CHAPTER ONE

Background and Conceptual Framework

General Overview

Khaled Hosseini's debut novel *The Kite Runner* is a tale of friendship, betrayal and redemption between two friends Amir and Hassan. The story is set against a backdrop of tumultuous events, from the fall of the monarchy in Afghanistan through the Soviet invasion in 1979, the mass exodus of refugees to Pakistan and the United States, and the rise of the Taliban regime. There are various interpretations of this book, ranging from the way in which the Taliban treated its own people to the relationship between the two boys being a representation of the microcosms of society.

The Kite Runner is divided into three major sections. The first part of the story takes place in Kabul. Amir, the main character and narrator of the novel, describes from his childhood to mid1970s and, especially, his relationship with Hassan. The second section begins in 1981 after Amir and his father leave Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation. This part of the novel takes place in Fremont, California, a city south of San Francisco in the East Bay. Here, they live as part of an immigrant Afghan community in the Bay Area. This section ends with the marriage of Amir to Soraya and the death of Amir's father in 1989. In the final section of the novel, it is 2001 and Amir returns to Afghanistan by way of Pakistan. Amir receives a phone call from his mentor, his father's best friend, Rahim Khan, who asks Amir to visit him. He tells Amir that he is sick, and that he has something for Amir to do to help Amir "to be good again." It is with the remembrance of this phone call that the novel opens.

The novel basically tells the story of Amir, a young boy from the Wazir Akbar Khan district of Kabul, who befriends Hassan, the son of his father's Hazara servant

Ali. Despite their ethnic and religious differences, Hassan grows up alongside Amir just as Ali does alongside Baba in a mud hut in the property of Baba and Amir. Hassan and his father both suffer from physical deficiencies. Ali's face is paralyzed, making it difficult for him to show any expression, and Hassan was born with a cleft lip. According to Amir, Hassan's beautiful mother, Sanaubar, abandoned Hassan shortly after his birth due to this condition. Although Ali and Hassan have grown up as brothers or friends to Baba and Amir, it is clear that their positions are those of servant and master. Amir and his father are Sunni Muslim Pashtuns and Hassan and his father are Shi'a Hazara. The Hazara are a minority in Afghanistan and the Pashtun are the ruling majority.

Both Ali and Hassan are loyal, devoted and protecting servants who would be ready to die for their masters. Ali has taught Hassan to be so righteous and loyal that he would not dream of starting trouble and does not hesitate to cover up for Amir. Hassan puts aside all the harassment and bullying, for being a Hazara. He always has a smile upon his face and a positive attitude. He looks up to Amir as if he was an elder brother. Hassan even keeps his rape a secret not to keep Amir in grief.

Hassan's unflinching loyalty to Amir is what results in his rape, his leaving Wazir Akhbar Khan, and one could argue, his death many years later. The difference between Amir and Hassan underscores the connection between loyalty and family. Hassan is loyal and long-suffering just like Ali, who kept the secret that Baba had an affair with Sanaubar and that Hassan was not his biological son.

Amir, on the other hand, considers Hassan as a Hazara and shuns him for his race. In Amir's young life, his ability to read and write separates him from Hassan. Hassan is a Hazara and expects to remain a servant like Ali. While Amir goes to school every day, Hassan stays behind and does his chores. It is Hassan's illiteracy

that brings him closer to Amir. The boys spend countless hours together under the pomegranate tree, Amir reading stories to Hassan. When Amir begins to write stories, Hassan becomes rapt audience. Yet Amir realizes that being literate gives him power over Hassan. He lords his advantage over the unsuspecting Hassan by making up stories while pretending to read and teasing Hassan for not knowing certain words.

If Amir's character arc is about growth, Hassan's arc is about not changing at all. From the start and through his death, Hassan remains the same: loyal, forgiving, and good-natured. As a servant to Baba and Amir, Hassan grows up with a very particular role in life. While Amir prepares for school in the morning, Hassan readies Amir's books and his breakfast. While Amir is at school for education, Hassan helps Ali with the chores and grocery shopping. As a result, Hassan learns that it is his duty to sacrifice himself for others. Furthermore, by nature he is not prone to envy, and he even tells Amir he is happy with what he has, though he sees all the time how much more Amir has. Hassan comes across as the personification of innocence as a result, and this innocence is crucial in creating the drama and symbolism of his rape by Assef. First, Hassan's innocence gives Amir no justifiable reason to betray Hassan. Amir's behavior cannot be rationalized, making it consummately selfish and reprehensible. Second, Hassan's rape becomes the sacrifice of an innocent, a recurring motif in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism that carries a great deal of symbolic meaning.

Khaled Hosseini: A Writer's Life

The Afghan-American writer Khaled Hosseini was born on March 4, 1965. He is the oldest of five children. His father worked for the Afghan Foreign Consul and his mother taught Farsi and history at a girls' high school in Kabul. Kabul, Afghanistan is the boyhood home of Khaled Hosseini, as it is for Amir, his protagonist in *The Kite*

Runner. He also incorporates in his story the same time period in which he, the author, grew up – the 1960s through the present day.

Hosseini grew up in a comfortable existence, loving American movies and flying kites. In the early 1970s, his family moved to Tehran, Iran when his father was assigned to a diplomatic post at the Afghan Embassy in Iran. They returned home to Kabul in 1973. In 1976 his family moved to Paris, France, where his father was a diplomat at the Afghan Embassy. They were to return home to Afghanistan in 1980, when the Russians invaded his country. His father was recalled home after the invasion, but he decided to ask for political asylum in the United States and finally received it. As a result, Hosseini ended up in San Jose, California. The family struggled to make ends meet for a while, as they had lost all of their property in Afghanistan and had to start over.

The immigrant experience in *The Kite Runner* is autobiographical, based on the difficulties that Hosseini and his parents experience in California. Putting his personal aspirations of becoming a writer on hold, Hosseini decides to pursue medicine. In 1989, he graduates from Santa Clara University with a bachelor's degree in biology and graduates from UC San Diego School of Medicine in 1993. He has a three-year residency in internal medicine at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, and then works as an internist for three years in Los Angeles. Hosseini returns to northern California in 1999, where he joins a branch of the Kaiser Permanente Medical Group. At this time, he also returns to writing short stories, some of which have been published in various literary magazines. Hosseini's debut novel *The Kite Runner* earns a number of popular and critical awards, including the Borders Original Voice Award, the *San Francisco Chronicle* Best Book of the Year Award, and the South African Book Prize. *The Kite Runner* has been voted as

the Reading Group Book of the Year in 2008. In 2006, Hosseini is named a goodwill envoy to UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency.

A Thousand Splendid Suns is the second novel written by Khaled Hosseini. The novel has sold over a million copies in the UK since its hardback publication in May 2007. Hosseini's popularity with reading groups continues as his second novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns,* comes.

And the Mountains Echoed, published in 2013, is the third novel by Khaled Hosseini. The novel deviates from Hosseini's style in his first two works through his choice to avoid focusing on any one character. The book is written similarly to a collection of short stories, with each of the nine chapters being told from the perspective of a different character.

A film version of *The Kite Runner* opens in 2007 with mixed critical reviews and is currently available on DVD. Hosseini is currently on an open-ended sabbatical from practicing medicine to focus on his writing. In addition to writing novels, he has expressed interest in writing a screenplay, a stage play, and more short stories.

A Glance into Previous Observations

The Kite Runner was published in 2003 to nearly unanimous praise. Said to be the first novel written in English by an Afghan, the novel was instantly popular. Reviewers admired the novel for its straightforward storytelling, its convincing character studies, and for its startling account of the human toll of the violence that has accompanied Afghanistan's turbulent political scene in the last thirty years. It has been interpreted and analyzed by various critics, scholars and writers from different perspectives. They have focused on different issues like Afghan diaspora, migration, family relationship, hypocrisy of those hiding their sins under the cloak of religious righteousness, the dichotomy of the privileged and underprivileged and the double

standard for men and women. Most of the perspectives and approaches are reader oriented and the author oriented but they have talked less about the issue that this thesis is going to explore. This research primarily focuses to the people of lower status, lower strata people of not conversant peasantry, under-represented, under-taught, non-canonical and the subordinated group who are always, directly or indirectly, prejudiced by ideologies of dominant class living in Afghanistan.

Hosseini, with an audience at the Central Parkway Library of the Free Public Library in Philadelphia, accepts both novels *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as first and foremost the love stories between two classes of the society. Stuhr quotes:

> Both are love stories, they are both stories of love found in the most unlikely places. In *The Kite Runner* it was these two boys who came from different ends… polar ends of society and yet they were like brothers. In [*A Thousand Splendid Suns*] it is the story of this unlikely love between these two very, very different women… somehow they find each other and there is this very special bond between them. The connection between these two novels is this unlikely and improbable and human connection that redeems these characters. (122)

Khaled Hosseini glimpses his novel, *The Kite Runner* as fictional autobiography which explores the powerful relationship between father and son during the Afghan monarch and hopes for a peaceful post-Taliban Afghanistan. In an interview with Razeshta Sethna after Returning to Afghanistan for the first time after 27 years in exile in America, Khaled Hosseini further says:

> The story line of my novel is largely fictional. The characters were invented and the plot imagined. However, there certainly are, as is

> always the case with fiction, autobiographical elements woven through the narrative. Probably the passages most resembling my own life are the ones in the US, with Amir and Baba trying to build a new life for themselves. I, too, came to the US as an immigrant and I recall vividly those first few years in California, the brief time we spent on welfare, and the difficult task of assimilating into a new culture. My father and I did work for a while at the flea market and there really are rows of Afghans working there, some of whom I am related to. (Sethna 1)

In his review in *World Literature Today*, Ronny Noor remarks, "This lucidly written and often touching novel gives a vivid picture of not only the Russian atrocities but also those of the Northern Alliance and the Taliban" (148).

A brief review in *Publishers Weekly* credited the novel providing "an incisive, perceptive examination of recent Afghan history and its ramifications in both America and the Middle East," (Zalesky 43) and called it "a complete work of literature that succeeds in exploring the culture of a previously obscure nation that has become a pivot point in the global politics of the new millennium" (Zalesky 43). The novel was noted for its detailed portrayal of a friendship between two boys that tenuously spans class and ethnic lines.

Critic Geraldine S Pearson finds *The Kite Runner* an emotionally painful novel to read. He is fascinated with its powerful descriptive on all interpersonal levels, including the father-son relationship between Amir and his Baba, the childhood friendship between Amir and Hassan, and the various relationships detailed in the book. The novel reads similarly to a memoir, and Hosseini brings us into the politically chaotic but beautiful world of Afghanistan and one man's journey through guilt and trauma from his childhood. Geraldine S Pearson says:

> From a psychiatric nursing perspective, this novel illustrates numerous clinically pertinent themes. Amir's exposure to the traumatic assault on his friend, Amir, hunts him for most of his life and this childhood event has a powerful impact on hi adult decisions and feelings. Pfefferbaum (2005) notes that symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder are mediated by the event, exposure and subjective reaction. (66)

In *The New York Times*, Edward Hower praises *The Kite Runner* 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). Hower 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 in a shiny Mustang while his friend stays home to clean the house" (4). A few noted with misgiving that the novel occasionally strays from the conventions of realism in contemporary fiction. Hower notes, "When Amir meets his old nemesis, now a powerful Taliban official, the book descends into some plot twists better suited to a folk tale than a modern novel" (4). Like Hower, Rebecca Stuhr in the *Library Journal Critical Overview* focuses on the late chapters in pointing out the novel's "over-reliance on coincidence" (122).

For Loyal Miles, the novel is about national identity. He also agrees with the betrayal in friendship because of the broader elements of Afghan society, ethnic and class divisions:

> The tensions in this relationship mirror Afghanistan's struggle in the 1970s to maintain a traditional sense of national identity in the face of government instability and eventual invasion by a foreign power.

> Broader elements of Afghan society, such as ethnic and class divisions, also make it impossible for Amir to consider Hassan, his closest childhood companion and gamily servant boy, a friend. The gradual unraveling of both relationships and Amir's eventual attempts to reconcile with his father and with Hassan provides a structure through which Hosseini compellingly examines Afghanistan's recent cultural and national history. (207)

In Afghanistan, socioeconomic status was highly correlated with ethnicity stratifying the greater Afghan society. Income inequality was vast as most of the upper class came from the royal tribal clan, while the lower class was comprised of the likes of Hassan's family of *The Kite Runner*. In this socio- structural context of Afghanistan, critic Mir Hekmatullah Sadat states:

> Through symbolic structure, Hosseini deals with the inequalities and injustices. The book's political dimension reveals that Hazaras and Shias could never move up the hierarchy unless they denied their identity or became wealthy. It was not just the Shias and Hazaras but also the Kuchis, Uzbeks, Turkmen, and 'atrafiyan or deehatiyan' (rural dwellers) no matter if they were Pashtu-speaking, Panjshiris, or Badakhshis. (1)

In an otherwise glowing review in the *Times Literary Supplement*, James O'Brien points out that "When Hosseini strays from the simple narrative style he prefers, he struggles to retain credibility" (25). Noor argued that the novel gives "a selective, simplistic, even simple-minded picture" (148) of the ongoing Afghan conflict, in particular, an overly optimistic view of Hamid Karzai's ability to govern Afghanistan. Overall, reviewers see the novel as a great triumph marred only by rare stylistic flaws.

A wide ranging criticism has been found about *The Kite Runner* since it has been studied, analyzed and interpreted from different perspectives. We still find many fields about this text which remain unexplored. Though there are several characters in the story, this present study only highlights Ali and Hassan as subalterns who always remain silent in response to the injustice done to them.

CHAPTER TWO

Subaltern Studies: An Outline

Post colonial theory, as a recent field of study, has lately become one of the most attractive academic disciplines. One of the latest subdivisions of post-colonial theory is the Subaltern Studies Group or the Subaltern Studies Collective that was launched in the 1980s by a group of eminent Indian scholars.

Throughout its history, since the beginning of the twentieth century, the concept of the subaltern remains one of the most slippery and difficult notions to define. The notion of the subaltern is first referred to by the Italian Marxist political activist Antonio Gramsci to refer to groups who are outside the established structure of political representation in his article "Notes on Italian History" which appeared later on as part of his most widely known book *The Prison Notebooks* written between 1929 and 1935. 'Subaltern' originally is a term for subordinates in military hierarchies but literally, it refers to any person or group of inferior rank and station, whether because of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion.

Gramsci's standpoint is fundamentally instrumental to any student who reaches an understanding of the origin of the notion of the subaltern because it tends to detach itself from the mechanistic and economistic form that narrowly characterizes most of the Marxist traditional studies. Gramsci uses the term subaltern to any low rank person or group of people in a particular society suffering under hegemonic domination of a ruling elite class that denies them the basic rights of participation in the making of local history and culture as active individuals of the same nation.

Gramsci becomes interested in the study of the subaltern classes of consciousness and culture as one possible way to make their voice heard instead of

relying on the historical narrative of the state which is by the end, the history of the ruling and dominant classes. In his study, Gramsci envisages to carry out the legitimized fact given thus, "The subaltern classes by definition are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a "State": their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society, and thereby with the history of States and groups of States" (52).

Subalterns are socially neglected people. They can neither unite for their rights nor dare to raise voice for justice. They are even excluded in the history. They become a subject matter of study only when they are connected with some other powerful groups. In order to study the history of the subaltern groups, Gramsci designes a plan composed of six steps that are found to be explained in details in his book. He intends to study:

> firstly, their objective formation by changes taking place in economic production; secondly, their active or passive affiliation to the dominant political formations and their attempts to influence their programs; thirdly, the birth of new parties and dominant groups, which are mainly created for the subjugation and maintenance of the subaltern; fourthly, the formations which the subaltern group themselves made to vindicate limited rights; fifthly, new formations which maintain the subaltern groups autonomy within old frameworks; sixthly, those formations which may help to affirm their entire autonomy. (52)

Ironically, Gramsci argues that the subaltern classes have the same complex history as that of the hegemonic classes, although the latter constitutes the most officially accepted. The subaltern groups' history in Gramsci's opinion has no evident unity and it seems to be in its very episodic totality because of their submission to the authority

of the ruling groups even when they break with the established system. This deplorable state of affairs imposes this sort of non-accessibility to the means by which they may limit and control their own representation and consequently lack an access to the social and cultural institutions of their state. Though, it takes a long time, the only possible way from Gramsci's perspective was to reach the state of freedom through a permanent victory which necessarily guarantees a dismantling of the master/slave pattern.

This dismantling is to be realized within Gramsci's theoretical framework, by releasing the subordinated consciousness of non-elite group from the cultural hegemony exercised by the ruling class. The elite culture refers to the customs, law, religion, civilizations, language of dominant groups of people, actually who are in power and whose voice is heard and recorded in history. Many critics argue that the elite culture is the superior and dominant over the non-elite cultural groups. Lower strata illiterate groups of peasantry, metropolitan sub proletariat and who resist against the hegemony of bourgeois ideology are non-elite cultural groups. Elitists always have the hegemony, domination over lower strata sub-proletariat groups in politics, economy and other social activities. Elitists voice is heard in literature and have the power over group of subordination. Culturally elite group whose culture the non-elite cultural groups are obliged to follow, take the latter as other and them. His groundbreaking and newly revealed ideas about the vital role of peasantry as a distinct group within the subaltern division, distinguishes Gramsci from the previous founders of Marxism.

Some 20th century scholars further study on the issue of Indian peasantry historiography based on the ideas formulated by Gramsci. With the emergence of the Subaltern Studies Group or Subaltern Studies Collective lead by Ranjit Guha, the

subalternity develops as a concept and gains a worldwide currency. This group comprises a number of other south Asian historians, social critics and scholars.

Ranajit Guha defines subaltern as, "a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way" (*Selected Subaltern Studies* 35). The subaltern for him is that clearly definite entity, which constitutes "the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the 'elite'" (*Selected Subaltern Studies* 44).

Guided by the foundational views of Guha, the group members aim at studying the subaltern groups as an "objective assessment of the role of the elite and as a critique of elitist interpretations of that role" (*Selected Subaltern Studies* 35). This concern originated from the assumption that the writing of Indian national history has been controlled by colonial elitism as well as nationalist-bourgeois elitism which are both produced by the British colonialism in different historical periods. Guha argues:

> Elitism is the product of British rule in India, but have survived the transfer of power and been assimilated to neo-colonialist elitist historiography of the colonialist or neo-colonialist forms of discourse in Britain and India respectively. Elitist historiography of colonialist or neo-colonist type counts British writers and institutions among its principal protagonists, but has its imitators in India and other countries. (*Subaltern Studies IV* 18)

Consequently, Guha affirms that this kind of historiography cannot possibly transmit, analyze or acknowledge the kind of changes or contributions brought by common people themselves as individual subjects are independent from the elite groups. Such a difficulty in acknowledging these contributions of common people by this elitist

historiography is clear enough in a ‘politics of people’ that persists to exist even when the elite politics dissipate.

Ranjit Guha gives his opinions on Elitism especially linked with Indian nationalism that came in many forms. Guha holds in his *Selected Subaltern studies*:

> The historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism-colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism... shar[ing] the prejudice that the making of the Indian nation and the development of the consciousness-nationalism that confirmed this process were exclusively or predominantly elite achievements are credited to British colonial rulers, administrators, in the nationalist and neo-nationalists writings to Indian elite personalities, institutions, activities and ideas. (137)

This distinct difference between the elite and the subaltern is evident when we conceive it through the notion of political mobilization. The elite political mobilization is fulfilled through appropriation of or adjustment to the British parliamentary institutions and laws whereas the subaltern political mobilization is founded on classical forms of social organization such as: blood relationships and kinship, territoriality, traditional and tribal affiliations where popular mobilization take the form of peasant insurgencies and regional demonstrations. No matter how heterogeneous the subaltern groups may be, there is a constantly unchanging character which defines them: that is, the notion of resistance to the imposed domination of the elite class. The final result of this interplay is summarized in the fact that the Indian bourgeoisie fails by the end to speak for the nation, a position which confirms the failure of Indian nation to objectively exist without any representations formed and

cherished by the colonial regime. This failure, in Guha's opinion, consists of the critical problem of the historiography of colonial India.

The concept of the subaltern moves to a more complex theoretical debate with the intervention of the Indian-American post-colonial feminist critic, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who is criticized in her groundbreaking essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

The complexity of Spivak's stance might be attributed to her erudite and skillful, but sometimes, unclear implementation of structuralist and post-structuralist theories, particularly decontructionist strategies of reading, in colonial and post-colonial spaces of divergence and inversion. In her seminal essay, Spivak reconsiders the problems of subalternity within new historical developments as brought by capitalistic politics of undermining revolutionary voice and divisions of labor in a globalized world. She disapproves the first place of Gramsci's assertion of the autonomy of the subaltern groups. Her justification of this rejection of Gramscian view is based on her view that this autonomy results in homogeneity of the subaltern group and subaltern subjective identity.

Spivak's second criticism of Subaltern Studies Group lies in her belief that no methodology, even the most ambitious Marxist one, can avoid a sort of essentialism in its attempt to define who or what may constitute the subaltern group. Consequently, Spivak chooses to adopt the notion of the subaltern essentially because:

> It is truly situational. 'Subaltern' began as a description of a certain rank in the military. The word was used under censorship by Gramsci: he called Marxism 'monism,' and was obliged to call the proletarian 'subaltern.' That word, used under duress, has been transformed into the description of everything that does not fall under strict class

> analysis. This is so, because it has no theoretical rigor. ("Theory in the Margin: Coetzee's Foe Reading Defoe's Crusoe/Roxana." 154)

Spivak, faces with this difficulty of specifying the realm of subalternity, shifts to reconsider the issues of the subaltern groups by dealing with the problems of gender and particularly Indian women during colonial times. She reflects on the status of Indian women relying on her analysis of a case of Sati women practices under the British colonial rule.

Sati women as a subaltern group, Spivak argues, were lost between two polarities: the British humanist discourse calling for individual freedom of Sati women and the Hindu native policy calling for voluntary participation in the ritual. The conflict between these two positions produces two different discourses with no possible solution; one postulates that, "white men [are] saving brown women from brown men," the other maintains that, "the woman actually wanted to die" ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 271). Here, it becomes clear that the Hindu woman loses her voice in such a contradictory position between two antagonistic poles that constantly teases her to make a conscious decision. The voice of the Hindu woman itself disappears while these two discursive groups try to give her a voice; the representation of Sati women contributes so much to a certain appropriation of their own free will to decide and deprive them of their subjectivity and a space to speak from. Finally, the Hindu woman "disappeared, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling, which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernization" ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 306).

Spivak cites the examples of widows burnt at the pyre of the husband. She emphasizes the condition of women who are doubly oppressed-firstly by patriarchy and secondly by colonialism. Spivak comes to conclude by the end:

> The Subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with woman as a pious. Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual has a circumscribe task which she must not disown with a flourish. ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 308)

This last declaration that she makes in her essay is controversially interpreted. It is interpreted as a declaration of the impossibility of voicing the oppressed groups' resistance because of their representations by other dominant forces as the same as a statement which affirmed the fact that the subaltern as a distinctly conscious subjectivity only possessed a dominant language or a dominant voice to be heard. From this stance, one may go further to assume that the whole discourse of postcolonial theory itself is to be considered as speaking for the voiceless and politically marginalized groups by their intellectual representatives.

By excavating the history of deprived women, Spivak manages to elaborate on the original demarcation of the notion of the subaltern as it was first developed by Ranajit Guha and the others through her fundamental exploration of the experiences and struggles of women in general, either from the upper middle class or the peasantry and sub-proletariat class. She stands for women as a differentiated gender because of the outrageous exclusion of their participation in anti-colonial history. Spivak contends:

> The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of the sexual division of labor, for both of which there is 'evidence'; rather, both were used as object of colonialist historiography and as a subject of insurgency, though the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the

> subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow. ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 308)

The last two decades of the twentieth century have witnessed the emergence of diverse themes within the subaltern historiographical school. Historians have noticed that the later volumes of the subaltern studies are dominated by the desire to analyse the portrayal of subalternity by the dominant discourses. Apart from these volumes, a number of books appear in the decades of the 80s and 90s.

In "The Nation and Its Peasant", Partha Chatterjee follows on the work of Gramsci, who is actually responsible for the substitution of the word subaltern for the previously used term proletariat, and explores peasants, peasant consciousness, and the nature of peasant resistance to colonial domination. Like Guha, Chatterjee describes peasants as a cohesive group, a group that is the object of manipulation by elites, engaged in resistance against those elites. In order to explain why or how that resistance sometimes had limited success, he asks for a "critique of both colonialist and nationalist historiographies by bringing in the peasantry as a subject of history, endowed with its own distinctive forms of consciousness and making sense of and acting upon the world on its own terms" (10). M.S. Nagarajan, in *English Literary Criticism and theory: An Introductory History* defines subaltern as "a military term which means 'of lower rank'" (276).

Veena Das views subaltern as a perspective to represent excluded marginalized group of subaltern among elite cultural groups in her celebrated essay "Subaltern as Perspective." She views that *Subaltern Studies*, "make an important point in establishing the centrality of the historical moment of rebellion in understanding the subaltern as subjects of their own history" (312). Veena Das further argues:

> Subaltern Studies poses a serious challenge to some of dominant conceptions about tribes or casts in anthropological theory. This project performs in our understanding of tribes, castes or other such group to restore to them their historical being. It is no longer possible to think, for instance, of tribes or inhabitants of the hill regions deprived of their rights to forests as simply inhabiting a world of nature. (314)

Subaltern studies represents the deprived, marginalized caste and tribes in the national history, as Veena Das views, for coexistence and complex interaction between different type of consciousness-e.g. caste, class, regional and national.

The decade of the 80s assumes a special significance due to the fact that caste, gender, and religion became important reference points in history writing, subaltern history in particular understood the need to document the lives of all the oppressed people, like peasants and workers, tribals and lower caste women and dalits, whose voices were seldom heard before in history.

It is necessary to note that the rise of the subaltern historiography in the decade of the 1980s conceded with that of the Dalit Movement. This movement questioned the basic assumption of Brahminism as well as various historical schools. Including the subalterns, historians have noticed that ‘subaltern studies’ is used as a blanket term for communities inside it. But each of these communities under this massive all inclusive umbrella possess a different vision of history and a distinct approach to it.

In the trend of subaltern studies, Dr. Sumit Sarkar has also contributed a lot. He studied Marxism, and his important writings consist of the history of common people in national movement, history of neglected group, leadership of Mahatma

Gandhi in national movement and the dominant nature of foreign colonial government. In the introduction to his book *Popular Movements and Middle Class Leadership in Late Colonial India*, he says:

> 'history from below' has to face the problem of the ultimate relative failure of mass initiative in colonial India, if the justly abandoned stereotype of the eternally passive Indian peasant is not to be replaced by an opposite romantic stereotype of perennial rural rebelliousness. For an essential fact surely is that the 'subaltern' classes have remained subaltern, often surprisingly dormant despite abject misery and ample provocation, and subordinate in the end to their social 'betters' even when they do become politically active. (3)

Subaltern school has no doubt made great contribution in the realm of Indian historiography. But nevertheless, it is not totally free from shortcomings. Sumit Sarkar in his famous essay "The Decline of the Subaltern" states;

> *Subaltern studies* does not happen to be the first Indian historiographical school whose reputation has come to be evaluated primarily in terms of audience response in the west. For many Indian readers, particularly those getting interested in postmodern trends for the first time. The sense of being 'with it' strongly conveyed by *Subaltern Studies* appears far more important than any possible insubstantiality of empirical consent. Yet some eclectic borrowings or verbal similarities apart, the claim (or ascription) of being postmodern is largely spurious, in which ever since we might want to deploy that ambiguous and self-consciously polysemic term. (417)

Sumit Sarkar expresses his disagreements with the trend of late subaltern studies that flow from a compound of academic and political misgivings. He opposes the trend of reading subaltern studies within the certain limitations.

There is no denying the fact that subaltern school has contributed a lot in the study of history, economics and social sciences in Third World countries in the end of the twentieth century. Subaltern Studies form a part of postcolonial theory in literature and its application is indeed very useful in the study of certain texts like Dalit Literature. B.K. Das in his book *Twentieth Century Literacy Criticisms* Says, "Literature is not a branch of social sciences and therefore cannot be evaluated according to the methods adopted by Subaltern Studies" (147).

It becomes clear nowadays with the postmodern turn as conceived of in Baudrillard's terms of the disappearance of the real and the death of originality that the subaltern becomes defined in descriptive terms according to a particular marginalized subject position in any given cultural or social context. Subalternity as a condition becomes an umbrella concept which gained an extended attractive fashion. People in the present time would willingly like to occupy the position of a subaltern whose silence is possibly voiced through the advocating representation of an intellectual. Spivak warns in advance from such a position of accepting the condition of a permanent subordination.

The task of an intellectual is to pave way for the subaltern groups and let them freely speak for themselves. It becomes quite difficult for all the changes taking place in a globalized postmodern world to define the subaltern as a distinct category. Ironically, Professor Gyanendra Pandey, in his attempt to trace the developments which took place in the politics of the subaltern, points to a drastic movement in the demands of the marginalized groups from "the struggles for recognition as equals" to

"the demand for a recognition of difference" (1). The societies of the third world become influenced to a great deal by their contemporary European neighbors as a result of the economic imperatives to the extent that the peasant/worker positions become intermingled in different settings while moving between urban and rural spaces.

Finally, Spivak might perhaps, with the uncontrolled changes in human social system, be disillusioned in those who want to speak for subaltern when she chooses in one of the interviews with Leon de Kock to interrogate him, "Who the hell wants to protect subalternity?" (*New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa* 46). The difficulty to encompass the realm of subaltern studies is more evident with the postmodern turn which cherishes everything that may act against the values of European enlightenment rationalism.

CHAPTER THREE

Discrimination and Passive Response

Portrayal of Afghan History

Khaled Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner* derives its name from an ancient Afghan hobby of dueling with kites. Similar to Afghanistan's tumultuous history, Afghan kite flying involves mid-air duels between rivals, "like paper sharks roaming for prey" (55). Kite flyers attempt to down their adversary's kites analogous to the fighting between the Afghan government and mujahidin guerrilla factions. "In Kabul, fighting kites *was* a little like going to war" (43). In most cases, the kite flyer is encouraged to kite duel aggressively at high altitudes by the 'string giver' who usually holds the string reel. His role is not much different than the foreign powers that instigated all Afghan sides into battle to fight their proxy war by providing arms, training, and intelligence.

When the opponent's kite has been downed, then the real battle turns into a race, to see who retrieves the fallen kite, "Up and down the streets, kite runners were returning triumphantly, their captured kites held high" (56). This is symbolic to the 1992 event in Afghanistan when ethno-religious warlords looted and pillaged Kabul and other cities in a race to see who can amass the most booty. Interestingly enough, in 1994 the emerging Taliban regime "banned kite fighting" (187) and an assortment of other activities offering at best a graveyard peace to a conflict-ridden society. Amir's anxiety before the day of kite flying tournament identifies the resemblance between kite fighting and war:

> 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. (43)

The Kite Runner deals with Afghan situation from the 1970s to the year 2002. Like all places, Afghanistan has a long and complicated history, but it drew international attention only after the coup of 1973. Afghanistan means Land of Afghan, Afghan being a name the Pashtun majority describe themselves starting before the year 1000. Traditionally Pashtuns have dominated the country because they are the presumed majority of the population, "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" (35). Other ethnic groups have not had a strong voice within the society. The Hazaras are speculated to have descended from the contingents left behind by the Mongolian quests into Afghanistan.

In addition to Pashtuns and Hazaras, Afghanistan is comprised of other ethnicities such as the Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Turkmen. Through symbolic structure, Hosseini deals with the inequalities and injustices, "Twenty years of unhappiness in their *watan*" (316). The book's political dimension reveals that Hazaras and Shias can never move up the hierarchy unless they deny their identity or became wealthy. The sufferers are not just the Shias and Hazaras but also the Kuchis, Uzbeks, Turkmen no matter if they are Pashtu-speaking, Panjshiris, or Badakhshis.

Afghanistan regained independence after the third war against British forces in 1919. From 1933 to1973, Afghanistan was a kingdom ruled by King Zahir Shah. When the king was on vacation, his cousin Mohammad Daoud Khan seized power. The military coup was nearly bloodless:

> They weren't shooting ducks after all. As it turned out, they hadn't shot much of anything that night of July 17, 1973. Kabul awoke the next morning to find that the monarchy was a thing of the past. The king, Zahir Shah, was away in Italy. In his absence, his cousin Daoud Khan had ended the king's forty-year regime with a bloodless coup. (32)

But as we see through Amir's story, it was still a frightening time for the people of Kabul who heard rioting and shooting in the streets, "Something roared like thunder. The earth shook a little and we heard the rat-a-tat-tat of gunfire" (31).

For six years, Mohammad Daoud Khan became President and Prime Minister of Afghanistan. Daoud Khan turned to the Soviet Union for economic and military assistance. In 1978, General Daud was overthrown and killed in a coup by leftist People's Democratic Party. It led to the power struggle between leftist leaders Hafizullah Amin and Nur Mohammed Taraki won by Amin. Babrak Karmal, leader of the People's Democratic Party was installed as ruler backed by the Soviet troops. The People's Democratic Party instituted many political and social reforms in Afghanistan, including abolishing religious and traditional customs:

> FOR THE NEXT COULPLE of years, the words economic development and reform danced on a lot of lips in Kabul. The constitutional monarchy had been abolished, replaced by a republic, led by a president of the republic. For a while, a sense of rejuvenation and purpose swept across the land. People spoke of women's rights and modern technology. (38)

These reforms incensed groups of Afghans who believed in adherence to traditional and religious laws. These factions began to challenge the government very rigorously.

No one in Afghanistan remains trustworthy. Even the school children are encouraged to spy on their parents. Comrades divide the whole Kabul into two groups: "Those who eavesdropped and those who didn't" (98). The new government officials shoot the singer from Amir's party:

> You couldn't trust anyone in Kabul any more-for a fee or under threat, people told on each other, neighbor on neighbor, child on parent, brother on brother, servant on master, friend on friend. I thought of the singer Ahmad Zahir, who had played the accordion at my thirteenth birthday. He had gone for a drive with some friends, and someone had later found his body on the side of the road, a bullet in the back of his head. (98)

In 1979, the Soviet Army entered Afghanistan, beginning an occupation that would last a decade of bloody violence, "When Russian tanks would roll into the very 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" (32).

This is the historical point in *The Kite Runner* when Baba and Amir abandon their home in Kabul for their own safety. They leave secretly in the night, and make the dangerous journey to Peshawar in an oil tanker with other desperate refugees. At a checkpoint on their way out of Afghanistan, Baba and Amir encounter a Russian soldier who, though already paid bribe money, demands a further condition of their escape with sex proposal with a fellow lady traveler, "the soldier wanted a half hour with the lady in the back of the truck" (100). Baba stands up for her, even when the guard threatens to shoot him. An older guard steps in just before the shot. Baba says to the truck driver: "Ask him where his shame is" (100). To which the Russian soldier responds; "There is no shame in war" (100). Angrily, Baba counters: "Tell him he's

wrong. War doesn't negate decency. It demands it even more than in times of peace" (100). Baba speaks consistently with international law which, in both treaty and custom, insists upon humane rules of armed conflict in international and civil wars. The event pin points the prevalent insecurity and violence for women in Afghanistan. A disdain for the Russians resulting from their invasion and occupation of Afghanistan is palpable throughout the book. Hosseini forecasts the terrible sweep of devastated Afghanistan.

Throughout the years of Soviet occupation, internal Muslim forces put up a resistance. Farid and his father in the novel are examples of these Mujahedins or men engaged in war on the side of Islam. Various Mujahideen troops fight Soviet forces. Many countries including US supply money and arms.

Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan completely in 1989, but civil war continued as Mujahideen push to overthrow Najibullah. In 1993, Mujahedeen factions agreed on the formation of government with ethnic Tajik, and proclaimed Burhanuddin Rabbani as the president. Factional contests were continued. Pashtun-dominated Taliban emerged as a major challenge to the Rabbani government. In the years following Soviet withdrawal, there was a great deal of infighting among rival militias, making everyday life in Afghanistan unsafe, "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" (185). As the talk between Amir and Rahim Khan turns to the Talibans, Rahim Khan addresses them as cruel persons who do not let people live in respective way, "They don't let you be human" (173). He remembers his bitter encounter with a young Taliban at a soccer game in Ghazi Stadium:

> "Anyway, Kabul scored a goal and the man next to me cheered loudly. Suddenly this young bearded fellow who was patrolling the aisles, eighteen years old at most by the look of him, he walked up to me and struck me on the forehead with the butt of hi Kalashnikov. 'Do that again and I'll put out your tongue, you old donkey!' he said." […] "I was old enough to be his grandfather and I was sitting there, blood gushing down my face, apologizing to that son of a dog." (173)

When Taliban seized control of Kabul in 1996 after so many years of insecurity and violence, people welcomed the takeover. The theme is reflected in Rahim's expression: "When the Talib rolled in and kicked the alliance out of Kabul, I actually danced on that street" (174).

The Taliban 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 dangerous again. Being Sunni supremacists, they systematically "massacred the Hazaras in Mazar-i-Sharif" (187). They imposed hard line version of Islam and also enacted fundamentalist laws, most famously those banning music and dance, and those severely restricting women's rights. Rahim Khan tells Amir about the fragmented Afghanistan:

> If you went from the Shar-e nau section to Kerteh-Parwan to buy a carpet, you risked getting shot by a sniper or getting blown up by a rocket- if you got past all the checkpoints, that was. You practically needed a visa to go from one neighborhood to the other. So people just stayed put, prayed the next rocket wouldn't hit their home. (174)

The Soviet occupation left Kabul mostly untouched, but the civil war following the departure of the Soviets has left Kabul in ruins "Collateral damage" (175) and its

population crippled and in extreme poverty. Additionally, the street presence of the Taliban means that it can be dangerous to move around openly in the streets.

As a result of Afghanistan's long period of civil strife and inhumane governance, children were prominently victimized. Zaman, director of the orphanage tells Amir, "Many of [the children] have lost their fathers in the war, and their mothers can't feed them because the Taliban don't allow them to work. So they bring their children here" (222). The novel's canvas turns dark when Hosseini describes the suffering of his country under the tyranny of the Taliban, whom Amir encounters when he finally returns home, hoping to help Hassan and his family. The latter half of the book is full of haunting images: a man, desperate to feed his children, trying to sell his artificial leg in the market; an adulterous couple stoned to death in a stadium during the halftime of a football match; a rouged young boy forced into prostitution, dancing the sort of steps once performed by an organ grinder's monkey. Amir sums up Kabul in three words: "Rubble and Beggars" (245). Zaman states the condition of his orphanage in this way:

> There is very little shelter here, almost no food, no clothes, no clean water. What I have in ample supply here is children who've lost their childhood. But the tragedy is that these are the lucky ones. We've filled beyond capacity and every day I turn away mothers who bring their children. (222)

The novel portrays the Afghans as an independent and proud people who for decades have defended their country against one invader after another. But the narrator wonders if his people will ever transcend the tribalism that continues to threaten.

Afghanistan's integrity, "Maybe it was a hopeless place" (233). A similar sentiment is later expressed by Sohrab when he says "There are a lot of children in Afghanistan, but little childhood" (277).

The novel reveals the violence during Taliban regime. It was a time of ethnic cleansing. A Talib describes about their terrible movement, "We left the bodies in the streets, and if their families tried to sneak out to drag them back into their homes, we'd shoot them too. We left them in streets for days. We left them for the dogs. Dog meat for dogs" (243).

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 not until 2004 that the current president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, was elected. Today, there are countless Afghan refugees living in other parts of the world, just like Amir and his family. For those Afghans living in Afghanistan, life is still dangerous. In the South, conflict continues to rage on and the Taliban have managed to reemerge. Afghanistan continues to this day to be a land of conflict, divided by religion, caste, class, political ambition, global power politics, and other factors in such a way as to make the realization of human rights for the Afghan people as a whole still a distant dream.

Throughout each page of this compelling novel, readers have to remind themselves that Hosseini is telling a story he has conjured up, the outcome of his life's adventures and creative imagination. As a distinct trademark, Hosseini weaves Farsi, Dari and Pashtu dialectical phrases along with Afghan history, cultural traditions, humor and social criticism into his debut book. Hosseini confronts many prejudgments indoctrinated in some Afghan groups and families. As a microcosm of

Afghan society, he tells the fictional tale of people growing up under the same roof but treated tremendously different.

Projection of Social Discrimination

The Kite Runner explores the impacts of the Cold War, the Soviet invasion, the Taliban rule, refugee issue, and heterogeneity of Afghan Society, tribal tradition, religious extremism and cultural clashes. It is also a story about the collapse of civil society and the violation of fundamental human rights that commonly takes place. Hosseini mirrors the subject of social discrimination and prejudice based on ethnic and racial discrimination, religious intolerance, the oppression of women and children, war crimes, the plight of refugees Afghans have suffered at the hands of foreign invaders and their own people particularly in the past 30 years. The novel basically tackles the issue of ethnic discrimination with an example of the relationship between Amir, a well-to-do Pashtun boy, and Hassan, and the son of Amir's father's servant Ali, a Hazara.

Briefly, the novel begins in San Francisco, though the narrator, Amir, immediately flashes back to his childhood in Afghanistan. When the protagonist's friend, Rahim Khan, calls him out of the blue, he knows that his past sins are coming back to haunt him even in the new life he has built in San Francisco, "It was my past of unatoned sins" (1). He remembers Hassan, whom he calls "the harelipped kite runner," (1) saying, "For you, a thousand times over" (1). Rahim's words also echo in his head, "There is a way to be good again" (2). These two phrases become the focal points for the rest of the novel.

From boyhood, Amir recognizes the difference in social class between himself and Hassan. Amir says, "...History isn't easy to overcome. Neither is religion. In the end, I was a Pasthun and he was a Hazara, I was Sunni and he was Shi'a, and nothing

was ever going to change that. Nothing" (22). In truth, it is not religion but suffering that separates the boys. Yet both "feed from the same breast" (10). Baba's house was widely considered the most beautiful one in Kabul. There Baba held large dinner parties and entertained friends, including Rahim Khan, in his smoking room:

> Everyone agreed that my father, my baba, had built the most beautiful house in the Wazir Akbar Khan district, a new and affluent neighborhood in the northern part of Kabul. Some thought it was the prettiest house in all of Kabul. A brand entry way flanked by rosebushes led to the sprawling house of marble floors and wide windows. Intricate mosaic tiles, handpicked by Baba in Isfahan, covered the floors of the four bathrooms. Gold –stitched tapestries, which Baba had bought in Calcutta, lined the walls; a crystal chandelier hung from the vaulted ceiling. (4)

One glaring difference between Amir and Hassan, however, lies in their religion and culture. The Pashtuns, Sunni muslims, rule the country. Baba and Amir belong to this class. As a Pashtun, Amir enjoys a higher social class. As a result, his father works in the upper class, starting his own business. The well furnished living room reminds Amir his sophisticated position:

> The living room downstairs had a curved wall with custom –built cabinets. Inside sat framed family pictures: an old, grainy photo of my grandfather and King Nadir Shah taken in 1931, two years before the king's assassination; they are standing over a dead deer, dressed in knee high boots, rifles slung over their shoulders. There was a picture of my parents' wedding night, Baba dashing in his black suit and my mother a smiling young princess in white. (5)

Hassan's father was a servant to Amir's father, Baba and lived in a small servant's house on his property. Hosseini writes in the second chapter canvassing the rueful living of Hazara servants and their settlement: "On the south end of the garden, in the shadows of a loquat tree, was the servant's home, a modest little mud hut where Hassan lived with his father" (5). Social class separates the two boys from true friendship. However, they share much of their time in boyhood. Despite their time together and the close proximity of their homes, Amir rarely visits the mud hut, which he remembers as sparse:

> In the eighteen years that I lived in that house, I stepped into Hassan and Ali's quarters only a handful of times. When the sun dropped low behind the hills and we were done playing for the day, Hassan and I parted ways. I went past the rosebushes to Baba's mansion, Hassan to the mud shack where he had been born, where he'd lived his entire life. I remember it was spare, dimly lit by a pair of keresone lamps. (6)

Hosseini does not just present an idyllic Afghanistan. The crises presented by Hosseini in the novel stem from inherent weaknesses in Afghanistan's social structure and its cultural prejudices. Amir and his father are Pashtun and Sunni Muslims, and their servants are Hazara and Shi'a Muslims. This is a typical servant-master arrangement. Though, Baba and Ali grew up as quasi-brothers, just like Amir and Hassan a generation later, Baba never considered Ali his friend just as Amir never considered Hassan his, "But in none of his stories did Baba ever refer to Ali as his friend. The curious thing was, I never thought of Hassan and me as friends either" (22).

According to Amir, their ethnic and religious differences kept them from being true friends or family. The boys played and got into mischief together like any

other two boys, except that Hassan made Amir's breakfast, cleaned his room, and did all his other household chores:

> During the school year, we had a daily routine. By the time I dragged myself out of bed and lumbered to the bathroom, Hassan had already washed up, prayed the morning namaz with Ali, and prepared my breakfast: hot black tea with three sugar cubes and a slice of toasted naan topped with my favourite sour cherry marmalade, all neatly placed on the dining table. While I ate and complained about homework, Hassan made my bed, polished my shoes, ironed my outfit for the day, packed my books and pencils. I'd hear him singing to himself in the foyer as he ironed, singing old Hazara songs in his nasal voice. (23)

Ali and Hassan being Hazara were historically under –represented, under-taught, non-canonical and the subordinated group, and "School textbooks barely mentioned them and referred to their ancestry only in passing" (8). After hearing so many insults thrown at Hassan because of being a Hazara, the protagonist secretly read a summary of Hazara history. He found out that the Hazara people were descended from Moguls, owing to their flattened, "like Chinese" (8) facial features. The Hazaras were brutally oppressed throughout their history for being Shi'a instead of Sunni Muslim. His own people, the Pashtun, oppressed the Hazaras, as reflected in the expression, "quelled them with unspeakable violence" (8). He pitied Hassan for being a hated minority because he was an unusually gentle and kind person, "incapable of hurting anyone" (9).

Hazaras were often illiterate because they lacked education opportunities. After the completion of work, Hassan used to follow Amir to the sunlight and

shadows of pomegranate trees where he used to listen to Amir's stories. Hassan had great passion for his stories though Amir used to enjoy pointing Hassan's ignorance:

> That Hassan would grow up illiterate like Ali and most Hazaras had been decided the minute he had been born, perhaps even the moment he had been conceived in Sanaubar's unwelcoming womb- after all, what use did a servant have for the written word? But despite his illiteracy, or maybe because of it, Hassan was drawn to the mystery of words, seduced by a secret world forbidden to him. I read him poems and stories, sometimes riddles-though I stopped reading those when I saw he was far better at solving them than I was. (24)

Hassan was always, directly or indirectly, prejudiced by ideologies of Amir, "after all, what use did a servant have for the written word" (24)? After school, Amir would read stories to Hassan, who loved books despite his illiteracy. Sometimes Amir used to tease him while going across a big word to "expose his ignorance" (24). For Hassan, "the words on the page were a scramble of codes, indecipherable, mysterious" (26). It was Amir's superiority ego that always dominated Hassan. When Hassan pointed out a plot hole in Amir's story, Amir thought, "*What does he know, that illiterate Hazara? He'll never be anything but a cook. How dare he criticize you*" (30).

Like Amir, however, Farid shares the common prejudices against the Hazaras and Shi'as. He accompanies Amir into danger as he tries to rescue his nephew Sohrab, but he asks Amir why he would go to such lengths for this particular boy, "You come all the way from America for . . . a Shi'a" (233)? Amir is horrified to hear Farid ask that, but he is not that much better himself. He has come from America to find peace, not to adopt a Hazara boy—not even if that boy is his nephew and Hassan's son. It is

only Rahim Khan's convenient trickery that sets the wheels in motion for Sohrab to go to America with Amir. Amir initially thinks he will be leaving Sohrab with some American philanthropists in Pakistan whom Rahim knows. The little boy has lived as a persecuted minority his whole life, his parents were executed by the Taliban and he was sent to an orphanage to live under horrific conditions and from there was essentially sold to a sadistic pedophile to the same one who had raped Sohrab's father as a young boy.

Amir perhaps recounts Assef as unfathomably evil because Amir fears that he and Assef are alike. Assef is half-German, after all, and Amir is, as Farid reminds him, little better than a tourist, "You? You've always been a tourist here, you just didn't know it" (204). They are, indeed, the same: in their privileged backgrounds and schooling in prejudice, in their status as outsiders in Afghan society and in their crimes against Hassan. If Assef violates Hassan's body, Amir violates his trust in a way just as brutal. Assef isn't just a childhood bully; he carries brass knuckles, bites off ears, and idolizes Hitler. He's a rapist, assaulting first Hassan in the alley and then countless children, male and female, taken from the Kabul orphanage. As a powerful member of the Taliban, he stones a man and woman to death for adultery and he exults over the massacre of Hazaras in Mazar-i-Sharif:

> The Talib, looking absurdly like a baseball pitcher on the mound, hurled the stone at the blindfolded man in the hole. It struck the side of his head. The woman screamed again. The crowd made a startled "OH!" sound. I closed my eyes and covered my face with my hands. The spectators' "OH!" rhymed with each flinging of the stone, and that went on for a while. (237)

Amir's self-loathing and feelings of guilt are so extreme that he sees Assef as his twin, even in his hospital bed in Peshawar, after his rescue of Sohrab: "I had a dream later that night. I dreamed Assef was standing in the doorway of my hospital room, brass ball still in his eye socket. 'We're the same, you and I,' he was saying. 'You nursed with him, but you're my twin'" (268).

Ali's song of liberation and desire to live a happy as well as a joyous life focuses on the brotherhood between people either Shi'a or Sunnni; a kinship between people either hazara or pashtun that not even time could break. But it remains only a dream, a dream that is never to be true, a dream that is always only a dream nothing more than that:

> *On a high mountain I stood,*
>
> *And cried the name of Ali, lion of God.*
>
> *O Ali, Lion of God, King of Men,*
>
> *Bring joy to our sorrowful hearts.* (10)

Amir compares Hassan to the lamb. It underscores the theme of sacrifice. Hassan is a very brave person, but in the fight with Assef and his friends he does not go down fighting. Rather, he accepts his fate-he gets "the look of the lamb" (66) in his eyes-because his loyalty to Amir makes him willing to suffer even the terribly violent act of rape. Amir, in contrast, is not willing to sacrifice anything for Hassan. Amir, even in his cowardice, seems very conscious for his ego to get love from his hard demanding father, "I actually aspired to cowardice, because the alternative, the real reason I was running, was that Assef was right: Nothing was free in this world. Maybe Hassan was the price I had to pay, the lamb I had to slay, to win Baba" (68).

Amir is so selfish that he ends up forcing Hassan and Ali out of the house rather than risking the loss of Baba's pride in him. Hosseini makes it clear that Amir

was in a state of panic and internal conflict. Still, he makes a conscious decision to abandon Hassan, whom he feels on some level "servant's son" (61) and "just a Hazara" (68). Even when Rahim Khan makes it his dying wish for Amir to bring Sohrab to Peshawar, Amir tries to make excuses. Ultimately, he goes seeking Sohrab not so much to save the boy, but to save himself from his lifelong guilt.

Through Rahim Khan's words, we learn that Hassan remained a loyal and humble person until death. Even though he never found out that Baba was his father, he still mourned for him the way a son does, "wore black for the next forty days" (182). He insisted on living in the servant's hut and keeping house for Rahim Khan, presumably "as a matter of *ihtiram*, a matter of respect" (182) to Baba and also to Ali, who never asked for anything more. Hassan was as forgiving as an adult as he was as a child. When Sanaubar returned decades after abandoning him, he merely took time to collect himself and then returned to welcome her with open arms. And as Sohrab tells Amir later, Hassan even forgave Amir and considered him "the best friend he ever had" (267). In the end, Hassan died defending Baba's house and honor.

The Kite Runner showcases the devastation that reigns in Kabul under the Taliban. During the occupation of the Taliban, government officials execute scores of Hazara. Assef proudly aids in such ethnic ragging and such massacres to Amir, is "Ethnic cleancing. I like it. I like the sound of it" (249). The theme of violence has been central to the novel all along in the context of Hassan's rape. We know that a single rape has influenced Amir's life immeasurably. When Amir and Baba were fleeing to Pakistan, they found out about a second rape, Kamal's. Now, we discover from Zaman that under the Taliban, even government officials are raping children: "'There is a Talib official,' […]. 'He visits once every month or two. He brings cash with him, not a lot, but better than nothing at all.' […] 'Usually he'll take a girl. But

not always'" (224). The government's appetite for violence is insatiable; they not only jump on any existing chance to enact violence, but provoke people so they can beat them. As Farid explains, merely staring at a Talib is reason enough for him to injure someone, "Don't ever stare at them! Do you understand me? Never!" (217). Both Hassan and Rahim Khan have described beatings by the Taliban merely for talking too loud, "Young, whip-toting Talibs roamed the aisles, striking anyone who cheered too loudly" (234). The Talibans have created a culture not only of violence but of humiliation.

In incorporating the stonings at Ghazi Stadium into his story, Hosseini brings to life something about which most non-Afghans have only heard. The event is all the more significant because we experience it through Amir's eyes that are unaccustomed to this type of unchecked violence and injustice:

> "Every sinner must be punished in a manner befitting his sin!" the cleric repeated into the mike, lowering his voice, enunciating each word slowly, dramatically. "And what manner of punishment, brothers and sisters, befits the adulterer? How shall we punish those who dishonor the sanctity of marriage? How shall we deal with those who spit in the face of God? How shall we answer those who throw stones at the windows of God's house? WE SHALL THROW THE STONES BACK! (236)

Beyond their sheer violence, the deaths of the accused adulterers in Ghazi Stadium embody what is happening to the Afghan people under the Taliban. The victims are accused of being adulterers, but from what we know about the Taliban from Rahim Khan, Hassan, and Farid's accounts, they may just have looked at a Talib the wrong way. They are killed in public, supposedly to make an example for others; in truth,

their public murders are meant to intimidate the masses and bring them under even closer control. Not just the two victims in Ghazi Stadium, but the Afghan people as a whole, are being dragged into a pit of hopelessness from which there is no escape, degraded, and killed cruelly and unjustly.

In several ways, Sohrab's suicide attempt teaches Amir how strong an influence fear has over people's lives. It is fear and panic that drive him to pray after fifteen years and convince him that God exists. Amir suddenly understands that people who are afraid need to believe in God in order to maintain their hope. He says, "There is a God, there always had been. I see Him here, in the eyes of the people in this corridor of desperation. This is the real house of God, this is where those who have lost God will find Him ... There is a God, there has to be" (301). Believing in God makes Amir resemble Hassan more, because he is suddenly pious like his friend. However, as Amir acknowledges, his prayers flow from a selfish locus. He is bartering with God, promising to be a more devout Muslim in exchange for Sohrab's life. He is still acting out of his long-held guilt, praying, "My hands are stained with Hassan's blood; I pray God doesn't let them get stained with the blood of this boy too ... I pray my sins have not caught up with me the way I'd always feared they would" (302). From these words, it is clear that even though Amir desperately wants Sohrab to live, the person he is most concerned with is still himself.

The Kite Runner spins to the theme of suppression and discrimination in wide levels. The novel begins with the supremacy of the king Zahir Shah and his fellow people. The supremacy shifts to Daod Khan's supporter along with the coup of time. Most of the ethnic people including Mujahedins and Talibans are suppressed during Soviet invasion but the system of discrimination abruptly increases in Taliban regime.

Emergence of Silence and Secrets

The Kite Runner is the story of strained relationships between a father and a son, and between two brothers, displaying how they deal with guilt and forgiveness, and how they weather the political and social transformations of Afghanistan from the 1970s to 2001. The novel deals with the social injustice related to the subject of discrimination based on race. It deals with this in the way that there are two clans, Pashtuns and the Hazaras. The Hazaras are treated as slaves; they were pretty much the lowest of the low.

Before we know anything about the protagonist, including his name, we learn that one moment in his past has defined his entire life:

> I became what I am today at the age of twelve, on a frigid overcast day in the winter of 1975. 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 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)

We do not learn exactly what the moment is until the middle of the novel. This tells us that the event has significance beyond its detail; it is not so much specifically the rape, but more generally the betrayal, that makes that moment in time so central to Amir's life:

> 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. And I would have told, except that part of me was glad. Glad that this would all be over soon. Baba would dismiss them, there would be some pain, but life would move on. I wanted to be able to breathe again. (92)

We also discover that Amir has been trying to forget his secret for the last twenty-six years. His betrayal of Hassan haunts him continually throughout his life, but it is not until he is 'caught' that it spurs him to action and then, very reluctantly. When Amir thinks he is alone with his secret, he can pretend it does not exist. Once he finds out that Rahim Khan knows what he did, he cannot hide from it anymore. "And why you? I think we both know why it has to be you, don't we" (194)?

The theme of loyalty is central to the novel. Amir's lack of loyalty to Hassan is what keeps him rooted to that one moment in the winter of 1975. Amir's running away being afraid of Assef is betrayal in friendship with Hassan. It was Amir's cowardice and jealousy to leave Hassan in trouble. Amir's confusion indicates that he was not still in remorse to sacrifice Hassan for his life. Amir was selfish whereas Hassan was innocent:

> I ran because I was a coward. I was afraid of Assef and what he would do to me. I was afraid of getting hurt. That's what I told myself as I turned my back to the alley, to Hassan. That's what I made myself believe. I actually aspired to cowardice, because the alternative, the real reason I was running was that Assef was right: Nothing was free in this world. May be Hassan was the price I had to pay, the lamb I had to slay, to win Baba. Was it a fair price? The answer floated to my conscious mind before I could thwart it: He was just a Hazara, wasn't he? (68)

Hassan's unflinching loyalty "Loyal as a dog," (63) to Amir is what results in his rape, his leaving Wazir Akhbar Khan, and one could argue, his death many years later. We learn the basics of Amir and Hassan's relationship early on, as embodied in their mischief making. Amir is a child of privilege who wants attention, so he feels safe and even entitled to getting into trouble. Yet his insecurity and fear of Baba makes him unable to stand up for himself or take credit for his mistakes:

> 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. (91)

In contrast, Hassan is a servant who has a very close and constant relationship with his father, Ali. Ali has taught Hassan to be so righteous and loyal that he would not dream of starting trouble and does not hesitate to cover up for Amir. "Amir Agha won the tournament and I ran this kite for him. I ran it fairly. This is his kite" (63).

As we learn, Hassan is so determined to protect Amir and not to cause anyone in grief that he keeps his rape a secret even to his father, Ali, "After that kite tournament, he came home a little bloodied and his shirt was torn. I asked him what had happened and he said it was nothing, that he'd gotten into a little scuffle with some kids over the kite" (71). The difference between Amir and Hassan underscores the connection between loyalty and family. Assef tries to incite Hassan against Amir pointing out the difference:

> 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, 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. Don't ever fool yourself and think you're something more. (63-4)

The theme of loyalty is connected to the theme of silence and secrets. Remaining silent about injustice is Ali and Hassan's way of showing loyalty to Baba and Amir. Hassan is mocked everywhere by everybody just because he is a Shi'a and a Hazara. He is called with his nick. "*mice-eating, flat-nosed, load-carrying donkeys*" (8). Is it Hassan's mistake to be born as a son of Hazara? Is it his fault to be a Shi'a? As a boy, who even does not know what it would be to be a Shi'a or to be a Hazara, he has to face the insult wherever he goes. Hassan is helpless to revolt for all the injustice. All he could do is make a silent cry rolling tears from his cheeks:

> "You! The Hazara! Look at me when I'm talking to you!' The soldier barked. He handed his cigarette to the guy next to him, made a circle with the thumb and index finger of one hand. Poked the middle finger of his other hand through the circle. Poked it in and out. In and out. 'I knew your mother, did you know that? I knew her real good. I took her from behind by that creek over there." […] "What a tight little sugary cunt she had!" The soldier was saying, shaking hands with the others, grinning. Later, in the dark, after the movie had started, I heard Hassan next to me, croaking. (6)

Though Amir and Hassan are together on the way to movie, the soldier misbehaves only to Hassan because he is Hazara. Hassan has no options against any dominations except to moan oneself. Similarly, Hassan's father Ali also has to face same problem everywhere without any reaction. When Ali finds Amir walking behind him, humming, trying to imitate his walk, he remains silent. "Ali turned around, caught me aping him. He didn't say anything. Not then, not ever. He just kept walking" (7). Likewise, older kids in the neighborhood troubles him for his appearance and race, "They chased him on the street, and mocked him when he hobbled by. Some had taken to calling him *Babalu*, or Boogeyman. 'Hey, Babalu, who did you eat today?' they barked to a chorus of laughter. 'Who did you eat, you flat-nosed Babalu'" (8)?

Having Mongoloid features and Mogul descendants, Hazaras are barely mentioned in the textbooks too. They are silenced even to social academia, "School textbooks barely mentioned them and referred to their ancestry only in passing" (8). Pashtuns had persecuted and oppressed the Hazaras who had tried to rise against the Pashtuns in the nineteenth century, but the Pashtuns had "quelled them with unspeakable violence" (8). When Hassan is victimized with sexual violence as a means of payment for his loyalty to Amir by Aseef, Hassan responds merely with silent tolerance:

> Assef knelt behind Hassan, put his hands on Hassan's hips and lifted his bare buttocks. He kept one hand on Hassan's back and undid his own belt buckle with his free hand. He unzipped his jeans. Dropped his underwear. He positioned himself behind Hassan. Hassan didn't struggle. Didn't even whimper. He moved his head slightly and I caught a glimpse of his face. Saw the resignation in it. It was a look I had seen before. It was the look of the lamb. (66)

Even after the dark day of the cruel violence, Hassan never changes his view to look over Amir. Despite all the cruelties, he remains loyal in service of Amir, "Good old Hassan. Good old reliable Hassan. He'd kept his promise and run the last kite for me" (61).

The incident with the pomegranates embodies Hassan's insistence on 'taking the high road' when it comes to violence and anger. Instead of pelting Amir with pomegranates, he smashes one into his own forehead, as though he is truly incapable of hurting someone else. Later, we find out that even after Amir drove him out of Baba's house, Hassan considered Amir "the best friend he ever had" and passed onto Sohrab his belief in nonviolence. "Then Hassan did pick up a pomegranate. He walked toward me. He opened it and crushed it against his own forehead" (81). One of the most notable things in the novel is that Ali and Hassan accept their plight with silence though they know the truth when Amir plots against Hassan for his stolen watch:

> Ali's paralyzed face could mask his sorrow. I forced myself to look at Hassan, but his head was downcast, his shoulders slumped, his finger twirling a loose string on the hem of his shirt. Baba was pleading now. 'At least tell me why. I need to know!' Ali didn't tell Baba, just as he didn't protest when Hassan confessed to the stealing. I'll never really know why, but I could imagine the two of them in that dim little hut, weeping, Hassan pleading him not to give me away. But I couldn't imagine the restraint it must have taken Ali to keep that promise. (93)

Besides the social discrimination, the suppression over Hazara in Taliban controlled Afghanistan is very complicated. As a minority Hazara, Hassan has to face terrible encounters time and again. Hassan finds no way out except being a passive observer

when a young Talib hits his wife without any sincere reason. “He struck her so hard she fell down […] She had a large purple bruise on her leg for days but what could I do except stand and watch my wife get beaten” (190) ? Very loyal merciful Hassan and his wife Farzana meet their end in the blind charge of self-defense during the service of their master. Nobody dares to go against the case of Taliban. “Hassan’s and Farzana’s murders were dismissed as a case of self-defense. No one said a word about it. Most of it was fear of the Taliban, I think. But no one was going to risk anything for a pair of Hazara servants” (192-93).

The Kite Runner is an intricate story concerned with the way in which family and friendship relationships can be influenced by ethnicity, race or culture. At the core of the novel there is the secret in the feeling of guilt that the protagonist of the novel, Amir, keeps locked inside for his entire life: his betrayal towards his childhood friend, Hassan is the new reason. The novel opens with Rahim Khan’s appeal to Amir to come to Afghanistan. The readers are drawn to the mystery of his statement, “There is a way to be good again” (2).

The story of *The Kite Runner* is filled with things untold or unspoken. One major unspoken thing in the boys’ household is the difference between Pashtuns and Hazaras. Amir does not even know why the Pashtuns demean the Hazaras until he secretly reads a history book:

> The book said that my people had killed the Hazaras, driven them from their lands, burned their homes, and sold their women. The book said part of the reason Pashtuns had oppressed the Hazaras was Pashtuns were Sunni Muslims, while Hazaras were Shi’a. The book said a lot of things I didn’t know, things my teachers hadn’t mentioned. Things Baba hadn’t mentioned either. (8)

It is only twenty-six years later, when General Taheri refers to Sohrab as a "Hazara boy," (315) that Amir breaks his silence about this issue and demands respect for Sohrab.

Another major unspoken truth in the household is the lack of mothers. Sanaubar gets little attention until the end of the novel, when she reappears in Hassan's life and redeems herself by caring for Sohrab. Neither Hassan wanted to know about the secrecy of her mother's past nor her mother revealed about it, "he never asked where she had been or why she had left and she never. I guess some stories do not need telling" (185). Baba maintains such silence about Amir's mother Sofia Akrami that he assumes Baba blames him for her death. He learns more about her from the beggar in Kabul than he ever did from his own father:

> Baba had always described my mother to me in broad strokes, like, 'she was a great woman.' But what I had always thirsted for were the details: the way her hair glinted in the sunlight, her favourite ice cream flavor, the songs she liked to hum, did she bite her nails? Baba took his memories of her to the grave with him. Maybe speaking her name would have reminded him of his guilt, of what he had done so soon after she had died. Or maybe his loss had been so great, his pain so deep, he couldn't bear to talk about her. May be both. (219)

The key secret keeper and revealer in the story is Rahim Khan, who protects secrets for Baba, Ali, Hassan, and Amir. Ultimately, he is the one who insists on Amir's redemption. Rahim Khan delivers the disturbing fact that "Sanaubar wasn't Ali's first wife" (194) and he was biologically sterile .When Amir demands to know who Hassan's biological father was, Rahim Khan never states, but leaves Amir to guess:

> 'Ali was sterile,' Rahim Khan said.

> ‘No he wasn’t. He and Sanaubar had Hassan, didn’t they? They had Hassan-’
>
> ‘No they didn’t,’ Rahim Khan said.
>
> ‘Yes they did!”
>
> ‘No they didn’t, Amir.’
>
> ‘Then who-’
>
> ‘I think you know who.’ (195)

Amir’s reaction to the news reveals how important family ties are when Rahim Khan indirectly reveals to Amir that Hassan was actually Baba’s illegitimate son and his half-brother.

Amir is furious because suddenly the way he treated Hassan and Ali seems the entire more wrong, “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” (195)! The concept of “brother” is much stronger to him than the concept of “servant-best-friend” whereas Hassan had treated him like a brother no matter what. Amir says, “Hassan had loved me once, loved me in a way that no one ever had or ever would again” (199).

Amir now feels as though his entire life has been “a cycle of lies, betrayals, and secrets,” (198) and not just his own. He finally understands that Baba was as much of a betrayer, liar, and secret-keeper as he is, “As it turned out, Baba and I were more alike than I’d ever known. We had both betrayed the people who would have given their lives for us” (197). He also understands that this makes the importance of his redemption twofold, saying, “Rahim Khan had summoned me here to atone not

just for my sins but for Baba's too" (198). Amir questions himself about Baba's unbalanced reality and life philosophy:

> How could he have lied to me all those years? To Hassan? He had sat me on his lap when I was little, looked me straight in the eyes, and said, *There is only one sin. And that is theft… When you tell a lie, you steal someone's right to truth*. Hadn't he said those words to me? And now, fifteen years after I'd buried him, I was learning that Baba had been a thief. And a thief of the worst kind, because the things he'd stolen had been sacred: from me the right to know I had a brother, from Hasan his identity, and from Ali his honor. His *nang*. His *namoos*. (197)

Baba keeps some secrecy forever in his life. When Amir knows the truth about his strained family relationship after the death of his father, it haunts him very much. Amir looses his moral respect for his father when he knows the bitter reality of father.

Amir's spouse Soraya is unknown about every sin and secret up to the last of the novel. Amir tries to convince Sorya not to worry about his life abroad. He is very eager to dispatch a long kept secret story to her, "Soraya, I have a story to tell you, a story I should have told you a long time ago" (283). Sohrab on the other hand is disclosed to the truth while sitting on a park bench in one of the picnic areas in the shade of the gum tree of Daman-e-Koh Viewpoint. He is unknown to the fact that the very stranger who came for his help from distant place is his uncle. When Sohrab listens Amir about their relationship, "Your father and I were brothers," he added, "Half Brothers, really. We had the same father" (280) he says sadly that his "father never said he had a brother" (280). How a poor Hassan could tell others about a life long secrecy that "he didn't know" (280)!

CHAPTER FOUR

Ali and Hassan as Subaltern Representative

The term, subaltern, remarkably and aptly employed by Spivak refers to the predicament of those who are allotted sub or secondary space in the human society. Subaltern, here in the context, is used as an umbrella term for all those who are marginalized and deprived of the voice to speak. Spivak makes it clear that subaltern can not speak, even though the subaltern attempts. Because the opposite one, the centre, against whom often the subaltern speaks, ensures the subaltern should go unheard, whatever way possible. However, the subaltern speaks, though his speech ultimately, reaches the people to appall stupendously. That is often the destruction, self immolation or sacrifice, which draws the attention of the people to the subaltern.

Khaled Hosseini has mirrored this very process and journey of the subaltern characters, who are suppressed and denied speech in his novel *The Kite Runner*. Ali and Hassan are presented as the representative of subaltern. They struggle with hardship not against anyone but to run a very simple life with every convenient possible way and agency, but fail to achieve the desired end. Hosseini has tried to offend any agency that fosters oppression, by situating the subaltern characters within the marginalizing framework of socio-political and economic milieu of a society.

After one reads *The Kite Runner* one infers that the mosaic of characterization in Hosseini's work is of subalterns. We can overhear the silenced cry of the subalterns through the representation of Ali and Hassan who have been alienated and embittered by the system that is oppressive and ungenerous. But as humans they are able to forget the oppressive paradigms and surpass both internal and external limitations and reach a certain heights. Initially, they are of course lacking in positive activism. This lack originates from traumatic interactions and dominating pernicious home

environment. With the inspirations to attain authenticity upon their existence, by accepting themselves and their responsibilities, they are strengthened by the impediment of time.

Hosseini chronicles the thirty years of Afghan history with remarkable insight in *The Kite Runner*. He portrays Afghanistan as the wounded and wronged country in a heart wrenching manner. Hosseini portrays the lives of Amir and Hassan in fight against complexities, anxieties, and contradiction, to come to terms with life and to live life of authentic existence and belonging. The novel highlights the predicament of the people like Ali and Hassan who are caught in crossfire and are completely overwhelmed by external forces. They lead a complex life where they are guided and influenced not only by the outside ruthless world of war and oppression which they have no control over but also their internal innocence rule a great deal over in the decision making process regarding the course of their life. In spite of all teeth breaking domination and marginalisation of the masses Ali and Hassan accept their vulnerabilities, collect and use their resistance and capacity to go along the limiting boundaries and perform the acts of self sacrifices however discouraging and destructive that they may be. They suffer too much psychological anguish in their struggle to achieve a life of their own dictations.

Among the ethnic groups living in Afghanistan, Ali and Hassan are the representative of Shia minorities who have been suppressed through the long history. Shia Hazaras have been especially vulnerable in areas of conflict. Taliban forces have committed large-scale abuses against Hazara civilians with impunity. Hosseini depicts the condition of women still worse there. Women are not allowed to come out of their houses. The merciless killing of the woman at Ghazi stadium and young Talib's cruel behavior to Farzana in front of her husband in street illustrates how poor the

circumstances are for the women in Afghanistan. Hosseini projects several breath taking examples in the novel.

Hassan is portrayed as major subaltern character. Though raised in the same household and sharing the same wet nurse, Amir and Hassan grow up in different worlds. Their intertwined lives, and their fates, reflect the eventual tragedy of the world around them. From the start and through his death, Hassan remains the same: loyal, forgiving, and good-natured. As a servant to Baba and Amir, Hassan grows up with a very particular role in life. While Amir prepares for school in the morning, Hassan readies Amir's books and his breakfast. While Amir is at school getting an education, Hassan helps Ali with the chores and grocery shopping. As a result, Hassan learns that it is his duty to sacrifice himself for others. Hassan comes across as the personification of innocence. Even years later, after being driven out of the house by Amir and losing his father to a land mine, Hassan writes letter to Amir filled with warmth and nostalgia for their time in Kabul.

Hazaras are reportedly ranked very low in relative ethnic status. Hazaras in Kabul tend to follow the same unskilled labor occupations, so that some jobs have come to be known as Hazara occupation. Most of the Hazara like Ali work as a servant and serve their master faithfully. They never dare to speak against their master even in case of severe violence.

As soon as one encounters the word subaltern, silence and speech become the mind griping subjects of deliberation. With these issues the destructive power of the centre and the devised incapacity of the subaltern to answer back hold the position of determinants in the discussion. When Amir calls Hassan a coward and begs Hassan to hit him back, Hassan just takes it and never fights back. Hassan has great ability to

suffer without expressing his pain and bitter feeling which separates him from his friend Amir.

The Kite Runner presents the story of silenced minority that deals with the most harrowing truth about the power of evil to reach a shocking discrimination in human relationship. Hosseini has produced countless of societies, histories and cultures from below which have promoted to dispersed terms, methods and bits of theory used in subaltern studies among countless academic sites. Hosseini enlightens the thrust of passive resistance, subaltern consciousness, and the rueful lives of Hazara in his novel through the representation of Ali and Hassan.

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