not have to live with that lie anymore. The sentence “would not have to live with that lie anymore” emphasizes the feeling of guilt Amir experienced after letting Hassan got raped by Assef and act as if he never knew what already happened with Hassan in the alley. He says, “I watched Hassan get raped,” I said to no one. ... A part of me was hoping someone would wake up and hear, so I wouldn’t have to live with this lie anymore... That was the night I became an insomniac. (Hosseini, 2003:75)

The second moment showing Amir’s moral anxiety happened when Amir could not stand looking at the sentence...
Amir carved on the pomegranate trunk, stating, “Amir and Hassan: The Sultan of Kabul.” Yet the sentence, “Amir and Hassan: The Sultan of Kabul” represents the close friendship of Amir and Hassan. The confession Amir makes, saying that he cannot stand to look at the carving words, represents Amir’s guilt and shame toward his betrayal he did to Hassan, as the words he ever carved on symbolizing the close friendship between them. In this moment, the feeling of shame and guilt Amir got, came from his ego which is punished by his superego.

Furthermore, the moral anxiety Amir got by cannot stand looking at the sentences he ever carved on the pomegranate’s tree which is represented Amir’s shame and guilt toward a betrayal he did to Hassan, also describes Amir’s general description as a coward person. The words I’d carved on the tree trunk with Ali’s kitchen knife, Amir and Hassan : The Sultan of Kabul ... I couldn’t stand looking at them now. (Hosseini, 2003:76)

The third moment showing Amir’s moral anxiety dealing with betrayal he did toward Hassan, happened when he was an adult and he suddenly uttered Hassan’s name after for along time he never did it anymore. Amir confessed to himself that by uttering Hassan’s name he felt that the thorny old barbs of guilt bore into him once more.

The word “old barb of guilt” represents the old event of betrayal Amir did when he was boy which never could be erased and already made Amir guilty. Moreover, Amir described his guilt and anxiety by saying how the air in Rahim Khan’s little flat suddenly was too thick and hot that made him could not take breath freely. Amir’s difficulty breathing is an evidence Amir’s anxiety. Difficulty breathing appears as one effect of heart papilation as a physical effect of an anxiety. The difficulty breathing is caused by an abnormality of heartbeat that ranges from often unnoticed skipped beats or accelerated heart rate.

Dealing with explanation above, feeling about the old barbs of guilt bore into him, the air in Rahim Khan flat which suddenly become thick and hot which indirectly describes Amir’s difficulty breathing, are the symbols of Amir’s moral anxiety. “Hassan,” I said. ... Those thorny old barbs of guilt bore into me once more, ... Suddenly the air in Rahim Khan’s little flat was too thick, too hot,... (Hosseini, 2003:176)

Amir’s self-condemnation can be seen when Amir thought that he could be one of the reason of Amir’s death. Amir realized that he might have not brought the Taliban to the house to kill Hassan. But Amir thought that the condition might be different too if in the past Amir never sent Hassan out from his home and his life.

Furthermore, Amir’s moral anxiety which is came to him by thinking that he can be called as Hassan’s murderer, also shows Amir’s general description as an anxious person. Because the way Amir shows his dilemma by thinking whether he can be assumed as Hassan’s murderer too or not, represents his personality as a person who feels worry about something that is happening. In addition, this Amir’s moral anxiety also shows the internal conflict that arises within him as he says, “I hadn’t brought the Taliban to the house to shoot Hassan. But I had driven Hassan and Ali out of the house things might have turned out differently if I hadn’t?” (Hosseini, 2003:198)

Dealing with the explanation above, it can be summed up that according to the source of Amir’s betrayal and the act of Amir’s betrayal toward Hassan, the consequences that Amir have to get is experiencing the realistic, neurotic and moral anxiety in his life. A betrayal toward Hassan is the biggest source of anxiety that is experienced by Amir. So that, moral anxiety which is experienced by Amir become the most dominant anxiety he gets. Meanwhile, the realistic and neurotic anxiety become the proof of Amir’s source and reason of betrayal he did toward Hassan, although there is one realistic anxiety which correlates between Amir’s guilt and Sohrab’s suicide.

REFERENCES