



## Symbolic Images in the Novel *The Kite Runner*

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**Abstract:** This article explores the artistic elements that contribute to the unique qualities of literary works, focusing on the novels of Afghan-American writer Khaled Hosseini. Unlike traditional artistic approaches, Hosseini's style incorporates symbols, details, and metaphors as the primary drivers of narrative development in works such as "The Kite Runner," "A Thousand Splendid Suns," and "And the Mountains Echoed." The article delves into the symbolic significance of key elements, such as kites, wind, and a pomegranate tree, unraveling their multifaceted meanings in the context of friendship, betrayal, guilt, redemption, and cultural identity. Through a detailed analysis, the article underscores how these symbolic elements contribute to the depth and emotional resonance of the novels, weaving together themes that explore the complexities of human relationships and the enduring impact of one's actions on personal and familial legacies.

**Keywords:** symbol, portrait, landscape, metaphor, nostalgia, motive, fate, culture, freedom, cleaning, bestseller, detail

### 1. Introduction

There are many elements that make any work of art artistic. For example, artistic image, landscape, portrait, spiritual world of a character, symbol, metaphor. If we count them, we will have to use a lot of pencil to write. Each writer approaches the elements that make his work artistic in his own way. In the novels of Abdulla Qadiri, the portrait (outer appearance of the images) [1] gives the work a special artistry. As soon as one read the portrait of Kumush and Atabek, Uzbekoyim and Yusufbek, Hamid, they will be embodied before the reader's eyes [2]. The landscape in Cholpon's lyrical and epic works soothes the reader. As one read the image of the field and the sky following the girls on their way to Yoyilmasoy, the reader will involuntarily appear with them in the bosom of nature [3]. In our modern novels, mental analysis is the leading role in the novels of Ulugbek Hamdam, and joining those heroes, one will begin to analyze his/her own psyche [4]. In some works, "the details speak for themselves" [5].

In the novels of Afghan-American writer Khaled Hosseini, the style is completely different. They mainly include symbols, details, metaphors. Symbols and metaphors are the main drivers of the development of events in the works *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* [6], and *And the Mountains Echoed* [7], which became "best-selling" novels in world literature.

### 2. Method

This study employs a thematic analysis to explore the symbolic imagery in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. Beginning with a close reading of the text, we meticulously identify recurring motifs and vivid imagery that carry thematic weight. Through this process, we decode the layers of meaning embedded within each symbol, from the soaring kites symbolizing hope to the haunting scars representing guilt.

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Our approach extends beyond the text itself, drawing upon scholarly sources to enrich our interpretation. By synthesizing insights from literary critiques and academic discourse, we deepen our understanding of the novel's symbolic complexity.

Through this rigorous methodology, our study aims to shed new light on the power of symbolism in literature and its profound impact on readers. By unraveling the thematic threads woven throughout *The Kite Runner*, we offer fresh insights into Hosseini's narrative and its enduring resonance.

### 3. Results and Discussion

In the novel *The Kite Runner*, a sheet, a wind, a notepad, and a rolling pin are also symbols of a certain thing. The title of the work also has its own symbolism. The work was presented to Uzbek readers under the name *Running After the Wind*, and the original word-for-word translation gives the name *The Kite Runner*. There is symbolism in both translations.

#### 3.1. Symbolism of kite

Khaled Hosseini titled his novel *The Kite Runner* for several reasons, and the title carries symbolic and thematic significance throughout the story.

The kite serves as an important symbol in the novel, representing a number of themes such as friendship, betrayal, and purification of the soul from the sins of the past. Fighting kite and kite is a central element of Amir and Hasan's childhood, symbolizing their connection and the freedom they find in the sky. As a way of chasing down and catching fallen leaves, the scrolls become a metaphor for the characters' dreams, cleansing, and healing [8].

- 1) **A symbol of spiritual cleansing:** The title can also be seen as a symbol of the main character Amir's journey towards redemption from the pain of the past. Amir's guilt and remorse for betraying his childhood friend Hasan haunts him throughout the story. Toward the end of the novel, Amir's kite seeks to "fly," a metaphorical attempt to redeem himself for his past mistakes.
- 2) **Cultural symbol:** the kite is a traditional Afghan game with cultural and historical significance in Afghanistan. The novel is set against the backdrop of a changing Afghanistan, and the title serves to ground the story in the country's cultural and social context.
- 3) **Nostalgia for childhood and the past:** the title of the novel reflects the nostalgia associated with the loss of childhood and innocence. The kite flying was a childhood hobby for Amir and Hasan and the name evokes memories and emotions of that time.
- 4) **Friendship and brotherhood:** Amir and Hasan are the two central characters in the novel *The Kite Runner* is a symbol of deep and strong friendship between them. Their shared love of flying and hang gliding is a reflection of their strong bond and friendship. Fighting with kites becomes a way for them to strengthen their relationship.
- 5) **Betrayal and guilt:** As the story progresses, the leaves also represent betrayal and guilt. Amir's failure to protect Hasan during the kite competition and later betraying him by accusing him of theft is related to the kite battle incident. The sheets, once a symbol of their unity, now represent Amir's betrayal and the guilt he carries.
- 6) **Return:** In the final part of the novel, the scrolls take on a new symbolic meaning related to redemption and spiritual cleansing. Amir's pursuit of the last blue card of the tournament for Sukhrab represents his attempt to make up for the mistakes he made against Hasan. This action becomes a symbol of Amir's quest for salvation and his desire to heal the wounds of his past.

- 7) **Freedom and escape:** Kites also represent a sense of freedom and an escape from the harsh realities of life in Afghanistan, especially for Amir. Flying planes allows Amir to briefly escape the constraints of his troubled family and the war-torn environment of Kabul. It gives moments of relaxation and joy in an otherwise difficult world.
- 8) **Culture and generational change:** Kites serve to represent traditional Afghan culture and the process of generational change that occurs in the country. The novel is set against the backdrop of a changing Afghanistan, and the sword fighting competition reflects the conflict between tradition and modernity.

### 3.2. Symbolism of wind

Khalid Husayni's book *The Kite Runner* is presented to Uzbek readers for its own reasons. In the novel, wind is a recurring symbol that carries multiple meanings and serves as a literary device to convey important themes and emotions throughout the story. Because the wind has been a symbol of freedom, instability, transience in many works. For example, in Abdulla Oripov's poem *The Wind of My Country*, the wind is embodied as a symbol of the transience of life [9]. In *Rabguzi's Story* [10] the wind is embodied as a symbol of transience. In the work *The Kite Runner*, the wind also has different meanings:

- 1) **Friend and enemy:** The central motif of the page in the novel is closely related to the wind. Kites can only fly when there is enough wind to lift them into the sky. The kite, a popular Afghan folk game, is a metaphor for the heroes' struggles and pursuit of happiness. Wind is both friend and foe, as it is needed to lift the leaves, but at the same time it can cause them to fall.
- 2) **Freedom and escape:** The wind is often used as a symbolic representation of freedom and the desire to escape from the constraints of one's life. Amir, the hero of the play, tries to get rid of his guilt and the weight of his past mistakes. He associates the wind with the opportunity to save and get rid of his guilt.
- 3) **Change:** The wind can symbolize change. It is often used to indicate important turning points in a novel. When Amir and his father, Baba, leave Afghanistan for the United States, they are described as having "gone up the wind" from their homeland, suggesting a profound change in their lives.
- 4) **Fate:** Wind is also used as a symbol of fate. Amir believes that the sword fighting tournament, where swords fly and fight in the wind, holds the key to his destiny and his chance to redeem himself in his father's eyes. In this context, the wind represents the forces that shape human life.

### 3.3. Symbolism of pomegranate

Along with the rest of the symbols, there is a pomegranate tree in the work and it has the following figurative meanings:

- 1) **Symbol of childhood friendship:** The pomegranate tree is initially a place of solace and joy for Amir and Hassan. It becomes a symbol of their innocent friendship and shared experiences during their childhood in Kabul. The tree is where Amir reads stories to Hassan, and they spend time together, finding refuge from the challenges of the world around them.
- 2) **Change and decay:** As the narrative progresses, so does the condition of the pomegranate tree. It ceases to bear fruit and begins to decay, mirroring the deterioration of Amir and Hassan's relationship. The changing state of the tree reflects the impact of the traumatic event in the alley and the subsequent guilt and betrayal that Amir harbors.
- 3) **Metaphor for friendship's demise:** The moment when Amir witnesses Hassan being assaulted and doesn't intervene marks a turning point in their friendship.

The pomegranate tree, witnessing this betrayal, becomes a metaphor for the disintegration of their once-close bond. The guilt and shame Amir feels contribute to the desolation of the tree, symbolizing the irreparable damage done to their relationship.

- 4) **Bearing witness to betrayal:** The pomegranate tree becomes a silent witness to Amir's betrayal of Hassan. It stands as a living testament to the rupture of trust and the deep emotional wounds inflicted upon both characters. Amir's inability to stand up for Hassan results in the symbolic decay of the tree, reflecting the corrosive effects of guilt and remorse.
- 5) **Themes of redemption and forgiveness:** The pomegranate tree also serves as a site of potential redemption. When Amir returns to Kabul years later, he notices that the tree is still alive, albeit struggling. This symbolizes the possibility of healing and redemption, suggesting that, like the tree, Amir and Hassan's relationship may find a way to endure despite the scars of the past.
- 6) **Cycles of regeneration:** Pomegranates are often associated with fertility and regeneration. The enduring presence of the tree, despite its hardships, hints at the potential for renewal and growth. The cyclical nature of the pomegranate tree's life may symbolize the possibility of healing and reconciliation over time.

In summary, the pomegranate tree in *The Kite Runner* serves as a poignant and multi-layered symbol, encapsulating the themes of friendship, betrayal, guilt, and the potential for redemption. Its evolution mirrors the complex emotional landscape of the characters, making it a central and evocative element in the narrative.

### 3.4. Symbolism of blood

In *The Kite Runner*, the symbolism of blood is a potent motif that is woven throughout the narrative. Blood represents various themes, including kinship, loyalty, guilt, and redemption. Here's an exploration of the symbolic significance of blood in the novel:

- 1) **Blood as a Symbol of Kinship:** Blood is initially associated with the idea of family and kinship. The blood ties between characters like Amir and Baba emphasize the familial bonds that are expected to be unbreakable. The blood connections also extend to the bond between Amir and Hassan, emphasized by their shared blood through the pomegranate tree oath.
- 2) **Blood ties and betrayal:** The image of blood takes a darker turn in the novel, particularly after the incident in the alley where Hassan is assaulted. The presence of blood becomes a stark reminder of Amir's betrayal. The blood on Hassan's hands and Amir's choice not to intervene create a symbolic rift in their relationship, highlighting the betrayal that will haunt Amir throughout the story.
- 3) **Redemption and healing:** As the narrative progresses, blood takes on a redemptive quality. Amir seeks a way to atone for his sins, to cleanse himself of the guilt associated with Hassan's suffering. The act of spilling his own blood in the fight with Assef becomes a symbolic gesture of redemption, as Amir confronts the physical and emotional consequences of his past actions.
- 4) **Sacrifice and innocence:** The idea of sacrifice is linked to blood, especially through Hassan's sacrificial nature. His loyalty and willingness to endure pain for Amir's sake create a powerful connection. The innocent bloodshed, such as Hassan's and later Sohrab's, becomes symbolic of the harm inflicted upon the pure and the sacrifices made for the sake of others.
- 5) **Blood as a legacy:** Blood is a metaphorical legacy that characters carry with them. The sins and virtues of the past influence the present and future generations. The revelation of familial connections and the impact of past

actions on subsequent generations underscore the enduring nature of blood ties.

- 6) **Symbol of identity:** Blood also serves as a symbol of identity and heritage. Amir's struggle with his identity, particularly in relation to Baba, reflects the complex interplay of blood ties and personal choices. The search for identity becomes entwined with the understanding of one's familial bloodline and the consequences of actions associated with it.

In summary, the symbolism of blood in *The Kite Runner* is multi-faceted, representing themes of kinship, betrayal, redemption, sacrifice, and the enduring impact of one's actions on personal and familial legacy. The use of blood imagery enhances the emotional depth of the novel and contributes to its exploration of complex human relationships.

### 3.5. Implications of the symbolism

In general, the wind serves as a versatile symbol of *The Kite Runner*, representing freedom, change and the inevitable influence of fate [11,12,13]. It is intricately crafted, reflecting the characters' struggles and desires, and sheds light on the novel's complex themes of guilt, redemption, and personal relationships [14].

In the novel *The Kite Runner*, the wind and the kite cover the essence of the work, which expresses the themes of friendship, betrayal, guilt and redemption, all of which are deeply connected with the symbolism and cultural significance of the wind and the kite [15,16]. The title captures the main elements of the novel and highlights the themes that play a central role in the story. Kites serve as a unifying thread throughout the work, connecting the characters' relationships, experiences, and themes explored in the novel.

Summarizing the above points, it can be said that, along with the rest of the works, the details and figurative images in *The Kite Runner* perfectly fulfilled their assigned task. on the other hand, all the details of the work are mentioned during the work. For example, the slingshot in Hasan's hand and the stone in it are still thrown by Sukhrob at the end of the play. We are far from thinking that the work is a perfect work of art. In some places, such as the chase scene and the confrontation with Asef, it would have been more acceptable if it was a little more realistic [17,18,19,20]. Because Amir, who silently watches the torture of the young boy by the rest of the children, is hated by the readers.

## 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, a thematic analysis of Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* has revealed the profound significance of four key symbols: the kite, the wind, the pomegranate, and blood.

Firstly, the kite emerges as a potent symbol of hope, redemption, and the quest for freedom. Through the act of kite flying, solace and redemption are found amidst the turmoil of characters' lives, symbolizing the possibility of overcoming past traumas and forging new paths forward. Secondly, the wind serves as a powerful force of change and transformation throughout the narrative. It carries both literal and metaphorical significance, representing the shifting tides of fate and the inevitability of destiny.

Thirdly, the pomegranate emerges as a complex symbol of fertility, life, and the interconnectedness of past and present. Its vivid imagery evokes themes of rebirth, renewal, and the enduring bonds of family and tradition. Lastly, blood emerges as a potent symbol of sacrifice, loyalty, and the burden of guilt. From the blood ties that bind characters to their families to the bloodshed that stains their conscience, this motif underscores the profound complexities of human relationships and the consequences of past actions.

In summary, the symbolic imagery of the kite, wind, pomegranate, and blood in *The Kite Runner* serves as a rich tapestry that adds depth and nuance to the narrative. These symbols not only enrich our understanding of the characters and their experiences but

also resonate on a universal level, inviting readers to contemplate the timeless themes of redemption, forgiveness, and the enduring power of human resilience.

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