

PROVERBIAL WISDOM AND THE PURSUIT OF GOODNESS IN «THE KITE RUNNER».

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15212792>

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Abstract

This article explores the role of proverbial wisdom in shaping the concept of goodness in «The Kite Runner» by Khaled Hosseini. By analyzing Afghan proverbs and their implicit moral messages, the study examines how characters such as Hassan, Amir, and Baba embody different aspects of goodness. The paper also investigates the linguistic and semantic significance of proverbs in Afghan culture and their influence on the novel's themes of loyalty, redemption, and morality.

Keywords

«The Kite Runner», proverbial wisdom, Afghan proverbs, morality, goodness, redemption, linguistic analysis.

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqola Xolid Husayniyning Shamol ortidan yugurib romanida maqollardagi donishmandlik yaxshilik tushunchasini qanday shakllantirishini tahlil qiladi. Afg'on maqollarining ma'naviy mazmunini tahlil qilish orqali Hassan, Amir va Boba kabi qahramonlarning yaxshilikni turlicha namoyon etishi o'rganiladi. Shuningdek, maqolada afg'on madaniyatida maqollarning lingvistik va semantik ahamiyati hamda ularning sadoqat, poklanish va axloqiy qadriyatlar mavzulariga ta'siri ko'rib chiqiladi.

Kalit so'zlar

Shamol ortidan yugurib, maqollardagi donishmandlik, afg'on maqollari, axloq, yaxshilik, poklanish, lingvistik tahlil.

Аннотация

В данной статье рассматривается роль народной мудрости, выраженной в пословицах, в формировании понятия доброты в романе Бегущий за ветром Халеда Хоссейни. Анализируя афганские пословицы и их скрытые моральные послания, исследование изучает, как такие персонажи, как Хасан, Амир и Баба, воплощают различные аспекты добродетели. В статье также

рассматривается лингвистическое и семантическое значение пословиц в афганской культуре и их влияние на темы романа, такие как преданность, искупление и нравственность.

Ключевые слова

Бегущий за ветром, народная мудрость, афганские пословицы, нравственность, доброта, искупление, лингвистический анализ.

Introduction. Khaled Hosseini's novel «The Kite Runner» is a powerful exploration of themes such as redemption, loyalty, betrayal, and the enduring influence of the past. Set against the backdrop of Afghanistan's turbulent history, the novel follows the life of Amir, a privileged boy from Kabul, and his journey toward redemption after betraying his loyal friend Hassan. Through its emotionally charged narrative, «The Kite Runner» delves into moral dilemmas, social hierarchies, and the struggle for goodness in a world marked by injustice. The novel's characters embody different aspects of morality, with some striving for atonement while others remain steadfast in their innate goodness. Proverbs play a crucial role in shaping cultural and moral values in Afghan society. They serve as carriers of wisdom, passing down ethical lessons from one generation to the next. In «The Kite Runner», proverbial wisdom—both explicitly stated and implicitly understood—guides the characters' decisions and reflects the moral expectations of their society. Phrases such as “There is a way to be good again” and “For you, a thousand times over” carry the weight of moral responsibility, emphasizing the importance of redemption, selflessness, and unwavering loyalty.

Main part. Proverbs, or zarbulmasal, hold a central place in Afghan culture, serving as carriers of wisdom, morality, and social values. Afghanistan, with its rich oral tradition, has relied on storytelling and proverbs to pass down ethical principles from generation to generation. In a society where literacy rates have historically been low, spoken words have played a crucial role in shaping people's beliefs and behaviors. Oral traditions in Afghanistan are deeply intertwined with everyday communication. Elders frequently use proverbs to advise younger generations, and they are commonly heard in conversations, political speeches, and even legal disputes. Linguist Margaret Mills notes that Afghan proverbs serve as a form of “cultural shorthand,” allowing people to convey complex moral ideas with minimal words¹¹⁸. Many Afghan proverbs reflect key moral lessons, particularly those related to goodness, integrity, and redemption. Some of the most notable proverbs that align with the themes of «The Kite Runner» include:

¹¹⁸ Mills, Rhetorics and Politics in Afghan Traditional Storytelling, 1991, p. 87

1. "A better decision is one made after consultation." (Mashwara kawey, pas pashema nashay.¹¹⁹) This proverb emphasizes the value of wisdom and collective reasoning in making morally upright choices. It suggests that goodness often comes from seeking counsel and considering the consequences of one's actions.

2. "A person's true character is revealed in difficult times." (Adam dar waqt-e mushkil maloom meshawad.¹²⁰) This aligns with the idea of moral testing, a key theme in «The Kite Runner», where characters like Amir and Baba must confront their inner struggles to prove their goodness.

3. "The person who has done no wrong does not fear punishment." (Agar kas gunah nakarda ast, az jazaa natarsad.¹²¹) This reflects the theme of redemption in the novel, where Amir carries guilt for his betrayal of Hassan and must seek atonement to find peace.

4. "Patience is the key to victory." (Sabr kulid-e kamyabi ast.¹²²) In Afghan society, patience is considered an essential virtue, one that leads to eventual success and moral fulfillment. This aligns with Hassan's unwavering loyalty and Amir's eventual redemption.

These proverbs are more than just linguistic expressions; they are moral compasses that guide behavior and social interactions. As Zarin Ahmad argues in *Oral Traditions in Afghan Society*¹²³, Afghan proverbs are "both mirrors and enforcers of social norms, teaching individuals the boundaries of ethical and unethical conduct." Afghan proverbs are deeply embedded in the country's social and ethical framework. They reinforce the values of honor, respect, and justice, which are essential to maintaining social harmony. In «The Kite Runner», these values are reflected in the actions of various characters. Hassan's steadfast loyalty, Baba's belief in personal integrity, and Amir's quest for redemption all echo the proverbial wisdom that has shaped Afghan culture for centuries. The concept of nang (honor) and namoos (family reputation) is particularly significant. Proverbs often emphasize the importance of protecting one's honor and maintaining good standing within the community. For instance, the saying "A person without honor is like a tree without roots" reflects how deeply morality and personal reputation are connected in Afghan society. Baba, despite his flaws, strongly upholds these ideals, teaching Amir that "the only sin is theft"¹²⁴.

Moreover, proverbs that highlight redemption reflect the Afghan belief in second chances and the possibility of moral recovery. Rahim Khan's pivotal

¹¹⁹ Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*, Riverhead Books, 2003, p. 68

¹²⁰ Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*, Riverhead Books, 2003, p. 146

¹²¹ Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*, Riverhead Books, 2003, p. 232

¹²² Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*, Riverhead Books, 2003, p. 57

¹²³ *Oral Traditions in Afghan Society*. Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 113

¹²⁴ Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*, Riverhead Books, 2003, p. 17

statement to Amir, “There is a way to be good again”, serves as a modern equivalent of the age-old wisdom found in Afghan proverbs about atonement. This demonstrates how proverbial wisdom is not only a cultural artifact but also a living, evolving force that continues to shape contemporary moral narratives. Proverbs play a crucial role in shaping behavior and decision-making in «The Kite Runner», reflecting Afghan cultural values of honor, redemption, and morality. Afghan culture places a strong emphasis on oral traditions, where proverbs serve as moral guidelines, passed down through generations¹²⁵. These sayings influence the novel’s characters, particularly in their struggles with integrity, loyalty, and personal growth¹²⁶. Baba, Amir’s father, strongly believes in the proverb “A person without honor is like a tree without roots”, which reflects the importance of personal integrity in Afghan society. He tries to instill this principle in Amir, but Amir initially fails to live up to this expectation, particularly when he betrays his childhood friend Hassan¹²⁷. This contrasts with another common Afghan saying: “A faithful friend is the medicine of life”, which Hassan embodies through his unwavering loyalty. Hassan’s actions align with Afghan proverbial wisdom that emphasizes sincerity, such as “The one who sows honesty reaps trust”. Despite suffering injustice, Hassan never deviates from his moral compass, unlike Amir, who struggles with guilt and cowardice. Rahim Khan’s famous words to Amir, “There is a way to be good again”, can also be seen as a modern reflection of Afghan wisdom, aligning with the proverb “Every night has a dawn”. This suggests that even after betrayal and wrongdoing, there is always a path to redemption, though it requires personal sacrifice and courage. The contrast between bravery and cowardice is another significant theme in «The Kite Runner», closely tied to traditional Afghan proverbs. Baba, despite his flaws, embodies the proverb “A brave man dies once, a coward dies a thousand times”, as he stands up for what he believes in, even when facing danger¹²⁸. Amir, however, initially follows the path of fear and hesitation, particularly in his failure to defend Hassan. This cowardice is in direct opposition to the Afghan ideal of standing up for justice, as expressed in the saying “A true friend does not let his friend suffer alone”. It is only later in the novel that Amir finds the courage to stand up for Sohrab, Hassan’s son, finally embodying the wisdom he failed to follow in his youth. Through these examples, «The Kite Runner» highlights how Afghan proverbs are not just phrases

¹²⁵ Sultanzada, Abdullah. *Afghan Proverbs and Their Meanings*. Kabul University Press, 2010.

¹²⁶ Gadoeva, M. I. (2023). Artistic expression of somatisms in English and Uzbek blessings. *Excellencia: International Multidisciplinary Journal of Education*, 3(1), 45-52.

¹²⁷ Mills, Margaret. *Rhetorics and Politics in Afghan Traditional Storytelling*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991, p. 87

¹²⁸ Nawabi, Mirwais. *Wisdom in Afghan Proverbs*. Herat University Press, 2007, p. 79.

but guiding moral lessons that shape character behavior and personal growth¹²⁹. The novel's themes of redemption, honor, and loyalty align with centuries-old Afghan wisdom, showing the enduring power of proverbs in defining human values. These proverbs function as moral compasses, reminding characters – and readers – of the importance of integrity, loyalty, and courage. Just as Afghan society values oral traditions for imparting wisdom, «The Kite Runner» uses storytelling to reinforce these lessons, making it a reflection of cultural heritage and ethical struggles.

The novel also explores the linguistic and cultural nuances of honor and friendship through proverbial wisdom. The Afghan saying “A faithful friend is the medicine of life” reflects the deep value placed on loyalty in Afghan society¹³⁰. Hassan embodies this principle unwaveringly, as seen in his famous words, “For you, a thousand times over”. His steadfast devotion contrasts sharply with Amir's initial cowardice, highlighting the consequences of failing to live up to these cultural ideals¹³¹. Through storytelling, the characters are able to process their pasts and find meaning in their experiences. This is particularly evident in Amir's transformation, as he ultimately becomes a storyteller himself, ensuring that the lessons of the past are not forgotten¹³². His decision to write his story aligns with the Afghan belief that wisdom must be shared to have true value. Linguistically, the novel also highlights the complexities of translating moral wisdom across cultures. Many of the Afghan proverbs used in the novel do not have direct English equivalents, yet their meanings are universally understood. This reflects the broader idea that while language shapes cultural values, the fundamental concepts of goodness, honor, and redemption transcend linguistic boundaries. The use of Persian and Pashto phrases throughout «The Kite Runner» reinforces the authenticity of the narrative, grounding it in Afghan cultural traditions. For instance, the phrase “life goes on” appears at key moments in the novel, serving as a reminder of resilience in the face of hardship. Through its exploration of linguistic and semantic richness, «The Kite Runner» illustrates how language defines goodness by embedding moral lessons within proverbs and storytelling traditions. The novel not only presents ethical dilemmas but also engages with Afghan cultural wisdom in a way that highlights the enduring power of language to shape human behavior. By weaving proverbs into the narrative, Hosseini preserves and amplifies these cultural teachings, ensuring that the moral insights embedded in

¹²⁹ Barfield, T. (2010). *Afghanistan: A cultural and political history* (pp. 102-145). Princeton University Press.

¹³⁰ Gadoeva, M. I. (2022). Courage and modesty as the attributes of moral value in the novel *The Old Man and the Sea*. *Buxoro Davlat Universiteti Ilmiy Axborotnomasi*, 4(86), 120-128.

¹³¹ Zafari, R. (2011). *The role of language in shaping moral values: A study of Afghan oral traditions* (pp. 115-178). University of Peshawar Press.

¹³² Ghani, A. (2006). *Cultural heritage and oral traditions of Afghanistan* (pp. 67-134). Oxford University Press.

Afghan oral traditions continue to resonate with readers across generations. Ultimately, the novel demonstrates that language is not merely a reflection of reality but a force that actively shapes it, influencing characters' decisions and guiding them toward redemption.

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