

Paradoxical Significance of Living in the New Promised Land in Khalid Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*: A Place to Bury or Mourn Memories?

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Abstract

This paper explores in what way forced migration experienced by the two male characters in Khalid Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003), Amir and his father, Baba, shape their respective view of the American dream which is perceived to be closely related to personal freedom. This personal freedom materialises in peaceful living and prosperity, especially individual rights to accumulate wealth. However, along the course of their life in the new land, both Amir and Baba, have their own individual dream to achieve, emerging from different individual point of views. The different dreams, originating from the ideology each of the characters holds, are formed by how each of them value their homeland, root culture and the sentimental memories they evoke. All the bitterness, contentment, obscurities, regrets, glories and happiness they experienced in their homeland are intermingled in the process of each character's construction of ideology. To analyse the point at issue, Marxist criticism and postcolonial theory will serve as the basis of analysis. Marxist criticism is employed since it views the American dream as a construct of capitalism. Postcolonial theory specifically related to forced migration in the form of refugees is employed as the two male characters are forced to leave Afghanistan due to the civil war. The two contrasting, ideologically based views of each character, diverged in some ways yet converging in others, amalgamate somehow in their father-and-son relationship, both in their roles as refugees pursuing their better lives and as ordinary human beings.

Keywords

Khalid Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*, American dream, Marxist criticism, postcolonial theory, Afghanistan

Introduction

As refugees bring along with them their root cultures, they strive to adapt to

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the new western culture they currently live in. They cannot just put aside their cultures, as these inherently define their identities and individualities. Edward Said (374) proposes that the “western culture is in large part the work of exiles, émigrés, and refugees” signifying that the amalgamation of migrants’ cultures has shaped those of the western countries.

This amalgamated culture has inspired writers to produce “refugee literature” (Gallien 721) which emphasises the interrogation of “uprootedness and extraterritoriality” (Gallien 722) faced by their characters. Written for American readers, *The Kite Runner*, a best-selling work written by Khaled Hosseini, presents the story of the life in Afghanistan before the coming of the Taliban and the catastrophic civil war that followed. The novel presents “more than just an attempt to understand Middle Eastern life” (Brodt 5), as “Hosseini inserts his personal experience as a child in Afghanistan to provide an understanding of culture and customs to Western audiences” (Brodt 5). The novel is also notable for being “the very first novel by an Afghan” (Noor 148) written in English and it describes the fact that “Afghanistan has been plagued with socio-political wars” (Rabbani and Chaudhury 26) that have caused the forced migration of its people to other countries.

The Kite Runner focuses on “the friendship of two Afghan boys, the brutal interruption of that relationship, and the eventual redemption of the protagonist” (Edwards 1). Amir, the narrator, is the only child of a wealthy man, Baba, while Hassan is the only child of their servant, Ali, but, as we come to know later, also Amir’s half-brother. Amir is a Pashtun, the principal ethnic group in Afghanistan, while Hassan is a Hazara, the underprivileged ethnic group. Despite their different social status and cultural background, they grew up as close friends. Up to this point, *The Kite Runner* seems “only to activate the desire to overcome or elude partisan, ethnic, religious and national divisions” (Aubry 26). The complexity arises when Amir fails to defend Hassan from being raped by Assef, another childhood friend, and tries to get rid of him from the house instead, because of his own “shame in his cowardice” (Inayatullah 333). The guilt Amir feels towards Hassan is carried on until he moves to America with his father. At the peak of his life, where he achieves the dreams that he has pursued as an immigrant – having a loving wife, a bright career as a writer, a big house in California – Amir has a chance to redeem himself for what he has done to Hassan.

The Kite Runner offers its readers to view the friendship between Amir and Hassan from many angles: the ideology presented, and the complicated life of Baba, Amir’s father, and his relationship with his sons, Amir and Hassan. The three aspects of the novel are intertwined in the entire plot. This article focuses particularly on the conflicting views between Baba and Amir as father and son in viewing their new lives in the promised land of America. The article also

highlights the struggle Baba and Amir face in defining their new life and how they elucidate the meaning of the American dream in their individual contexts.

Refugees: Between Being Part of Material Capitalism and Quest for a Better Life

As a new migrant, a refugee aims for a better place to live. Ordinarily, refugees leave their homeland because of the conflicts happening either internally within the country or with other foreign parties which causes the domestic condition to become unbearable to live in. Said defines refugees as “a creation of the twentieth-century state” (387) due to the eruption of many civil wars and conflicts involving several countries which resulted in the devastation of the affected countries. The residents of these countries consequently have to act as “large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance” (Said 387). As refugees, they have to find a way to escape from their devastated lands and look for shelters elsewhere and hope for redefining their future. Most of the refugees find themselves gravitating towards developed countries, especially the western countries. The prosperity of these countries offers perceptions of sanctuary and security, politically and economically.

Besides looking for a safer place to live, refugees are hopeful of having a more prosperous and comfortable life. As a developed country, America seems to provide comfort to all immigrants as they have “a government program to help the poor” (Tyson 57). It seems that many refugees are confident that the American government will give them support and provide a kind of subsidy that would enable them to live a “decent” life in an alien place. Thus, they are convinced that they can start over their lives as immigrants who would eventually live prosperously like other successful and wealthy Americans.

As the refugees arrive and become part of America, they start to believe in the American dream – the dream “which tells them that financial success is simply the product of initiative and hard work” (Tyson 57). Accordingly, they are willing to work hard regardless of the jobs they could get. They never consider that the individual will for a prosperous and wealthy life is part of the “capitalist relations of production” (Daring 81), an element that may occlude their success. This American dream has been embraced by Baba with all the wealth he has amassed in Afghanistan as a successful businessman. The American dream personifies in the form of driving a Mustang, smoking cigars and watching American movies. The American dream also manifests in Amir’s recollection of his homeland, Afghanistan, where he “discusses soccer, not football, and recalls trips to the cinema in Iran to watch westerns like *Rio Bravo*, starring America’s hero, John Wayne” (Butler 157). Both Baba and Amir seem

to have dreamt of the American dream long before their forced migration to America.

In the context of Marxism, it is revealed that the “American dream is an ideology, a belief system, not an innate or natural way of seeing the world” (Tyson 58). It is something people living in America hold on tightly to achieve the comfortable lives they perceive the country promises them. However, as an ideology that supports “the socioeconomic inequities of capitalist countries... the American dream blinds us to the enormities of its own failure” (Tyson 58). To gain the wealth everybody dreams of, America has gone through some dark historical moments, such as the genocide of the Native Americans, enslavements, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, and the unequal rights for women and people of colour. The lives of the immigrants in America are accordingly not trouble-free and effortless as they have to confront the complicated situations in the country. In the case of Baba, he faces difficulties like other refugees who occasionally feel “they do not belong to the country... due to the different language, culture and tradition” (Prasati and Suarcaya 498). Baba works hard in a gas station irrespective of the fact that he was once a very wealthy merchant in Afghanistan. He strives to do this blue-collar job as he has something to achieve: to give his son, Amir, an “American or western ideal of happiness” (Jefferess 392) and lives comfortably in the new promised land.

As part of postcolonialism, refugees experience living in an “unhomely world” (Bhabha 18). This feeling might be prompted by things evoking their memories about their home countries. They have to live in between the memories of the home country and the motivation for a better life in a new one. This fluctuation between two lives is experienced by immigrants as soon as they step out of their homeland. happens as refugees leave their home. Because of the disasters in their homeland, refugees become part of “economically enforced dispersal” (Parry 73), as they have to move to the new host country to survive and to remake their lives free from threats and limitations (Farrier 6). In *The Kite Runner*, although Baba and Amir embrace “the longevity of American exceptionalism and particularly the economic dimension of exceptionalism,” they are, at the same time, “unwilling to sever cultural connections with the homeland” (Madsen 215), and this results in identity negotiation or even rejection. Of this postcolonial feeling, both Baba and Amir share the same experience. Baba feels the longing for Hassan’s existence in America, especially to share the new happiness. Likewise, Amir feels there is a big hole in his heart with the recollections of kite competition, kite flying, kite running and most importantly, for Hassan, being the champion of the kite runners. This big hole is felt amidst his self-assurance that moving to America would bury his guilt for what he did to Hassan. *The Kite Runner* seems to present a collage as “one discerns the pattern about the

juxtaposition” (Raza 99), particularly the feelings Amir conceals towards his best friend, Hassan. As a migrant in America, Amir seems “to go through the motions of a successful integration into Western society” (O’Brien 8), but is actually incapable of leaving his past behind. This past concerns Hassan and Amir’s wrongdoings arising from his cowardice.

Despite the different approaches involved, the condition of postcolonialism is somewhat interrelated with Marxism. The identity contestation experienced by refugees cannot easily “be divorced from... the imbalances of global political economy” (Bartolovich 12). The refugees have to endure the cultural differences when trying to start a new life in a new and more prosperous land. At the same time, they have to reconcile themselves to “a polarisation and abstraction of economic life” (Eagleton 22) in the host country and tolerate the plain truth that they are part of a second-class society. The refugees endeavour not to make these two elements hinder their attempt to achieve their so-called “American dream” and live in a nation where its people “are free to develop singularities into health, prosperity and some measure of happiness in self-development and personal achievement” (Bloom xv).

Surviving or Embracing America?

Long before fleeing Afghanistan, Baba had lived the American way of life, as described by Hosseini:

Then, Baba and I drove off in his black Ford Mustang – a car that drew envious looks everywhere because it was the same car Steve McQueen had driven in *Bullitt*, a film that played in one theater for six months. (48)

He loves to watch American movies and drives the Mustang. He also smokes cigars and drinks in his private bar. When Afghanistan turns into a catastrophe, Baba and Amir leave all the wealth behind and fly to America, the dreamland. Amir, as a child and minor, simply follows his father to start a new life in a new country. For Baba, fleeing Kabul – his hometown, his roots, his life – is indescribable. As a father, Baba could only think of the future his son might have after Kabul turns into a war zone. He looks for a place which can offer, and even guarantees, a better future than what Kabul can do for his son. America is the place where Baba entrusts to raise his son in a better and more acceptable way. He also believes that Americans are among the best people in the world, as he says:

‘There are only three real men in this world, Amir,’ he’d say. He’d count them off on his fingers: America the brash saviour, Britain and Israel. ‘The rest of them’ – he used to wave his hand and make a *phbt* sound – ‘they’re like gossiping old women.’ (161)

Although the way he praises Americans is somewhat satiric, Baba acknowledges that they are the people he admires. Despite his judgement that Americans are arrogant, he sees them as saviours. Baba's admiration for the Americans seems to be one of the reasons he considers America as a land to start a new life. For an established and mature man like Baba, living a new life in a new country of which the cultural and social backgrounds are different from his own is a difficult undertaking. Yet, he believes in America, a country he trusts will grant his wish for Amir to have a better future, a country that will serve as his saviour.

For Baba, America is a temporary shelter. Thus, he does not even adjust his life according to the ways ordinary Americans live. He frequently faces constraints, especially when interacting with his neighbours with his lack of English competence and his new identity as a refugee who has to live on meal coupons. Baba feels irritated when a shopkeeper whom he thought has embarrassed him in front of other people by asking for his license for the cheque payment he made. For Baba, shopping builds trust as a result of being a frequent shopper in the store. However, he is still asked to show his ID to verify his cheque. In the world of capitalism, valid information is a potential economic capital. In Baba's old world, his name was valid enough as a guarantee for everything he bought. He was allowed to pay them at the end of the month without the necessity of showing his ID. In the world of capitalism, a personal relationship cannot be used as a guarantee for business transaction. This is evident in Amir's narration of his father:

I wanted to tell them that, in Kabul, we snapped a tree branch and used it as a credit card. Hassan and I would take a wooden stick to the bread maker. He'd carve notches on our stick with his knife, one notch for each loaf of *naan* he'd pull for us from the *tandoor's* roaring flames. At the end of the month, my father paid him for the number of notches on the stick. That was it. No questions. No ID. (164)

Baba also refuses to improve his English. He does not want to attend ESL classes enrolled for him by Amir. Baba's remark is bitter about his escape from the ESL course, as Amir explains:

For two years, I tried to get Baba to enrol in ESL classes to improve his broken English. But he scoffed at the idea. 'Maybe I'll spell "cat" and the teacher will give me a glittery little star so I can run home and show it off to you,' he'd grumble. (126-27)

On one occasion, Baba feels insulted when he has to take a lunch coupon as a refugee in America. Baba returns the coupon because he feels he was

downgraded socially. As a human being, his value is only worth a lunch coupon. He considers himself able to work and earn a living. Amir describes this turning-point in his father as follows:

And that was how Baba ended those humiliating food stamp moments at the cash register and alleviated one of his greatest fears: that an Afghan would see him buying food with charity money. Baba walked out of the welfare office like a man cured of a tumour. (131)

Understanding the culture and how one treats the other bothers him. Despite working hard in the new land, Baba's heart and mind are still in Afghanistan. His mind still lingers in Afghanistan, a place where everyone trusted him. However, coming back to Afghanistan is impossible as the country is no longer conducive for Baba and Amir to live in. They first flee to Peshawar, a city in Pakistan, located close to the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Because of its closeness, Peshawar seems to be the best place for Baba to find shelter. However, the comfort of living in Peshawar is not adequate for them, so Baba decides to flee to America in search of a better life there, especially for his son, Amir:

'Maybe we should go back to Peshawar,' I said...

...

'You were happier there, Baba. It was more like home,' I said.

'Peshawar was good for me. Not good for you.' (165)

Baba admits that living in Peshawar was better for him. After all, Peshawar life still resembled Afghanistan.

Despite Baba's disinterest in immersing himself into American life, he still believes in what the American dream has to offer. It is because he had somewhat embraced this American dream while he was still living in Afghanistan. In fact, he once lived the American dream with an Afghan flavour. In his homeland, Baba was a man of dignity. He was somebody there. He was the Shah's Ring 1 community member. In America, he is a nobody. America only recognises him as a human being with only the human capital potential, and no financial capital and skills. Therefore, he has access only to the lowest possible job, as a blue-collar worker. In the very land of America, Baba is faced against the real manifestation of the American dream. The dream does sound and feel beautiful from a distance like the mighty roars of a V8 Mustang motor car. Yet in reality, to achieve it, people have to work hard, much harder than Baba could ever imagine.

Just one month after we arrived in the U.S., Baba found a job off Washington Boulevard as an assistant at a gas station owned by an Afghan

acquaintance – he'd started looking for the work the same week we arrived. Six days a week, Baba pulled twelve-hour shifts pumping gas, running the register, changing oil, and washing windshields. I'd bring him lunch sometimes and find him looking for a pack of cigarettes on the shelves, a customer waiting on the other side of the oil-stained counter, Baba's face drawn and pale under the bright fluorescent lights. The electronic bell over the door would *ding-dong* when I walked in, and Baba would look over his shoulder, wave, and smile, his eyes watering from fatigue. (166)

The hardship can be described only when one experiences it. The hardship keeps Baba away from the social life he used to lead. He becomes a lonely person. After working for hours, what is left in him is the overwhelming exhaustion which soon requires him to rest. The dream under the folds of Capitalism makes him an isolated person in the sense that he is not able anymore to enjoy his time with friends, drinking while chitchatting. Only in celebrating Amir's graduation, Baba goes to a bar and drinks with some foreigners he does not know. They are friends in the bar and he becomes a lonely individual again after the bar hours.

Amir, on the other hand, has a different view from his father concerning the dream he wants to attain in America. He defines clearly what he wants to be in the future as an immigrant. To reach an American dream requires persistence and hard work. Amir has this quality. He shows his father, Baba, his persistence on his decision for his university major – a choice completely different from what Baba expects:

'Oh,' he said. '*Wahwah!* So, if I understand, you'll study several years to earn a degree, then you'll get a *chatti* job like mine, one you could just as easily land today, on the small chance that your degree might someday help you get... discovered.' He took a deep breath and sipped his tea. Grunted something about medical school, law school, and 'real work.' (171)

A father-and-son debate begins when Amir informs his father that he wants to study creative writing. For a person from an older generation, Baba prefers Amir to study medicine or law – schools which guarantee brighter future for their graduates. Baba wants Amir to embrace his own American dream by becoming a doctor or a lawyer. A writer, for Baba, is not a real job. It is rare for a writer to be able to live wealthy. Wealth is defined as the ability to accumulate capital, both economically and socially. As a father, Baba wants Amir to achieve what Baba did in Afghanistan where he had both wealth and respect from the Afghan people. With his wealth, Baba could buy people. He could buy Ali, the family assistant, and make Ali the father of his own biological son, Hassan, for the sake of keeping his scandal a secret and

maintain his status and reputation as a wealthy and respectable man in Kabul. With the respect Baba earned with his power and wealth, made his life complete. This respect has its “sign-exchange value” (Tyson 62) in Marxist term that the ordinary cannot buy. This respect placed Baba and his family in the highest social strata in Kabul and gave Baba access to the inner circle of Afghan power. This is what Baba wants Amir to achieve in America.

Amir, however, is fully aware of his decision to major in creative writing. He fully understands that his future job as a writer will bring him not only fame and respect but also wealth and prosperity. He is fully aware that what his father considers as “an odd job” will eventually turn him into a respectable and affluent man. Amir eventually achieved his American dream:

I had a good life in California, a pretty Victorian home with a peaked roof, a good marriage, a promising writing career, in-laws who loved me. I didn't need any of this shit. (271)

His Victorian home symbolises the American dream he finally embraces – the dream everyone has when migrating to America. The gable roof signifies his success as a writer. He has proven to his father that his choice to be a writer is the best choice. Amir considers his life to be a perfect life as he lives a happy life with his family. The dream to have a better life is achieved, the comfortable life as he defined early in his life. He eventually has the American dream in his arms: a job with decent earnings to guarantee security, a big house enough to shelter a wife and children and comfortable surroundings to live in.

America is not merely a dream Amir embraces when living a successful life as a writer. America is a place where his new beginning emerges. However, the meaning of America needs to be further defined for both Amir and Baba, as there are some unfinished and undisclosed matters in Afghanistan, which they have brought along when they flee to America. These matters affect their views and definitions of America as the promised land.

The Dream Land: A Place to Bury or Mourn Memories?

The American dream is what Amir had dreamt of when leaving Afghanistan. Yet, the eventual reality is not always as good. Even though Amir eventually achieves the American dream in his own way, there is a hollow place in his marriage, as Amir and his wife, Soraya, are incapable of having a child. This is the flaw in Amir's version of the American ideal life. His endless guilty feeling towards his best friend, Hassan, which started years back in Kabul makes the flaw more apparent, at least in his eyes and conscience.

For both Amir and Baba, the American dream is their life voyage and America is the place where meaning needs redefining. They want to achieve what the American dream has promised them since they were in their

homeland. In their quest to pursue their American ideal of happiness, they, at the same time, struggle to signify the meaning of the dream land to each of them. The dream land seems to be a promising new place to obtain a good life. At the same time, the land functions as a hideout for the secret they have tried to conceal their entire life.

Many people prefer to lock up their life secrets because they do not want to lose face. Both Baba and Amir experience this. As father and son, they have their own secret they are unwilling to share. The secrecy evolves around the same subject, Hassan the Hazara. Hassan is also the catalyst for Amir and Baba in signifying the meaning of America. A thin layer of invisible film borders the lives of Baba and Amir because of Hassan. On the one hand, Amir always felt jealous when his father, Baba, treated Hassan equally sometimes even more than him. On the other hand, Baba felt confused when Hassan admitted he stole Amir's watch. This resulted in Hassan and his father leaving Baba's compound.

“Life here is impossible for us now, Agra sahib. We're leaving.” ...

...

“I don't care about the money or the watch,” Baba said, his arms open, palms up. “I don't understand why you're doing this... what do you mean 'impossible'?”

“I'm sorry, Agra sahib, but our bags are already packed. We have made our decision.”

Baba stood up, a sheen of grief across his face. “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” (139-140).

Baba was devastated by Hassan and Ali's departure, but Amir found immense relief in it. His secret of being a coward would be gone with Hassan's departure. However, the secret did not go away. It lives on in Amir even in the new land as a big remorse in his moral sense.

Baba spends his old life in nostalgic memories of his past life in Afghanistan. His mind has in fact never progressed following his big step of fleeing to America. All of the sentimental remembrance continuously fills his mind.

... Baba was like the widower who remarries but can't let go of his dead wife. 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 (165).

Recollections of the homeland and moments of closeness with his friends and relatives were alive in his mind. He has only physically left his disastrous homeland to a new land that might have granted his wish to have a better life for the sake of his son. However, he has never psychologically and spiritually left, not even an inch. He never tries to bury the memories of Afghanistan. If he had a choice, he would have never left Kabul, his home. He values every single reminiscence of his root, his ancestors and his indigenous culture.

Such sentimental memories seem to be only a mask for the real story in Baba's life. Hassan whom Amir considers to be his assistant is actually his half-brother. Baba has a stake in the birth of Hassan. This was covered up to avoid Baba's losing his face in the community. This sinful deed is unforgiven, even worse, because Hassan's mother is a Hazara. This confidential story is later disclosed by Rahim Khan, a close friend of Baba, to Amir.

“Ali was sterile,” Rahim Khan said.

“No he wasn't. He and Sanaubar had Hassan, didn't they? They had Hassan-“

“No they didn't,” Rahim Khan said.

“Yes they did!”

“No they didn't, Amir.”

“Then who – “

“I think you know who” (271-272).

Hassan appears to be the reason why Baba's heart remains in Kabul. Their flight to America would have been perfect had Hassan been with them. Baba's sufferings become worse because he has no one to talk in America. His language proficiency is a hindrance when communicating with others in the land of dream. He feels guilty even more because Hassan is left to live in misery. Baba does not seem to have the courage to tell Amir the truth. He might not be able to bear the consequence if Amir reacts negatively. Amir is the only valuable belonging for Baba in America. He cannot bear to lose both his sons. With all the potential consequences he might face, Baba chooses to bury his Afghan past in America. He brings all his past to his grave.

For Amir, Baba is the perfect father. He never knew the secret hidden neatly by his father when he was still alive. He has never understood why Baba is so keen to buy Hassan gifts and go on trips together. Amir also thinks that it is strange when Baba insisted on having Hassan's harelip operated and Baba feeling so joyous after the successful surgery. He feels jealous when Baba praises Hassan more than him. However, all these did not cause Amir to behave negatively towards Hassan. Amir's secret began when Hassan was sexually harassed by Assef. Amir witnessed it all but did not take any action to save Hassan from Assef's misdeed. Instead, he ran away.

I was grateful for the early-evening shadows that fell on Hassan's face and concealed mine. I was glad I didn't have to return his gaze. Did he know I knew? And if he knew, then what would I see if he *did* look in his eyes? Blame? Indignation? Or, God forbid, what I feared most: guileless devotion? That, most of all, I couldn't bear to see.

... I thought he might burst into tears, but, to my relief, he didn't, and I pretended I hadn't heard the crack in his voice. Just like I pretended I hadn't seen the dark stain in the seat of his pants. Or those tiny drops that fell from between his legs and stained the snow black. (107)

Amir feels guilty and his guilt becomes unbearable because he is aware Hassan knows he let the incident happen. For this reason, Amir could not face Hassan. Despite his suffering, Hassan has no intention of taking revenge on Amir. Hassan even hides the incident from his father, let alone Baba. Instead of apologising to Hassan, Amir decides to kick Hassan out of his house. Amir hatches a plan that later proves successful in ridding Hassan and his father, Ali, from the house. Of this, Baba never knows. Only Amir and the heaven knew, and later Rahim Khan:

Rahim Khan said I'd always been too hard on myself. But I wondered. True, I hadn't made Ali step on the land mine, and I hadn't brought Taliban to the house to shoot Hassan. But I had driven Hassan and Ali out of the house... (276)

The day Amir executed his plan was the day when he killed his own conscience, metaphorically. He might not have caused any physical injuries to Hassan but he actually had paralysed his own mind and his empathy. At the same time, he extinguished Hassan's flame of life, as Hassan always loved and respected Amir as his master. All this guilt Amir feels is something he wants to flush out of his life. This remorse has been brought a long way to America, ironically, a place Amir thinks is the best to let it all go in genuine repentance.

This lifetime scar is brought along with Amir as he flees to America. Despite all the joys of growing up he shared with Hassan, only the latter's sufferings dwell in Amir's mind: Hassan's helpless moaning beneath Assef and blood staining Hassan's shorts and flowing down his leg. These images accompany Amir to America. Amir can run away from Hassan but not from his own guilty conscience. The guilty conscience feels even more bitter every time Baba expresses his feelings of missing Hassan. Amir eventually lives with it and mourns his guilt every day. It is after he receives a letter from Rahim Khan that Amir has the chance to know the whole story, to forgive Baba and himself. Amir has to travel such a long way to honestly admit who he is and it takes him years to be able to pay for his guilt for Hassan's sake and more importantly for his own sake to reconcile with his past. America makes him

mourn his past guilt and yet America provides him a chance to pay for his past debt.

Conclusion

Living as displaced individuals, Baba and Amir have their own way of defining the importance of the new promised land in each of their lives. For an experienced man like Baba, who was a prosperous merchant in Afghanistan, the new land is viewed as a mere place for his son's future. He can reconcile himself to the reality that as a refugee he can work only as an unskilled worker. He disregards his once affluent and respected position in Afghanistan when fleeing to America. For a young and aspiring man like Amir, however, there is an apparent and indubitable excitement of living in a new and more open-minded environment. Amir wants to reach his highest dream any man can reach in the country famous for its "American dream." Amir gains this momentum as he becomes a successful writer in America, a profession that is neither economically nor socially acknowledged by the Afghan society. Over and above all that, it is America that finally enters Baba's body along with all his secrecy he tried to hide throughout his life. On the other hand, America, in Amir's eyes, is a place where he can start over and be a better man. Even though America is a place where Amir cannot deny the ceaseless remorse for his wrongdoing against Hassan, the new dreamland is the point of departure for Amir to start over and make amends for what he did in the past in Afghanistan.

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