

Reconstruction of a Nation: A Reading of Khaled Hosseini's Fiction

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Abstract

A National narrative has the history of the nation within the stories. It also has characters which witness the political changes of the nation. They express their aspirations for their nation. Khaled Hosseini is an Afghan author who voices for his nation through his writings. The present study is an attempt to analyse the novels of Khaled Hosseini for its historical background.

Keywords: Geography, Invasion, Colonization, Civil War, Taliban, War Crimes.

Nation – A Historical Phenomenon

The nation is the largest effective community which is permeated by a common consciousness of a common kind. Sociological thinkers like Frederick Hertz, Schumna, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels recognize that the nation is distinctly a historical phenomenon. They equate nation with statehood and opine that people of a state are a nation.

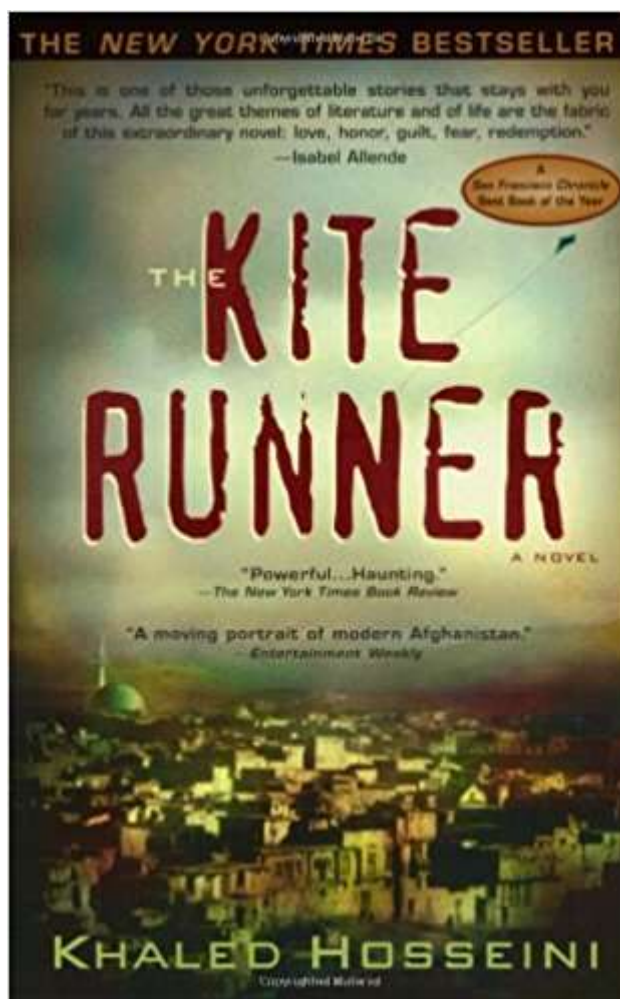
“The birth of a nation is an extra festival on the calendar, a new myth to celebrate . . . a country which would never exist except by the efforts of a phenomenal collective will except in a dream we all agreed to dream . . . a collective fiction in which anything was possible” (qtd. in Nayar 77). A nation is drawn, constructed on paper, and enforced through material forces like immigration offices, the military, passports and visas. It exists in the icons people adopt to believe in. Benedict Anderson rightly says that nation is imagination. The postcolonial writers are keen to bring out the collective voices of their nations which have long been suppressed.

Afghanistan

Geographically Afghanistan is small in area, about the size of France and its population is barely thirty million. Nevertheless, the terrain is spectacularly varied with mountains rising over 7000 meters and broad rivers feeding fertile valleys alternating with inhospitable deserts. Travelling around this landscape is difficult as roads are sometimes so poor that neither a horse nor a donkey can climb the precipitous trails. Thus, individuals often live and die in their home valleys unaware of the others around them. Yet, over the millennia a rich diversity of people has come to this land because it occupies a pivotal position at the hub where four civilizations meet. This centrality of place as a zone of intercommunication has attracted conquering armies, men of intellect, missionaries, pilgrims, traders, artisans, nomads and political exiles. Some merely passed through, others stayed and settled. It is in this reciprocal interaction of diverse influences that the medley of Afghan culture germinated.

Afghanistan is a landlocked country located in southern Asia. It shares no border with the sea. Its land borders include Iran on the West and Pakistan on the south and east. On the North, the Amu Darya River divides Afghanistan from the central Asian countries of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. Afghanistan also shares a short border with China in the northeast. Afghanistan

covers about 2, 50,000 square miles (647,500 square kilometers) an area about the size of the U.S. state of Texas. In *The Kite Runner*, the protagonist Amir says the geography of the nation as follows: “In Afghanistan, I had only seen the ocean at the cinema” (118).



Courtesy: <https://www.amazon.com/Kite-Runner-Khaled-Hosseini/dp/1594480001>

Internal Conflict

Since 1979, Afghanistan has been a place of conflict. In 1979, the former Soviet Union was trying to keep communism alive in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the United States trained the Afghan fighters to combat the Soviets to stop the spread of communism. The Afghans succeeded in pushing out the Soviets from their country in 1989. They then fought among themselves for the right to govern Afghanistan. In 2001, after the September 11 attacks, the United States sent troops to Afghanistan to help the Afghan groups to topple the ruling Taliban. Today, the Afghan people with the help of the international community are struggling hard to overcome the last twenty-five years of conflict.

Afghan History

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The Persian Empire took over Afghanistan around 500 BC. The Persians were nomads from present-day Russia who began to move into the area in 1000 B.C. They eventually ruled a large empire that extended from Egypt to India. The Persians ruled the present Iran.

When Alexander the Great invaded Persia and Afghanistan around 330 B.C Afghanistan became part of the Greek Empire. Alexander's empire was divided among several of his generals after his death in 323 B.C and on account of a lack of a strong central authority the empire weakened. The Mauryan Empire from northern India took over the areas of the Hindu Kush Mountains and they brought Buddhism to parts of Afghanistan.

The control of Afghanistan passed through several more rulers before the Kushans gained control of the area in 135 B.C. The Kushans were Buddhists. They carved huge statues of Buddha in the mountains of central Afghanistan. The characters in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* marvel at the Buddha statues. "The two Buddhas were enormous, soaring much higher. . . . Chiseled into a sun-bleached rock cliff" (TSS 145).

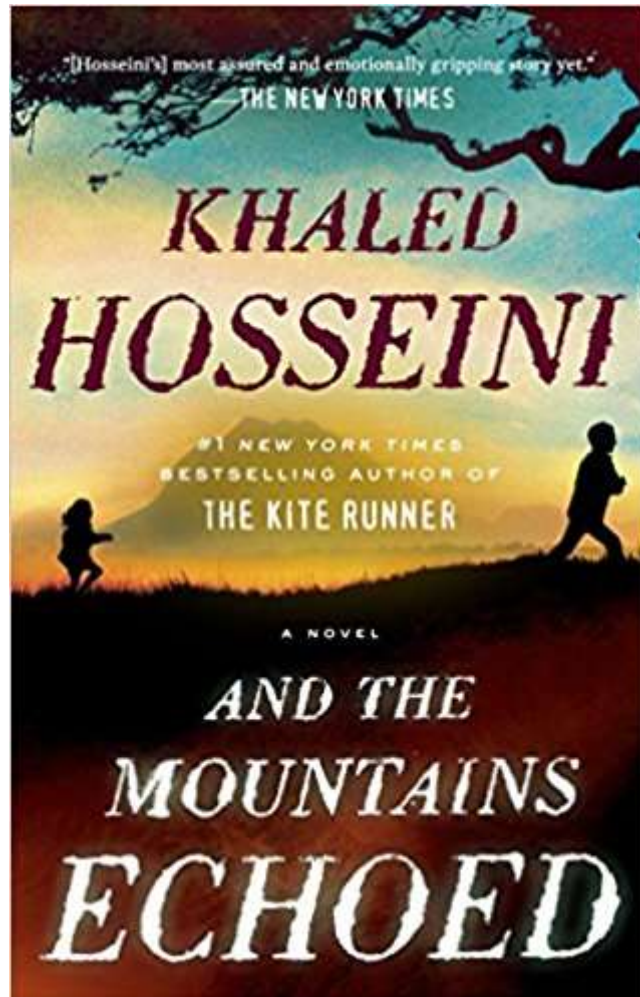
Several more groups gained control of Afghanistan after the Kushans, but the Arabs were the most influential. They began to invade the area in A.D 642. They brought Islam that spread rapidly across Afghanistan. Islam continues to influence Afghanistan's Government today. The shift from Buddhism to Islam got mentioned in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as "Bamiyan had once been a thriving Buddhist center until it had fallen under Islamic Arab rule in the ninth century" (145).

The Muslim Turks invaded the present-day Afghanistan in 999A.D. An important leader during this time was Mahmud of Ghazni. Art and learning thrived during his reign. He ruled an empire that stretched from Kabul to India. The Mongols led by Genghis Khan invaded the area from Mongolia in A.D 1219. They destroyed entire cities in their conquest. Genghis Khan tried to destroy the Islamic religion and culture but did not succeed. In the late 1200s the Italian traveller Marco Polo travelled through Afghanistan on his way to China. He wrote about the Mongol empire in his book *Description of the World* completed in 1298. "That is called Shahr-e-Zohak, the Red City. It used to be a fortress. . . . Genghis Khan's grandson attacked it in the thirteenth century, but he was killed. It was Genghis Khan himself who then destroyed it" (TSS 144).

By 1370 Timur another Mongol from Asia had taken control of present-day Afghanistan. Timur built a Muslim Empire and ruled until the early 1400s. Over the next 300 years many Kings ruled Afghanistan. One of the most important was Babur, a Muslim who founded the Mogul Empire in 1526. This empire was originally based in Kabul, but Babur later moved to Delhi to rule his huge empire. One of the characters in *A Thousand Rooms of Dream and Fear* exclaims the following, "Oh, if only I'd lived in the time of Babur, he would have planted half of the Kabul with vines just for me!" (43).

After Babur's death Afghanistan became caught in a tug-of-war between the Mogul Empire and the Safavid Dynasty of Persia for 200 years. These two powers fought over the land. The Persian king Nadir Shah eventually defeated the Mogul Empire in 1739. Ahmad Khan was the leader of Nadir Shah's personal bodyguards and an Afghan. He belonged to the powerful Pashtun tribe. When Nadir Shah was killed in 1747, Ahmad Khan fled to Afghanistan.

Ahmad Khan met the other tribal leaders near Kandahar. In October 1747, the tribal leaders declared him the king of Afghanistan. He renamed himself Shah, the Persian word for king. He founded a capital city at Kandahar and then set out to conquer India. By 1761, the Kingdom of Afghanistan reached from the Amu Darya River in the North to the Indian Ocean in the South. It also reached from Western Iran to the Indus River in Pakistan. Throughout his life, Ahmad Shah fought to expand his kingdom. He also fought many battles to maintain control of the different tribes within its borders. Ahmad Shah died in 1773.



Courtesy: https://www.amazon.com/Mountains-Echoed-Khaled-Hosseini/dp/1594632383/ref=pd_lpo_sbs_14_img_1?encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=2F0J5V52QTPCWZ9KEZ2E

Ahmad Shah's heirs to the throne were eventually defeated by a rival tribe led by Dost Muhammad in 1826. Dost Muhammad Shah ruled during the time of British and Russians fighting for Afghanistan. By the early 1800s both the Great Britain and Russia became interested in Afghanistan. Great Britain was afraid that Russia would invade British India by travelling across Afghanistan. Russia wanted a southern route to the sea. In 1809 Afghanistan signed a treaty with Great Britain to keep away the Russians from travelling through Afghanistan.

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In 1837 Persia invaded Western Afghanistan. Russia supported Persia. The British allied with the Afghans in Herat, Kabul, and Kandahar. The Afghan leader, Dost Muhammad asked the British to help him to regain the territory near Peshawar. As the British refused, Dost Muhammad decided to seek help from Russians. Britain did not want Russia in Afghanistan, the British invaded Afghanistan to keep the Russians out and it was the start of the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842).

The British captured Kabul and Dost Muhammad fled to northern Afghanistan. The Afghans soon rebelled against Great Britain in October 1842 and the British finally left Afghanistan. Dost Muhammad returned to lead Afghanistan and began to unite the different regions. When he died in 1863 his son Sher Ali became the leader.

In 1878 Sher Ali met with the Russian diplomats in Kabul. The British sent a group of diplomats too, but Sher Ali refused to receive them. The British returned with 40,000 soldiers and the Second Anglo-Afghan war (1878-1880) began. At the end of the war the Afghans agreed to allow Great Britain to handle their relationship with other countries. The following quote throws more light on this:

. . . a ridge called Tapa Maranjan and to the dome-shaped mausoleum atop it overlooking the city. He said Nader Shah, father to King Zahir Shah, was buried there. He showed them the Bala Hissar fort atop the Koh-e-Shirdawaza mountain, which he said the British had used during their second war against Afghanistan. (*AME* 35)

In 1893, the British set the modern borders of Afghanistan by the Durand Agreement. This border divided the land of the Pashtun tribes of Eastern Afghanistan and modern Pakistan. It was not a popular decision with the tribes.

In 1919, Afghanistan's ruler Amanullah Khan attacked India, a colony of United Kingdom to gain independence from the United Kingdom. This short battle was known as the Third Anglo-Afghan War (1919). In the Treaty of Rawalpindi, the United Kingdom agreed to give Afghanistan complete independence. Amanullah declared himself the king and introduced Afghanistan's first Constitution. The Constitution created courts, laws, and a legislature to replace the traditional tribal government. These changes upset the traditional leaders and religious leadership. They rebelled against the aggressive modern ideas Amanullah proposed. They forced Amanullah to leave the country in 1929. His government was based on traditional Islamic laws.

The next King of Afghanistan Mohammad Nadir was killed and his son Zahir became Shah. From 1933 until 1973 Afghanistan began to build its education system and industry. Northwestern farmers exported the famous Karakul lambskins. Kabul University was created in 1946. This is stated in the novel as follows: "In 1933, the year Baba was born and the year Zahir Shah began his forty-year reign of Afghanistan" (*KR* 21).

In 1973, Mohammad Daoud and the military helped the Soviet Union to overthrow Zahir Shah. Daoud declared the new Republic of Afghanistan. The common people of Afghanistan got confused. The chaos is presented in the novel *The Kite Runner* as follows: "What's a republic? . . . On radio they were saying the word 'republic' over and over again" (32). In 1978, the leaders of the

People's Democratic Party killed Daoud and formed a new Communist Government. Communism is a way of organizing a country and so all land, money, and industry belonging to the people are administrated by the Government.

In 1979 the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to keep the communist government in control. "The story of our country, one invader after another . . . Macedonians, Sassanians, Arabs, Mongols. Now the Soviets" (*TSS* 144). But the same time the traditional Afghan tribes formed an army to overthrow the government. These fighters are known as the Mujahedeen. It means defenders of Islam in Arabic. The United States, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan supplied weapons to the Mujahedeen. The Soviets were never able to conquer these determined fighters.

In 1988 the United Nations brought Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Soviet Union, and the United States together to bring peace. They signed an agreement that required the Soviet Union to withdraw from Afghanistan. The last Soviet soldier left Afghanistan in February 1989. Nearly fifteen thousand Soviet soldiers were killed. But more than one million Afghans were killed between 1979 and 1989.

In Afghanistan, there was a Civil War from 1989 to 1992. The Mujahideen represented many tribes and ethnic groups with different ideas of what form the government should take. In 1996 a group called the Taliban which means religious students wanted to give Afghanistan an ultra-orthodox system of Islamic laws and Government. By 1998 the Taliban controlled ninety percent of the country. Though they stopped much of the fighting they were still at war with a group of Mujahideen called the Northern Alliance.

The Taliban passed ultra-orthodox Islamic laws. This form of Islam was in conflict with the moderate form of Islam practiced by most Afghans. Men were expected to pray five times a day and grow their beards. Women could not work outside their homes. They were required to wear a veil and be escorted by a male relative when they went out. Girls were forbidden to attend school. The government strictly enforced these rigid rules. If women did not wear veil, they were beaten.

Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*

Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* deals with Afghanistan from the 1970s to the year 2002. During 1933-1973 Afghanistan was a monarchy ruled by King Zahir Shah. On July 17, 1973 when the king was on vacation, Mohammad Daoud Khan seized power. Mohammad Daoud Khan was Zahir Shah's cousin and a former Prime Minister of Afghanistan. Hosseini meticulously infuses history in the novel as he writes, "In 1933, the year Baba was born and the year Zahir Shah began his forty-year reign of Afghanistan. . . . Of July 17, 1973 . . . Kabul. . . . The King, Zahir Shah, was away in Italy. In his absence, his cousin Daoud Khan had ended the king's forty-year reign with a bloodless coup" (*KR* 32).

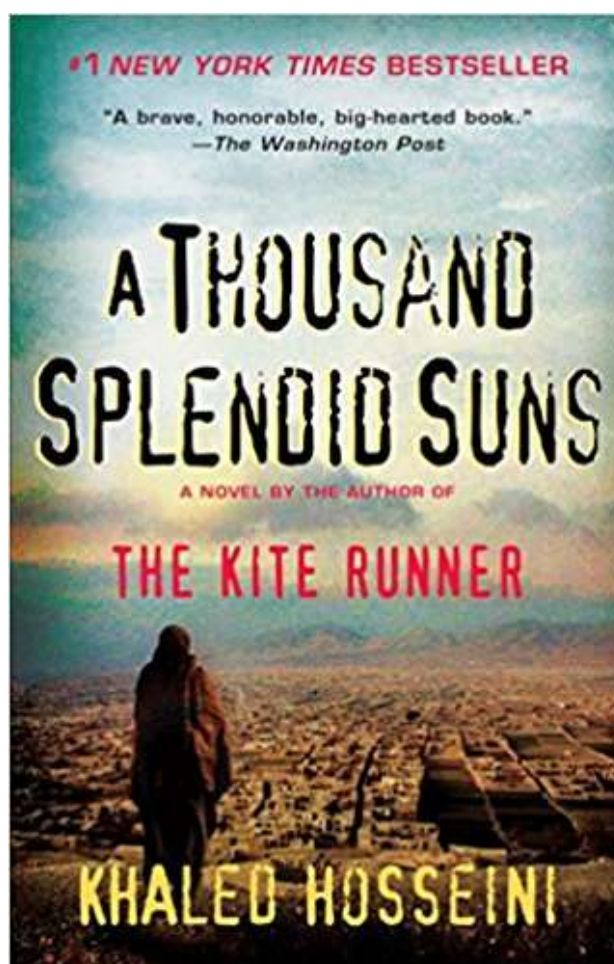
Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* presents history through three generation woman who are Mariam, Laila and Aziza respectively. The first-generation woman Mariam was born in 1969. In the summer of 1973 when Mariam was fourteen, King Shah who had ruled Kabul for forty years was overthrown in a bloodless coup. His cousin Daoud Khan did it while the king was in Italy getting medical treatment. "You remember Daoud Khan? I told you about him. He was Prime Minister in

Kabul when you were born. Anyway, Afghanistan is no longer a monarchy, Mariam. You see, it's a republic now and Daud Khan is the President" (*TSS* 23).

For six years Mohammad Daoud Khan was President and Prime minister of Afghanistan. Then on April 27, 1978 he was violently overthrown by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. Daoud was killed in the coup along with many members of his family. Even though Afghanistan had long insisted on maintaining its independence from Russia, the PDPA was a communist party which held close ties with the Soviet Union. Amir remembers the war in the pathetic way as follows, "Then in December 1979, when Russian tanks would roll into the way same streets where Hassan and I played, bringing the death of the Afghanistan I knew and marking the start of a still ongoing era of bloodletting" (*KR* 32).

The PDPA instituted many political and social reforms in Afghanistan including abolition of religious and traditional customs. These reforms incensed groups of Afghans who believed in adherence to traditional and religious laws. These fractions began to challenge the Government so rigorously that in 1979 the Soviet Army entered Afghanistan beginning an occupation that would last a decade. This is the historical point in *The Kite Runner* when Baba and Amir leave Afghanistan. Throughout the ten years of Soviet occupation internal Muslim forces put up resistance. Farid and his father, in *The Kite Runner* represent the Mujahidin or native men engaged in war for Islam. The United States was among the countries that supported the resistance because of its own anti-Soviet policies. When the Soviet troops finally withdrew in 1989 Afghanistan remained under the PDPA for three more years. In 1992, in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Mujahedin finally won Afghanistan and it was converted into an Islamic State.



Courtesy: https://www.amazon.com/Thousand-Splendid-Suns-Khaled-Hosseini/dp/159448385X/ref=pb_bxgy_14_img_2?encoding=UTF8&pd_rd_i=159448385X&pd_rd_r=AD2WVTT1SG9SZJCE5SQH&pd_rd_w=KjM8Y&pd_rd_wg=ASdQI&psc=1&refRID=AD2WVT1SG9SZJCE5SQH

In the years following the Soviet withdrawal there was a great deal of infighting among the rival militias, making everyday life in Afghanistan unsafe. In *The Kite Runner*, Rahim Khan describes the fear in Kabul during this time. He recalls:

The infighting between the factions was fierce and no one knew if they would live to see the end of the day. Our ears became accustomed to the rumble of gunfire, our eyes familiar with the sight of men digging bodies out of piles of rubble. Kabul in those days . . . was as close as you could get to that proverbial hell on earth. (185-86)

Taliban's Islamic State of Afghanistan

Mohammad Najibullah was the last President of Afghanistan before the Taliban coming to power. Taliban defeated him and came to power. They declared Afghanistan as the Islamic State of

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Afghanistan. Hosseini vividly describes the process by which Taliban's got hold of the country. Hosseini writes:

The Taliban had dragged Najibullah from his sanctuary at the UN headquarters near Darulaman Palace. They tortured him for hours then tied his legs to a truck and dragged his lifeless body through the streets. 'He killed many, many Muslims!' the young Talib was shouting through the loudspeaker. . . He punctuated his words by pointing to the corpses with his weapon. 'His crimes are known to everybody. He was a communist and a Kafir. This is what we do with infidels who commit crimes against Islam!' (TSS 269)

People Welcoming Taliban and Change of Situation

In 1996 the Taliban took control of Kabul. After so many years of insecurity and violence the people welcomed the takeover. Rahim Khan in *The Kite Runner* recollects how the ordinary people welcomed the Taliban. "We all celebrated in 1996 when the Taliban rolled in and put an end to the daily fighting" (KR 186). In the same novel Baba says, "They [Muslim extremist] do nothing but thump their prayer beads and recite a book written in a tongue they don't understand. . . . God help us all if Afghanistan ever falls into their hands" (KR 15). Baba's words are ironical as later Afghanistan fell into the hands of Taliban. They were a group of pashtun supremacists who banded together and took almost complete control of the country. Despite their warm initial reception, they soon made life in Afghanistan miserable.

Amir's Life in America

The protagonist of *The Kite Runner*, Amir's life in America does involve suffering especially due to Baba's death. But Baba's death is peaceful because America is a heaven free from violence. The violence under the Taliban in Kabul is shocking and sobering. Amir got a taste of violence when he and Baba were fleeing to Pakistan and Kamal's father committed suicide. However, nothing can prepare him for the extent of violence and sufferings in Afghanistan. One of the most graphic accounts is of the stoning at Ghazi Stadium. Like the rapes of Hassan and Sohrab, the event symbolizes the devastation of Afghanistan as a whole as once experienced by the Afghans.

Another very violent event is Amir's fight with Assef. At that time, Amir's pain made him feel happy and healed. He was repaying Hassan for all the violence he suffered on Amir's behalf. Amir's split lip though minor compared to his other injuries is more significant because it represents this feeling of closeness to Hassan. Yet that violence is not the answer to Amir's problems, nor does he understand just how deep its consequences run. When young Sohrab tries to kill himself, Amir understands that his nearly fatal injuries are nothing compared to the pain Sohrab and other Afghans have suffered. Ultimately, he finds out that the only way to heal the harm done to Hassan and Sohrab is to forgive him.

Violence Pervades in *The Kite Runner*

Even though Hosseini has stated that he wants to remind people of a peaceful Afghanistan he also exposes the sufferings the nation has experienced in a quarter century of conflict. Violence pervades in *The Kite Runner* even in the seemingly innocuous activity of kite fighting. Kite fighting is violent because it is a kind of battle as boys injure their hands when they participate. The fact suggests that Afghanistan has become a place where joy cannot exist separately without pain. Afghan memories of their homeland are tainted with agony. The entire novel centers on a single act

of violence, Hassan's rape and the sin Amir commits by pretending that violence did not occur. Symbolically Hassan's rape is echoed by Sohrab's rape decades later and by Afghan's continual rape by war and terrorism.

Mujahidin Leaders

Abdul Rashid Dostum leads Afghanistan's Uzbek community and also, he is a leader in the Afghan National Army. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was a leader of the Mujihadeen and a warlord. He was the Prime Minister twice during the 1990s. Dostum joining hands with Hekmatyar affected the lives of the ordinary people severely which are clearly presented in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*:

In January 1994, Dostum did switch sides. He joined Gulbuddin Hekmayar, and took up position near bala Hissar, the old citadel walls that loomed over the city from the Koh-e-Shirdawaza Mountains. Together they fired on Massoud and Rabbani forces at the Ministry of Defense and the Presidential Palace. From either side of the Kabul River, they released rounds of artillery at each other. The streets became littered with bodies, glass, and crumpled chunks of metal. There was looting, murder, and, increasingly, rape, which was used to intimidate civilians and reward militiamen. (246-47)

Migrating to Other Lands and Migrants' Pathetic Conditions of Living

Due to war many people in Afghan became exiles and migrated to other lands. The Civil War in Afghanistan left thousands of Afghan families homeless, more than two thousand civilians dead, and one lakh wounded. To highlight how the country is torn by war Hosseini depicts the killing of Giti in a bomb blast:

In the month of June, Giti was walking home from school with two classmates. Only three blocks from Giti's house, a stray rocket struck the girl. Later, that terrible day, Laila learned that Nila, Giti's mother, had run up and down the street where Giti was killed, collecting pieces of her daughter's flesh in an apron, screeching hysterically. (TSS 175)

Due to the civil war many became refugees. Nearly two million Afghans have taken shelter in Pakistan and Iran. To show the painful migration of innocent people, Hosseini depicts the migration and scattering of Laila's friends:

Hasina's family had fled in May, off to Tehran. Wajma and her clan had gone to Islamabad that same month. Giti's parents and her siblings left in June, shortly after Giti was killed. Laila did not know where they had gone – she heard a rumor that they had headed for Mashad, in Iran. . . . Everyone was leaving. And now Tariq too. (TSS 177)

After the Civil War, people were put in reservation camps. Amir in *The Kite Runner* comes to Afghanistan through Pakistan from San Francisco, California. He has witnessed the sufferings of Afghan refugees in Peshawar camp. "People living under scraps of cardboard. T.B, dysentery, famine crime. And that is before winter. Then it's frostbite season. Pneumonia. People turning to icicles. Those camps became frozen graveyards. . . ." (KR 209).

A Thousand Splendid Suns too pictures Afghans who were put in refugee camps. “Refugees lying about in the sun, their scores and stumps in plain view . . . a lot of kids died. Dysentery, TB, hunger . . . so many kids buried, there’s nothing worse a person can see. . . . My father didn’t survive that first winter . . . he said. That same winter his mother caught pneumonia” (327).

End of Civil War and the Emergence of Taliban

The civil war came to an end with the emergence of Taliban. The Taliban Movement started in autumn 1994 in a remote village in Afghanistan driven by the determination of a farmer turned cleric, the one-eyed Mullah Muhammad Omar. In fact, the Taliban were manipulated from the outset by Pakistan’s Inter- Services Intelligence which sought to extend Pakistani influence building on links between the Pashtun tribes on either side of the border.

The Taliban were educated in madrasses in Pakistan with the support of the Government. Then the Pashtun movement joined forces with al-Qaeda for the first time. There were several reasons for this. They are the memories of the joint combat against the Soviet invader, their common religious and ideological conventions, the personal ties that Osama Bin Laden established with Omar and the influx of funds from Qaeda’s networks in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. It is later found out that the Taliban supported the al- Qaeda for 9/11 attack. Joseph Collins avers in his book *Understanding war in Afghanistan* as follows:

The 9/11 commission concluded that through his relationship with Mullah Omar – and the monetary and other benefits that it brought the Taliban-Bin Ladin was able to circumvent restrictions, Mullah Omar would stand by him even when other Taliban leaders raised objections. . . . Al-Qaeda members could travel freely with in the country, enter or exit without visas or any immigration procedures. Purchase and import vehicles and weapons and enjoy the use of official. Afghan state-owned Arianna Airlines to courier money in to the country. (44)

The Taliban took the rule of Afghanistan in April 1992 and they changed its name as the Islamic State of Afghanistan. People welcomed it and they thought of it as a new dawn in their history. They thought that the new Government would “bring peace and order. . . . No more rockets! . . .” (KR 267). They celebrated it. “Everywhere, there were shouts; Allah-u-Akbar! Mariam saw a bed sheet hanging from a window on Jedeh Maywand. On it, someone had painted three words in big, black letters; ZENDA BAAD TALIBAN! Long Live the Taliban” (TSS 268).

The Taliban rule was very strict, and they announced that they were following Islamic ideology. People were announced through radios and loud speakers to follow Islamic rules strictly and if they fail to do so they will be punished severely. They compelled all to wear Islamic clothes that they are turban for men and burqa for women. Past times were not allowed. Singing, dancing, playing cards, playing chess, gambling, and kite flying were forbidden. Writing books, watching films and painting pictures were also denied. Praying five times a day became a must for all the citizens. During the Taliban regime the nation had no growth or development. Hosseini lists out the Taliban’s rigid activities:

Men wielding pickaxes swarmed the dilapidated Kabul Museum and smashed Pre-Islamic statues to rubble that is, those that hadn’t already been looted by the

Mujahideen. The University was shut down and its students sent home. Paintings were ripped from walls, shredded with blades. Television screens were kicked in. Books, except the Koran was burned in heaps, the stores that sold them closed down. The poems of Khalili, Pajwak, Ansari, Haji Dehqan, Ashraqi, Beytaab, Hafez, Jami, Nizami, Rumi, Khayyam, Beydel, and more went up in smoke. (TSS 273)

Danger to the World At Large

When the Taliban controlled Kabul, no one would listen to Ahmed Shah Massoud, the Tajik warlord based in the Panjsher valley who repeatedly warned that the Taliban and al-Qaeda were not just a danger for Afghanistan but for the world at large. He had to give his life for this. Secure in the belief that those western democracies can live within the current level of violence in Afghanistan, few people listened to those who drew attention to the danger of leaving a Taliban and al-Qaeda sanctuary in Pakistan. Yet the threat once again concerns the whole world. This is well expressed in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as follows:

Ahmad Shah Massoud had gone to France and spoken to the European parliament. Massoud was now in his native North and leading the Northern Alliance, the sole opposition group still fighting the Taliban. In Europe Massoud had warned the West about terrorist camps in Afghanistan and pleaded with the U.S to help him fight the Taliban ‘If President Bush doesn’t help us, he had said, he had said ‘these terrorists will damage the U.S and Europe very soon.’ (305)

Taliban Cruelties

The Taliban’s used God’s name for all their cruelties. Prostitutes were stoned to death. The Taliban asked the crowd to pelt stones at the person accused of adultery. They met out cruel and inhuman punishment for crimes.

Every sinner must be punished in a manner befitting his sin those are neither my words nor the words of my brothers. Those are the words of GOD! The Talib, looking absurdly like baseball pitcher on the mound, hurled the stone at the blind fold man in the hole. It struck the side of his head. The woman screamed again. The crowd made a startled ‘OH!’ sound. . . . (KR 236-37)

The Taliban became terrorists. Having received moral and material support from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, Taliban sought terrorism to achieve their ends. In Afghanistan, the Taliban insurgents were increasingly putting NATO forces on the defensive. The Pashtun Islamist rebels have gathered automatic rifles, rocket launchers and explosives. However, their guerilla combat is nevertheless gathering strength and covering more ground, which involves increasingly daring operations. Rasheed in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* says, “I had heard rumors that the Taliban were allowing these people to set up secret camps all over the country, where young men were being trained to become suicide bombers and jihadi fighters” (300).

9/11 Attacks

The 9/11 attacks and its aftermath are described at the end of *The Kite Runner*. After the events of September 11, 2001, the United States invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban. The end of *The Kite Runner* occurs in 2002, when a provisional Government was in place. It was in

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2004 the present president of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai was elected. Hosseini humorously remarks, “Hamid Karzai’s caracul hat and green chapan became famous” (*KR* 316). The ouster of Taliban from Afghan is portrayed in the novel. Hosseini observes:

Then one warm night in July 2002, the coalition forces have driven the Taliban out of every major city, pushed them across the border to Pakistan and to the mountains in the south and east of Afghanistan. ISAF, an international peacekeeping force, has been sent to Kabul. The country has an interim president now, Hamid Karzai. (*TSS* 377)

Natural Disasters

Along with terrorism and political turmoil, Afghans witnessed a lot of natural disasters which are recorded in the novels of Hosseini. In 1988 there was a drought. Hosseini writes, “all over the country, farmers were leaving behind their parched lands, selling off their goods, roaming from village to village looking for water. . . . The Kabul River, without its yearly spring floods, had turned bone-dry. It was a public toilet now, nothing in it but human waste and rubble” (*TSS* 287). Again in 2000 also there was drought. Hosseini pictures that as follows:

In the summer of 2000, the drought reached its third and worst year. In Helmand, Zabol, Kandahar, villages turned into herds of nomadic communities, always moving, searching for water and green pastures for their livestock. When they found neither, when their goats and sheep and cows died off, they came to Kabul. . . . (*TSS* 295)

Afghanistan seems to be the least developed country in the world. Famine is a bitter reality there. Hosseini’s touching description of the starvation in Afghanistan is fit to be quoted here:

Rice boiled, plain and white, with no meat or sauce, was a rare treat now. They skipped meals with increasing and alarming regularity. Sometimes Rasheed brought home sardines in a can and brittle, dried bread that tasted like sawdust. Sometimes a stolen bag of apples, at the risk of getting his hand sawed off. . . . Death from starvation suddenly became a distinct possibility. (*TSS* 299)

Since the fall of the World Trade Centre in 2001, the media has overwhelmed U.S. citizens with images of oppression in Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Due to the wide media coverage, the American invasion became an international topic. Hosseini writes, “Everyone is drinking, nearly everyone smoking, talking about the new war in Iraq, what it will mean for Afghanistan” (*AME* 142).

To Conclude

Hosseini and Rahimi give clear understanding of nation as a psychological feeling of the people of the country. People respect their national flag, emblem and so on. They select their leaders and try to follow the Constitution of their nation. They are ever ready to show their patriotic spirit for their nation. Each and everyone’s respect for their nation should not make them invade other countries. Hosseini and Rahimi are voicing for their weak nation Afghanistan against the war crimes of the developed nations.

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