

# Representation of Afghan Families in context with Khaled Hosseini's *And the Mountains Echoed*

## Mountains Echoed

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### Abstract:

The term family is multifaceted and capable of much identification. The chapter focuses on how to define the family or in other words, families. This presentation will cover family ideals and their historical turning points during the past century. In particular, family ideas and representations are essential for capturing the complex picture of families. Family representations reflect how people view their family based on existing and culturally accepted signs and pictures and family ideology are perceived as ideal ways of life, and so depict the varied reality. In addition, the idea of a family is dynamic and has different meanings depending on the culture and even the individual family members. Due to the impossibility of providing a globally comprehensive picture of the ideologies and representations associated with this term, this chapter will primarily concentrate on the ideologies, histories, and representations associated with families in Western Anglophone cultures. In Khaled Hosseini's novel, *And the Mountains Echoed*, the protagonist is permanently estranged from her biological parents, which causes a sense of estrangement and desire. According to the key elements of family views, the research focuses on the analysis of Khaled Hosseini's *And the Mountains Echoed* which was written after he immigrated to the United States from Afghanistan.

### Key Words:

Afghan, trauma, depression, separation, reunion, adoption

Afghanistan's culture is very patriarchal and their family is structured in terms of the roles of gender. Women are perceived as homemakers, whilst men are recognised as the primary wage earners. Generally men rule the public world while women solely hold their power in the home, over their children and other women. The twentieth century has seen some advancements in women's rights, which modernise many Afghan's perspectives. But after, the Taliban takes control they severely restrict women's rights, which leads to their seclusion and alienation. Many restrictions are put in place that restrict their interaction with the public, tighten their normal code for dress, and prevent them from receiving an education.

Afghanistan views marriage as a necessary part of life, and marriage is assumed to be the end goal of all partnerships. Marriage is viewed as the institution of two families coming together. In Afghanistan, divorce is uncommon and a shameful activity. Women are typically the symbol and idol of a family's history. In his novels, Hosseini deftly captures the life of Afghan women and their battle to uphold family values. Afghanistan has a diverse civilization until the Taliban has taken its power and establish their dominance over women's lives.

Khaled Hosseini is a master raconteur of our modern times. His novel, *And the Mountains Echoed*, is an epic multi-generational family story that begins in the 1950s with various settings – from Afghanistan to France, and from Greece to the United States. It is a collection of nine interrelated stories which revolves around non-romantic love between the family members. The story is sentimental, embracing, and talks about the hardships of life and the tough choices one has to make in life. The story focuses on the themes of family, commitment, faithlessness, and so on. Hosseini interprets Afghanistan through family standpoint in the Post-Taliban period. The author sheds light on the family separation and he plans a story that puts more emphasis on family and its bonds.

The story of the novel *And the Mountains Echoed*, compasses beyond families, history and continents. The novel focuses on the countless relationships within families. The central story revolves around uniting of Abdullah and Pari after almost sixty years of separation. Hosseini vividly captures the bond between a brother and a sister in his third book, but the desire for traditional values are long since vanished in the modern world. The selfless love in the family is highlighted by personalities like Saboor and his kids Abdullah and Pari.

The families that are portrayed in this novel support the Western view of family is what everyone should strive for because it is the ultimate home in addition to share commonalities with typical Western family ideals in terms of size and organisation. Everyone is viewed as having to get married or start a family once they reach the ideal age. Nabi, who is the uncle of Abdullah and Pari, is questioned frequently and pressured to find a wife by both his sisters and parents during the course of the novel. Love is not, however, considered to be a crucial component of marriage. For instance, Nila and Suleiman's marriage is "an unhappy one. Rarely did I see a tender look pass between the couple or hear an affectionate word uttered. They were two people occupying the same house whose paths rarely seemed to intersect at all" (94). For others, particularly women, marriage is a promise that ensures both financial security and a stable quality of life. Love in Parwana's case may begin on one side first, as her sister advises: "Then marry Saboor. Look after his children. Have your own. He loved you. He

doesn't love me. He will, given time" (78). The novel also features blended families which is another sort of family. Abdullah is aware, even at an early age, that "they weren't her children, he and Pari. Most people loved their own. It couldn't be helped that he and his sister didn't belong to her. They were another woman's leftovers" (25). He therefore comes to the terrible realisation that neither Parwana nor he can ever succeed his mother: "If one night their house caught fire, Abdullah knew without doubt which child Parwana would grab rushing out. She would not think twice" (25). Pari's father sells her to a wealthy family, severing her from her family, particularly from her beloved brother, Abdullah at the age of four. After taking the listener through different stages of Pari and Abdullah's lives, the narration comes to a close with their reunion fifty-eight years later. Unfortunately, Abdullah cannot identify his sister because of dementia, but his daughter Pari, who has the same name, unites their aunt right away.

Discrimination against children is based not only on their paternity but also on their gender. In the novel, Nila's father castigates her for damaging his family name beyond repair. He expects Nila to be obedient, and when she defies him, he silences her with violence and seclusion. On the other hand, Abdullah's daughter, Pari has always been confined in cages, by the hard, unyielding boundaries of the existence that her overprotective father sets since her childhood. She is under intense pressure to unwillingly quit her art school and marry her fiancé in order to care for her elderly parents and their hated business since she is expected to be the daughter who has bravely sacrificed some glamorous life of ease and fortune. In *And the Mountains Echoed*, Mr. Wahdati marries Nila despite Nila's inability to bear children. Similarly, Nabi views marriage and family differently than other people do. He becomes aware that he "already had what people sought in marriage. He had comfort, and companionship, and a home where he was always welcomed, loved, and needed" (137) by providing for his master and ensuring that he has never felt a tug of paternal impulse. Tragically, the characters in the novel choose to flee their home in the hopes to go elsewhere for security and pleasure. Following Pari's departure, Abdullah makes the decision to distance himself as far as possible from his father and his Step-mother.

Multiple families in the novel are formed on chosen emotional ties rather than biological affinities, which can be interpreted from the stand point put out by David H.J Morgan that modern families are more about doing than being. Adoption creates a chosen relationship in this novel. Pari's father make a determined personal decision to give Pari up for adoption, says Park. "It had to be her. I am sorry, Abdullah. She had to be the one. The finger cut, to save the hand" (54). Eventually her adopted parents become her family. Additionally, Pari's

entrance has for the first time make the Wahdati household resembled a proper family. Specifically, Mr. Wahdati is portrayed as a decent man with a nice family, including his wife, Nila and adoptive daughter, Pari. This family appears to be the epitome of a happy, harmonious American nuclear family, but Nila later reveals that Suleiman Wahdati is a homosexual who is in love with Nabi. Nabi is as shocked as anyone when he learns about it. But he does not pathologies or leave Suleiman because of their attraction to one another. Instead, he decides to remain with Suleiman as a friend. By putting an emphasis on individual instincts and decisions, Hosseini has highlighted the absurdity of seeing love and familial constructs that are based just on what is socially acceptable.

In the novel, families and people's identities are flexible and change over time and space rather than being set in stone. The fact that Pari is living in Paris with her husband and children eliminates the necessity for her to return to her own country in order to learn more about the events from her early years that altered the path of her life. Pari "no longer feels the piercing urge to search for answers and roots" (255) to borrow the author's phrase, because she is creating a new identity, a new home, and a new family of her own. Nila has undergone yet another change. At first, Nila adopts Pari as a daughter because she wants a child of her own. However, as time goes on, Pari grows up and when the two of them are in Paris, Nila bitterly realises that having children is never everything one hopes for.

In the novel, Suleiman seems to be the rare breed of man who values isolation and art over social connection. He has no driving experience, and he always defers to his wife's judgement, even when it comes to decisions like adopting a daughter. The majority of Mr. Wahdati's time is spent by "reading in his upstairs study, doing his sketches" (95). Despite the fact that Parwana quickly regrets her choice and spends years caring for her paralysed twin sister, Parwana still has the aim of hurting Masooma. In the end, she marries Saboor and abandons Parwana by herself in the woods to start over. Pari, Nila's adopted child, is viewed as her disappointment because she is breathtakingly thoughtless. Particularly, Pari becomes her rival because of her covert relationship with her mother's partner. In summary, Parwana, Nila, and Pari have developed alternative conceptions of family members from the stereotypically conceived romantic child. By using various nations as the setting for his story, Hosseini has portrayed a variety of ambiguous and juxta positional family kinds with values that range from sanctioned to flexible, aberrant, and in-between in order to not only express cultural shifts but also the well-established ideals are firmly supported, articulating the modern and historic intertwinements.

The concept of family, its members, and their interactions have all been examined in this chapter. It is worthwhile to examine how the characters' perspectives on family evolve over time, particularly before and during the Taliban rule, in order to develop a more complete understanding of the issue.

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