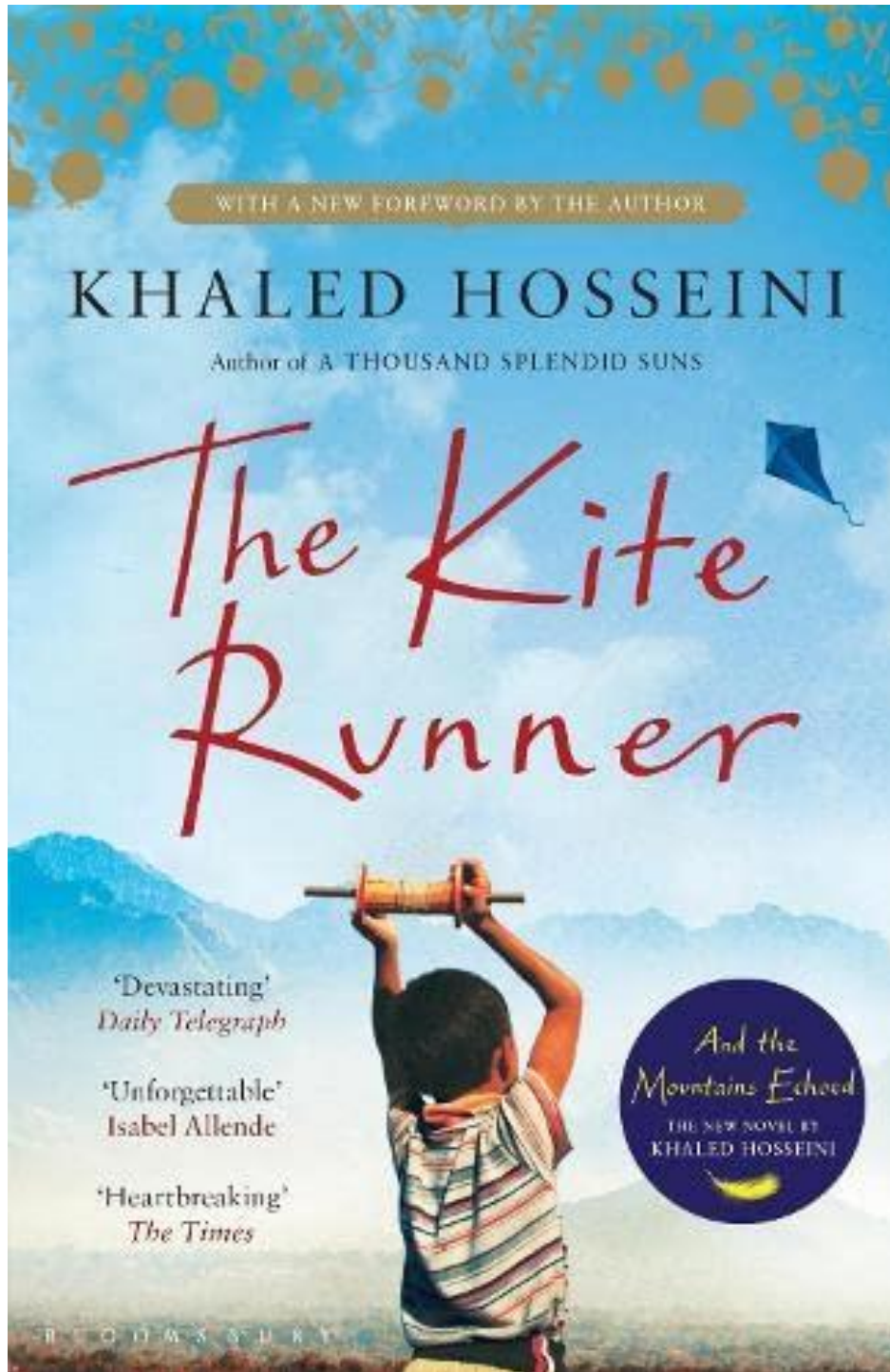


THE KITE RUNNER - A BOOK REVIEW



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Novel: The Kite Runner
Author: Khaled Hosseini
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Khaled Hosseini's debut novel "The Kite Runner" is a compelling and emotionally driven novel that deals with friendship, betrayal, guilt, and the impact of historical events on lives. This novel is set in Afghanistan, where the author himself grew up therefore the settings of this book are real and help resonate with a wider audience as it feels authentic and genuine.

This book revolves around Amir, the wealthy son of a businessman in Kabul and his servant Hassan. Both boys have been friends since childhood but their social status soon starts to show as Amir grows increasingly showcases his power in many different situations. Regardless of their differences, Hassan always thinks of Amir as a close friend and is very loyal to him. On the other hand, Amir has never thought of Hassan as a friend, he thinks Hassan is just his servant who has been with him for a long time.

The differences in these two characters start to really show as the story progresses. Amir is cowardly and doesn't fight back. His cowardice is highlighted when he lets Hassan be sexually assaulted and goes as far as to try and kick him out by framing him for stealing afterwards. He is the main character of this book yet his nature is quite unlikable. He is not only a coward but he also exhibits slyness and moral ambiguity. He is shy and unsure about himself and people around him which makes him as a character very frustrating to read. Analyzing him further it is clear he has no self-confidence at the beginning of the book. He lives under his father's shadows in Afghanistan but after moving away neither him nor his father have a presence, so he builds himself up from the scratch, facing past traumas and mistakes. He finally learns to forgive himself and regains himself.

Amir's journey to redemption is very endearing to read. At the beginning Amir is completely eaten up by guilt, and despite his efforts to leave his past behind he is constantly haunted by his lack of courage as a kid. Moreover, after he learns about Hassan being his half brother he is yet again consumed by another wave of greater guilt. In an attempt to reconcile with his past, Amir returns to Afghanistan where he finds Hassan's son Sohrab. He starts forming a bond with this child and vows to rescue him. Amir gathers up his courage and navigates through the war stricken land of Afghanistan rescuing and protecting Sohrab. He forms an unbreakable bond with Sohrab, similar to the one he had with Hassan. This shows redemption, forgiveness and change.

Compared to this, Hassan is a more likable character. He is kind, compassionate, loyal, forgiving and brave. He always sticks by Amir, helping him with various tasks. He is also very loyal to Amir. This can be shown when he selflessly retrieves a kite back for Amir in the kite running competition despite the risks that come along with it. He is brave as well, this is clearly portrayed when he stands up against Assef for Amir's dignity, despite him being scared too. At last Hassan is a very forgiving character. He forgives Amir after the betrayal because he doesn't want to ruin the decade old bond they have. Even during his death, he does not think ill of Amir. Hassan is the embodiment of innocence and purity.

Analyzing the characters we can conclude that Hosseini had done an excellent job representing an array of emotions and complex human characteristics. Not just through characters, but through the interaction of multiple characters so many subtle but important things are portrayed such as the relationship between Amir and his father.

Amir's father, Baba is an important figure in Afghanistan. He is portrayed to be strict and very traditional, always following traditional values held by Afghans. Contrasting this Amir's values are more inclined towards the modern world than to old traditional values. This stark difference between them causes the rift in their relationship to increase. Similarly due to Baba's high expectations and coldness toward Amir, he often questions his self worth. He does everything possible to gain validation but when nothing works, the distance between the father and the son only increases. Their relationship becomes more complex after the revelation of Hassan being Amir's half-brother. This context changes everything as Amir starts viewing his father as not so idealistic and in a way, starts despising his father for expecting him to be perfect when Baba himself is not.

The Kite Runner also cleverly intricates the socio-political instability of Afghanistan. The novel starts with the Soviet invasion that fell upon Afghanistan where war, chaos and violence took over the country. The characters in the book are affected with this drastically as they migrate. The book that drapes onto the rise of the Taliban during which oppression of women and lower castes became prevalent.

Throughout the book these real life incidents are shown through the characters' behaviors. When the Soviet invasion took place Amir and Baba had to flee Afghanistan, leaving behind their privileged life in Kabul to face a life full of struggle in America. Hassan and Ali, who were left behind, had to go through the turmoil of rebellions and wars in Afghanistan and eventually meet a tragic end.

Hossieni's way of writing his characters and events is captivating. The metaphor behind the kite fighting competition is very strong. At the beginning the competition represents innocence and childhood as they play with no prejudice as children. It also symbolizes the strong bond between Hassan and Amir as they work together to catch the cut off kite. However, later this kite of innocence takes a dark turn, as the kite fighting competition's outcome becomes traumatizing and channels the characters to adulthood. At the end the competition indicates redemption because when Amir flies kites with Sohrab, he reconnects with his past and gets the courage to find forgiveness and peace for himself.

This amazingly beautiful book by Khaled Hossieni deserves to be read by everyone as it is not just informative but also very poetic. It makes you feel so many emotions like sympathy, grief, sorrow, happiness and peace. It adds a significant brick on your reading career and insights.