

The Many Faces of Masculinity: Wolves, Sheep and the Path to True Manhood in *The Kite Runner*

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Abstract

In many cultures and societies around the world, men have long been expected to possess the qualities of masculine power, which include being more self-assured, resolute, responsible, and self-actualized. Scholars of gender studies contend that there are important distinctions between men and women, refuting feminist claims that gender is purely a social construct. Thus, being a man who is responsible, grounded, righteous, and courageous is not only a theoretical concept; it is a social requirement that is necessary to build a better society. The argument for social reform has frequently been strengthened through literature, with modern fiction works emphasizing the need for masculinity to be the main area of study for humanities experts. In a world that needs more high-value men, diaspora fiction authors like Khaled Hosseini emphasize the significance of males cultivating their manly qualities. Diaspora literature demonstrates how difficult situations create stronger, more moral men and how characters' pain influences their development into moral beings. By examining examples from Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, this article employs a qualitative methodology to show that masculinism is an inspiration rather than merely a doctrine. This research investigates how Amir's transition from an average guy to a responsible masculine man in his search for redemption is represented by analyzing significant passages. This study demonstrates how literature can mirror the larger cultural desire for responsible and self-actualized masculinity in contemporary culture, providing insightful information for future academics tackling related subjects.

Keywords: Masculinism, Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*, gender studies, diaspora, gender mainstreaming, hegemonic masculinity, gender disparities

1. Introduction

The Kite Runner, Khaled Hosseini's debut novel, has received a lot of praise for its portrayal of nuanced characters and the depth of feeling it provides its readers. Many readers find great resonance in the novel's plot, which depicts the anguish and adversity endured by individuals living in the diaspora. This is not a coincidence because Hosseini, an Afghan American writer who lives abroad, uses his personal experiences to create a very intimate story that captures the hardships of displaced people. The Kite Runner, in particular, provides a powerful analysis of masculinism by drawing a comparison between weak, frail men with weak consciences and authentic masculinity. The novel also touches on the gender disparities between men and women, particularly in Afghan society, where traditional gender roles limit women's agency and opportunities for self-actualization (Connell, 1995; Goyal, 2023)."

At its core, the novel serves as a powerful demonstration of the idea that even men who initially embody weakness or failure can redeem themselves and strive toward becoming the best versions of themselves. Julia Wood, a distinguished scholar in gender studies, defines masculinism as an ideology that supports distinct roles and rights for men and women (Fixmer-Oraiz & Wood, 2019). This perspective is based on the belief that inherent gender differences necessitate differential treatment. Furthermore, masculinism highlights the notion that

men themselves may encounter discrimination and advocates for reclaiming their rightful place in society.

The concept of masculinism has been explored by several scholars in the field of gender studies. Michael Kimmel, in *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (2006), discusses how American masculinity has evolved, often influenced by societal expectations and crises of identity. Kimmel suggests that masculinity is not a fixed trait but rather something shaped by external pressures and internal struggles. In a similar vein, R.W. Connell's concept of "hegemonic masculinity" in *Masculinities* (1995) argues that societal ideals of masculinity are often constructed in opposition to what is considered feminine or weak, reinforcing a rigid gender hierarchy. This ideological structure is crucial to understanding how masculinity functions in *The Kite Runner*, where Amir's transformation from a passive figure to a responsible, self-actualized man challenges these very constructs.

While masculinism offers a critique of gender dynamics, it can also be contrasted with feminism, which, according to some, may perpetuate misogynistic elements. For example, in Tahmima Anam's *The Startup Wife* (2021), the female protagonist strives to assert her power in a male-dominated world, only to be overshadowed by her husband's eventual rise as the central figure of power. These narrative critiques the competitive dynamics created by feminism when women attempt to occupy spaces traditionally dominated by men.

In *The Kite Runner*, the transformation of Amir from a weak, passive figure to a more responsible and self-actualized man highlights the notion that adversity shapes men into stronger, more virtuous individuals. The novel demonstrates that average men, unable to endure hardship, often fall short of the masculine ideal. On the other hand, men who embrace toxic masculinity, akin to savage predators, fail to achieve true strength and, ultimately, self-actualization. Society often confuses toxicity with masculinity, creating a false dichotomy between the two.

Research Questions

This paper seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How does *The Kite Runner* depict the evolution of masculinity through the character of Amir?
2. In what ways does Hosseini's portrayal of masculinity challenge traditional perceptions of what it means to be a man?
3. How does the concept of masculinism, as presented in gender studies, relate to the character development in *The Kite Runner*?
4. Can the novel be seen as a critique of both toxic masculinity and traditional gender roles, and if so, how?

2. Literature Review

The recent works on the idea of masculinity have been variously associating masculinity with toxic male dominance or with the idea that patriarchy is a possible reason for a devastated and oppressed female society. In this section, the researcher reviews a few recent works on the idea of masculinity and its connection with the novels of Khaled Hosseini.

According to Goyal (2023), hegemonic masculinity serves as an explanation for the connection between gender roles and the dominance of men over women and other marginalized men, ultimately determining their social status. Goyal (2023) argues that this concept of male dominance is further explored in Hosseini's second novel, which delves into the underlying causes of this hegemonic male dominance and the resulting sexism evident in Rasheed's treatment of his wives. Goyal (2023) also acknowledges that the field of masculinities encompasses various definitions and origins and will continue to do so as gender roles and power dynamics between genders evolve. Consequently, it can be inferred that masculinity should not be confined to rigid definitions of what it means to be a man but rather should be understood as an ideology dictating how a man should behave.

Several scholars have explored the concept of gender mainstreaming, which aims to integrate gender perspectives into all aspects of policy and programming, as a tool for addressing gender inequality. Walby (2005) argues that gender mainstreaming can help to deconstruct rigid gender roles by promoting a more equitable distribution of power and opportunities between the sexes. This framework is particularly useful for analyzing the dynamics in *The Kite Runner*, where gender disparities are evident in the treatment of female characters and the social expectations placed on male characters. By applying gender mainstreaming, we can analyze how traditional masculine ideals, as portrayed in the novel, contribute to the marginalization of women and the reinforcement of hierarchical gender structures (Afandi, 2018; Walby, 2005).

Resser (2015) believes that scholars who explore masculinity through post-structuralist thought, or literary/cultural representation are now focusing on how masculinity is shaped by movement and change. Literature, as a form of fantasy or projection, can unveil aspects of masculinity not easily seen in everyday life or other cultural forms. Resser (2015) concludes that as the world becomes more global, scholars are exploring how different types of masculinity in different locations will interact and impact the study of gender.

According to Afandi (2018), Gender roles in a patriarchal system are designed to keep men in power and make women dependent on them. Men are given power through masculine roles, while women are restricted by traditional feminine roles that limit their freedom. Gender roles are slowly changing from traditional to modern as women are now given more opportunities to receive education and find employment. This allows them to contribute financially to their families. Afandi (2018) finds that *The Kite Runner* is seen as a masculine novel showcasing traditional Afghan gender roles mainly through male characters. The author includes a few minor female characters in traditional roles to highlight the contrast between gender roles for men and women in Afghanistan.

Iynisha and Shanthi (2018) believe that masculinity differs across cultures, periods and perspectives. It is not one fixed identity but rather a range of identities. The concept of masculinity has evolved from dominant and nurturing to redefining and eventually breaking down

traditional distinctions. In Hosseini's novels, various forms of masculinity are depicted within Afghan culture and society. The concept of masculinity has evolved from dominant and nurturing to reconfiguration and subsequently to the blending of the dichotomies and the limits. The novel by Hosseini showcases a range of masculinity rooted in Afghan culture and society.

Kabir (2022) studies the detrimental consequences of toxic masculinity in the characters' personal, familial, and social lives, showing the utter helplessness of male characters who have to comply with the stereotyped notion of gender roles of real men. Because of the male characters' vague notion of masculinity, their relationship with their partners becomes toxic. Kabir (2022) analyses toxic masculinity in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini and advocates for reducing sexism to foster a harmonious relationship characterized by love, respect, and trust among partners.

Table 1. Articles on Masculinity in Khaled Hosseini's Works

The number of research articles that have traced the idea of masculinity in Khaled Hosseini's works	5
The number of research articles that have traced the idea of masculinity in <i>The Kite Runner</i>	3
The number of research articles that have traced the idea of toxic masculinity in <i>A Thousand Splendid Suns</i>	1
The number of research articles that have analyzed <i>The Kite Runner</i> as a call for masculine consciousness	0

Table 1 shows that the reviewed articles in this research did not analyze *The Kite Runner* as a call for masculine consciousness/awareness. Considering what was reviewed above, the researcher aims to deal with *The Kite Runner* as a literary alert for modern manhood to raise awareness so that it can inspire the modern generation of men to be hardworking individuals and, therefore, become an asset for a better life and a better generation to come.

3. Methodology

This article uses the qualitative methodology by tracing instances from the novel *The Kite Runner* which demonstrates that the novel pursues masculinism as more than just a theory, but also as an inspiration. This can be a reference for future researchers working on the same or similar topic. By considering certain instances from the novel, readers will understand how the character of Amir represents a journey from a normal male into a responsible masculine man in the quest for redeeming himself.

4. Discussion

In exploring the themes of masculinity, male friendship, and the persistence of the past within *The Kite Runner*, it becomes apparent that these concepts are not only central to the novel's narrative but also resonate deeply with parallel psychoanalytic theories. The persistence of the past in shaping Amir's understanding of masculinity is a powerful force that underscores his journey toward redemption.

4.1 The Persistence of the Past

The theme of the past's persistence is reflected in Amir's struggles to come to terms with his childhood actions, especially his betrayal of Hassan. In psychoanalytic theory, this could be viewed through the lens of Freud's **repetition compulsion**, which suggests that individuals often unconsciously repeat past behaviors in an attempt to master them. Amir's inability to escape the guilt from his childhood misdeeds mirrors this concept. His journey back to Kabul and his efforts to redeem himself is indicative of his unconscious need to resolve the emotional trauma of his earlier years. The act of returning to confront his past, including saving Sohrab, becomes a mechanism for achieving psychological closure. This mirrors the idea that one must confront repressed memories and unresolved emotions to achieve true emotional healing and maturity.

4.2 Male Friendship and Hegemonic Masculinity

Male friendship, especially between Amir and Hassan, also plays a pivotal role in the construction of masculinity within the novel. According to R.W. Connell's theory of **hegemonic masculinity** (1995), masculinity is often shaped by societal expectations and the dominance of certain behaviors that are considered ideal for men, often involving traits such as emotional stoicism, strength, and authority. These ideals of hegemonic masculinity serve as a standard to which Amir feels he must conform, yet he struggles with his own insecurity and inadequacy (Connell, 1995). Hassan's unwavering loyalty, courage, and kindness contrast sharply with Amir's insecurity, cowardice, and eventual self-realization. In many ways, Hassan embodies an idealized form of masculinity that challenges the restrictive norms of hegemonic masculinity, based on honor, loyalty, and selflessness—qualities that Amir struggles to cultivate. The emotional distance between them, fostered by Amir's betrayal, reflects the tension between the dominant notions of masculinity (strength, stoicism, and emotional detachment) and the more nuanced and compassionate form of masculinity that Hassan represents. In this context, their friendship highlights the complexity of masculine identity in *The Kite Runner*. While Amir initially views Hassan as a subordinate and inferior because of his Hazara ethnicity, he later recognizes that Hassan's actions—his self-sacrifice, forgiveness, and unwavering support—represent a higher form of masculinity, one that transcends societal constraints and embraces empathy and understanding. This evolving dynamic between the two characters mirrors the psychoanalytic idea of the **mirror stage**, wherein an individual begins to develop a sense of self by recognizing aspects of themselves in others. Amir, on seeing the selflessness in Hassan, begins to recognize the

virtues he must adopt to achieve personal growth.

4.3 Male Friendship and Psychoanalytic Theory

Psychoanalytic theories of **transference** and **countertransference** can also be applied to Amir's relationship with his father, Baba. Baba represents the epitome of traditional masculinity—strong, authoritative, and emotionally distant. Amir, in his desperate attempt to win his father's approval, unconsciously projects his feelings of inadequacy onto Baba, thereby intensifying his internal conflict. This dynamic exemplifies Freud's concept of **transference**, where a person's unconscious feelings about significant figures in their past are projected onto new relationships. Amir's journey towards self-actualization involves not only confronting his past with Hassan but also navigating his fraught relationship with Baba, ultimately allowing him to redefine what it means to be a man in his own right.

By the novel's conclusion, Amir's redemption and self-awareness signify his transition from a boy desperate for his father's validation to a man who finds peace within himself, able to stand up for what is right. His transformation echoes **Jungian individuation**, wherein an individual reconciles the different facets of their personality, achieving a more complete and authentic sense of self. Amir's redemption is thus not only a personal victory but also a broader commentary on the potential for individuals to break free from the constraints of toxic masculinity and achieve a more inclusive, compassionate understanding of what it means to be a man.

The Kite Runner offers a rich exploration of the themes of masculinity, male friendship, and the persistence of the past, all of which are deeply interwoven with psychoanalytic concepts. Amir's journey of self-discovery and redemption reflects the complexities of masculine identity, shaped by both personal history and societal expectations. Through the lens of psychoanalytic theory, we can see how Amir's growth as a man is facilitated by his confrontation with the past, his evolving understanding of friendship and loyalty, and his ultimate transformation into a more empathetic and mature individual.

5. Results

5.1 The Road Back to Masculine Consciousness

First of all, it must be clarified that Amir is the main protagonist of *The Kite Runner* and that a protagonist's state, character, or activity is known as protagonism (Webster, n.d.). Additionally, he or she serves as the driving force behind the unfolding events. According to Heckmann (2020), the description of the term "first actor," which comes from the Greek words "protos" and "agnists," is translated into English as the protagonist or the hero. Amir enjoyed a carefree and blissful childhood, and it can be described as a life that is free of true masculine struggle. The action of the story occurred in the Afghan capital of Kabul. Hassan, the child of a servant, was such a good friend to Amir, and it was almost like they were brothers. Their friendship is similar to that of their fathers. "Ali and Baba grew up together as childhood playmates_ at least until polio crippled Ali's leg just like Hassan and I grew up a generation later" (Hosseini, p. 24). Amir's father exhibited a lack of genuine care toward Amir, which left him feeling confused and unaware of how to change the situation. In his misguided attempts to gain his father's approval, Amir made a grave mistake that would have consequences in the future. He took part in the kite-fighting tournament with the hope of winning his father's affection, but ironically, his determination to succeed ultimately led to his downfall. It was at this point that Hassan, his loyal friend, decided to come to his aid. However, due to his cowardice, Amir chose to hide and witness Hassan's humiliation. Eventually, he came to regret his actions and expressed remorse for his behavior.

In the end, Amir decided to flee. Even though his thoughts were all over the place, he ultimately decided to engage in dishonorable conduct. He had no illusions about the decision he was making. Moreover, this was very childish and immature. To make matters even worse, Amir hid his cash and looked at Hassan's residence before lying to his family and claiming that Hassan had taken it without his permission. After that, Hassan admitted his guilt and eventually left with his father. Amir made no effort to accommodate their request to stay at his house. No matter how devoted Hassan was to Amir, Amir believed in his subconscious that he could abandon Hassan anytime and in any circumstance. "I DIDN'T SPEAK TO HASSAN until the middle of next week. I had just half eaten my lunch, and Hassan was doing the dishes" (Hosseini p.81). According to Winkler (2007), Hosseini creates a world where redemption is at the very least possible. In the world of the book, it is possible to go back to where one committed a crime. This exemplifies action as opposed to inaction, masculinity as opposed to cowardice, and selflessness as opposed to self-absorption. This string of acts of kindness may make up for the trust that he broke with Hassan. Amir decided to confront his past to cleanse himself of his sin. He returned to Kabul and rescued Hassan's son, Sohrab. As he worked to rescue Sohrab, he met with Assef, a malicious individual. Amir was highly terrified of him and contemplated fleeing to that location. However, in the end, he insisted on staying there to accept Assef's challenge, and he remained there. It turned out that he was able to save both himself and Sohrab. It was the only time since Amir's childhood that he felt mental peace brought on by the situation.

Amir transformed into a more empathetic and mature person when he heard those three simple words on the phone: "There is a way to be good again"(Hosseini p.2). The kite serves as a central image throughout the book, representing many qualities, including friendship, justice, kindness, honesty, bravery, and, most of all, manhood. According to Stuhr (2009), the pursuit of the kite is, in reality, the pursuit of the discovery of the excellent person's nature. So, masculinity is therefore associated with the good nature of a man and his willingness to be a better person. The novel's two most crucial kite battles—the tournament that Amir wins to the one at the close and the reversal of roles- are essential because, by the end of the book, Amir has transformed into *The Kite Runner*. As a result, the kite is a symbol of the reciprocal relationship between betrayal and redemption. The chasing of the kite is a metaphor for focusing on human nature, and the battle between Amir and the kite becomes a metaphor for both his exasperation and his rebirth. Hassan and Soraya were there to witness Amir's maturation and were instrumental in assisting him in regaining his humanity. Hassan was Amir's most trustworthy and reliable

companion.

Hassan was frequently insulted and looked down upon by others because of his Hazara ethnicity. However, he never gave any indication that he was going to resist. However, any time Amir ran into trouble, he would immediately stand up and separate the parties involved. Hassan, knowing how essential the kite has been to Amir, would much rather be assaulted and disrespected than quit the kite for the sake of Amir's glory. This is because Hassan understood how much the kite meant to Amir. Hassan's mother left him when he was young, but she returned to him many years later. Hassan was happy to see her and even cared for her until she passed away. Hassan was aware that Amir had lied to him, but he never harbored resentment toward Amir and was eventually able to forgive him. Hassan acted as if he had committed the theft when Amir framed him by claiming to Baba that Hassan had taken his watch and money. Hassan also apologized for his actions. He chose to bear the humiliation and make the sacrifice to maintain their friendship with one another.

In addition to this, he had his own beliefs, so he had never felt resentment toward anyone. Twenty years later, he even decided to write Amir a letter in which he announced his intention for the two of them to make amends with one another. Hassan was a man who was trustworthy due to his honesty, kindness, bravery, purity, tolerance, consideration, and loyalty. He served as a mirror for Amir, illuminating the aspects of his personality that needed improvement. He also served as a role model for Amir, demonstrating the virtues of kindness, forgiveness, loyalty and justice. It was due to his merit that Amir became the protagonist.

Amir's wife, whose name was Soraya, was also an essential figure in Amir's journey toward self-redemption. Amir started contemplating his history when she showed up and helped. This established a particular psychological groundwork for Amir, allowing him to develop the capacity to embark on a path leading to his salvation. Before they got hitched, Soraya came clean to Amir about an incident that occurred when she was eighteen years old and involved her cohabitating with a drug dealer. They were together for almost a month. Later, however, her father coerced her to break up with the man and brought her back home.

Amir admired Soraya's bravery because she had revealed her darkest secret to the world. He almost informed her how he had betrayed Hassan, lied to him, driven him out of the house, and ruined a forty-year relationship that had existed between his dad and Ali. He raised his lips and almost said it. Amir did not speak about his previous actions, even though he had improved and was doing good deeds. He was gradually positively influenced by her. He started by acknowledging his shortcomings and his responsibility. After he had successfully rescued Sohrab, he revealed everything to her. Because she was aware of Amir's history, she exhibited no signs of disgust or uncertainty. She did not stop loving him. The fact that her comprehension of Amir had a positive impact on Amir, which ultimately led to Amir bringing Sohrab back to the house, is the most important thing. Not only was Soraya a devoted wife, but she was also an encouraging companion on Amir's journey toward maturation. Whether Amir was in Afghanistan or California at the time, he developed, changed, and was influenced by the environment in which he was living. Kabul in Afghanistan served as the setting for Amir's formative years there. Before the war broke out, that location was renowned for its tranquility and natural beauty. Amir was considered to be of the upper class in Kabul. Nearly all of the people behaved respectfully toward him. He does not need to submit to the stress from the outside world. In addition to this, he was assisted and safeguarded at all times by a trustworthy servant. He was a genius who could handle virtually anything he desired. After the war broke out, he and his dad were forced to go to the United States. There, every single thing had been altered. Even though he graduated from college with a degree, married the woman he loved, and established himself as a successful writer in the United States, even though everything seemed to have been going according to plan, he never felt like he belonged anywhere. In addition, Amir and his father spent a few years in America in a lower social class. In some strange way, America was a new destination that could conceal the past; it allowed him to blank out and forget things in a way that would not be possible in Afghanistan. His maturation was hastened by everything he encountered in the United States. Amir's experiences in the two countries were completely different due to the differences in his social status.

The interesting thing about Amir as a main character in *The Kite Runner* is the fact that he shows that there is still faith in what society may label as less courageous or sissy men. Amir was able to complete his journey to self-actualization and finally grow up mentally and become a decisive man. Amir enters a new realm in the world of maturity after enduring psychological torment, which brings him to a new height, forces him to recognize and correct the mistakes he has made in the past, and raises him to a new level. Both the light and the shadow that are inherent in human nature coexist within everyone. Self-development can be thought of as both the phase of coming to know oneself and the revival of the positive aspects of human nature. One person's development towards becoming more masculine might be representative of all of ours. As Du (2017) describes, "A personal growth may represent all of ours. Just as the writer Hosseini describes behind every dusty face is a soul, and determined to flick over ordinary Afghans faces dust, which will be displayed behind the "soul" to the world." The author is determined to brush away the dust that settles on the faces of ordinary Afghans so that the souls can be shown to the rest of the world.

5.2 *Wolves, Sheep and the Higher Level of Manhood*

The Kite Runner provides an example of three types of men, and to illustrate these three types, one needs to bring an example from a drama series. According to Lombardi (2021), Barthes' notion of plurality addresses the varied and delayed reception of television drama as it traverses different continents. This concept is particularly relevant to the analysis and reception of non-Anglophone television series, which are screened with subtitles that create a sense of estrangement. This reception experience places significant emphasis and strain on the simultaneous elements of images, writing, and sound. Therefore, literature strongly exists in television dramas, and there are many examples to be given to illustrate the notion of masculinity with relevance to the focus of this paper. There is a famous show that started

in 2015 called 'Better Call Saul,' which revolves around a lawyer trying to ace his path into the world. In one scene, called 'the Grifter scene,' the director showcases an incident that happened to the lawyer 'Saul' during his childhood; one day, he was in his father's local store and there was a stranger who tried to deceive his humble father by stealing from him. The boy (little Saul) was able to notice the trap, and he called it out by saying that this stranger must give money before touching any item in the store. So, when the stranger understood that he was caught for being a bluffer by the kid, he immediately said, "There are wolves and sheep in this world, kid. Figure out which one you're gonna be" (Particles, 2023,1:03).

So, in light of this example from 'Better Call Saul,' one can categorise men in *The Kite Runner* into the three types that are already mentioned above: wolves, sheep, and the higher level of manhood. There are many examples of men under the category of wolves in the book, and one example is Assef. Assef is depicted as a sociopathic character in *The Kite Runner*. He is a kid with a disturbing admiration for Hitler. During his childhood, he is known as the local bully who commits the heinous act of raping Hassan. In his adulthood, he becomes a ruthless Taliban official who takes pleasure in taking lives. He holds Sohrab, Hassan's son, captive as a sex slave until Amir intervenes to rescue him. Following a brutal altercation where he severely injures Amir, Assef ultimately loses an eye to Sohrab's slingshot. Assef would describe people like Hassan as "It's just a Hazara" (Hosseini p.71). It is speculated that Hosseini drew inspiration for Assef from the enigmatic one-eyed Taliban leader, Mullah Omar. So, this makes Assef an unfortunate wolf-kind of man because he will follow every method to humiliate others and treat them as his servants. Assef is an example of what a man should not be.

When Amir betrays his friend, Hassan, he becomes a 'sheep' of a man because what he did was an act of cowardice and malice. It is quite interesting that Amir shows acts of cowardness throughout the novel. He sees fatherhood as frightening because he is unsure about the kind of father he may become. Amir says, "The idea of fatherhood unleashed a swirl of emotions in me. I found it frightening, invigorating, daunting and exhilarating all at the same time. What sort of father would I make, I wondered. I wanted to be like Baba and be nothing like him" (Hosseini p.169). Nevertheless, interestingly enough, this same Amir becomes a man of substance, and he achieves a higher level of manhood. Amir proves to have achieved the highest level of mature masculinity when he chooses to redeem himself and free the kid from the hands of Assef, making him a powerful man. If Amir had chosen to stay in America, he would have lived miserably for the rest of his life. Eventually, this shows that the masculine experience is greatly represented in what goes on with Amir, and his journey can be taken as an example.

5.3 Toxicity vs. Masculinity

Most people believe that masculinity is toxic and is another form of misogyny, but the opposite is true. According to Manaher (2023), the term "Masculinity" commonly denotes the adherence to conventional masculine principles and responsibilities, encompassing attributes like strength, bravery and leadership. It frequently accentuates the significance of men as guardians and providers while potentially perceiving women as individuals who require safeguarding and nurturing. Masculinity can never be toxic, but that does not mean that there are men who are not toxic and savage in their behavior; an example of this is the behaviour of the Russian soldier in *The Kite Runner*. The Russian soldier tried to rape the Afghan woman in the truck, which was taking the refugees outside the borders, and the soldier made it very clear that he would not allow the truck to pass unless he had had intercourse with the woman.

Genuine masculinity is characterized by a sense of protection rather than harm. Masculine individuals are often called upon in times of crisis to provide assistance and support. For instance, when faced with a fire, people rely on masculine firefighters to extinguish the flames. Similarly, individuals in distress often seek help from masculine police officers. In times of trouble, men and women seek out masculine figures for aid and protection. Masculine men are expected to fulfill their duty of providing for and safeguarding those under their care. They are willing to undertake tasks that others may shy away from simply because it is their responsibility. This sense of duty and responsibility is exemplified by the brave individuals who remained on the Titanic and perished, as they embodied the qualities of genuine masculinity.

Baba, Amir's father, is an example of a genuinely masculine man; he refuses to see the soldier harassing the woman in the truck and stands up to him, which is a real power. Baba shows sympathy and forgiveness towards Hassan when he learns about the theft, which is a true masculine attribute. At the novel's beginning, Baba expresses his dissatisfaction with the way Amir behaves, and he wants him to be a better man because he knows that being tough is a masculine quality and is essential for survival in the world. Furthermore, Baba has one of the most important attributes of manhood: money and riches. Amir describes his wealth and says, "Everyone agreed that my father, my Baba, had built the most beautiful house in the Wazir Khan District, a new and affluent neighborhood in the northern part of Kabul. Some thought it was the prettiest house in all of Kabul" (Hosseini p.4).

So, being a man can be an incredibly challenging experience. One of the most fascinating and yet daunting aspects of masculinity is the realization that one is born without inherent value. In society, one's worth is often determined by how useful they are perceived. However, this also presents an opportunity for personal growth and transformation. If a man is willing to put in the hard work and remain unwavering in his determination, he has the potential to become a symbol of strength and resilience, akin to a superhero. On the other hand, if he simply waits for handouts and relies on others, like Amir as a child, he will never earn the respect he desires. Unfortunately, many people have forgotten how demanding and competitive life can be for men. The constant need to prove oneself and outperform others is a reality that men often face.

6. Conclusion

The Kite Runner is a good example of how masculinism is more than just a theory but a necessity in the modern world. Diaspora fiction is

a good example of struggling for survival and, therefore, a good example of true masculine struggle. *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini shows many examples of manhood; one should always follow the right type. Being a man can present numerous challenges. One intriguing aspect of masculinity is the understanding that one must earn one's value rather than being born with it. Amir was weak initially, but then he changed and became strong. Society tends to judge individuals based on their perceived usefulness. However, this can serve as an opportunity for personal development and positive change. By putting in effort and maintaining unwavering determination, a man can become a symbol of strength and resilience, much like a superhero. Conversely, relying on handouts and others will not garner the respect one desires. Unfortunately, many fail to recognize the demanding and competitive nature of men's lives, where the constant need to prove oneself and surpass others is a common reality.

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Conflict of Interest

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Author's Contribution

Ng Miew Luan, Megala Rajendran conceptualized and developed the literature review, developed objective, analyzed, presented the arguments in the article and wrote the manuscript Dr. Jeyalakshmi Subramanian, Ashraf Tajmeeh contributed to edition and revision of the paper. Tan Tiam Lai, Prakash.A contributed to provide critical insights and ensured the overall language clarity of the paper. Keerthana.R contributed to edition and revision of the paper.

We, authors, discussed the research findings, contributed to the interpretation of the results, reviews and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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