

## “Commodification” Of Humans In Hussein’s Novel, The Kite Runner: A Textual Analysis

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### Abstract

*This study intends to analyse the novel The Kite Runner by Khalid Hosseini as per Marxist perspectives. It brings forth and gives reasons for the justification of Marx’s notions on which the study is based on. So as to specify the research study, the researchers have studied the work under the light of one of the key terms from the theory of Marxism that is commodification. The study unearls that through out the life of Hassan, he had been treated as a commodity in the novel, in order to full fill the materialistic needs of bourgeoisie. The value of a commodity can also be decided by the communal influence the commodity accords to its possessor (sign exchange value). At present, in capitalist civilization these behaviours are designated to human and human kinship” (Tyson, 2006) the research enlightens how are servants, women, fathers, and even marriage being attended as commodities to achieve personal profit, political purposes and to restore the honour.*

**Key terms:** Khalid Hosseini, The Kite Runner, Marxism and commodification.

### Introduction

Khaled Hosseini’s roots lies in Afghanistan, being born in Kabul in 1965 (Winkler 2007, p. 3).both his parents were educated, the father used to work with Afghan Foreign Ministry and mother who was associated with teaching history and Farsi in their hometown Kabul. Afterwards the family shifted to Paris from Kabul. They were prepared to come back to Kabul in 1980, however by then Afghanistan had just seen a bleeding attack of the Soviet armed force. They were conceded a refuge in the United States and started their livelihood in California. Khaled Hosseini moved on from secondary school in 1984 and enlisted at Santa Clara University and from there, in 1988 he was conferred upon a degree in biology. The following year in 1993, he got enrolled in the University of California-San Diego's School of Medicine and from there he was awarded with the degree in medical. . While attached to medicine those days, Khaled Hosseini started composing his first novel, The Kite Runner in 2001 and within two years in 2003, The Kite Runner got a wide distribution and turned out to be a global success. The book was distributed in forty eight nations

of the world. His subsequent novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, was distributed in May of 2007. Right now, Hosseini dwells in Northern California.

The novel *The Kite Runner* (2003) recounts a general narrative of family, love, and affinity on the back canvas of history. In Afghanistan, youthful Amir's most punctual recollections of life in Kabul are honoured with a social legacy that qualifies convention, blood ties and a profoundly established social character. In any case, similarly as the novel is antiquated in its portrayal, it is current in its subject — the overwhelming history of Afghanistan in the course of recent years. As genuinely grasping as it is delicate, *The Kite Runner* is a strange and amazing introduction to such a starting creator. The topics of this novel are all inclusive: familial connections, the intensity of penance, the cost of treachery, and the inhumanities of an unbending class framework, the awful real factors of war, or more all, one's procedure of recovery. *The Kite Runner*, an epic story of fathers and children, push us from the last days of Afghanistan's own governments to the brutalities of the Taliban rule.

### **Literature Review**

Commodification is the step of connecting to objects or persons in terms of their exchange value or sign-exchange value". (Tyson, 2006) Utilization of worker as product is particularly common in free enterprise. Bourgeoisie actually holds and control the authority and assets misuses the low class in different structures like surplus work and conflicting length of working day. As stated by Marx length of working day and it is not fixed rather it is dynamic, various and differs in different cases (Marx, Economic manuscript). Middle and working class are taken more work, they are overburdened and are not paid as per their working hours, surplus work remains unpaid.. "A commodity is consequently a peculiar thing, straightforwardly for the reason that in it the communal personality of men's labour come into sight to them as an disinterested character impressed upon the outcome of that labour; because the connection of the manufactures to the sum total of their own work is presented to them as a communal relation, surviving not between themselves, but between the outcomes of their work" (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004). Ill treatment of working class is dramatically analysed by Marx and he has contributed brilliantly in order to revolt against capitalist society. Karl Marx has contributed in the field of economics and in a society as a whole but the most significant thing is that he has worked for human behavior, which can be referred as social psychologist.

According to Marxist notion, a commodity's worth does not lie in its own self or what the commodity itself do, Tyson calls this use value (2006) but in the money or other goods or commodities for which it can be dealt (exchange value) or in the communal or social standard it grants on its holder (sign-exchange value)" (Tyson, 2006). Marx critical appreciations reflects the weakening impacts of capitalism on human conduct and mentality. "The worth of the commodity may also get decided by the communal influence the commodity accords to its possessor (sign exchange value). At present in capitalist civilization these behaviours are designated to human and human kinship" (Tyson, 2006). One person commodify another person when he or she structures his or her relations with that particular person in order to promote his or her extension socially or financially. It depends on the motives of that person who is using man as commodity. "A commodity is, in the initial point is "Spot, a thing outside us, an object that by its characteristics and premises pleases human needs to some extent or some other" (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004). All that these things presently let us know is, that human work power has been used in their creation, that human work is embodied in them. (Marx 48). Manipulation of labour as commodity is frequently running in capitalism. Bourgeoisie the one who use to rule the power resources make full use of and derive benefits in variable forms like surplus labour and variable working hours or fluctuating length of working day. Marx

has illustrated that the length of working day or working hours are not constant rather it changes as per the wish of the capitalist or bourgeoisie (Marx, Economic Manuscript)

### **Research Methodology**

The present study involves qualitative method with textual analysis for probing and analysing the text, which explores ideas and experiences in depth. The Theory of Marxism has been put into practice in order to assess the concept of commodification in the Husseini's novel *The Kite Runner*.

### **Discussion**

In capitalist society, there are recurrent stories of working class being used as a commodity (Fatima, 2016). In the novel *The Kite Runner* (Hosseini, 2003), Hosseini has portrayed vivid picture of class difference in Afghanistan which is allowing capitalists to use their labourers as commodity to gain their own personal benefits from them. After analysis of novel under the umbrella of Marxism, the relationships between Baba and Ali and Amir and Hassan is providing an understanding that how do the capitalists treat their workers for their own purposes? What are the motives of capitalists behind their actions of attending labourers as commodity? And how do labourers are used as objects or commodities to prove their loyalty towards their masters? This research is aimed to answer all these quires in this part of analysis.

#### **Ali: A Commodity for Baba**

Though both Ali and Baba have been grown together, as Hosseini states in Amir's narrative that Baba and Ali used to be companions and playmates as they were together since their childhood (Hosseini p.25), but with an obvious relationship of Pashtun master and Hazara servant. Baba never refers Ali as his good friend since he has used him as a commodity to fulfil his materialistic and sexual need. (Hosseini p.25) The class conflict is summoning capitalist Baba to use Ali as commodity for his own personal benefits. In the novel, after the death of Amir's mother Baba uses Ali his labourer as commodity to develop a sexual relationship with his wife Sanauber. As Amir explains to the father of Soraya (wife of Amir) when he asks him about the identity of Hassan's son Sohrab and Amir narrates the hidden truth that his father Baba, had an illicit relationship with the wife of a servant and the relationship resulted in the birth of a son, who was no one but Hassan (Hosseini p.361). Baba satisfies his sexual desires from Ali's wife, using Ali as a commodity, as he was using him in gaining some personal benefits out of him. Throughout the novel Baba is using him as a vehicle to do all his household chores because Ali belongs to lower class Hazara and Baba's father has given shelter to Ali to live in their house. Due to this this favour Ali is silently working as an object in the mansion of Baba.

Because of social inequality in Afghanistan in between Pashtuns the upper class and Hazaras the lower class, Baba does not give his name to Hassan. To him it is a dishonour sinful act which he has hidden from others and he has Ali as an object to pay all the responsibilities of father to Hassan throughout the plot of the novel. In early chapters of the novel. Baba's attitude towards Ali is that he never calls Ali as his friend. (Hosseini p.25) he is using him as a commodity to achieve domestic comfort. After the rape of Hassan and unbearable conditions of Kabul Ali resolved to move from the house of Baba and wants to go to Hazarajat, at this moment Baba is in search of how to make him convince not to leave Kabul. "Ali, haven't I provided well for you? Haven't I been good to you and Hassan? You're the brother I never had, Ali, you know that. Please don't do this." (Hosseini p.106) Baba changes his attitude and he calls Ali as his brother to buy him and his labour at the worth of blessing Ali all his favours, shelter and money. In this scene, Baba's motive

is to keep Ali as commodity who can labour for him in his house and at the same time Ali will also act as an object to hold hand of Hassan and he will live in same place.

### **Hassan: A Commodity for Amir**

Amir is using Hassan as an object to attain several benefits from his labour. In chapter two, Amir confesses that Hassan will never ever refuse to his orders and he will obey him blindly, “Hassan never wanted to, but if I asked, really asked, he wouldn’t deny me.” (Hosseini p.4) Amir is in need of his own personal profits. Whenever he does mistake, he hides himself behind Hassan and doesn’t struggle to tell truth. For example in their childhood Amir uses Hassan as a shield to protect himself from the disgrace as he gives ideas to Hassan “like shooting walnuts at the neighbour’s dog”, (Hosseini p.4) As Marx states, there is a physical relation between physical things. But it is different with commodities. (Das Kapital) the same case is with Amir who is taking Hassan’s labour not the purpose of economic stability but for the purpose of defencing himself, throughout the novel it can be analysed that Amir is unable to stand for himself in front of any one. Baba shows his disappointment about Amir to Rahim khan in chapter number four and both begin with a conversation, "Self-defence has nothing to do with meanness. You know what always happens when the neighbourhood boys tease him? Hassan steps in and fends them off. I've seen it with my own eyes. And when they come home, I say to him, 'How did Hassan get that scrape on his face?' And he says, 'He fell down.' I'm telling you, Rahim, there is something missing in that boy." (Hosseini p.22)

Amir uses Hassan his servant to fight with others for him. The motive of Amir behind spending time with Hassan is a practical approach towards his education and towards his writing skills. He used to shook him off from his sleep and provide him chance of listening a story. (Hosseini p.32) He commodifies Hassan to listen what he wants to allow him to listen and Hassan deliberately shook his head in order to show his loyalty to Amir. “I would read to Hassan” (Hosseini p.28) when Amir comes to know that Hassan has an expertise in the analysis of the things he ceases to narrate. Despite being illiterate and utterly uneducated Hassan used to be fascinated with words tempted by the world he was not allowed to enter in reality. Amir used to read aloud poems which he used to comprehend far better than Amir even he was so strong in solving riddles about which Amir did not have a clue (Hosseini p.28) Amir objectifies Hassan throughout his childhood in different contexts for several benefits even he teases him to uncover Hassan’s illiteracy. Hosseini states that Amir’s favourite part of reading to poor Hassan comes when they come across a really difficult word about which Hassan did not have any idea, Amir used to enjoy that moment via exposing Hassan’s ignorance (Hosseini p.28)

### **Hassan: A Commodity to Win Baba**

Hassan is used as a commodity to win Baba’s love and approval for Amir. Amir objectifies Hassan to win Baba’s heart and his affection. Amir is suffering from ambivalence, he does not stop Aseef to rape Hassan. “I watched Hassan get raped” (Hosseini p.86) Pashtuns the capitalists are aware of the Hazaras’ the lower class people’s suffering is discriminatory. Amir silently watched the rape scene of Hasan and all the brutalities inflicted upon Hasan. For him rescuing or intruding can call anything, his own rape or the loss of that blue kite that Hasan had run for Amir and in the loss of the kite Amir would have lost the opportunity to win and receive his Baba’s affection and love. As Amir stated that Hassan was the lamb which he had to sacrifice or Hassan was the object with which he exchange baba’s love (Hosseini 77). To Amir everyone has to pay a price for everything, Hassan is a price and a commodity which he has to pay to buy Baba’s love. He forgets each and everything the terrible scene of rape when Baba embraces him. Hosseini states

that Baba as proudly wrapped his arms around Amir, he got lost in his father's embrace and became oblivion of what Hassan had to go through (Hosseini p.79).

### **Woman: A Commodity**

Hosseini has represented the commodification of women in the history of Afghanistan on the basis of their class to which they belong. By alluding it, Amir reads his mothers' book in which the upper class treat women as an object to achieve economic benefits. The upper class Pashtun of Afghanistan use women as mean to earn money. Amir reads from the book that Pashtuns had assassinated Hazaras, set their homes on fire and mercilessly traded and sold their women (Hosseini p.9). Since nineteenth century till today, Hosseini's motherland is unwelcoming for women who are from lower class. Hosseini's narrative under Marxist lens provide a rich history and happenings encompassed over a quarter portion of a whole century (Library Journal)

### **Fathers: A Commodity**

The Kite Runner (Hosseini, 2003) is representing political conflict which has direct influence on the lives of common people who are from lower class. The war between Russia and Taliban has very worse consequences in the end, many persons who are fathers are used as commodity in Afghanistan to fight as worriers in war and they have sacrificed their lives to serve the capitalist of Afghanistan. This trauma results in the distortion of innocent children who are sent to orphanage as Taliban do not allow their mothers to work in order to feed them. "But they're not all yateem. Many of them have lost their fathers in the war, and their mothers can't feed them because the Taliban don't allow them to work" (Hosseini P.253). The commodification of male during war has pessimistic impacts on families of adult male worriers, who have suffered a lot. As Hosseini states in the narrative that war is the reason behind commodification of fathers in Afghanistan (Hosseini p.245). Here the Taliban are mean as they do not care about the lower class and they are deriving their own political and social benefits from them.

### **Marriage: As a Commodity**

The relationship between Ali and Sanaubar is not admired in the novel. She never respected him or honoured him rather she would not leave any chance to mock at him. She used to ask is he a husband? A donkey is better than him (Hosseini p.10). Their married life is based on some sorts of agreements between Ali and his uncle, Sanaubar's father. Here marriage is used as an object to restore the honour and for sake of personal profits. It was believed that the reason behind Ali's marriage to Sanouber was that he was intended to maintain or restore the lost honour of his uncle as his daughter had brought defame and dishonour to him, Ali was an utterly poor man as he was an orphan and had no property or money (Hosseini p.10) though Ali is nineteen years older than his wife Sanaubar, she was young, beautiful, seductive and had a bad reputation owing to her licentious and immodest attitude (Hosseini p.8) yet his uncle gives approval of marriage so that the sins of his daughters get a covering of marriage and he may earn a repute of a father of a happily married daughter, he has used marriage as commodity to regain pride or worldly honour.

### **Conclusion**

The study unsnarls characters like Baba and Amir who throughout the narrative used humans their servants in their functional terms. They used men as an object or commodity to achieve their own goals and personal

benefits whether those were related to socioeconomic profits or sexual desires from proletariats. According to Marxism in capitalist society usage of man as commodity is prevalent, the same circumstances are observed and dig out from the novel. As Baba has commodified Ali his servant who is working in his house in order to fulfil his sexual desires from wife of Ali. Hassan is commodity to Amir. Amir does not care about the feelings and emotions of Hassan but he uses him as a lamb to sacrifice as he believes nothing social is free in this world. To Amir, Hassan is an object to find a place in the heart of Baba. He uses Hassan whenever he needs someone who listens to his stories and cherishes him for his literary creations. By examining carefully it is justified that marriage is used as a commodity to restore honour and to achieve economic stability as Sanaubar's uncle has chosen Ali as her life partner to reinstate respect. At the same Ali is an orphan with no possession in heredity so he has possessed some economic stability after marrying Sanaubar. There are many perspectives regarding to the commodification of male gender, more specifically the research enlightens usage of fathers as a commodity in political conflicts in order to fight. This imposition of fight results in increment of orphans who are further treated unfairly. The upper class attended women as commodity to sell to earn economic profits.

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