

Chapter I. Trauma as a Guiding Thread in Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*

The present research primarily focuses on Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, a story of a young man who flees to America hoping to escape from great shame in the past. But he finds that only real escape from it is to fix his past mistake to the fullest extent. He confesses and expresses his intense desire to remove his past mistake. This novel is about the traumatic childhood that was spent by the main character Amir with his friend and half-brother Hassan. In childhood Amir once failed to rescue Hassan when he was bullied and raped by Assef and this guilt drives Amir to restlessness throughout his life. So, the present research tries to explore betrayal, confession and narrativization of trauma caused by the betrayal using the psychological and cultural perspectives which analyze the personality of the main character Amir as well as Baba, Hassan and other minor characters. In this novel, Amir confesses and narrativizes his trauma and tries to reduce the intensity of trauma caused by his betrayal of Hassan and gets more relief.

The Kite Runner is narrated by Amir, the son of a wealthy Afghan businessman, who immigrates to America with his father after the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. In America, Amir becomes part of the Afghan subculture in California, meets his wife Soraya, and becomes a successful author. But the guilt of not being able to prevent his friend Hassan from the assault and rape in childhood keeps haunting him. Eventually he returns to Afghanistan after he receives a letter from one of his father's friends named Rahim Khan, and discovers that Hassan had fathered a son, Sohrab, who was kidnapped by a member of Taliban. Amir undertakes to rescue Sohrab as an act of redemption for not preventing or speaking about the rape of Hassan when they were children. Although Amir views America as a place of redemption, there are hints of a barrier to full inclusion into American society.

Khaled Hosseini was born in Kabul, Afghanistan. After People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan seized control of the government in 1978 and Russia occupied Afghanistan

shortly thereafter, Hosseini's family decided to seek political asylum in the United States instead of returning to Kabul. They moved to San Jose, California where Hosseini graduated from high school and enrolled at Santa Clara University where he earned a bachelor's degree in Biology in 1988. The following year, he entered the University of California-San Diego's School of Medicine, where he earned a Medical Degree in 1993. While in medical practice, Hosseini began writing his first novel, *The Kite Runner* in 2001, which is all about personal conflict and tragedies.

Hosseini's memories of his childhood in peaceful pre-Soviet era Afghanistan as well as his personal experiences with Afghanistan's Hazara people led to the writing of his first novel, *The Kite Runner*. Lisa K. Winkler, Hekmat Sadat and Jerry Weiss in *A Study Guide to The Kite Runner* mention:

One Hazara man, named Hossein Khan, worked for the Hosseinis when they were living in Iran. When Khaled Hosseini was in third grade, he taught Khan to read and write. Although his relationship with Hossein Khan was brief and rather formal, Hosseini's fond memories of this relationship served as an inspiration for the relationship between Hassan and Amir in *The Kite Runner* (3).

This novel was published by Bloomsbury, London 2001, as the first novel of an Afghan which describes the story of an Afghan boy Amir. The novel describes how peaceful Islam is, how Afghan at that time was, the richness of Afghani culture although in other chapter tells about the culture in the United States. So, it presents the culture, the way of life, point of view and education of two different cultures and society. Thus, the novel tries to explore the cultural differences and its impact on human psyche. Furthermore, it talks about the experience of an Afghan boy in America and his confession and traumatic situation by remembering his past.

A humanistic and psychological reading of Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* offers a clear picture of how destructive and powerful guilt is and how effectively it damages the existing relationships; one could say that the words 'sin, guilt, and redemption' sum up the story of *The Kite Runner*. It is a tale of betrayal and redemption that rise above time and place while simultaneously remain firmly anchored against the chaotic setting of modern Afghanistan.

The main characters of the novel have sinned and everyone in one way or another is seeking redemption. The novel starts with Amir foretelling about ultimate sin in the winter of 1975 when Hassan gets raped and Amir chooses to do nothing. Furthermore, he tells us that he has been carrying the guilt even in America: "Looking back now, I realize I have been peeking into that deserted alley for the last twenty-six years" (1). Amir has been taking the guilt of his sins deep within his heart. This guilt comes back to haunt him throughout his whole life as vivid flashbacks.

Hosseini uses the plot structure to emphasize the theme of sin and redemption. As Amir retells the story of life, he weighs each event against his sin, his betrayal of Hassan. This guilt, Amir feels, is heightened by Hassan's righteousness, loyalty, and his willingness to sacrifice anything for Amir, "for you a thousand times over" (59). Amir promptly tries to bury and escape his guilt but finds he cannot. "It's wrong what they say about the past, I've learned, about how you can bury it" (1). Eventually his guilt drives him to insomnia. Amir seeks for ways to get relieved from his sin. He chooses to confess and narrate his story of guilt and betrayal upon his friend Hassan to reduce the intensity of trauma caused by the betrayal.

The Kite Runner has attracted many critics to review about it. In other words, Khlaed Hosseini's novel has drawn the attention of the numerous scholars and critics since its publication in 2001. There are some critics who have proposed that the novel depicts the historical ground realities of the then Afghanistan. According to Willy Williams, "*The Kite*

Runner is seemingly a simple novel, telling about implicit social stratification and social message” (1). He explains that the subject matter is about a social class namely Pashtun (high class) and Hazara (low class). He further adds, “It was the real social condition of Afghanistan felt directly by the author, and about culture in the United States already felt too by the author” (1). Indeed, according to Willey, this novel focuses on stratification class between Phastun and Hazara, the contradiction between the United States and Afghani culture implicitly.

Grant Andrew analyzes the extrinsic element of the novel, including the biography of author and how he creates this novel. Andrew says, “...although I close my eyes with the intrinsic element, this novel still is the great one” (2). He further tries to relate this novel with the 9/11 attack in America. He writes:

One of the novels dealt with in Chapter Two s Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner*, which presents the 9/11 attacks in a brief postscript to the main narrative of the novel, not showing how the identity of the Afghan protagonist Amir is affected in the wake of the attacks. However, the events of 9/11 have allowed for the novel to gain new relevance by popularizing the terms “Taliban” and fundamentalism” which are dealt with in Hosseini’s narrative, and propelling Afghanistan into the popular consciousness. 9/11 becomes a space of resolution in this novel, where difficulties of identity and representation for Amir and his own conflict with terrorism are cathartically highlighted through his adoptive home America’s newly formed War on Terror. (4)

Andrew's criticism on Hosseini’s novel focuses on the 9/11 attack in America and the protagonist offers two contrasting understandings of fundamentalism, using the lens to understand the terrorist figure and American society respectively. The construction of power

for both the American society and the terrorist is argued to be located in images which are linked to masculinity: money, sport, militancy, sex, and religious devotion.

A journal for mental health care professionals G. Pearson has cited, “*The Kite Runner*’s ‘clinically pertinent themes,’ and not-for-profit organizations serving refugees have recommended the book for anyone wishing to better understand the plight of displaced persons” (66). Hosseini himself insists that the message of both book and film was “tolerance, love, friendship and forgiveness. . . .It denounces bigotry; it denounces violence, and hatred and discrimination. I don't think anyone who walks out of that film does not understand that” (qtd. in Cadelago 5). In this way, Hosseini exposes the love between two great fellows whose mutual friendship is crumbled down due to the misunderstanding.

In this novel, the main character, young Amir fails to accept himself fully because he has made a mistake in his childhood. It makes him restless and guilty. So, when he knows there is a way to pay for his error, he does. He realizes that he must redeem himself for what he did to Hassan. Kristina V claims:

The novel allows readers to reflect on when and why they may have acted selfishly and caused harm towards someone else to satisfy their desires. The *Kite Runner* exemplifies many situations where characters develop their identities based on relationships and incidents that occurred during those relationship. (111)

It seems that getting married helps Amir forget about his guilt for some time but when Rahim Khan sends a letter to him, the guilt floods back along with insomnia.

Though the text has been analyzed from various perspectives, psychological and cultural approach through trauma study in case of betrayal, confession and narrativization of trauma has not been applied yet. The main characters in the novel have betrayed their fellow beings in one way or other and they have struggled to correct their past mistakes by

confessing their sins and narrativizing their trauma. Thus, there exists a strong need to carry out research on this from a new perspective. Without proper study on this issue the meaning of text will remain incomplete. Taking this fact in consideration, the present research proposes to carry out the research from the perspective of trauma studies by highlighting the issues related to trauma in the characters. For this, the present research attempts to analyze childhood traumatic disorder in the main character Amir through psycho-cultural perspective.

The term trauma, in general, refers to an emotional wound or shock that creates substantial damage to the psychological development of a person. It is a shock shown by the abnormal mind to the body and provides a method of interpretation of disorder, distress and destruction aroused by psychological repression. Peter Suedfeld defines trauma as "the disorders caused by experiencing, witnessing, or learning about death, injury, serious harm, and so on." (850) Trauma studies includes many fields, focusing on psychological, philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic questions about the nature and representation of the traumatic events. This concern of trauma theory "ranges from the public and historical to the private and memorial" (Luckhurst 497). Trauma is physical as well as psychological wound that causes terror and shock; yet, such wound is not only the cause of individual's memory but also the affection of political, social, and cultural aspects of the society because "trauma paradoxically becomes the basis for collective and/or personal identity" (LaCapra 724). So, this thesis tries to depict the traumatic experience of the main character Amir during his stay in America.

Cathy Caruth in her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* is concerned principally with question of references and representation: how trauma becomes text, or how wound becomes voice. According to Caruth, "the term trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (3). Caruth sketches a theory of

trauma as instigator of historical narrative which describes the intersection among traumatic narratives. Caruth adds:

In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena (11).

Caruth argues that trauma is incomprehensible. Traumatic narrative, then, is strongly referential. The impact of major traumatic events is never identical to any two persons and trauma manifests where political and psychological forces fuse.

Regarding the matter of trauma theory, E. Anne Kaplan in the essay “Why Trauma Now?” focuses on trauma culture. The memories of recent catastrophes implicate back into the trauma of industrial warfare, totalitarian atrocities, and the annihilating speed of modernization that, along with imperial invasion and colonial subjugation, demolished traditional cultures. Supporting the idea of trauma memory as Caruth explains, Kaplan argues:

In arguing that trauma is a special form of memory they stated that in trauma the event has affect only, not meaning. It produces emotion --terror, fear, shock -- but perhaps above all these destruction of the normal feeling of comfort. The meaning making one, namely, the cerebral cortex, remains shut down because the affect is too much to be registered cognitively in the brain. Caruth, taking this theory for granted, argued that just because the traumatic experience has not been given meaning, the subject is continually haunted by it in dreams, flashbacks, hallucination. (34)

Moreover, about the memory she further adds the idea of Sushana Radstone. She views:

...memory is the outcome of complex processes of revision shaped by prompting from the present, whereas trauma theory posits the linear registration of events as they happen, albeit such registration may be secreted away through dissociation.(109)

Radstone talks about the role of memory in trauma. She posits the linear registration of the memory in the mind of the people caused the traumatic disorder.

Using psychological and cultural trauma and its effect on human psychology especially in the migrated person, this research tries to draw a complete analysis of *The Kite Runner* in regard to its central character's quest for redemption. To redeem literally means to save something from the loss or to make it good again. Redemption suggests, when something goes wrong, it can be changed, corrected, and brought back to its original condition. It focuses, therefore, on corrective action or reform. It requires an exchange to achieve the correction; people need solid action to intervene in such situation so that they can achieve redemption.

The only way to redeem oneself from sins of the past is to atone for them. The idea of redemption is what makes *The Kite Runner* so amazing and beautiful, the idea that no matter how stupidly people act or how selfish people can be, they can right their wrong by owning up to their past mistakes. The novel is based on the basic human nature which has tendency of committing mistakes. However, there is always chance to correct mistakes and crimes committed in the past.

In this novel *The Kite Runner*, the feeling of injustice and sin made towards Hassan in the past compels Amir to get haunted by his cowardly actions and disloyalty even after he and his father fled to America. In part, it is these demons and his impossible quest for forgiveness that bring him back to his country Afghanistan from America.

Amir is an Afghan boy who had a privileged childhood in the Wazir Akbar Khan neighborhood of Kabul. The defining event in his life is his betrayal of his close friend, Hassan. Amir lives in San Francisco from the age of eighteen. He returns to Afghanistan at the age of thirty-eight and ends up adopting Hassan's orphan son, Sohrab. And Hassan was Amir's most loyal friend and half brother and a devoted servant, who was born with a cleft lip. He and Amir were nursed by the same woman and unbeknownst to them both, they are half-brothers. Hassan is illiterate but smart and stands up for others. He is also one of the best 'kite runners' in Kabul. He dies at the hands of the Taliban defending Baba's house from takeover.

Hosseini invokes the awful feeling of guilt that childhood wrong-doing can induce the fear that one is forever branded as the result of one's actions. In fact, from Kabul to California, where he and Baba make their home in the 1980s after a tough escape from Afghanistan, Amir is never free from the burden of his sin. The love of a good woman and astonishingly rapid success as a novelist cannot rescue him. Atonement lies only in a return to his native city in the summer of 2001, and a remarkable mercy mission.

The Kite Runner is warm with the sense of old Kabul and the Afghan community in exile, drawn from the author's experiences. The smell of lamb kebab, the endless glasses of tea, storytelling beneath the pomegranate tree, and the kite tournaments of the title are simply and powerfully evoked. The facts of Afghan courtship are captured in a San Jose flea market, as Amir first approaches his beloved: "Up to that point, our encounter could have been interpreted as a respectful inquiry. But I'd asked her a question and if she answered, we'd be - well, we'd be chatting. Me a mojarad, a single young man, and she an unwed young woman" (46).

These types of confessions are expressed by Amir in the overall novel. In America, Amir remembers his life when he was in Afghanistan and his past mistakes and betrayal to

his friend Hassan. His past always haunts him in his present life. So, he wants to get rid of it. So, for redemption from such past mistake, he adopts the son of Hassan and starts to live his rest life after Hassan's death from the hands of Taliban.

The objectives of the study are to highlight the past mistakes and sins which directly impact on the psyche of the general people. Through the critical analysis of Amir's journey from Afghanistan to America and again back to Afghanistan, this research aims at exploring the psyche of the people and the efforts made by them to redeem from such past traumatic events. Although, this study makes significant use of concept developed in trauma scholarship, it does not offer a comprehensive analysis of trauma theories. Rather an analysis of understanding trauma studies remains the primary tool of analysis.

This research has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter presents an introductory outline of the novel's issues, its problems, and a short account of Khaled Hosseini's life along with the reviews on *The Kite Runner* from different critics. Moreover, it gives a bird's eye view of the entire work. The second chapter analyses the novel *The Kite Runner* by highlighting the traumatic experiences recollected by Amir during his stay in America from the perspective of trauma theory. So, this chapter tries to prove the hypothesis of the study – as Amir, the protagonist in Khaled Hosseini's novel confesses and narrativizes his trauma; he reduces the intensity of trauma caused by his betrayal over Hassan and gets some relief. Finally, the third chapter sums up the main points of the present research and finding of the research.

Chapter II. Trauma in *The Kite Runner*: Betrayal, Confession, and Narrativization

The Kite Runner is the story of Amir, a Sunni Muslim, who struggles to find his place in the world because of the after-effects and fallout from a series of traumatic childhood events. An adult Amir opens the novel in the present-day United States with a vague reference to one of these events, and then the novel flashes back to Amir's childhood in Afghanistan. Amir thus remembers his day in Afghanistan when he was twelve:

I remember the precise moment, crouching behind a crumbling mud wall, peeking into the alley near the frozen creek. That was a long time ago, but it's wrong what they say about the past, I've learned, about how you can bury it. Because the past claws its way out. Looking back now, I realize I have been peeking into that deserted alley for the last twenty-six years. (1)

This is the beginning of the novel. Amir remembers his past day in Afghanistan and his happy life but he says the life in America is deserted to him.

Trauma refers to the psychological tension created by the past and its after-effect. Psychological trauma is the unique individual experience of an event or enduring conditions in which "the individual's ability to integrate his/her emotional experience is overwhelmed or the individual experiences (subjectively) a threat to life, bodily integrity, or sanity" (Pearlman and Saakvitne 60). Amir's romantic past in Afghanistan always haunted him in America. In this sense, he is in great psychological tension because of his playful past and betrayal to his best friend Hassan. He regrets now because he lied to his father that Hassan was a thief who stole the birthday present offered by Amir's father. It is all due to the ethnic familiarity because Hassan and Amir are from different ethnic background.

In addition to typical childhood experiences, Amir struggles with forging a closer relationship with his father, Baba, with determining the exact nature of his relationship with

Hassan, his Shia Muslim servant, and eventually with finding a way to atone for pre-adolescent decisions that have lasting repercussions.

Betrayal of Trust in *The Kite Runner*

It is traumatic memory of an event and also the effect of cultural, political, and religious practices that force subjects to support their political desire which are stored in the unconscious mind. They may want to articulate it in any forms such as dreams, verbalization and narrativization. The memory of recent catastrophe implicates back into the trauma of industrial warfare, totalitarian atrocities, and the annihilating speed of modernization that, along with imperial invasion and colonial subjugation, demolished traditional cultures.

Jenny Edkins in “Trauma and the Memory of Politics” describes of such shattering of person relating with trauma in this way:

Trauma can be seen as an encounter that betrays our faith in previously established personal and social world and call in to question that people have arrived at in order to continue with day to day life . . . when the community of which we consider ourselves member turns against us or when our family is no longer source of refuge but assign of danger. (169)

So, trauma or traumatic encounter reveals the way in which social order is radically incomplete and fragile. It shows the most painful way that social reality is nothing more than a fantasy as Amir’s construction of morality and justice got by the worthless betrayal of Hassan.

The events of betrayal started from the kite fighting events. When Amir knows that Hassan is from the different ethnic background, he starts betraying his best friend. In an encounter with Assef, the local bully, Amir comes to know that Hassan is from different ethnic background. Assef tells Hassan that he is not really Amir’s friend, but his servant. Assef and his friends start beating Hassan as Amir crouches behind the wall, watching

because Amir is too afraid to step in. The horrible situation of Amir is described as follows in the novel:

I stopped watching, turned away from the alley. Something warm was running down my wrist. I blinked; saw I was still biting down on my fist, hard enough to draw blood from the knuckles. I realized something else. I was weeping. From just around the corner, I could hear Assef's quick, rhythmic grunts. I had one last chance to make a decision. One final opportunity to decide who I was going to be. I could step into that alley, stand up for Hassan – the way he'd stood up for me all those times in the past – and accept whatever would happen to me. Or I could run. In the end, I ran. (65)

Then Amir realizes that he cannot live with Hassan anymore because Hassan is from different ethnic background and also perhaps because of his guilt. So, Amir leaves Hassan in the lane. Along with the passage of time, perhaps because of his guilt, Amir never tells Hassan what he saw and what happened in the alley.

He thinks about the conspiracy to go away from Hassan. Finally Amir succeeds to make conspiracy against Hassan. Amir plants a bundle of cash and his watch under Hassan's mattress, counts as Amir's two major betrayals of Hassan.

Then I took a couple of the envelopes of cash from the pile of gifts and my watch, and tiptoed out. I paused before Baba's study and listened in. He'd been in there all morning, making phone calls. He was talking to someone now, about a shipment of rugs due to arrive next week. I went downstairs, crossed the yard, and entered Ali and Hassan's living quarters by the loquat tree. I lifted Hassan's mattress and planted my new watch and a handful of Afghani bills under it. I waited another thirty minutes. Then I knocked on Baba's door and told what I hoped would be the last in a long line of shameful lies. (87)

People do terrible things in order not to do any other more terrible things. This bizarre logic guides Amir. In order not to lie anymore, Amir needs Baba to fire Hassan and Ali.

I flinched, like I'd been slapped. My heart sank and I almost blurted out the truth. Then I understood: This was Hassan's final sacrifice for me. If he'd said no, Baba would have believed him because we all knew Hassan never lied. And if Baba believed him, then I'd be the accused; I would have to explain and I would be revealed for what I really was. Baba would never, ever forgive me. And that led to another understanding: Hassan knew. He knew I'd seen everything in that alley, that I'd stood there and done nothing. He knew I had betrayed him and yet he was rescuing me once again, maybe for the last time. I loved him in that moment, loved him more than I'd ever loved anyone, and I wanted to tell them all that I was the snake in the grass, the monster in the lake. I wasn't worthy of this sacrifice; I was a liar, a cheat, and a thief. (88-9)

The readers find it quite sad that Ali, though no fault of his own gets caught up in Amir's guilt and jealousy. Seriously, Ali is even more innocent than Hassan – Ali had no part in the alleyway incident and has served Baba faithfully throughout his whole life. Amir is right about one thing: If Baba knew the extent of Amir's deception, he would disown Amir. In other words, if Baba knew Amir planted the watch and cash, and that Amir abandoned Hassan when Hassan really needed him, Baba's rage would know no bounds. Amir *never* tells Baba what happened to Hassan, or reasons behind Ali and Hassan's departure. Even after Amir and Baba arrive in America, Amir does not confess his misdeeds. Even when Baba is on his deathbed, Amir remains silent. Rather he says he's "... glad this would all be over with soon" (89).

In this connection, the critic Edward Hower also stresses on betrayal in the name of friendship. Amir betrays his loyal friend Hassan in the name of ethnic difference. He

describes, “In *The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini gives us a vivid and engaging story that reminds us how long his people have been struggling of the violence- forces that continue to threaten them even today” (4). It recapitulates Afghan history and its long effects on civilian; however, he agrees the novel depicts the betrayal of friendship. He further adds:

Political events even as dramatic as the once that are presented in *The Kite Runner*, are only the part of this story. A more personal plot, arising from Amir’s close friendship with Hassan, turn out to be the thread that ties the book together. The fragility of this friendship symbolizes by the kites the boy fly together, is tested as they watch their old way of life disappear. (4)

In this way, Hower evaluates this novel as a novel which deals with the friendship between two boys who are from different culture and how their friendship changes into enmity. He praises the novel for its detailed descriptions of life in Kabul in the 1970s: "Hosseini's depiction of pre-revolutionary Afghanistan is rich in warmth and humor but also tense with the friction of different ethnic groups" (4). He also notes how the class distinctions between Amir and Hassan make their relationship all the more vulnerable: "Amir is served breakfast every morning by Hassan; then he is driven to school while his friend stays home to clean the house"(4). This class distinction between two friends becomes the hindering factor for their relationship later. It changes the psychological shape of the children. Society constructs the class distinction. As described by Michael Harrish Bond in his article, "culture as educator, as motivator, as roadmap, as coordinator and as legitimizer of the evil we do in the name of good. Culture provides the plausibility structures"(27). Every human activity is the consequences of culture. The act of Amir of not choosing to protect Hassan from being raped is what his culture teaches him and act of Hassen being silent and loyal throughout his life is what his culture teaches him.

The story of betrayal is not only the betrayal of Amir to Hassan; it also evokes the betrayal of Baba to Amir, Hassan, and Ali. Baba never reveals that Hassan is his son. Later, it is revealed by Rahim Khan. The following lines are the evidence for betrayal:

"Did Hassan know?" I said through lips that didn't feel like my own. Rahim Khan closed his eyes. Shook his head. [...] "Please think, Amir Jan. It was a shameful situation. . [...] We couldn't tell anyone, surely you can see that." He reached for me, but I shed his hand. Headed for the door. [...] I opened the door and turned to him. "Why? What can you possibly say to me? I'm thirty-eight years old and I've just found out my whole life is one big fucking lie! What can you possibly say to make things better? Nothing. Not a goddamn thing!" (181)

Rahim Khan tells Amir about Baba's betrayal of him, Hassan, and Ali. Here is the story: Baba slept with Sanaubar, Ali's wife, and fathered Hassan. But Baba never told Amir or Hassan about it. Readers wonder that if Rahim Khan's revelation makes life easier or harder for Amir. Amir sees, for the first time, the similarities between himself and his father. Now he knows he was not the only one walking around with a secret guilt. But does this really help Amir? Is it comforting at all to know his father who made similar mistakes? Amir's betrayal of Hassan brings him closer to Baba in ways he could not have predicted. Although the two do not share the same secrets, they do share the secrecy of guilt.

In America, Amir meets Soraya, daughter of Baba's old friend General Tehari. Days later, Baba arranges Amir's engagement to Soraya. Soraya worries that her past - she ran away with a man and lived with him for a month- will cause Amir not to marry with her.

When we lived in Virginia, I ran away with an Afghan man. I was eighteen at the time... rebellious... stupid, and... he was into drugs... We lived together for almost a month. All the Afghans in

Virginia were talking about it. [.....] “Does it bother you enough to change your mind?” “No, Soraya. Not even close,” I said. “Nothing you said changes anything. I want us to marry.” She broke into fresh tears. (132)

And finally Amir and Soraya get married. Hence, Soraya, Amir's wife also betrays a man.

Hosseini illustrates a powerful story of betrayal to demonstrate the forever-ongoing imbalance of the hopeful and hopeless. By presenting the story with the symbol of the kite, the pomegranate tree, and Hassan's harelip readers get a unique concept of the characters motivation and conflicts, as well as the underlining meaning of horror.

First, having been breast-fed by the same women, Amir and Hassan grew up together forming a rare bond, which was not seen as friendship, but nevertheless a tie that connected them running blood deep. “‘Hassan!’ I called. ‘Come back with it!’” (67). He was already turning the street corner, his rubber boots kicking up snow. He stopped, turned. He cupped his hands around his mouth. The kite was meant to symbolize the companionship of the two boys though Hassan's loyalty is proven nearly every day Amir's guilt pushes himself to sever their relationship like that of the kite he cuts in the sky.

Secondly, the pomegranate tree from Amir's and Hassan's youth stood sturdy and inviting at the top of a hill symbolizing the old Afghanistan--life before the Russian's and the Taliban's arrived. In those days the tree had borne delicious fruit, which they would devour endlessly while straddling the strong branches, and reading riveting tales and adventures. Though many years later Amir returns to his beloved country to discover that the tree is much like everything else from his childhood, dead. He recollects, “‘Hassan had said in his letter that the pomegranate tree hadn't borne fruit in years. Looking at the wilted, leafless tree, I doubted that I ever would again’” (277). Like the tree, the country had once thrived in peace, but plugged into turmoil from Taliban's rule, replacing honor and pride, with “Stoning

adulterers? Rapping children? Flogging women for wearing high heels? Massacring Hazzaras?" (297-298).

Hassan's harelip, the deformity on his face, symbolizes the scar on their relationship, and Baba's motive to fix and help everything he can to make amends for the life he gave Hassan, and the one he deserved. Amir grew up in ignorance to this knowledge, discouraged by the fact that Baba held certain affection for Hassan that he never understood till after they were both dead.

The main cause of betrayal in *The Kite Runner* is the difference in culture and ethnicity. Though Amir and Hassan live together in one house, they originally belong to different class of the society. Hassan is no more than a servant in Amir's house. No matter how hard Hassan tries to be loyal towards Amir and his family, he can not be treated like a family member. He does not belong to Amir's origin and this sense of otherness between Amir and Hassan is the main cause of betrayal. By making Hassan other, Amir betrays him. In his later life, Amir regrets with his guilt and realized that he had ruined happiness of his childhood.

And what Rahim Khan revealed to me changed things. Made me see how my entire life, long before the winter of 1975, dating back to when that singing Hazara woman was still nursing me, had been a cycle of lies, betrayals, and secrets. "There is a way to be good again", he'd said. A way to end the cycle. (167)

This realization creates the traumatic effect on Amir. Amir realizes that it is possible to live with brotherhood in this world with transcultural form where no culture gets prejudiced. Amir is a Pashtun, and a Sunni Muslim and Hassan, is a Hazzara and a Shi'a Muslim. He is happy as long as he gets Hassan as a friend. Amir betrayed not only over Hassan but also over himself, on the basis of their ethnic differences. And he brings tragedy in his life. Amir gets

better life and opportunities in America rather than in Afghanistan. He gets social justice to live with brotherhood and adopts Soharab as a son. He lives with Soraya with transcultural form in America which brings happiness, peace, harmony and hope in his new life.

When he hid himself behind the wall while Hassan was raped, he was hiding behind the superiority of class and chose the path of least resistance. But the scar of betrayal cuts through his soul and never heals. This failure dictates Amir's inner dialogue throughout his life, even in America, until he is offered another change at personal redemption – adopting Soharab, Hassan's son.

Exploration of Cultural Trauma of the Afghans in *The Kite Runner*

Literature portrays human life and presents social problems. It transforms social fact into a text and offers the words as desired by the author. In other words, literature portrays life. It means that literature is an artistic portrait of social environment. Literature is not limited to the imaginative world only, but through literary work the author also presents the fact of social condition in creative process.

Literature cannot be separated from society and culture that cause the work to be created. If the literary work created in conflictual period, the author will communicate the situation and condition of the conflict in his work. In this case, it can be found in Khaled Hosseini's novel entitled *The Kite Runner* where the story presents the social life of Afghani people when the nation is in conflict. *The Kite Runner* is one of literary works that presents the social life of Afghani people in each political period of Afghanistan: The first is the Daoud Khan Coup; the second is Soviet or Communist government; then it is the Afghan Civil War; and finally, it is the Taliban regime. The effects to the Afghani people emerge in Rahim Khan, Farid, and Hassan's accounts for Afghan life in the period between the late 1970s and the early 2000s.

The novel *The Kite Runner* was written in the backdrops of Afghan history and culture which deals with foreign invasion, immigration, and cultural conflict. The 9/11 event follows the complicated story of Amir and Hassan in the backdrop of Afghan history and culture. Adam Ritscher in his speech at a Students Against War teach-in Duluth, Minnesota (USA) delivered that Afghanistan is one of the most impoverished nations of the world. It is one of the war-torn, most ravaged, and most beleaguered of nations.

Afghanistan has historically been the link between central Asia and the Middle East, and the Indian Subcontinent. It is therefore a nation made up of many different ethnic groups- the result of innumerable invasion and migration. Within the current borders there are at least a dozen of major ethnic group – Baluch, Chahar Aimak, Turlmen, Hazara, Pashtun, Uzbek. Pashtun nationally has been most dominant. So, there was conflict between these ethnic groups. One group started hating the other due to the nationalities. This creates anarchy in the country. Liza K. Winkler, Hekmat Sadat, and Jerry Weiss state:

The Afghan nation is a very heterogeneous population, comprising at least 22 languages, of which Dari and Pashto are officially recognized in the constitution. Practically everyone in Afghanistan is Muslim representing both Sunni and Shia Muslims. The majority of Hazaras and Qizilbash are Shia, while the majority of Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Turkoman, and Baluchi people are Sunni. (4)

In this novel *The Kite Runner*, too, the major characters are from different ethnic communities. They do not know each others' ethnic background. As they know it, they turn into enemies. In one hand Amir is guided by his sense of superiority when Hassan is raped and thus fails to rescue him. On the other hand Hassan is always loyal and faithful towards Amir and his family no matter how cruel Amir is to him. Amir belongs to the so called upper

class of the society who always dominates and Hassan belongs to that class of society who does not have other choice than to bow down in front of Amir and people of his class.

Baba and Amir are Pashtuns, the majority ethnic group in Afghanistan; Ali and Hassan are Hazaras, the minority group and the most persecuted ethnic people of Afghanistan. Although Baba has grown up with Ali and does not feel hatred for the Hazaras, other Pashtuns in the novel--particularly Assef and his Taliban kindred--believe that the Hazaras are only fit for extermination. Wealthy Pashtuns like Baba decide to leave after the Russian invasion since the Russians attempted to weed out the ruling class. Baba's wealth and high social standing in Kabul were lost when he moved to America where he settled into a lower middle-class status, working in a convenience store. He and Amir built a new life, safe from persecution by the Russians; nevertheless, Baba could never enjoy the status in California that he had earned in Kabul. Amir is able to better adjust to his new country. Hence, he is happy in California where he completes college, becomes a writer, and marries the girl of his dreams. Ali and Hassan actually have a better life during the Russian occupation, but when the Taliban took over, they immediately began a campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Hazaras. Ali eventually died when he stepped on a roadside bomb, and Hassan and his wife were executed by the Taliban. When Amir returns to Afghanistan to search for his nephew, Sohrab, he is forced to wear a fake beard and native clothes in order to avoid detection by the Taliban, who hate Afghans with Western affiliations. Only after the Taliban are driven out of most of Afghanistan are all of the ethnic groups able to again live in relative peace.

Therefore, the conflicts highlighted by the book are not only between Amir and Hassan or Baba and Ali but it is all about ethnic and cultural differences. Moreover, external political influence over Afghanistan is also responsible to create conflicts in society.

Ultimately these conflicts bring about traumatic experiences among Afghani people.

Alexander (2004) suggests:

Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collective feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible mark upon their group consciousness, marking their memory for ever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways (1)

Almost all characters in the novel are shaped by the troubled political situation in Afghanistan. As a young child Amir enjoys a happy life, and in Afghanistan the monarchy seems under control. However as the Soviets overrun the country, Amir sees struggle in his own life as well. Assef is given a position by the republic that allows him great power, which he uses against Amir as well as others. When Kabul, the Afghan capital is over run, Amir and his father are forced to flee to California. While back in Afghanistan the Taliban takes over the country, and Hassan is killed at this time. Hassan's death and Assef's power are both significant events in Amir's life. In this connection Williams Willy states:

The Kite Runner is seemingly a simple novel, telling about implicit social stratification and social message. The subject matter is about a social class namely Pashtun (high class) and Hazara (low class). It was the real social condition of Afghanistan that was felt directly by the author, and about culture in the United States that was too felt by the author. This novel focuses on stratification class between Pashtun and Hazara, the contradiction between United States and Afghanistan culture implicitly. (5)

The novel explores the nature of friendship, forgiveness and redemption through the complicated relationship between two characters Amir and Hassan. Amir and Hassan spend almost all their time together, playing games and sharing stories in their favorite pomegranate

tree. They enjoy together in games and other activities. They play kite fighting together. It is a popular game in Afghanistan. Amir describes:

Every winter, districts in Kabul held a kite-fighting tournament. And if you were a boy living in Kabul, the day of the tournament was undeniably the highlight of the cold season. I never slept the night before the tournament. I'd roll from side to side, make shadow animals on the wall, even sit on the balcony in the dark, a blanket wrapped around me. I felt like a soldier trying to sleep in the trenches the night before a major battle. And that wasn't so far off. In Kabul, fighting kites was a little like going to war. (43)

It is a kind of Afghani culture to have kite fighting game and boys enjoy in this game because they have their school closed during this season.

Kite fighting is no less than going to fight or in war. Every Afghani boy exercises and makes preparation for kite fighting in Kabul. After cutting the opponent's kite string, the kite runner runs after the cut kite. Amir is the kite fighter and Hassan is the great kite fighter for Amir. It is a culture of Afghani boys to play with kite. They cut the opponent's kite and win the grand prize. The runner gets to keep the kite as a trophy.

As an encounter with Assef, the local bully, Amir comes to know that Hassan is from different ethnic community. Assef tells Hassan that he is not really Amir's friend, but his servant. Assef and their friends start beating Hassan when Amir crouches behind a wall, watching because Amir is too afraid to step in:

"A loyal Hazara. Loyal as a dog," Assef said. Kamal's laugh was a shrill, nervous sound. "But before you sacrifice yourself for him, think about this: Would he do the same for you? Have you ever wondered why he never includes you in games when he has guests? Why he only plays with you when no one else is around? I'll tell you why, Hazara. Because to him, you're

nothing but an ugly pet. Something he can play with when he's bored
something he can kick when he's angry. (64)

Amir realizes he cannot live with Hassan anymore because Hassan is a Hazzara, a Shi'a Muslim. Amir betrays Hassan by telling Baba that Hassan stole his birthday money and watch. The consciousness of ethnicity in Amir's mind leads him to betray his most loyal and close friend Hassan. Amir starts ignoring and maintaining a distance with Hassan: he says, "I want to stop harassing me, I want to go away. I snapped . . . but he did not do anything like that, and when I opened the door minutes later he was not there" (77).

Due to the cultural artifact, friendship between Amir and Hassan changes into enmity. Later, Amir realizes his mistake to betray his best friend in America and that creates the traumatic situation in Amir. He wants to get released from his sin. He realizes he has made crime by lying with his father and betraying Hassan. Amir says; "I betrayed Hassan, lied, driven him out, and destroyed a forty years relationships between Baba and Ali" (144). This betrayal is remained as a sin in his mind. So, Amir wants to get rid out from it.

Jenny Edkins in her essay "Introduction: Trauma, Violence, and Political Community" strengthens the view that trauma theory now has become a mode of discourse which studies any text in relation to trauma, violence and political community. She elaborates the fact that each traumatic figure has a distinct tale to tell because of the violence they have faced. She relates trauma with political community and also examines the terms of connection between these terms. (7)

Here in *The Kite Runner* Amir serves as a traumatic figure who has distinct tale. He always gets haunted by his sin of betrayal to Hassan and lying with his father that Hassan stole his birthday money and watch:

Baba came right out and asked. 'Did you steal that money? Did you steal
Amir's watch, Hassan?' Hassan's reply was a single word, delivered in a thin,

raspy voice: 'Yes.' I flinched, like I'd been slapped. My heart sank and I almost blurted out the truth. Then I understood: This was Hassan's final sacrifice for me. If he'd said no, Baba would have believed him because we all knew Hassan never lied. And if Baba believed him, then I'd be the accused; I would have to explain and I would be revealed for what I really was. Baba would never, ever forgive me. And that led to another understanding: Hassan knew He knew I'd seen everything in that alley, that I'd stood there and done nothing. He knew I had betrayed him and yet he was rescuing me once again, maybe for the last time. (87)

In this way, because of the sense of difference between the ethnic groups, Afghani faces many chaoses, anarchy, and turmoil and so on.

Some critics view this novel as the representation of national unity and identity.

Focusing on the national identity, culture and history in the novel, Loyal Miles writes:

The tension in this relationship mirror Afghanistan's struggle in the 1970s to maintain a traditional sense of national identity in the face of government's instability and eventual invasion by foreign power. Boarder elements of Afghan society, such as ethnic and class division also make it impossible for Amir to consider Hassan. (207)

Miles stresses on the Afghan history, socio-cultural and economic hierarchy. She also agrees with the betrayal in friendship owing to the broader element of Afghan society, ethnic and class division. Like Miles, Nancy Grossman points out, "Hosseini is almost certainly the most famous afghan in the world. Even though *The Kite Runner* is about a complex Middle Eastern culture, in which Americans are supposed to be uninterested" (68). Thus the novel does not only tells the story of friendship but also spans Afghans history from the final days of monarchy to the present. It reflects Afghan society.

One of the biggest struggles for Amir is to learn to navigate the complex socio-economic culture or circumstances he faces, growing up in Afghanistan as a member of the privileged class yet not feeling like a privileged member of his own family. Hassan and his father, Ali, are servants, yet at times, Amir's relationship with them is more like that of family members. And Amir's father, Baba, who does not consistently adhere to the tenets of his culture, confuses rather than clarifies things for young Amir. Many of the ruling-class elites in Afghanistan view the world as black and white; yet, Amir identifies many shades of gray.

In addition to the issues affecting his personal life, Amir must also contend with the instability of the Afghan political system in the 1970s. Afghan conflict has caused many Afghan people lose their members of family. During a crucial episode, which takes place during an important kite flying tournament, Amir decides not to act — he decides not to confront bullies and aggressors when he has the chance — and this conscious choice of inaction sets off a chain reaction that leads to guilt, lies, and betrayals. While describing the event where he was not able to act in the novel, he says, "I opened my mouth, almost said something. Almost. The rest of my life might have turned out differently if I had. But I didn't. I just watched. Paralyzed." (73) Eventually, because of the changing political climate, Amir and his father are forced to flee from Afghanistan. Amir views coming to America as an opportunity to leave his past behind but he fails to do so because his past keeps haunting him. And the different war between ethnic groups and the terrorist attack in American Twin Tower become the other causes of his unsuccessful life in America.

Hossieni beautifully crafts the reality of Afghan society and draws the history of modern Afghanistan since the 1970s to 2001. Kabul became a war place from very beginning when the British Empire was expanding and consolidating their colonial holdings on the Indian Subcontinent, and the Russians, for their part, were expanding south and east in Central Asia. Conflict in Afghanistan has become the cause of change in old culture and then

emerge the new or different cultures. War has undoubtedly brought torture for the people in colonized country. In order to avoid any suffering that is caused by war; many Afghani people have left their country. Before Afghan conflicts they lived in peaceful situation, but after Afghan conflicts they have to face bad, difficult and cruel condition which has driven many people to traumatic situation.

It is clear that Hosseini gives the reality of Afghan Society and draws the modern history of Afghanistan. And he also talks about world political scenarios. He clearly visualizes the attack of Al-Qa'ida's terrorist attack in America. From this history, Hosseini wants to convey that the Al-Qa'ida's terrorist attack on Twin Tower in 2001, and Amir's betrayal to Hassan are the causes of hate between human being which is created by binaries of religion, race and caste. Hence, to bring harmony, happiness, peace in the cosmic world, we have to break the hierarchy between race, caste, and religion as Amir does in his later part of life where he gets happiness, peace and the sense of brotherhood.

In this way, *The Kite Runner* tackles the issue of ethnic discrimination in Afghanistan with an example of the relationship between Pashtuns and Hazaras. Baba's father sets an example for him of being kind to Hazara people, even though they are historically demeaned and persecuted. He could have easily sent Ali to an orphanage after his parents' death, but chooses to raise him in his household. Baba does the same with Hassan, although this is complicated by the fact that Hassan is actually his son. Even in Baba's house, the house of best intentions, the class barrier between the Pashtuns and Hazaras endures. Ali still lives in a hut and sleeps on a mattress on the floor. He nurtures the garden, cooks, and cleans up for Baba, and raises Hassan to do the same. So strong is Hassan's identity as a servant that even as an adult, when Baba is gone, he has no sense of entitlement. He insists on staying in the hut and doing housework. When Hassan dies defending Baba's house, he does so not because he feels it belongs to him, but because he is being loyal to Baba and Amir.

On the one hand the Taliban do not seem to care whom they are beating, torturing, or executing. Children like Sohrab and grandmothers like Sanaubar are all susceptible to the Taliban's cruelty. In this way, the Taliban discriminate against everyone but themselves. As Amir notices, Assef forces Sohrab to dance to music for his enjoyment when dancing and listening to music have long been banned. Amir thinks, "I guessed music wasn't sinful as long as it played to Taliban ears (197)." On another level, the Taliban discrimination is specifically directed against the Hazara people. They massacre the Hazaras not only in Mazar-i-Sharif, but in the region of Hazarajat and nearly anywhere else they can find them. Assef and his fellows do not see the Hazaras' lives as worthwhile; they barely see them as human. Assef tells Amir, "Afghanistan is like a beautiful mansion littered with garbage, and someone has to take out the garbage" (249). He feels entitled to killing those he seems unworthy of living in his land. He even relishes the term ethnic cleansing because it goes so well with his garbage metaphor. Like Baba, many people do not mention the Hazaras' history of persecution. Perhaps these people are so uncomfortable with this topic because by having Assef appear in pre-Taliban times and emerges as a leading Talib, Hosseini shows that the Taliban's persecution of the Hazaras and other Shiites is not new, but a greatly intensified outgrowth of long-held discrimination.

Working through the Individual and Cultural Trauma

Generally, culture includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, customs, behavior, other capabilities and habits acquired by human being a member of society. With the rise of colonization, immigration and globalization, different cultures have come across with each other. As such, one culture influences the other and gets influenced as well. So, no culture can remain intact and pure. These kinds of influences create the psychological tension to those people whose culture gets encroached. In this novel, after the Russian Invasion in

Afghanistan, Amir and his father flee to America where they face lots of difficulties due to the culture and which creates the cultural shock to them.

Amir does not represent barriers to his assimilation into American society. Indeed, Amir reasserts his feelings of belonging in America throughout the novel, even after 9/11, and represents the presence of exclusionary forces within Afghanistan by highlighting the destruction and desolation of his native country and also pointing to his emotional divide:

Long before the Roussi army marched in to Afghanistan, long before villages were burned and schools were destroyed, long before mines were planted like seeds of death and children buried in rock-piled graves, Kabul had become a city of ghosts for me. A city of hare lipped ghosts. (119)

The betrayal of Hassan, the “hare lipped ghost” (119) he refers to, creates an emotional barrier with Afghanistan. He continues by recounting his connection with America:

America was different. America was a river, roaring along, unmindful of the past. I could wade into this river, let my sins drown to the bottom, let the waters carry me someplace far. Someplace with no ghosts, no memories, and no sins. If for nothing else, for that, I embraced America (119).

The idea of America being “unmindful of the past” (119) strongly contradicts Changez’s assertion of America as “absorbed within old thoughts” (qtd. in Grant Andrews). When the outsider represents what Hartnell refers to as the “postcolonial moment” (343) and a sense of newness and difference, Amir’s views allow him to align with the protective American fortress which is “roaring along, unmindful of the past” (119), and it can also offer him an escape from his guilt since it has “no ghosts, no memories, and no sins” (119).

In America, Baba and Amir start a new life for themselves embracing the San Francisco Afghan Community. Baba is not happy working at gas station. He says he came to America for Amir. Amir says, “For me, America was a place to bury my memories. For

Baba, a place to mourn his” (112). Amir lives in California his latter part of his life with transcultural form. Amir loves America rather than his birth place Afghanistan. He valorizes America by this way for the first time:

America was different. America was a river, roaring alone, unmindful of the past. I should wade in to this river, let my sins down to bottom, and let the waters carry me some place far. Some place with no ghosts no memories and no sins. If for the nothing else, for that, I embraced America. (199)

Amir passes high school in 1983 and joined college. Although Amir views America as a place of redemption, there are hints of a barrier to full inclusion into American society. These barriers are mostly shown in how Amir’s father, is actively resistant to accepting his position as a disempowered immigrant.

Additionally, the novel presents very few instances where Amir or Baba interacts with American citizens who are not of Afghan origin. This lack of interaction is conspicuous in a novel where America seems to be idealized to such a great extent. Amir refers to one of these rare encounters in a visit to an official who assesses their eligibility for government support and offers Baba food stamps: “Baba dropped the stack of food stamps on her desk. ‘Thank you but I don’t want,’ Baba said. ‘I work always. In Afghanistan I work, in America I work. [...] I don’t like it frees money [sic]’” (114). Baba’s refusal to accept financial assistance is one of the ways in which he resists an identity of dependence and powerlessness. Indeed, Baba becomes the embodiment of power through his association with what the novel constructs as masculine symbols of power while living in Afghanistan, symbols which are idealized in Amir’s experience of America. However, despite his ability to enact these masculine ideals, Baba is not able to maintain his power in America. The present research argues that even though Baba maintains the national myth of the American dream and embodies the images of masculine power; his loss of power in the US is due to the ethno

cultural boundary which encircles American identity as it is constructed in the novel. Baba does not identify as an American but maintains his identity as an Afghan. Amir reflects on this identification in relation to the refusal of food stamps:

And that was how Baba ended those humiliating food stamp moments at the cash register and alleviated one of his greatest fears: that an Afghan would see him buying food with charity money. Baba walked out of the welfare office like a man cured of a tumor. (114)

Ironically, his loss of power in America is symbolized through physical deterioration and ultimately through being diagnosed with cancer.

In this way, Amir faces the difficulties due to the difference in culture. He wants to go back to Afghanistan. He wants to enjoy his own culture and get rid of his sin and betrayal to his best friend Hassan. But no matter how hard he tries, he actually cannot get out of this guilt ever. Trauma cannot be released totally but what one can do is to try to reduce the intensity of it and Amir does the same by adopting Sohrab at the end of the novel. Also by narrating his personal story of sin, guilt and his longing for redemption, he tries to reduce intensity of his trauma caused by his own guilt.

Trauma disturbs people in the formation of their own distinct identity. Mental trauma is described as a disorder. Sigmund Freud in his essay "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", describes it as a "disorder which has its roots in some experience long since consciously forgotten and repressed and which later on manifests itself in nightmares, overwhelming anxiety and motor disturbances" (84) Therefore, physical and psychological disturbance arising from the unconscious remaining after effects of trauma upset the patients. Physical trauma is taken as the response to the physical injury the previous physical condition of the victim. Physical trauma is related more to the physical hurt and damages which affects vital organ leading to the serious condition of the patient. The physical trauma is medic that is

serious injury or shock to the body, as from violence or an accident. Trauma theoretically is a real psychological disorder. Trauma comes with the individual feeling and subjective assessment of victims of how threatened and hopeless they feel. The extra-ordinary events closely affect the victims and they come fundamentally as the trauma itself.

Though Amir is in attempt to ignore and behave in normal manner, he has something already within him that makes him unusual or feels sick and which he cannot express. The unspeakable of that event has grown inside him. As Cathy argues, "trauma is incomprehensible" (17). In the novel Amir's condition too resembles this. He feels something unusual but cannot tell of this to his friends or others or show it to them. It is such a complex experience and preserving of feeling which with no means could be addressed to other or can be shown.

Hosseini highlights the traumatic memory through the protagonist and narrator, Amir. Traumatic memory haunts the viewer tellingly and undercuts the temporal continuity. The person who is haunted by the traumatic memory becomes helpless, and rootless. He finds himself distinguished from the larger boundary of society. Similarly, Amir feels aimless, rootless and not knowing what to do with his life. He goes where the wind blows. He is often introspective and indulges in self criticism, lacking sense of direction and does not believe that he fits anywhere. Traumatic memory and mourning will force to reconnect with those persons, in spite of debilitating distrust. Amir's narrative is one of the gaps, evasions and sudden fusions of erupting emotion and unstable discourse that resembles those of traumatic people, pulled by conflicting impulses controlled by the need for safety. Multiple repetitions and returns are another features of Amir's narrative, illustrating the human compulsion to return to and even reenact, disturbing situation.

Traumatic experience is unique in relation to history. Trauma means that it is referential to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs. It has be refered with history.

However, traumatic history is reliable in the sense that it does not claim to project reality and it is based on the testimony of the survivor and not those in power: "Memory is a midfield, looking back the mind distorts, forgets, invents and play tricks" (Caruth 3). The spatial memory of trauma plays a role to ruin by letting in what is absent. History like trauma is never simply one's own, people are implicated in each other's trauma. LaCapra explains the historical trauma:

In historical trauma, the traumatizing events may at least in principle be determined with a high degree of determinacy and objectivity. These would include the events of the Holocaust, slavery, apartheid, child abuse, or rape. In practice the determination of such events in the past poses problems of varying degrees of difficulty for obvious reason that our mediated access to such events is through various traces or residues – memories, testimony, documentation, and representation or artifacts. (133)

Amir sees it as a way for his Afghan identity to be more acknowledged within American society, referring to the aftermath of increased American nationalism and interest in Afghanistan in a seemingly positive light, highlighting the War on Terror as a campaign against the Taliban which becomes his personal enemy.

The Kite Runner offers a very different reaction to the 9/11 attacks. According to Grant Andrews; "While Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* lives in the shadow of the attacks for most of his narrative, Amir refers to the events in passing and they do not seem to greatly affect his identity"(26). The attacks take place after he has rescued Hassan's son Sohrab from Afghanistan where he was held captive by Assef--the one who as a child had raped Hassan and had since become a member of the Taliban. Sohrab, afflicted with the trauma of his past in Afghanistan, refuses to speak once he is adopted by Amir and Soraya in America. As they begin to form a family in America, the attacks occur:

While Sohrab was silent, the world was not. One Tuesday morning last September, the Twin Tower came crumbling down and, overnight, the world changed. The American flag suddenly appeared everywhere, on the antennae of yellow cabs weaving around traffic, on the lapels of pedestrians walking the sidewalks in a steady stream, even on the grimy caps of San Francisco's panhandlers sitting beneath the awnings of small art galleries and open-fronted shops. (316)

The rise of American nationalism symbolised by the omnipresence of the national flag seems to have little effect on Amir's identity, and he does not mention any change in the way he, an Afghan-American man, is represented in post-9/11 America.

Amir identifies with America and distances himself from his native country Afghanistan. The terrorist figure in Amir's narrative is concentrated in Assef, who seems to be inherently evil. Assef is the leader of the Taliban group responsible for kidnapping Sohrab, and is the same person who assaults and rapes Sohrab's father, Hassan in his childhood. He becomes associated with Amir's dismal and seemingly unredeemable view of modern-day Afghanistan. Amir describes Assef as a child by saying:

His word was law, and if you needed a little legal education, then those brass knuckles were just the right teaching tool. I saw him use those knuckles once on a kid from the Karteh-Char district. I will never forget how Assef's blue eyes glinted with a light not entirely sane and how he grinned, how he grinned, as he pummeled that poor kid unconscious. ... Years later, I learned an English word for the creature that Assef was, a word for which a good Farsi equivalent does not exist: 'sociopath.' (36)

Assef also holds beliefs of Afghan racial purity, a notable contrast with Amir's perception of America as accommodating. As a child Assef refers to Hassan from the minority Hazara

ethnic group as being racially impure: “Afghanistan is the land of Pashtuns. It always has been, always will be. We are the true Afghans, the pure Afghans, not this Flat-Nose here. His people pollute our homeland, our watan. They dirty our blood” (35). This is the thing the present researcher wants to prove that the cultural uniqueness emerging upon all nationality creates the unity and uniformity within them. Finally the previous activity remain as a trauma in their mindset.

Assef’s discrimination is however ironic since he himself is half-German, has blond hair and blue eyes. As a member of the Taliban, Assef wears a turban and dark sunglasses which serve to disguise these markers of his own difference, problematising the ethnocultural boundaries of Afghan identity which he tries to maintain. Amir describes Assef, “he took off his sunglasses and locked his bloodshot blue eyes on mine.” (246) Amir’s construction of the terrorist figure, embodied by Assef, allows him to position the barrier to his identification with Afghanistan through the racism, fundamentalism and violence of the Taliban.

Assef is shown to have power over national identity through the act of terrorism, referring to this as “public justice” (242). He links the act of terrorism metaphorically to the creation of fiction, demonstrating a form of narrative power over identity: “Public justice is the greatest kind of show, my brother. Drama. Suspense. And, best of all, education en masse” (242). He later demonstrates this narrative power when he repositions the massacre of Hazara people in Mazar-i-Sharif in positive terms, explaining to Amir:

“You don’t know the meaning of the word ‘liberating’ until you’ve done that, stood in a roomful of targets, let the bullets fly, free of guilt and remorse, knowing you are virtuous, good, and decent. Knowing you’re doing God’s work. It’s breathtaking” (242).

Amir retorts, “In the west, they have an expression for that [...] They call it ethnic cleansing” (249). Unaware of the negative connotations to the phrase, Assef adopts it

positively: “Ethnic cleansing. I like it. I like the sound of it” (249). Assef takes ethnic cleansing as an additional form of power, where he can reposition violence within positive labels. He also demonstrates a consciousness of the way in which the violence forms a narrative itself, a form of fiction which he uses to enforce his strictures onto the Afghan population as a show.

Thus the novel depicts the social condition of Afghani people during Afghan conflicts. This novel reflects the phenomena of the impacts of the Afghan conflicts for the author to combine his imagination and the real fact in the society.

Amir wants to get rid of the traumatic effect of his betrayal of his friend Hassan. The novel takes a turn when Rahim Khan makes a call to Amir and offers him a chance of redemption. Rahim proposes to adopt the son of Hassan, who was killed in Taliban attack. Amir remembers the proposal presented by Rahim:

I thought about a comment Rahim Khan had made just before we hung up. Made it in passing, almost as an afterthought. I closed my eyes and saw him at the other end of the scratchy long-distance line, saw him with his lips slightly parted, head tilted to one side. And again, something in his bottomless black eyes hinted at an unspoken secret between us. Except now I knew he knew. My suspicions had been right all those years. He knew about Assef, the kite, the money, the watch with the lightning bolt hands. He had always known. *Come. There is a way to be good again*, Rahim Khan had said on the phone just before hanging up. Said it in passing, almost as an afterthought. (168)

It is fitting that Rahim Khan points Amir toward Sohrab – a boy who is being abused by Assef – as a way to redeem himself. “There is a way to be good again” (168). Basically, Rahim Khan says to Amir: “Here's how you can undo the damage you lavished on Hassan” (168). By saving Sohrab, intervention replaces passivity for Amir. While we're on the topic of

redemption: voice also replaces silence through Amir's narration of the novel. The man needs some redemption.

When Amir returns to Pakistan, to see Rahim Khan who is sick, he tells Amir about unbearable life of the Afghans under Taliban rule. Rahim Khan is happy at first when the Taliban defeats the Russian soldiers because he thought life in Kabul would improve, most people felt this way because they thought that the fighting would be stopped. But it is not. It is Rahim Khan who told that Hassan was Amir's half brother. He also says that Ali has been killed by a land mine. Khan asks Amir to go to Kabul and bring ten years old Sohrab, son of Hassan to him. Afghanistan is under the control of Taliban and Taliban ban the kite fighting. "A few weeks later, the Taliban banned kite fighting. And two years later, in 1998, they massacred the Hazaras in Mazar-i-Sharif." (187) Hassan has a wish to see his friend Amir, Amir knows it from his letter and he also knows about the Taliban Rule in Afghanistan. Hassan is killed by Taliban. Taliban officers came to take the house but Hassan refuses to leave house. So, Hassan and his wife are gunned down by Taliban. Not only Hassan, but many of Hazaras are killed by Taliban just because Hazara belongs to different and lower community. Many Hazaras are killed by the Taliban which is not justifiable. Amir visits the orphanage where Soharab, son of Hassan has lived. But the director regretfully informs that Talib official had come to the orphanage and took Sohrab. By facing many difficulties, Amir is able to meet Soharab. Soharab is dressed almost like a court jester, wearing makeup, and forced to dance whatever music is played. The climax of the novel, in which Amir is finally able to atone for his past, occurs when Amir's fight takes place against Assef. In another instance of irony, Amir discovers the Taliban official he must rescue Sohrab from the same person who raped Hassan years ago. Yet the bizarre coincidence also creates a situation in which Amir is able to confront the same scenario that is the source of his guilt more than twenty years earlier. From the way Assef touches Sohrab and what he says to Amir, Amir has

no doubt at this point that Assef sexually abuses Sohrab. Because Sohrab represents a living piece of Hassan, Assef continues a figurative rape of Hassan. But Amir is now in a position to stop this. He can do what Baba always hoped he would and stand up for what is right. As Rahim Khan put it, it is his way to be good again. Amir realizes the official is actually Assef. Assef says he wants to settle some unfinished business. He beats Amir with brass knuckles, breaking Amir's ribs and splitting his lip. Sohrab threatens Assef with his slingshot, and when Assef lunges at him, Sohrab shoots him in the eye, allowing Amir and Sohrab to escape. Amir has to move soon from Afghanistan because the Taliban are looking for him. Amir wants to take Soharab with him to America. But it is very difficult due to the death certificate of Soharab's parents and the Islamic law: "It may not permit this adoption. In fact, even more moderate Muslim nations are hesitant with adoptions because in many of those countries, Islamic law, Shari's, does not recognize adoption" (194). Here, due to the differences between two cultures, Amir faces difficulties to take Soharab in America. Also, cultural shock is a factor for traumatic disorder in people as Amir in the novel.

By getting help of immigration lawyer Amir is able to get Soharab. They are able to reach America. Soharab is not happy. At the party thrown by Afghan- American community, Amir buys a kite for Soharab. Two of them fight kite together and win, just as he and Hassan had played some years ago. Amir says, "Do you want me to run that kite for you? . . . For you, a thousand times over," I heard myself say. Then I turned and run" (324). For the first time Soharab speaks with Amir and now, Amir is very happy getting Soharab, and Amir is the kite runner of Soharab. It is the first time, Soharab smiles for Amir. They live happy life in America with trans-cultural form.

In *The Kite Runner*, redemption is so important because sin is so enduring. Amir opens the story by telling not about how exactly he sinned, but about sin's endurance: "It's wrong what they say about the past, I've learned, about how you can bury it. Because the past

claws its way out" (4). Hosseini uses structure to emphasize the themes of sin and redemption. Because Amir tells the story in retrospect, every memory, even the blissful ones of his childhood before the rape, are tainted with it. Had the timeline of the novel been strictly chronological, we would not have the power of hindsight. Hosseini uses the first chapter almost like a thesis for the novel. As Amir retells the story of his life, he weighs each event against his sin, his betrayal of Hassan. Until Rahim Khan reveals Baba's secret, Amir thinks he is the only sinner among his family and friends. Even before Amir betrays him, Hassan makes him feel guilty simply by being such a righteous person. Amir is constantly trying to measure up to Baba because he does not realize that Baba is so hard on him because of his guilt over his own sin.

Once Amir finds out about Baba's sin, he feels as though his entire life is a cycle of betrayal even before he betrayed Hassan. But having a taste of betrayal himself does little towards redeeming Amir. In Ghazi Stadium, the Taliban skews the words of Muhammad in order to justify murdering the alleged adulterers. The mullah announces that every person should have a punishment befitting his sin. Although he would not want to compare himself to the Taliban, Amir believes this in regards to his own sin. When he tries to get Hassan to pelt him with pomegranates, he is expressing his feeling that in order to be forgiven for hurting Hassan, Hassan must hurt him. He admits:

I remembered the day on the hill I had pelted Hassan with pomegranates and tried to provoke him. He'd just stood there, doing nothing, red juice soaking through his shirt like blood. Then he'd taken the pomegranate from my hand, crushed it against his forehead. Are you satisfied now? he'd hissed. Do you feel better? I hadn't been happy and I hadn't felt better, not at all. But I did now. My body was broken--just how badly I wouldn't find out until later--but I felt healed. Healed at last. I laughed. (289)

When Assef almost kills Amir, he feels healed, as though now that Assef has hurt him, he is redeemed. He even tells Farid that in the room with Assef, he got what he deserved. In the end, Amir finds out that punishment is not what will redeem him from his sin. It is not even saving Sohrab. In order to atone for his and Baba's sin before him, Amir must erase the lines of discrimination he has lived with all his life by giving Sohrab an equal chance of success and happiness.

Soraya needs Amir to forgive her before she can marry him. In the same way, Rahim Khan needs Amir to forgive him for keeping Baba's secret before he dies. Rahim Khan, the story's unofficial wise man, is the one who truly understands how redemption occurs. He tells Amir in his letter, "I know that in the end, God will forgive. He will forgive your father, me, and you too ... Forgive your father if you can. Forgive me if you wish. But most important, forgive yourself "(156). Rahim Khan carries the novel's ultimate message about forgiveness. God is merciful; it is people who are not. Therefore, truly atoning for one's sins means coming to terms with them, without relying on a higher power. When Amir prays, he is still bound by fear and guilt; instead of wishing unselfishly for Sohrab to recover, he begs God not to leave Sohrab's blood on his hands. When Amir manages to forgive himself in the very last moments of the novel, he works through his traumatic past and reduces the intensity of trauma.

Chapter III. Confession, Narrativization and Reduction of the Intensity of Trauma

The Kite Runner is the story of Amir, a Sunni Muslim, who struggles to find his place in the world because of the after-effects and fallout from a series of traumatic childhood events. An adult, Amir opens the novel in the present-day United States with a vague reference to one of these events, and then the novel flashes back to Amir's childhood in Afghanistan. In addition to typical childhood experiences, Amir struggles with forging a closer relationship with his father, Baba; with determining the exact nature of his relationship with Hassan, his Shi'a Muslim servant; and eventually with finding a way to agree for pre-adolescent decisions that have lasting repercussions. Along the way, readers are able to experience growing up in Afghanistan in a single-parent home, a situation that bears remarkable similarities to many contemporary households.

In America, Amir becomes part of the Afghan subculture in California, meets his wife Soraya, and becomes a successful author. His past haunts him, as in childhood he had witnessed and failed to prevent the assault and rape of his servant and friend Hassan, who was left behind in Afghanistan when Amir and his father emigrated. Amir eventually returns to Afghanistan after he receives a letter from one of his father's friends named Rahim Khan, and he discovers that Hassan had fathered a son, Sohrab, who was kidnapped by a member of the Taliban. Amir undertakes to rescue Sohrab as an act of redemption for not preventing or speaking about the rape of Hassan when they were children.

It tells a story of horrific abuse - physical, emotional, and sexual. It explores the shame that comes with rape--and not just the emotions of the person who was abused. It weaves a narrative around loss of parents and loved ones. But it also tells a story of unabiding hope for the future.

The Kite Runner demonstrates the brutal impact of war on individuals, their relationships, and society as a whole; the complexities of relationships between generations and social classes; and the vicissitudes of guilt, shame, loyalty, and struggles for resolution and forgiveness. The vast number of children and adolescents who have experienced trauma place great demands on child and adolescent psychiatrists to understand the impact of trauma and its cultural complexities on treatment.

Amir's quest to redeem himself makes up the heart of the novel. Early on, Amir strives to redeem himself in Baba's eyes, primarily because his mother died giving birth to him, and he feels responsible. To redeem himself to Baba, Amir thinks he must win the kite-tournament and bring Baba the losing kite, both of which are inciting incidents that set the rest of the novel in motion. The more substantial part of Amir's search for redemption, however, stems from his guilt regarding Hassan. That guilt drives the climatic events of the story, including Amir's journey to Kabul to find Sohrab and his confrontation with Assef. The moral standard Amir must meet to earn his redemption is set early in the book, when Baba says that a boy who does not stand up for himself becomes a man who can not stand up to anything. As a boy, Amir fails to stand up for himself. As an adult, he can only redeem himself by proving he has the courage to stand up for what is right. In this way, *The Kite Runner* is a novel about impact of war and the sin in the human life.

One of the major elements that defines traumatic experience is the association of fear, horror and helplessness with the occurrence or threat. Here, traumatic experience felt by Amir is associated with the occurrence where he failed to rescue his brother (and friend) Hassan from being raped. This event haunts him throughout his life and ultimately he seeks ways to get rid of the guilt. It is only when his father's past sins are exposed that Amir feels obligated to address the wrongs of his childhood. No matter how hard he tries, he can not fully escape from traumatic effects of past guilt, however he tries decreasing the intensity and

frequency of negative aftereffects to improve his daily functioning. The guilt that was built over the years was partially put to rest at the safety of Sohrab. In Afghanistan when Amir stood up for Sohrab and Assef aggressively beats him up, Amir had said "My body was broken just how badly I wouldn't find out until later but I felt healed. Healed at last. I laughed" (289). It shows Amir has come to terms with what he did as a child and gets some relief. Although he was getting beat up, it did not matter anymore, he just wished he had stood up to Assef years ago, and maybe he would have earned his redemption in that alley. The moral standard Amir must meet to earn his redemption is set early in the book, when Baba says that a boy who does not stand up for himself becomes a man who cannot stand up to anything. As a boy, Amir fails to stand up for himself. As an adult, he can only redeem himself by proving he has the courage to stand up for what is right.

The story is in first person narrative and perhaps it is writer's idea to make Amir realize and confess his guilt and sin he did in the past by narrating his own story. It partially helps Amir to reduce the intensity of trauma caused by his guilt. It is all about seeking salvation by facing the past and by recognizing that love and selfless acceptance of duty that is the only path to maturity and happiness. The choices that Amir made, beginning in his childhood, show what he truly is. Total redemption is not possible: the dead cannot be saved. However, through his search for Sohrab and bringing him home, Amir manages to make peace with himself.

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