

Amir's Ethical Fretfulness in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*

Dasarath Neupane, PhD
English Department, Navodit College
Samakhushi, Kathmandu, Nepal
neupane.dasarath@gmail.com

Abstract

The aim of this paper was to explore and analyse Amir's ethical fretfulness in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner. It is found that a betrayal toward Hassan is the biggest source of fretfulness (anxiety) that is experienced by Amir. So that, ethical fretfulness which is experienced by Amir become the most dominant anxiety he gets. Meanwhile, the realistic and neurotic anxiety become the proof of Amir's source and reason of betrayal he did toward Hassan, although there is one realistic anxiety which correlates between Amir's guilt and Sohrab's suicide.

Keywords: anxiety, ethical, fretfulness

Introduction

Ethical fretfulness is an anxiety or the emotional response that appears when the ego threatened by punishment from the superego. A person experiencing a ethical fretfulness means he does not follow his superego which has already given him a true moral direction but prefers to follow his id for certain reason. Later, this anxiety leads the person experiencing the feelings of shame, guilt or self condemnation as the superego punishment. The concept of anxiety and fear has always been present in human history, but its scientific enquiry is deeply rooted in Freudian psychoanalytic theory (Freud, 1924). Freud distinguished between objective, neurotic and moral anxiety. Whereas objective anxiety refers to reactions to objectively dangerous stimuli (e.g. someone pointing a gun upon you), the other two types of anxiety are experienced, whenever the person's ego-defence is not strong enough to hold id-ego (neurotic anxiety) or id-superego (moral anxiety) conflicts outside of consciousness. Specifically, neurotic anxiety is a signal which indicates, that because of breakdown in ego-defence, the person might re-experience the repressed and unconscious psychological trauma (Pajkossy, 2014, p. 14). So, the dysfunctions of ego-defence results in a tendency to be frightened and anxious.

Anxiety involves a somewhat "diffuse" apprehension with no clear and present eliciting cue (Craig, Brown, & Baum, 1995; Stöber & Borkovec, 2002), and a "sense of uncontrollability focused largely on possible future threats, danger, or other upcoming potentially negative events" (Barlow, 2002). Ohman (2008) emphasizes also the temporal dimensions: fear is elicited by a present danger, whereas anxiety is anticipatory to threat cues.

Moral anxiety is a fear of his/her conscience. It happens because there is conflict between Ego and Superego. Similarly, it happens if we fail to do what we consider as a good thing according to moral value.

Amir's Ethical Fretfulness

Dealing with the definition of ethical fretfulness above, Amir as the main character in the story, seen as a character who experiences some moral anxieties after betraying Hassan for

his own purpose. Becoming an insomniac, cannot see the word Amir carved in Amir and Hassan's favourite pomegranate, feel guilty when uttering Hassan's name, being confused to judge Amir himself as a murderer of Hassan, are the example of Amir's ethical fretfulness in *The Kite Runner*. According to the explanation above, the first Amir's ethical fretfulness appears when he became a sleepless and tried to tell to anyone who sleep near him that he watched Hassan got raped by Assef. Being a sleepless, can be seen as the result of Amir's anxiety he got after letting Hassan got sexual harassment from Assef. In addition, Amir also said in his monologue, the reason he wants someone hear his confession is he hopes he would not have to live with that lie anymore. The sentence "would not have to live with that lie anymore" emphasizes the feeling of guilt Amir experienced after letting Hassan got raped by Assef and act as if he never knew what already happened with Hassan in the alley.

In addition, the ethical fretfulness Amir experienced which described by his insomniac, also shows Amir's general description as an anxious person. For, the insomnia Amir gets describe his uncomfortable feeling for hiding a rude fact such sexual harassment that Hassan got. Furthermore, this ethical fretfulness shows also an internal conflict Amir experienced about. "I watched Hassan get raped," I said to no one. ... A part of me was hoping someone would wake up and hear, so I wouldn't have to live with this lie anymore... That was the night I became an insomniac" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 75).

The second moment showing Amir's ethical fretfulness happened when Amir could not stand looking at the sentence Amir carved on the pomegranate trunk, stating, "Amir and Hassan : The Sultan of Kabul.". Yet the sentence, "Amir and Hassan: The Sultan of Kabul" represents the close friendship of Amir and Hassan.

The confession Amir makes, saying that he cannot stand to look at to the carving words, represents Amir's guilt and shame toward his betrayal he did to Hassan, as the words he ever carved on symbolizing the close friendship between them. In this moment, the feeling of shame and guilt Amir got, came from his ego which is punished by his superego.

Furthermore, the ethical fretfulness Amir got by cannot stand looking at the sentences he ever carved on the pomegranate's tree which is represented Amir's shame and guilt toward a betrayal he did to Hassan, also describes Amir's general description as a coward person. In addition, this Amir's ethical fretfulness shows too the internal conflict within him that makes him cannot stand looking at the sentences he craved on Amir and Hassan's favourite pomegranate's trunk. "The words I'd carved on the tree trunk with Ali's kitchen knife, Amir and Hassan: The Sultan of Kabul ... I couldn't stand looking at them now" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 76).

The third moment showing Amir's ethical fretfulness dealing with betrayal he did toward Hassan, happened when he was an adult and he suddenly uttered Hassan's name after for a long time he never did it anymore. Amir confessed to himself that by uttering Hassan's name he felt that the thorny old barbs of guilt bore into him once more.

The word "old barb of guilt" represents the old event of betrayal Amir did when he was boy which never could be erased and already made Amir guilty. Moreover, Amir described his guilt and anxiety by saying how the air in Rahim Khan's little flat suddenly was too thick and hot that made him could not take breath freely. Amir's difficulty breathing is an evidence Amir's anxiety. Difficulty breathing appears as one effect of heart palpitation as a physical

effect of anxiety. The difficulty breathing is caused by an abnormality of heartbeat that ranges from often unnoticed skipped beats or accelerated heart rate.

Besides that, the ethical fretfulness Amir got such feeling the air in Rahim Khan's flat becomes too thick and the feeling of guilt that bore into him after uttering Hassan's name hot after uttering Hassan's name, describes Amir's general description as an anxious person. Since the feeling of a thick and hot air, and guilt experienced by Amir, shows his lack of courage when Rahim Khan recalled Hassan to Amir. In addition, the symptom Amir got, such difficulty in breathing, shows the internal conflict arises within him. "Hassan," I said. ... Those thorny old barbs of guilt bore into me once more, ... Suddenly the air in Rahim Khan's little flat was too thick, too hot,..." (Hosseini, 2003, p. 176).

The last moment showing Amir's ethical fretfulness happened when Amir knew that Hassan already killed by The Taliban. In this situation Amir's ethical fretfulness appears in a form self-condemnation. Amir's self-condemnation can be seen when Amir thought that he could be one of the reason of Amir's death. Amir realized that he might have not brought the Taliban to the house to kill Hassan. But Amir thought that the condition might be different too if in the past Amir never sent Hassan out from his home and his life.

Furthermore, Amir's ethical fretfulness which is came to him by thinking that he can be called as Hassan's murderer, also shows Amir's general description as an anxious person. Because the way Amir shows his dilemma by thinking whether he can be assumed as Hassan's murderer too or not, represents his personality as a person who feels worry about something that is happening. In addition, this Amir's ethical fretfulness also shows the internal conflict that arises within him. "... I hadn't brought the Taliban to the house to shoot Hassan. But I had driven Hassan and Ali out of the house. ..things might have turned out differently if I hadn't?" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 198).

Conclusion

Dealing with the explanation above, it can be summed up that according to the source of Amir's betrayal and the act of Amir's betrayal toward Hassan, the consequences that Amir have to get is experiencing the realistic, neurotic and ethical fretfulness in his life. A betrayal toward Hassan is the biggest source of anxiety that is experienced by Amir. So that, ethical fretfulness which is experienced by Amir become the most dominant anxiety he gets. Meanwhile, the realistic and neurotic anxiety become the proof of Amir's source and reason of betrayal he did toward Hassan, although there is one realistic anxiety which correlates between Amir's guilt and Sohrab's suicide.

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