

## THEME AND SYMBOLISM IN KHALED HOSSEINI'S "THE KITE RUNNER", COMPARING WITH ASKAD MUKHTOR'S "THE PLANE TREE" ("CHINOR")



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### Abstract

The article is devoted to the themes, such as guilt and cowardice which are considered as the most elaborate themes of "The Kite Runner". Moreover, it is compared with Askad Mukhtor's "The plane tree" ("Chinar"), which has the same themes, as well. The article shows the similarities and differences between characters, Amir and Akbarali, their betrayal to defend their friends and dark memories which haunt both of them for the rest of their lives.

**Keywords:** modern American literature; violence; terrorism; love; guilt; cowardice; friendship and kinship

## ХОЛИД ХУСАЙНИЙНИНГ "ШАМОЛ ОРТИДАН ЮГУРИБ" ВА АСҚАД МУХТОРНИНГ "ЧИНОР" АСАРЛАРИДАГИ РАМЗИЙ ХУСУСИЯТЛАР ҚИЁСИ

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### Аннотация

Мақолада Холид Хусайнийнинг "Шамол ортидан югуриб" ("The Kite Runner") асарида илгари сурилган "гуноҳ" ва "қўрқоқлик" тушунчалари ҳақида сўз юритади. Мақолада "Шамоллар ортидан югуриб" асари Асқад Мухторнинг айни шундай мавзудаги "Чинор" асари билан қиёсланган ва бу икки асар қаҳрамонлари орасидаги ўхшашлик (Амир ва Акбаралининг ҳикоя қилиб берган тарихи) ва фаркли жиҳатлар кўрсатиб берилган.

**Калит сўзлар:** замонавий Америка адабиёти; зўравонлик; терроризм; севги; гуноҳ; қўрқоқлик; дўстлик; қондошлик.

## ТЕМА И СИМВОЛИЗМ В РОМАНЕ "БЕГУЩИЙ ЗА ВЕТРОМ" ХОЛЛЕДА ХОССАЙНА В СРАВНЕНИИ С "ЧИНАРОЙ" АСХАДА МУХТАРА

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#### Аннотация

Статья посвящена темам вины и трусости, которые считаются наиболее сложными темами романа "The Kite Runner" («Бегущий за ветром»). В статье также это произведение сравнивается с романом «Чинара» Аскада Мухтара, который имеет те же темы. В статье показаны сходства и различия между персонажами, Амиром и Акбарали, между их изменой и воспоминаниями, которые преследуют их обоих всю оставшуюся жизнь.

**Ключевые слова:** современная американская литература; терроризм; любовь; чувство вины; трусость; дружба и родство.

Modern literature of the United States of America in XXI century has its own features which differ this period from other literary movements. The major themes of the period, such as migration, immigration, terrorism and violence have an important impact on modern American writings. The novels and poetry of American literature in XXI century have been published by modern critics that aid to make critical opinion regarding literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the United States of America. Similarly, the XX century of Uzbek literature includes the same themes, mainly the descriptions of the war. You can also feel the emotions and feeling of people who were affected in the war from Uzbek literary books of this period.

One of the outstanding authors of this movement is Khaled Hosseini, an Afghan-American novelist and physician who always mentions that He wrote a lot of stories, novels and articles, his other works are "A Thousand Splendid Suns" (2007) and also "And the Mountains Echoed" (2013) that is his third novel. He lived in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1965. Hossaini spent his early years in France that his father was a diplomat in the 1970s. Khaled Hosseini is an author "who helps people to leap over their lives and inhabit someone else's world for a while" (3, 2).

However, "The Kite Runner" is appreciated as a stunning debut for his career. The novel has been sold the millions of copies around world and it is becoming more and more famous even though some give critical reviews about the novel. Moreover, it should be considered that the work has been classified as one of a classic and translated into many languages worldwide. The novel offers a mirror into the history and cultural traditions of Afghanistan, a nation was shrouded in terror and war. "The story doesn't focus as much on politics and war as it does on the lives of those affected. It is a tale of family and friendship, loyalty and salvation amid the horrors of war" (4, 2). The author shows these cultural traditions through Amir and Hassan, the children who come from different ethnical groups. Moreover, the author used some words of Dari language, which is an official language in Afghanistan: "Hey,

Babalu, who did you eat today? Huh? Come on, Babalu, give us a smile!” (2, 36). Somewhere Hosseini utilized the words and phrases of Dari language and mentioned the meaning of these words in English. “*You look Khoshteeep,*” said Baba. Handsome. He used some familiar words of Dari language, such as, *Bas, Yelda, Ramadan, Bismillah, Chai, Chapan, Inshallah, Jan, Hafez, and Kursi* in his novel.

“The Kite Runner” is an autobiographical masterpiece, because these events are taken from the author’s own experiences. There are many similarities between the life of Hassan, the hero of novel and that of the writer, Hosseini, himself. Many events in The Kite Runner repeat the life experiences of Khaled Hosseini. This, however, is not the concern of the present paper. In his introduction to the tenth anniversary of *The Kite Runner*, Hosseini wrote: “My childhood and Amir’s mirrored each other in many ways” (3, 88).

In contrast, the most famous novelist of the XX century of Uzbek literature is Askad Mukhtar. He was born in a working class family in the city of Fergana, Uzbekistan on 23th December in 1920. At the age of 11 he became an orphan and he received higher education at the faculty of Philology of the Central Asian University, which he graduated in 1942. From 1957 to 1969, he was a secretary of the Writer’s Union of the Uzbek SSR. He worked in the magazines and journals as a journalist. He published the novels “Birth” (“Tug’ilish”), “Time in my fate” (“Davr mening taqdirimda”), and “Plane” (“Chinar”). Revolutionary themes are touched upon by Mukhtar in the story “The Karakalpak Tale”. The writer depicted the issue of the spiritual perfection of the Uzbek people in the majority of his works and this issue played an important role on the lives of the Uzbek nation. The author intended to do so by describing the lives of the Uzbek working class. So author’s novels have become so popular both in Uzbekistan and around the world that any reader has these books in his bookshelf.

His most outstanding novel “Chinar” which gives brief information about the history and traditions of The Uzbeks who lived at that time, brought him success awards in his life. The book describes a family and kinship of Ochil buva (old man) and its members who share their own feelings, difficulties and hardships with the reader. The author gave mostly his attention to the issues of that period in the novel, which had a great impact on the lives of people, as political, cultural issues and the problem of the Aral Sea. Ochil buva (old man) who is a main character of the novel shares with the life experiences of his grandsons and granddaughters. The last part of novel that depicts the life of Akbarali has a similar theme as the novel “The Kite Runner” by Khaled Hosseini, such as guilt, sin, cowardice, and redemption.

“The Kite Runner” is not a silent book; It is like a secret book till the final of the book you come across with the secrets over and over again. The heading itself cheats you; while you are reading it, you may think that it is about happy childhood, about children who are holding kites on their hands, who are running with smiles on their faces, about peaceful land, wonderland where there are a lot of holidays, where you can feel why you are alive and where you are thankful that you were born here. However, you can get a different imagination from the plot of the novel: even first sentences of the novel begin with the depression, with bad memories, with the description of the land where “there are a lot of children, but no childhood” (1, 275).

From the very beginning Amir deals with a secret in his past and how secret shaped him as a man. Moreover, despite depression, darkness, the opening chapters of the novel create an atmosphere that the hope is forever with us, and it is never late to change our world, our surrounding: Hosseini tries to depict the meaning of life to the reader; he points out that we are given to live only once, so we should spend it honestly. He writes in a simple language, uses many proverbs, sayings, songs for it.

While we are reading the novel, we may think that Amir is a main character of it. However, it is seen that the kite is a symbol of success, but cutting the kite cannot bring the victory for children. In this story, running and getting the last kite is Hassan. He is the best kite Runner for Amir in this tale that gets every kite without looking the sky. The author also explains the two characters that develop the whole story and performed with the conflict through their actions and dialogues. So it means that there is no one main character, but each person of the novel has its own basic and important role in the work. And similarly, in the novel “Chinar” all personages are main personages and without any of them the novel cannot be full and accurate for the reader, because all of them are connected together as a chain.

Looking at literacy levels, although the role of books and literacy is among the themes in The Kite Runner, here I observe it in the context of friendship. It therefore means that it will not be exhaustively discussed. In spite of the fact that Amir and Hassan lived in the same house for about twelve years, Amir never wanted to be a teacher for Hassan to help him to read; rather he would taunt and mock him for not being able to read. However, in Bamiyan, Hassan was taught to read by a local preacher. However, Hassan always gave a hand to Amir and loved him so much. So it is seen that the theme of friendship is sophisticated in a novel, the connection between Amir and Hassan gives the meaning to the theme and enriches it. Hassan is ready to do anything for Amir, whereas Amir is not able to do it. However, it is said they have different mothers, but they are brought up by the same woman, so there is also the kinship between them.

Similarly, the chapter in “Chinar” by Askad Mukhtar, which is devoted to Akbarali, begins with dejection, as the same with “The Kite Runner”. In the novel Akbarali shares his own secret, dark memories with his granddad, Ochil buva, which leads the reader to the depression, as well. On the other hand, the difference between these novels is that Amir can survive from this obstacle, can begin his new life despite the difficulties which happens in his life, but Akbarali cannot; his secret leads him to death. Akbarali is not brave and he cannot find the power to live.

Akbarali and Amir’s cowardice and guilt are the central themes of both novels. There is a saying in Uzbek that “The worst predator is a rabbit” (5 , 203).

Amir and Akbarali are like “rabbits” in the novel, they are afraid of defending their friends, they are afraid of deciding quickly. That guilt changes their lives in a minute: They themselves change their paradise life into hell. Afterwards, the guilt makes them run away from their friends in order to forget about everything happened; but it is seen that it is too difficult to run away from the soul, heart which knows everything and remains about it again and again: Akbarali was a personage who was like a snake in the grass, a monster in the lake. He was not worthy of this sacrifice. He was a liar, a cheat, and a thief.

The Kite Runner is a symbolic book. The kite itself is the symbol of the novel: it is not only the symbol of childhood, but also the symbol of life, peaceful life. We can take an example from Amir’s life: his friendship, childhood ends with kite-flying tournament, and his new peaceful life with Sohrab begins with flying kite in the novel. As well, The Kite Runner is a religious book. Even green, the color of Islam is mostly described in the novel. You can come across with a religious word in the novel, such as *yelda*. From the point of my view, *yelda* symbolizes the novel itself.

In *yelda* you look forward to the sun to rise and bring love and luck. The morning sun to *yelda* brings you new life, lights your dark life again. At the end of the book, after the *yelda*, after darkness, Sohrab is the morning sun of *yelda* for Amir to change his old way of life to new one.

The word of “Plane” (“Chinor”) is a symbol of kinship, relationship and family. Akbarali is described as a fragile branch of this plane tree (*chinor*). He cannot be brave to live, so that he chooses the easiest way: dying. With the words of his grandfather it is written like this: “Life is merciless, especially, for fearful people. Akbarali desired to change the situation according to his outlook, shallow outlook, but with cowardice. In order to correct a mistake, to find out the solution to the problem, you should have courage; but Akbarali cannot be courageous enough” (5, 243). And if in “The Kite Runner” there were not Sohrab, Amir would be dead with his bad memories, with his

cowardice in the end, but Sohrab helps him to begin new life and to be courageous to survive.

Both “The Kite Runner” and “Chinar” are not devoted to the political problems or war, but it is related to the lives of those who were affected by the war. So it is written in fairy-tale style, not a modern one, which is similar to “Chinar”. In both books you can feel the atmosphere of war, the feeling, emotions of people, the life of children who do not know, even, what childhood is. Both Khaled Hosseini and Askad Mukhtar achieved a political, social, cultural goal by humanising, caring for people who need it; they can bring fresh humanity to the world with their novels.

Khaled Hosseini has achieved a political, social, cultural goal by humanising, caring for people who need it; he can bring fresh humanity to the globe with their novels. Khaled Hosseini mentioned in one of the interviews that: After reading these books, you may feel hate for Amir or Akbarali, or you may be sorry of them. But the goal of the novels is not only making readers feel the emotions of the personages and discuss their behavior or life, but it is making them understand that we are given to live only once, so we should be brave, honest in order to survive in merciless life: “Life goes on, unmindful beginning or end, crisis or catharsis, moving forward like a slow dusty caravan of *kochish*” (1, 316).

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