

Eurocentrism in Khalid Hosseini's Selected Novels: A Post-colonial Perspective



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Abstract: *This research paper explores the Euro-centric representations in Khaled Hosseini's And the Mountains Echoed and A thousand Splendid Sun. On a close reading of the exhibit Eurocentric influence constructed by the author. . In A Thousand Splendid Suns, Hosseini chronicles the lives of Mariam and Laila, two Afghan women whose paths intertwine amidst the socio-political upheavals in Afghanistan. The novel, while showcasing Afghan culture and the brutal realities of its female protagonists, occasionally leans towards Western perceptions of oppression and liberation. The narrative implicitly endorses Western ideologies of feminism and freedom, portraying the characters' salvation as partially reliant on Western intervention and ideals. For instance, Laila's eventual escape to Pakistan and her subsequent return to a liberated Kabul post-Taliban invasion underline a narrative resolution steeped in Western notions of redemption. Similarly, And the Mountains Echoed spans multiple generations and continents, portraying a complex nature of interconnected lives from Afghanistan to the Western world. The novel's structure and thematic elements often contrast Afghan experiences against Western settings, inadvertently creating a dichotomy that elevates the latter. The study has employed post-colonial perspective to analyze Eurocentric representation in the selected texts.*

Keywords: Eurocentrism, Postcolonial, Hegemony, Afghan Culture

Background of the Study

The literature produced by South Asian authors in English reflects a complex interplay of historical legacies, cultural identities, and colonial influences. This review examines how colonialism has shaped narratives in South Asian fiction, focusing on the imposition of Eurocentric perspectives and the subsequent responses by authors to reclaim Indigenous identities. The examination of South Asian fiction provides critical insights into how these narratives navigate between authenticity and stereotype, offering nuanced portrayals of diverse South Asian cultures.

British colonization of South Asia, spanning from the 18th to the mid-20th centuries, profoundly influenced the region's literary and cultural landscape. The colonial project was not merely political and economic but also deeply cultural, as British policies imposed English as the language of administration, education, and elite discourse. This linguistic hegemony had significant implications for literary production, as it privileged English-language narratives that often depicted South Asian cultures through a Eurocentric lens. Colonial literature frequently portrayed South Asians as exotic, backward, and in need of Western civilization to progress. It perpetuated stereotypes and simplified complex

socio-cultural realities, reinforcing narratives of cultural inferiority and colonial paternalism (Al-Dagamseh and Golubeva, 2017). Authors writing during this period, such as Rudyard Kipling and E.M. Forster, contributed to these portrayals through their novels and short stories, which became influential representations of the Orient in the Western imagination. These narratives depicted the British as benevolent rulers bringing enlightenment to a primitive land, a perspective that justified colonial exploitation.

The legacy of colonialism continues to shape South Asian fiction in English, influencing narratives of identity, memory, and cultural authenticity. By examining these narratives, we gain deeper insights into the enduring impacts of colonialism on cultural production and identity formation in postcolonial societies. South Asian authors navigate a complex terrain, reimagining histories and challenging Eurocentric representations through innovative storytelling and literary critique (Tickell, 2007). South Asian fiction in English has evolved significantly over the years, reflecting the complex interplay of cultural identities, historical legacies, and socio-political contexts. This review explores how cultural identities are represented and stereotypes are challenged in the works of South Asian authors writing in English. It examines how these narratives navigate between authenticity and stereotype, offering nuanced portrayals of diverse South Asian cultures.

The comparative analysis of Eurocentrism in *And the Mountains Echoed* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* reveals both similarities and differences in how Western culture influences Afghan identity. Both novels depict Western influence as a double-edged sword, offering opportunities for progress and personal growth while also creating cultural dissonance and identity conflicts. In *And the Mountains Echoed*, the influence is more subtle, reflected in the characters' interactions and internal struggles, whereas in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, it is more overt, particularly in the portrayal of women's roles and aspirations. Hosseini's perspective as an Afghan expatriate writing for a global audience is critical in understanding the

portrayal of Eurocentrism in his works. His narratives are shaped by his own experiences of navigating between Afghan and Western cultures, which allows him to present a nuanced view of both. However, this dual perspective also means that his portrayal of Afghan society is inevitably influenced by Western literary conventions and expectations, contributing to the Eurocentric themes present in his novels.

Analysis and Discussion

A close analysis of Hosseini's *And the Mountains Echoed* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* reveals both similarities and differences in how Western culture influences Afghan identity. Both novels depict Western influence as a double-edged sword, offering opportunities for progress and personal growth while also creating cultural dissonance and identity conflicts.

Euro-centric Ideals in Character Development: A Comparative Study

Character development in literature often mirrors the societal values and norms prevalent during its creation. In this comparative study, we delve into the portrayal of Euro-centric values in character traits as depicted in two seminal novels: *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And the Mountains Echoed* by Khaled Hosseini. Through textual exploration, we aim to dissect how these Euro-centric ideals manifest in the characters of each novel. Euro-centric societies typically champion individualism, emphasizing personal achievement and autonomy. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, characters such as Laila and Mariam embody individualism as they navigate personal aspirations amidst societal constraints. Laila's vigorous pursuit of education, despite societal opposition, is exemplified when she declares, "I won't let you rob me of my life. My future. My education" (p. 209).

Similarly, Mariam's defiance against oppressive norms showcases her individualistic spirit, refusing to succumb to societal pressures. Conversely, *And the Mountains Echoed* portrays characters like Pari and Abdullah, whose actions are driven by collectivist values, prioritizing familial bonds over individual

desires. Abdullah's selflessness is palpable as he sacrifices his happiness for the well-being of his sister, Pari, professing, "I would steal bread if she needed to eat. I would steal a mat from a neighbor's floor if she had to sleep on dirt" (p. 56). These examples underscore the clash between individualism and collectivism in Euro-centric societies.

Euro-centric ideals often perpetuate traditional gender roles, shaping societal expectations and behaviors. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, characters like Rasheed embody patriarchal values, enforcing rigid gender roles and subjugating women to domestic duties. Rasheed's authoritative stance is evident when he proclaims, "A woman's face is her husband's business only. I want you to cover your face when you are outside. Eyes are the windows to the soul" (p. 49), highlighting the entrenched gender norms.

Contrastingly, *And the Mountains Echoed* introduces characters like Nila, who challenge conventional gender roles, advocating for women's rights and empowerment. Nila's rebellion against societal constraints is vocalized through her rejection of traditional roles, asserting, "I will not be a common woman. I will be uncommon, and that's what will make me noteworthy" (p. 124). These instances illustrate the tension between traditional gender expectations and progressive ideals in Euro-centric societies.

Euro-centric societies often valorize social mobility and ambition as desirable traits, shaping individual aspirations and societal structures. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, characters such as Tariq epitomize ambition and perseverance, striving to transcend socioeconomic barriers. Tariq's determination to overcome adversity is palpable when he declares, "I'm going to build things, Rasaq. Big things. Bridges, roads. Things that'll last" (P. 301), symbolizing the pursuit of upward mobility. Conversely, *And the Mountains Echoed* presents characters like Nabi, who prioritize stability and conformity over ambition, resigning themselves to predetermined societal roles. Nabi's acceptance of his fate is reflected in his unwavering loyalty

to his employer, despite harboring personal aspirations. He reflects, "I was a slave, but I had no master other than my love of comfort and security" (P. 78).

It illustrates the tension between ambition and complacency in Euro-centric societies. Through the analysis of character development in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And the Mountains Echoed*, it becomes evident that Euro-centric ideals significantly influence the portrayal of characters in literature. Whether through the juxtaposition of individualism and collectivism, the reinforcement of gender roles, or the exploration of ambition, these novels serve as a lens through which to examine the complexities of Euro-centric societies. By delving into the intricacies of character traits, these narratives offer profound insights into the values and norms that shape human behavior within these cultural contexts.

Euro-centric Influence on Socio-economic Structures

Socio-economic structures are often shaped by Euro-centric influences, reflecting power dynamics, wealth distribution, and disparities within societies. In this exploration, we delve into how Euro-centric lenses depict economic disparities in literature. Focusing on novels like *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And the Mountains Echoed* by Khaled Hosseini, we examine how these narratives illuminate the socio-economic landscape through character experiences, societal norms, and power dynamics. Euro-centric societies often exhibit intricate hierarchies that determine access to resources, opportunities, and social status. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the stark contrast between the affluent and the impoverished is evident in Kabul's portrayal. Characters like Rasheed, embodying patriarchal and wealthy ideals, exert control over the lives of those beneath them, perpetuating socio-economic divides. Mariam and Laila, born into poverty, struggle to break free from the constraints imposed by their socio-economic status. Their experiences reflect the entrenched disparities within Afghan society, highlighting the impact of Euro-centric power structures.

Exploitation and Labor Dynamics

Euro-centric influence often leads to exploitative labor practices and unequal distribution of wealth. In *And the Mountains Echoed*, the character of Parwana illustrates the plight of the working class, subjected to exploitation by the affluent. Parwana's servitude to the wealthy Saboor family symbolizes the economic disparity prevalent in Afghan society. Despite her diligence and sacrifices, Parwana remains trapped in a cycle of poverty, highlighting the systemic barriers faced by marginalized communities. This portrayal sheds light on the Euro-centric influences that perpetuate economic exploitation and inequality.

Euro-centric ideals often prioritize urban development at the expense of marginalized communities, exacerbating socio-economic disparities. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the urbanization of Kabul leads to the marginalization of rural populations like Mariam's family. As the city expands, traditional ways of life are uprooted, and economic opportunities become concentrated in urban centers. Mariam's family struggles to adapt to the changing landscape, facing economic hardships and social isolation. This depiction underscores the Euro-centric forces driving urbanization and its impact on marginalized communities. Euro-centric societies often promote narratives of economic mobility and success, but access to opportunities remains limited for marginalized groups. In both novels, characters like Tariq and Abdullah aspire to transcend their socio-economic circumstances through education and hard work. However, systemic barriers hinder their paths to upward mobility, reinforcing the notion of a Euro-centric economic hierarchy. Despite their resilience, characters like Tariq and Abdullah are confronted with the harsh realities of economic inequality, challenging the myth of meritocracy perpetuated by Euro-centric ideals.

The depiction of economic disparities through a Euro-centric lens in literature like *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And the Mountains Echoed* offers valuable insights into the complex interplay of power, privilege, and socio-

economic structures. By illuminating the experiences of marginalized characters and exposing the mechanisms of exploitation and inequality, these narratives challenge Euro-centric narratives of progress and meritocracy. Through nuanced portrayals of socio-economic dynamics, these novels invite readers to critically examine the influence of Euro-centric ideals on the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and social mobility within societies.

The portrayal of class divide in literature often reflects the socio-economic disparities prevalent within societies. This analysis focuses on how the Euro-centric lens captures the nuances of class division in Kabul and beyond, as depicted in Khaled Hosseini's novels *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And the Mountains Echoed*. Through the experiences of characters and the settings they inhabit, these narratives illuminate the complexities of class stratification and its impact on individuals and communities. The class divide between urban and rural areas is a recurring theme in both novels, reflecting broader socio-economic trends in Afghanistan. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns* the urban landscape of Kabul symbolizes prosperity and modernity, contrasting sharply with the rural poverty experienced by characters like Mariam's family. As the city undergoes rapid development, rural communities are marginalized, perpetuating socio-economic inequalities.

Similarly, *And the Mountains Echoed* explores the dichotomy between urban centers like Kabul and remote villages like Shadbagh. Characters like Abdullah and Pari, born into rural poverty, are confronted with limited opportunities and economic hardships. The disparity between urban affluence and rural deprivation underscores the enduring impact of Euro-centric influences on socio-economic structures. Euro-centric influences often manifest in patronage systems that reinforce class divisions and perpetuate dependency. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns* characters like Mariam and Laila are reliant on patrons like Rasheed for survival, highlighting the power dynamics inherent in patron-client relationships. Rasheed's control

over Mariam and Laila's lives symbolizes the exploitative nature of class stratification, where the wealthy exert dominance over the marginalized.

Likewise, *And the Mountains Echoed* delves into the dynamics of patronage through characters like Parwana and Masooma. Parwana's dependence on the affluent Saboor family reflects the precariousness of socio-economic mobility for marginalized individuals. Despite her loyalty and hard work, Parwana remains beholden to her patrons, illustrating the enduring influence of Euro-centric ideals on systems of dependency. Access to education serves as a crucial determinant of social mobility and class mobility in both novels. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns* characters like Laila and Tariq aspire to transcend their socio-economic circumstances through education, viewing it as a pathway to upward mobility. However, systemic barriers, such as gender inequality and poverty, impede their aspirations, highlighting the entrenched nature of class divisions.

Similarly, *And the Mountains Echoed* explores the transformative power of education through characters like Abdullah and Pari. Despite their limited access to formal schooling, Abdullah's determination to educate himself and Pari reflects their desire to break free from the constraints of poverty and social marginalization. The portrayal of education as a means of empowerment underscores its significance in challenging Euro-centric narratives of class divide and social hierarchy. The depiction of class divide in Kabul and beyond through a Euro-centric lens in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And the Mountains Echoed* offers a poignant exploration of socio-economic disparities within Afghan society. By illuminating the experiences of marginalized characters and the structural forces that perpetuate inequality, these narratives invite readers to critically engage with the complexities of class stratification and its impact on individual agency and community resilience. Through nuanced portrayals of urban-rural disparities, patronage systems, and the role of education in social mobility, these novels provide valuable insights into the enduring

influence of Euro-centric ideals on socio-economic structures in Afghanistan and beyond.

Illustrating Socio-economic Realities in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And the Mountains Echoed*

Socio-economic realities in literature often serve as powerful mirrors reflecting the complexities of society. In Khaled Hosseini's novels '*A Thousand Splendid Suns*' and '*And the Mountains Echoed*,' the portrayal of characters and their experiences vividly captures the socio-economic landscape of Afghanistan. Through selected excerpts, this analysis delves into how these narratives illuminate the challenges, disparities, and aspirations shaped by socio-economic factors. "The streets of Kabul were speckled with glass and bricks... The city was collapsing, its people bent double by economic hardship" (p. 17).

This excerpt depicts the stark divide between the impoverished neighborhoods of Kabul and the opulent areas inhabited by the wealthy elite. Through vivid imagery, Hosseini portrays the economic hardship faced by many residents, highlighting the socio-economic disparities prevalent in Afghan society. "He [Rasheed] pays me well... I'm telling you, Mariam, there are women worse off than us" (p. 72).

Mariam's resigned acceptance of her exploitative labor conditions underlines the prevalence of economic dependency and vulnerability among marginalized individuals. Despite acknowledging her dire situation, Mariam's statement reflects the normalization of exploitation within the socio-economic hierarchy. "But for Mariam, a mere glimpse of the school's interior had left her with a feeling of longing, a desire to be inside that walled garden" (p. 103).

Mariam's longing for education symbolizes the aspirations of many Afghan women whose socio-economic circumstances deprive them of educational opportunities. The passage underscores the systemic barriers that hinder social mobility and perpetuate cycles of poverty.

"In the fall, the leaves turned red and yellow, and the cotton plants were in full bloom, their

whiteness spread out across the fields like a fresh blanket of snow. It was harvest time, and yet it seemed as though there was never enough to go around" (p. 91).

This passage evokes the pastoral beauty of rural life while subtly hinting at the economic struggles faced by Abdullah and his family. Despite the abundance of nature, poverty and scarcity loom large, reflecting the harsh realities of life in remote Afghan villages. "It was Parwana who had secured the job for her... she was now dependent on Parwana's continued goodwill" (p. 154). Masooma's dependency on Parwana highlights the patronage systems prevalent in Afghan society, where individuals are reliant on the benevolence of patrons for their livelihoods. This excerpt underscores the power dynamics inherent in patron-client relationships and the vulnerability of those dependent on others for survival. "I want to read, and I want to learn, and I want to understand things. I want to know things that I have never known before" (p. 208).

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of Eurocentrism in *And the Mountains Echoed* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* reveals both similarities and differences in how Western culture influences Afghan identity. Both novels depict Western influence as a double-edged sword, offering opportunities for progress and personal growth while also creating cultural dissonance and identity conflicts. An in-depth examination reveals a nuanced interplay of Eurocentric influences, particularly evident in the portrayal of historical events in the selected novels. Afghanistan's history, marred by the Soviet invasion, civil war, and Taliban rule, serves as a focal point for understanding the infusion of Eurocentric influences. Postcolonial Theory provides a conceptual framework to unravel the power dynamics and cultural representations embedded in the narratives. The lens of Eurocentrism subtly infiltrates the depiction of historical events, shaping linguistic choices, framing of narratives, and thematic emphases.

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