

Chapter I

Politico-Cultural Turmoil and Human Relation in Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*

Issues and Context

This research intends to study the extent to war trauma which produces harmful consequences into the life of Afghan people. Due to the conflicting interests of imperial forces, Afghanistan fell into the spiral of war. Hundreds of thousands of Afghan families were displaced. *The Kite Runner* shows the innocent Afghan people and innocent civilians falling victims to the catastrophe of warfare. When the increasing imperial Soviet interest clashed with that of America, many ethnic minorities within Afghanistan also began to ally with either of the imperial forces. As a result, country plunged into the decade-long civil war. It became the playground of alien forces and imperial fantasy.

Even after the partial termination of the state of war in Afghanistan, many Afghan citizens are unable to come back to the normal psychological condition. The shock, restlessness, ennui and killing sense of psychic disorder and panic psychology are the common traits of those who survived the brutal war. More than the immediate effects of war, the long-lasting and lingering effects of war in collective conscience of people are indescribably unimaginable and unthinkable.

In 1978 Kabul, adolescent Amir Qadiri's best friend is Hassan, the son of his family's servant, Ali. Hassan will do whatever for the respect of his best friend. Among other things they do together, they compete as a team in kite fighting competitions; Hassan who is a natural runner in knowing where the cut kites will eventually land. Amir's family is ethnically superior Pashtuns, whereas Hassan's family are ethnically inferior Hazara. Regardless, Amir's wealthy widowed father, who Amir calls Baba, considers Hassan the son he would have wanted as he sees

Amir as being a weak minded boy who indulges too much in creative writing.

When Amir and Hassan are confronted by older local bully Assef, it is Hassan who always stands up to him. In the face of what Amir sees as this lack of outward love from Baba to him, Baba's friend, Rahim Khan, provides Amir with that fatherly type assurance. On a day that should be the most triumphant in both Amir and Hassan's young lives and one where Amir may finally receive the respect from Baba he so craves, Amir witnesses an incident with Hassan. Fast forward several years to the San Francisco Bay area, where Baba and Amir eventually settle following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. There, they have led a working class life. Amir, the aspiring writer, eventually marries Soraya, a Pashtun Afghani like himself, who has lived a working class life in the United States after being in the privileged class in Afghanistan.

In 2000, after Baba has passed away, Amir receives a telephone call from Rahim Khan asking him to return to Afghanistan for a special mission concerning Hassan's orphaned son, Hassan and his wife having been murdered by the Taliban. When Amir learns of his own family's history in the story, Amir does what he can to honor the memory of his old friend Hassan. He not only has to beware of the Taliban in general, but an old nemesis in particular who has only gotten more sadistic with age.

In Khaled Husseini's *The Kite Runner* the victims of war and ethnic cleaning are unable to maintain the integrity of their psychology. They seem to be slow to come to terms with the normal course of their duty. Amir is at pains to know that his betrayal to Hassan during war has implanted the deepest wound in his heart. He carries the burden of guilt due to his act of betrayal in his friendly relationship with Hassan. How can the victims of war hope to restore their normal psychic framework

if they are constantly pestered by guilt, fear, restlessness and the sudden outburst of over-reaction?

Hosseini has stated that he was partly inspired by his own relationship with Hossein Khan, a cook that worked for his family. He was from the rugged mountains of central Afghanistan. When Khaled was a young boy, he and this man became good friends and while just a third-grader. He taught Hosseini Khan how to read and write. Khaled was happy to have helped this man and says that he still thinks of him every time he sees an alphabet book. Khaled later realized how social injustice and bias can be cruel and can make life more difficult for people just because of their race or upbringing--even when they share your roof. Khaled Hosseini novel *The Kite Runner* dramatizes the effects of war trauma. The effects of war trauma persist in the victims of war. The burden of guilt, irresistible passion for oddity, sporadic outburst of agony and failure to come to terms with normal life are the representative effects of war trauma.

The major thrust of this study is to explore the fallout of war. This research shows the proximity between the study of the effects of war on both the body and mind of civilians and those non-civilians who are directly or indirectly affected by the catastrophe of war. This issue of the detrimental consequences of war and ethnic cleaning will be probed in this research.

This research is strictly confined in the analysis of the history of the formation of traumatic effects in the victims of war in Afghanistan. The psychological conditions of those who are affected by war and the war and other forms of conflict are studied as though they are causally connected. Only the effects of war on both the body and mind of civilians are examined critically in this research.

Literature Review

Khalid Hosseini is the prominent diasporic writer of modern day Afghanistan.

He currently lives in the United States of America. He wrote some of popular novels on the troubled and pathetic condition of Afghanistan following the foreign intervention in it. *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* are two memorable works of Khaled Hosseini. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* deals with gender relationship in Islamic society.

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Hosseini advocates for the rights women. He holds Islamic religion responsible for the subordination and subjugation of women. If anything has hindered the progressive march of feminism in Islamic society, it is Islamic religion. Through this novel, Hussein makes a plea to all the Islamic women to interrogate those social institutions which restrict women's movement towards freedom and empowerment. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is has brought forth radical feminist awakening in Islamic women.

Apart from this novel, Hussein has published another equally powerful novel *The Mountain Echo*. In this novel, Hussein has pointed out the illusory and fragile nature of human existence. The futility and fragility of parents' love for their children lies at the center of this novel. In the backdrop of Islamic practices, Hussein has examined the bright and dark side of human relation. Entire human existence is represented as the joke which human beings have failed to point out.

Khaled Hosseini is widely known as that sort of novelist who writes directly and straightforwardly. He feels free enough to express what he see, feels, experiences and imagines. Most of his ideas expressed in his novels are inspired by the advanced liberal ideas of the west. That is why he seems to be so liberal and sympathetic to those who are victimized by the oppressive and rigid social and religious institutions of the Islamic society.

Peter Robinson is the famous critic whose critical insight brings into lights the

hidden inconsistencies and subtleties of the text *The Kite Runner*. He takes out the western metropolitan perspective that the author has used while representing the Afghan culture of violence. Robinson discloses the following facts regarding this novel:

The Kite Runner has been accused of hindering Western understanding of the Taliban by portraying Taliban members as representatives of various social and doctrinal evils, according to them, not typically attributed to the Taliban. The American Library Association reports that *The Kite Runner* is one of its most-challenged books of 2008, with multiple attempts to remove it from libraries due to offensive language, sexually explicit, and unsuited to age group. (27)

According to Robinson, Afghan is just the same land defined by the orientalist of the nineteenth century. To make his novel popular in the circle of metropolitan readers, the author has portrayed Islamic people as though they are impulsive, carefree, and irrational and orientated towards violence and extremity.

Jonathan Doctorow is the leading critic of Khalid Hussein. He argues that *The Kite Runner* gives the kaleidoscopic glimpse of Afghan history since the collapse of the monarchy to the present conflict. Doctorow is of the opinion that *The Kite Runner* is the parable of the growth and creative upbringing that take place in the atmosphere prone to conflict and chaos. Doctorow opines the following view:

The Kite Runner, spanning Afghan history from the final days of the monarchy to the present, tells the story of a friendship between two boys growing up in Kabul. Though raised in the same household and sharing the same wet nurse, Amir and Hassan grow up in different worlds: Amir is the son of a prominent and wealthy man, while

Hassan, the son of Amir's father's servant, is a Hazara. Their intertwined lives, and their fates, reflect the eventual tragedy of the world around them. (14)

Doctorow holds the belief that the invasion of Afghan by the soviet forces sows the seed of conflict. The communist takeover and the subsequent intervention of western countries in Afghan put the country in constant chaos and conflict that is not resolved till now. The maelstrom of conflict heightens even now in Afghan provided that there is a slim chance of arriving at the level of reconciliation.

Sulamith Firestone evaluates *The Kite Runner* as the storehouse of Afghan culture and history. He could not help praising the power of Khalid in this novel. He agrees with Hosseini's opinion that Afghan is the center of excellence. It is the tragedy of Afghan people that they are always infested and inflicted by conflict.

Sulamith makes the following observation:

The Kite Runner begins in 1973, when the army overthrew the monarchy led by Zahir Shah. He was forced into exile in Italy by his cousin and son-in law, Daoud Khan, who declared himself president of the republic. Daoud Khan spoke about ending corruption and being true to the revolution but it became apparent the regime change was only a transfer of power. Resistance against the new regime formed immediately by Islamic guerrilla rebels.(34)

Sulamith says that there are still the traces of political instability in the conflict prone country Afghan. The regime began purging from the government all officials with socialist or Marxist ties. The clash between the active interest of Marxists and Liberals weakened the foundation of the country. The impact of coup and political overthrow are credible causes for the destiny of Afghanistan as the collapse state.

After a series of socialist leader assassinations, Daoud Khan was overthrown by the same military that brought him to power.

Clara Zetkin is the vigorous critic of Afghan literature. She has been quoted widely to probe into any problematical issue manifest in any Islamic literature. Zetkin produces the following evaluative remarks:

The major events of the novel, while framed in the context of Amir's life, follow Afghanistan's transitions as well. In Amir's recollections of his childhood, we see the calm state of Kabul during the monarchy, the founding of the republic, and then watch as the Soviet invasion and infighting between rival Afghan groups ruin the country. These events have a hand in dictating the novel's plot and have significant effects on the lives of the characters involved. (47)

The role of reminiscence is meticulously mentioned in the novel. It is Amir's guilt that brings him back to his homeland that is broken and bowed down completely by conflict. The establishment of the republic gives Assef an opportunity to harass Amir, simply because Assef's father knows the new president.

Thomas Benton is a regular critic of Khalid Hosseini. He contends that *The Kite Runner* is the product of Khalid Hussein's attempt to cope with hatred and cruelty which are implanted in the consciousness of every Afghan citizen following the outbreak of the invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet Union. Benton shortly puts forward the following view:

Fiction has few characters as utterly loathsome as Amir. Hosseini takes on envy, hatred, and iniquity, bringing the reader to identify with a character so despicable that they shudder to recognize their own empathy. The opening chapters create an atmosphere that promise to

be a much-needed deviation from typical narratives of heroism and goodness. Amir's character can also be read as a version of the author's younger self; some experiences seem too vivid to be imagined. (41)

The loathsomeness and wild passion of Afghan citizens for idle existence are two things that are carefully examined and evaluated by Hosseini in *The Kite Runner*. Benton is more interested in the analysis of the inner malaises of the characters like Amir and others. Though outer challenges which arose following the invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet Union are vital, inner psychological conditions of characters are of utmost importance.

Wylie Henderson does not hesitate to give credit to Hosseini for humanizing the entire region of Afghanistan. According to Henderson, Hosseini is the first Afghan author to expose and externalize some of promising and pessimistic plight of Afghanistan to the western world. Hosseini is the first writer to rely on textual strength to project the power and plight of Afghanistan to the western world. Henderson puts forwards the following view with respect to the possibility of interaction between the dilapidated Islamic community and the liberal western world:

Hosseini may have achieved a political goal by humanizing a region still obscure in Western thought. He describes Afghanistan and its inhabitants as once very modern, before outside forces rendered the nation a war-torn catastrophe. However, war and political conflict take the back seat to the human dramas that occur because of and — more importantly — despite of such events. The author's simple language is surprisingly effective in explaining the complexity of emotions, characters and dynamics which could exist in any culture. (76)

Although there is still doubt and discussion about the alleged nonpolitical motive of Hosseini for writing *The Kite Runner*, Henderson maintains that the driving force behind the creation of *The Kite Runner* is undoubtedly political. Without doubt, this novel can hardly survive on its own. Prior to the publication of this novel, Afghanistan remained a mystery which haunted to the world of western readership. When this novel circulated to the western world, many facts about the culture and geographical oddities of Afghanistan became accessible to the western world.

David Lewiston maintains that the whole novel *The Kite Runner* is about the protagonist's struggle towards the assertion of his selfhood. It is the circumstances and the inherent inferiority that compel the protagonist to tread on the path of self-assertion. Lewiston makes the following disclosure with respect to this novel:

The antagonist is, on the surface, the man named Assef, who is a bigoted childhood acquaintance of Amir and Hassan. He torments them both, but actually attacks and rapes Hassan. Later, when the Taliban gains control of Afghanistan, he becomes one of them so he can continue to torture others he finds inferior to himself. He also takes Sohrab as his sexual plaything and Amir must defeat Assef to bring Sohrab home and to the family he deserves. The other antagonist is Amir's sin which he must expiate before he can find redemption. (121)

Surrounded by guilt and sin, a few male characters begin to take the help of strong line of actions. But the situation does not favor them to choose the strong line of action. Hence, it is necessary for the culturally alienated characters to take shelter in the tendency to perform the ascribed actions with the unique touch of heroism.

Roberta Johnson notices the theme of man's inhumanity to man. he argues that this is the most appealing theme of this novel. The humanistic side of this novel is

further illustrated by this sort of theme. Concerning this sort of the thematic aspect of the novel, Roberto makes the following viewpoint:

The theme of man's inhumanity to man is a theme which makes the reader think about how we torture each other because of our need for power in our lives. It is true as seen in this novel that there are essentially evil individuals who are impossible to redeem and that the evil they do affects all people around them. Assef is such a character. He enjoys hurting others physically, emotionally, and psychologically. If there is a Hell, he is bound for it. (67)

Roberto is acutely conscious of the vague reality that has appeared in Afghanistan after it is politically and culturally torn due to foreign invasion and occupation. The reasons may vary for why we commit such sins, but in the end, it is all about needing some sort of power in our lives. Amir is such a man. He is essentially good. But the evil he does as a child follows him into his adulthood. He must find a way to expiate those sins for his own sake and also for the sake of Sohrab.

Imtiaz Akhtar happens to find out the notion of the fragility of the relationship between son and father. To dramatize this sort of bitter reality regarding father-son relation is another strong aspect of this novel. He puts forward the following view:

Another theme that is emphasized throughout is that of the fragile relationship between fathers and sons. Amir spends his entire life trying to be the son who will not disappoint his father and making up for the death of his mother who died while giving birth to him. Many of the sins he commits are in the hopes that his father will believe in him, embrace him, and tell him how proud of him he is. It is only when

Amir grows up, watches how valiantly his father faces his own death, and then returns to Afghanistan to right the wrongs he had committed that he realizes that his father had always loved him and was proud of him. (132)

According to Akhtar, the most fascinating and touching dimension of *The Kite Runner* is to project the breakability of father –son relation. It is unfortunate that men find it difficult to show their love to their sons for fear of somehow being less of a man. Amir would have loved to have had such a relationship all of his life and we who watch him struggle to find it identify with his need for parental approval.

The researcher makes use of the tool of war trauma. Jeffry Alexander, Caruth and other popular theorists of war trauma will be quoted in order to probe the proposed thesis. Peter Mason is the leading theorist of war trauma. He makes an extensive study of the pervasive effects of war trauma. Mason analyzes the long-lasting effects of traumatic shock unleashed by war. The effect of in human psyche is unimaginable and unthinkable. War trauma generates fatal and detrimental consequences. Both social memory and individual memory are dynamic processes of continuous change and development. Furthermore, memory is divided and the subject of controversy and conflict, dominance and hegemony, neglect and forgetting.

Coming to terms not only means rituals, monuments, remembrance and memory; it also means mourning and recovery. Physical and mental exhaustion can result in temporary or chronic illness. According to Mason, “war trauma will have vicious consequences. Even after the end of war, its effects can easily be seen. The post-war period rather intensifies the lingering effects of war trauma”(54). During the time of warfare, only the physical bruises and wound can take place. But in the aftermath of war, the effects of war will be seen in a fierce and formidable way.

Cathy Caruth defines trauma as mental laceration or psychological injury. It is caused by plenty of events and occurrences. Caruth says that “Psychological trauma is a type of damage to the psyche that occurs as a result of a severely distressing event” (87). When that trauma leads to posttraumatic stress disorder, damage may involve physical changes inside the brain and to brain chemistry. It changes the person's response to future stress. The sense of being overwhelmed can be delayed by weeks, years or even decades. Caruth clarifies the concept of trauma in an explicit way. Psychological trauma can lead to serious long-term negative consequences that are often overlooked even by mental health professionals. Trauma can be caused by a wide variety of events, but there are a few common aspects. Trauma may accompany physical trauma or exist independently of it.

Although all these critics have examined the novel *The Kite Runner* from different perspectives, none of them concentrated upon the effects of war trauma. The researcher dwells upon the effects and consequences of war trauma. The traumatic effects of war caused by political conflict and civil war would be examined extensively. When Afghanistan is invaded by Soviet Union, other western capitalist countries also asserted their active interest. The colliding imperial interests are the root cause of the civil war. The researcher asserts that the effects of war can easily be seen in the disintegrating culture, social unrest, displacement and deranged mentality of people. The researcher's issue of the effects of war trauma is distinct in this regard. It differs from the issues raised by all the reviewers and critics whose ideas and insights are cited above.

The researcher makes use of the tool of trauma. Jeffrey Alexander, Caruth and other popular theorists of trauma will be quoted in order to probe the proposed thesis. Robert Mason is the theorist of trauma makes an extensive study of the pervasive

effects of trauma. Mason analyzes “the long-lasting effects of traumatic shock unleashed by war. The effect of in human psyche is unimaginable and unthinkable” (162). Trauma generates fatal and detrimental consequences. Both social memory and individual memory are dynamic processes of continuous change and development. Furthermore, memory is divided and the subject of controversy and conflict, dominance and hegemony, neglect and forgetting.

Coming to terms not means rituals, monuments, remembrance and memory. It also means mourning and recovery. Cultural exhaustion can result in temporary or chronic illness. According to Mason, “Cultural trauma will have vicious consequences. Even after the end of war, its effects can easily be seen. The post-war period rather intensifies the lingering effects of cultural trauma” (54). During the time of warfare, only the physical bruises and wound can take place. But in the aftermath of war, the cultural effects of war will be seen in a fierce and formidable way.

Cathy Caruth defines trauma as mental laceration or psychological injury. It is caused by plenty of events and occurrences. Crauth says that “Psychological trauma is a type of damage to the psyche that occurs as a result of severely distressing events” (87). When that trauma leads to post traumatic stress disorder, damage may involve physical changes inside the brain and to brain chemistry. It changes the person's response to future stress. The sense of being overwhelmed can be delayed by weeks, years or even decades. Caruth clarifies the concept of trauma in an explicit way. Psychological trauma can lead to serious long-term negative consequences that are often overlooked even by mental health professionals. Trauma can be caused by a wide variety of events, but there are a few common aspects. Trauma may accompany physical trauma or exist independently of it.

It is universally true that horrific experience are so deeply disturbing, so

overwhelming, those victims of trauma will try to suppress bad memories rather than confront them. But many trauma researchers believe that it is the repression of memories and feelings that is the heart of trauma suffering in both the short and long term. Time does not heal trauma. According to Ron Eyerman “A victim of war trauma must be helped to express suffering and to confront bad memories, with the support and guidance of an empathic and informed adult” (67). The very act of talking or writing about or even acting out, traumatic events is a way for trauma-victims to begin healing and start on the road to recovery.

Every culture has its own way of dealing with traumatic experience. To quote Everman again, those who are aware of the fatal effects of war trauma “show that each has very different concepts of psychological distress. And much also depends on the family circumstances of the victims of cultural trauma, as well as their age and the nature of their exposure to traumatic events” (105). In all cultures one of the most important factors is the cohesion of the family and community, and the degree of nature and support that children receive. Indeed, out of the most significant from parents-often more distressing than the war activities themselves.

Another type of trauma is that caused by war. Recent studies show that caused changes in the brain may last for a year after returning from deployment. The cultural damage from this can last year many years after the event. Symptoms of this type of trauma include problems with memory, reliving the event, anger, irritability, and a withdrawal from friends and family among other difficulties. Neil C Hunt says that “When in a constant stressful state of mind when deployed, the brain begins to function differently so that it can be better suited for survival in the harsh elements that come with war” (87). Cognitive thinking may be affected when soldiers face life threatening situations for an extended period of time. This can last when they return

from a war zone, possibly leading to trauma caused by the war.

Beyond the cultural changes that happen in the brain, war can cause people to change dramatically. This can lead to relationship problems and a host of other cultural disorders. The symptoms of war trauma are similar to those found in other types of trauma. Hunt again maintains that victims of cultural trauma “revolve around the changes that occur in the brain while deployed. For example, soldiers need to think and react quickly to survive” (43). Staying in this state of mind for long periods of time isn't really necessary or helpful in civilian social setting. In addition, a person may experience problem with attention deficit. In the battlefield facts that aren't relevant to the task at hand are usually pushed back in the mind for survival reasons.

The notion of cultural trauma brings attention to the fact that it is the nature of trauma that it cannot be accessed in an objective form in its earlier stages. It is saturated pervasively in the social subjects, conscious and unconscious. Trauma is more than events. Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life.

Trauma is often used to refer both to negative events that produce distress and to distress itself. Trauma refers only to the event, not the real action. It should be reserved for major events that are psychologically overwhelming for an individual. Trauma is defined as direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury. The person's response to the event must involve intense fear, helplessness, or horror. This concern of trauma theory ranges from the public and historical to the private and memorial. Trauma is physical as well as psychological wound that causes terror and shock. This wound is not only the cause of individual's memory but also the affection of political, social, and cultural aspects of the society. Trauma appears to be a serious injury or shock to the body.

Chapter II

Symbol: Theory and Concept

Origin and Practice

A symbol is a sign that stands for an idea or an object. The term, 'symbol' is derived from the Greek word *symbolon* which means contract, token, insignia, and a means of identification. To trace the origin, development and differentiation of a symbol is a complicated process. There are differences of opinion about dating the first appearance of some of the most important and complex symbols. Some writers argue strongly in favor of remote origins whereas others trace these beginnings as far back as the age of Hammurabi or earlier.

Almost every symbol and picture in religion is at first either directly or indirectly connected with the senses, impressions, and objects of man's environment. Many are derived from the objects of nature, and others are artificially constructed in a process of intuitive perception or emotional experience. In most cases, the constructions are related to objects in the world of sense perception. The same idea is symbolically expressed in various manners; for example, by means of persons, objects, animals, and signs, all appearing side by side. The *New Encyclopedia Britannica* defines symbolism as:

Symbolism, the basic and often complex artistic forms and gestures used as a kind of key to convey religious concepts, and iconography, the visual, auditory, and kinetic representation of religious ideas and events, have been utilized by all the religions of the world since time immemorial. (900)

A symbol differs from an allegorical sign because it has a real existence whereas an allegorical sign is arbitrary. For instance, a scale symbolizes justice; a dove, peace;

the cross, Christianity; and a lion symbolizes strength. Different forms and levels of the experience and relationship to reality are linked together with the concept of symbol, sign and picture. The function of the symbol is to represent a reality or truth and to reveal them either instantly or gradually. The relation of the symbol to reality is conceived as somewhat direct and intimate and also as somewhat indirect and distant. Although symbols have a tendency to be normative, stable and to have a fixed meaning, the changes in the meaning of existing symbols frequently occur.

Several societies may use same symbols but the symbols may stand for different things. In many countries, for example, red color, symbolizes war and violence. But the same color in China represents marriage and among American Indians, it stands for the East. So, a symbol has only the meaning that people have given it. Even a powerful symbol can lose its meaning if the society ignores or dishonors it. Moreover, action and gestures are also symbolic. The clenched fist, for example, symbolizes aggression and beating the breast remorse.

In general, a symbol is something which is used to stand for something else. In literature, it is most often a concrete object which is used to represent something more abstract and broader in scope and in meaning – often a moral, religious or philosophical concept or value. Symbols can range from the most obvious substitution of one thing for another as the letter. ‘A’ in Hester’s bosom in Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*. Literary symbols may be variously defined. It clearly involves the use of concrete imagery to express abstract ideas and emotions. Similarly, M. H. Abrams in his famous book *Glossary of Literary Terms* state as:

In the broadest sense, a symbol is anything which signifies something; in this sense all words are symbols. In discussing literature, however, the term symbol is applied only to a word or phrase that signifies an

object or event which in its turn signifies something, or has a range of reference, beyond itself. (206)

Edmund Wilson, in his book, *Axel's Castle*, defines symbolism as, “Symbolism may be defined as an attempt by carefully studied means – a complicated association of ideas represented by a medley of metaphors to communicate unique personal feelings”(21/22). In fact, the art of symbolism is the art of expressing feelings, not through direct description, but by reacting feelings in the mind of the readers. It is the power of symbol that the representation and what is represented excite and constrains the mind to linger and to penetrate more deeply.

The field of symbolism shows a strong relation between religion and other areas of culture. The social domain under the influence of religion develops its own symbolism for expressing its own values and objectives. Similarly, religion depicts its symbols from the social, political and economic domains. So, we should not forget that literature reflects all these domains as Catherine Belsey in the book, *Literature, History, Politics* says that literature history and politics go side by side reflecting one another.

Religious symbols and pictures may be similar to those of language and to pictorial expression in literature. They are related in allegory, parable, fairy tales and legends in which they can appear in a form that is closely related to that of religious symbolism. Religious symbols are often used in plastic art, in architecture and in music. Symbols also have been developed in these arts, and later introduced into religion. In this way, one can easily observe the interdependence and continual reciprocal influence of religion and culture. A literary symbol combines an image with a concept. It may be public or private, major or minor. Public symbolism includes symbols drawn from established religion or religious text. A public symbol

continuously occurs throughout history or the works of art. The 'cross' in Christianity and the wheel of the law in Buddhism can be taken as the best examples of the public symbols.

In his fragmentary poem, *The Waste Land*, T. S. Eliot draws the symbols from Buddhism, Hinduism and also from the Christian orthodox. Therefore, the best way to understand, for a reader, what a symbolist writer means in his work, is to read the work itself by bringing imaginative associations. Thus, it is clear that literary artists prefer to speak on particular issues through the use of symbols. A piece of art is capable of carrying varieties of meanings simultaneously. It is a brilliant demonstration of the power symbols.

The Symbolist Movement

Symbolism as a literary movement was started by a group of French poets, which included Charles Baudelaire, Stephane Mallarme, Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud. Later on, the techniques of the French symbolists influenced English and American poets and novelists. So, it is relevant to deal here with the Symbolist Movement by categorizing them into the following divisions.

The French Symbolist Movement

The French symbolist movement was largely confined among group poets between 1885 and 1895. In a manifesto article of 18th September 1886, Jean Moreas used the term 'Symbolism' to describe aesthetic theories and practice of the writers grouped around Mallarme. This group of writers included Baudelaire, Mallarme, Verlaine and Rimbaud who were the chief practitioners of the symbolist movement in France. Cecil Maurice Bowra writes in his book *The Heritage of Symbolism* as, "Baudelaire was the first to exalt the value of symbolism, Verlaine used them intrinsically, and Mallarme erected metaphysics to explain and justify them" (12).

The French symbolist movement was fundamentally mystical. It protested with noble eloquence against the scientific art of an age which had lost much of its belief in traditional religion and hoped to a substitute in the search for truth. Their protest was also mystical in that it was made on behalf of an ideal world which was, in their judgment, more real than that of the senses. Thus, symbolism was the mystical form of aestheticism.

Mallarme and his followers are called symbolists, because they attempted to convey a supernatural experience in the language of visible things, and therefore every word is a symbol and is used not for its common purpose but for the associations which it evokes of a reality beyond the senses. Indeed, any attempt to epitomize the symbolist view must end in distorting them, for they preferred to speak on particular issues not by describing them directly nor even defining them through explicit metaphors and similes, but suggesting the exact nature of these ideas and emotions and by reproducing them through the use of symbols – public or private. Thus, symbolism became a subtle transformation of reality.

The French Symbolist Movement reached the highest point of its audience in 1890s. Then the reaction began against what were seen as its gratuitous obscurities, its verbal idiosyncrasies and its source. Gradually some abandoned the philosophical idealism of symbolism in favor of a return to modern and some others converted to Catholicism. Lean Bloy, Paul Berget were the notable examples of such writers. C. M. Bowra writes:

When Mallarme died in 1898, the movement of which he was the high priest and the foremost practitioner seemed to die with him. In the next few years, French poetry found distinguished exponents in Jean More as, Francis James, Henry de Reginer and Paul Claudel but not one of

these was really symbolist. (17)

Still, Mallarme owed a lot to decadence. In 1874 Mallarme founded his own journal *La Dermere Mode*, which reviewed such decadent themes such as jewelry, fashion, menus and salons.

The English Symbolist Movement

Though symbol was used in various fields from the very beginning of human civilization, the use of symbols developed as a movement in English literature basically from the romantic period. No doubt, French writers began the movement and English Romantic poets followed it. Regarding the English symbolist movement M.H. Abrams writes:

The techniques of the French symbolists, who exploited an order of private symbols in a poetry of rich suggestiveness rather than explicit signification, had an immense influence throughout Europe, and (especially in the 1890s, and later) in England and American poets such as Arthur Symons, and Dawson as well as W.B. Yeats, Ezra pound, Dylan Thomas. (209)

Romanticism was an extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility. As romanticism tried to project the free use of symbols which can be used in the poetry and other literary works also.

Romanticism was a revolt of the individual. It was a reaction against 'Classicism'. It was an attack in the domains of politics and moral in the society and in art, an ideal of objectivity. The peculiar quality of romantic poetry lies in this that is apparently detaching us from the real world. It seems to restore us to a reality at a higher level. As Richard Ellimann writes in the book, *The Modern Tradition*:

Though not all romantics are symbolists, the symbolist is a kind of

romantic, one who singles out and develops the romantic doctrine of creative imagination. Whatever else he may affirm, the symbolist holds that human imagination actively constructs the world we perceive or at least meets it more than half way, and does not merely reflect the given form of external objects. (7)

The romanticism presented the creative imagination connected with art, poetry and Contemporary politics.

Chapter III

Symbolism in *The Kite Runner*

Symbols of Redemption

Symbolism is the practice or art of using an object or a word to represent an abstract idea. An action, person, place, word, or object can all have a symbolic meaning. When the author wants to suggest a certain mood or emotion he can also use symbolism to hint at it, rather than just blatantly saying it. Symbolism can take different forms. Generally, it is an object representing another, to give an entirely different meaning that is much deeper and more significant. Sometimes, however, an action, an event or a word spoken by someone may have a symbolic value. Symbols do shift their meanings depending on the context. Thus, symbolic meaning of an object or an action is understood by when, where, and how it is used. It also depends on who reads the work. In the *The Kite Runner* the researcher also found some symbolism.

Redemption, or gaining freedom from sin, is one of the central themes of *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini. This novel is about a family in Afghanistan that makes mistakes, but learns and grows from them. Amir, the protagonist, has a distant relationship with his father, Baba. Amir, like most children, tries to figure out what he has done to cause the problem. He wonders if it is because his mother, Baba's wife, died in childbirth. He also wonders if it is because Amir has always been more interested in reading and writing than he is in sports as Baba would like. The one thing they have in common is kite fighting. When Amir wins the big kite fighting competition, he imagines what it will be like to share it with his father. In reality, Baba's coldness towards Amir has more to do with Baba's secret than it has to do with Amir. Baba had an affair with a Hazara servant's wife. She gave birth to an

illegitimate boy, Hassan, who lives on Baba's property. Amir views winning the contest as redemption for not being the son Baba always wanted.

However, when Amir does nothing as Hassan is raped by the town thug, Amir's need for redemption grows. Amir knows that Baba already has concerns that Amir backs down too easily. He overhears Baba saying to his friend, Rahim Khan, 'Self-defense has nothing to do with meanness. You know what always happens when the neighborhood boys tease him? Hassan steps in and fends them off. I've seen it with my own eyes. And when they come home, I say to him, 'How did Hassan get that scrape on his face?' And he says, 'He fell down.' I'm telling you, Rahim, there is something missing in that boy.' Amir spends many years hiding his shame for not being the kind of boy who would step in and defend what is right in honor of his friend.

To gain redemption, Amir must face Assef and his brass knuckles as a grown man to save Hassan's son, Sohrab, from sex slavery. Before Assef will allow Sohrab to leave, he says to Amir, 'We have some unfinished business, you and I... You remember, don't you?' Then Assef instructs his guards, 'When it's all done, only one of us will walk out of this room alive... If it's him, then he's earned his freedom and you let him pass, do you understand?' The fight is treacherous, Amir nearly loses his life, yet at the end, he does something unexpected. Amir narrates, 'I don't know at what point I started laughing, but I did. It hurt to laugh, hurt my jaws, my ribs, my throat. But I was laughing and laughing. And the harder I laughed, the harder he kicked me, punched me, scratched me.'

When Amir finally does stand up to Assef, he realizes that the physical danger is nothing compared to the emotional torture he has carried with him for all of these years. The sudden release from his burden comes in

Kites, Kite Flying, and Kite Fighting

Kites and everything associated with them (kite flying and kite fighting) are the most important symbols in the novel. Traditionally, kites symbolize both prophecy and fate, and both of these ideas can be applied to characters and events in *The Kite Runner*. However, kites symbolize so much more in *The Kite Runner*. The Afghan kites with their glass strings symbolize the dichotomy between beauty and violence, simultaneously representing Afghanistan and the half-brothers, Amir and Hassan. The two main kite fights in the novel — the tournament Amir wins and the one at the end of the book — not only also represent Amir and Hassan but also symbolize the juxtaposition of roles, for at the end Amir has become the kite runner. Thus, kites also symbolize the thematic topics and interrelationship between betrayal and redemption.

Myths and stories about legendary heroes as well as stories and literacy in general symbolize both the similarities and differences between the Shi'a Muslims and the Sunni Muslims. Socioeconomic conditions may determine levels of literacy and understanding, but they do not guarantee heroic attitudes and actions. And the heroes of Afghan and Middle Eastern cultures are shared by those of differing beliefs and socioeconomic conditions. The character of Rostam, who acts dishonorably toward the king by sleeping with his daughter, symbolizes Amir. The character of Sohrab, who does not know who his father is, who becomes Hassan's favorite hero, and who meets an untimely death, symbolizes Hassan.

While Amir and Hassan are young and carefree and as close as a servant and master can be, they carve their names in the tree, and it bears fruit. Thus, the tree symbolizes their relationship. Years later, after Hassan is dead and Amir is wracked with guilt, the tree — just like Amir's memories — still exists but no longer bears fruit. The tree not only symbolizes a unifying force between Amir and Hassan but

also serves as a source of division. Amir wants Hassan to hit him with the pomegranate fruit in order to inflict a physical punishment and lessen his guilt; instead, Hassan breaks the fruit over his own head.

Amir spends most of his life trying to forget Hassan, yet only when he gets a physical reminder of his only childhood friend is Amir able to be at peace. The scar Amir has after being beaten by Assef symbolizes his brotherhood with Hassan. Amir now has his own "harelip" and is physically like his half-brother. Representing two generations, the slingshot symbolizes both childhood as well as the need to stand up for what is right. Both Hassan and Sohrab use a slingshot to stop Assef, although Hassan only has to threaten to use his, and Sohrab actually inflicts pain.

Traumatic Effect in the Novel

Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. Cultural trauma is first of all an empirical, scientific concept, suggesting new meaningful and causal relationships between previously unrelated events, structures, perceptions, and actions. But this new scientific concept also illuminates an emerging domain of social responsibility and political action. It is by constructing cultural traumas that social groups, national societies, and sometimes even entire civilizations. In this chapter I explore the notion of cultural trauma in the formation of African American identity from the end of the Civil War to the Civil Rights movement. The trauma in question is slavery, not as institution or even experience, but as collective memory, a form of remembrance that grounded the identity-formation of a people.

Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been

subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks on their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. Trauma is rooted in reality and has a language, therefore social and collective. It is socially constructed. *The Kite Runner* is a novel containing sociological and psychological issues. The story describes how the social barrier between Pashtuns and Hazaras in Afghanistan society makes a coward and inferior boy such Amir, the main character, experiencing a lot of conflict. Conflicts experienced by Amir lead him to experience anxiety. A big anxiety experienced by Amir happened when he sacrificed Hassan, Amir's beloved Hazaras servant and friend, letting Hassan get raped by Assef to save his last kite from kite-fighting tournament he just won in order to get Baba's respect and recognition. This kind of anxiety later causes more conflicts, further anxiety and change of Amir's personality become a bad person toward Hassan.

The Kite Runner is the first novel takes place before Afghanistan's revolution and its invasion by Russian forces. It is a vivid and engaging story that gives a picture of how long Afghans struggled to triumph over the forces of violence, forces that threaten them even today. In this novel, four themes have been introduced, first of all Redemption is a way to make up sins committed, secondly, Adversities contribute to a person's personality, thirdly, Fear can lead to severe mistakes and long term consequences, before last, After pain and struggles come survival and lastly, Friendship is the essence of a bond that seek the best mutually.

The researcher makes use of the notion of cultural trauma and essential theoretical insight. Jeffrey Alexander examines any kind of traumatic terror within the context of socio-economic parameters. He links traumatic assault in relation with the fragility and vulnerability of identity. Jeffrey Alexander delivers and divulges the

following insight into the core idea of cultural trauma:

The paradigm of cultural trauma first of all assumes the existence of an original culture, which has clear and maintainable economical, institutional, and spiritual systems and mechanisms for storing and transmitting the experiences of the pre-aggression period. Additionally, it is supposed that the offensive culture could radically alter the identity and sustainability of the original culture. The rapid changes within the systems of original culture could lead to cultural dissolution.

(85)

Alexander says that cultural trauma is a gives an outlet of the original cultural deviation. These deviations are necessary for reinforcing the identity and keeping the continuity. The need for utilizing cultural trauma becomes acute during these periods when a culture's natural balanced development becomes strongly disturbed. The continuity of a culture is ensured by widely accepted and followed norms, customs, and rituals.

This thesis was about human suffering and female identity as experienced in the novels of Khaled Hosseini. In the course of the study, many new points were discovered about the literature of Khaled Hosseini. Hailing from Afghanistan he tells the stories of his countrymen and women, highlighting their suffering, their pain and the problems that are making their lives hell. Khaled Hosseini is a man with a mission, a mission to redeem his country of all its ills, to make it beautiful, like it once was. He does this by writing beautiful novels with breathtaking canvas, spreading across Afghanistan and the Afghan diaspora all over the world. It tells the story of the Afghan people, Afghan women, children and men, those who are caught in the web of religion, politics and terrorism.

The idea and insight proposed by Jeffrey Alexander contribute really to the creation of sound methodological framework. Alexander initiates the formulation of his theory with the following definition:

Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.

(35)

This opening definition constitutes cultural trauma in terms of five significant and interwoven elements. Firstly, it starts with a group of people being subjected to what they perceive as a horrendous event. Secondly, this event must be recognized and felt by members of a collectivity as being horrendous. Third, for the event to be a cultural trauma it must be deeply felt in such a way that it leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness. This mark upon the group consciousness is, fourthly, supposed to influence the memories of this group, or collectivity, forever. Fifth, and last, the at this point, undoubtedly so, existing cultural trauma will, due to the effect of the collective memory, also change the future identity of the actual suffering group and, eventually, a wider, enlarged collectivity.

The present study found out that racism plays important roles in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. The author uses racism to describe the characters and the culture represented in the stories. In it, Khaled Hosseini uses prejudice as a tool to tell this story of betrayal and redemption. He pursues his story with prejudice and racism in Afghanistan as well as in the United States. It pits two classes against each other, the educated modern and secular elite and the medieval masses. This is what the present study found out.

Amir's father, Baba represents the cultural elite of Afghanistan, educated in modern schools with modern education and working for the king or in his favour. However, on the other side of this religious divide was people like Mullah Fatiullah Khan, the teacher of Amir who identified with the rise of the Taliban. Baba warned Amir against the stupidities and dangerous inclinations of Mullah Fatiullah in these words: "God help us all if Afghanistan ever falls into their hands." He called people like Fatiullah as "self-righteous monkeys".

The approach of Piotr Sztompka sounds relevant in this research. In this approach, cultural trauma is connected with the negative consequences of rapid social change and its collective acknowledgement is also recognized. When enriching the original psychiatry-related notion of 'trauma' with social content, Sztompka stresses "the social agent's ability to cope with unfavorable social changes through recognition, its reactive creation of collective coping strategies and consequent establishment of a consistent social becoming"(124). Beginning with Jeffrey Alexander, the Enlightenment and psychoanalytic interpretations are mentioned in the contemporary theoretical literature of the phenomenon of cultural trauma (Alexander, 2004:3). The social actors perceive traumatic events consciously.

Guided by the intention to deepen the account of Alexander's cultural trauma theory, the researcher will now take the reader on a short journey through what the researcher would like to call significant specifications of the trauma theory. These specifications concern the scientific character and applicability of the theory. It all ends with notions of a collective memory that have not yet been touched upon. According to Alexander, "his cultural trauma theory is a scientific and an empirical theory. As such it suggests new meaningful and causal relationships between previously unrelated events, structures, perceptions, and actions" (87). It is also of

relevance to state that he considers the theory to be universal. “Collective traumas have”, Alexander writes, “no geographical or cultural limitations” (54). So it is clear that this novel is showing a divide between the secular, rational and logical elite of Afghanistan which believed in peaceful co-existence with fellow tribes and ethnicities and the uneducated madrassa-fed masses of Afghanistan who believed in the version of Mullah Fatiullah Khan and those of the Talibani fighters. Hosseini showed this clash beautifully in *The Kite Runner*. His worst fears came true when his country fell to the extremists.

The most important of events in this novel tells the story of its primary characters on one hand and on the other hand they discuss the momentous events that were going on in the country at that time. Thus the readers see that when Amir is a child his native Kabul and Afghanistan are peaceful. However, as he leaves the country along with his father after the coup and the worsening of the ethnic peace in the country, we see that the country is taken over by the fundamentalists and is ruined. Hosseini has beautifully blended the personal events with the political ones in his first novel. The ascription of trauma to an event is a process that involves human agency informed by systems of meaning. These claims are made by reflexive social agents and conveyed to other members of the collectivity. Alexander calls these actual groups of agent’s carrier groups. To quote Alexander:

Theorist may be denigrated and marginalized classes. They may also be “prestigious religious leaders or groups whom majority has designated as spiritual pariahs. These groups may also be generational or determined by different institutions. No matter what conditioned them, they are the collective agents of the trauma process. (161)

Therefore these claim makers of cultural trauma can come from a wide range of

social, economic and political backgrounds. The story told is one of a terrible wrong that has been done to them and that threatens their collective identity. It is a wrong that needs to be rectified. Hence, the act of conveying the trauma claim has a lot in common with a speech act.

The present study found out that there is a divide between two kind of characters in the novel. On one hand there are Baba and Amir who belong to the dominant Pashtun tribe and on the other tribe are Ali and Hassan who belong to the Shia Hazara minority. Their double ignominy is that they are double minorities. First they are religious minority in the sense that they are Shias in a predominantly Sunni Muslim country. Secondly, they also belong to the racial minority in the country with only 8% of the population characterizing themselves as ethnic Hazaras. These were the conditions in 1970s. Though there were differences but they were tolerated.

Thus Baba and Amir lived rich lives. They lived in big houses, resembling palaces, while Hazara Ali and Hassan lived in impoverished huts. It is also witnessed that while Amir is healthy and so is his father, Ali and Hassan suffer from many health problems due to them belonging to an impoverished ethnic, social, religious and financial minority. Even after all these divisions are just beneath the veneer of cohesion in Afghanistan, and there is widespread discrimination, Afghans manage to live together peacefully in the country, by large. However, as soon as the Taliban take over they implement a racist code on the country in which ethnic minorities like Hazaras are ethnically cleansed. The ethnic fabric of Afghanistan is torn apart and so are the lives of the primary characters of the novel, thus the private and the political lives meet here.

Cultural trauma bears certain resemblance with historical trauma as well. Thus it becomes imperative to quote Dominick LaCapra. LaCapra is pinpointed the

difficulties faced by the interpreters of Holocaust trauma. He maintains that it is not possible to gain an insight into the Holocaust event by just applying theory like psychoanalysis or any other postmodern theories. Even the psychological trauma of camp inmates has socio-cultural implications. Trauma has to be worked through.

LaCapra mentions the following view:

Defying comprehension, the tragic history of the cultural trauma has been alternately repressed and canonized in postmodern Western culture. Recently our interpretation of the cultural disaster has been the center of bitter controversies. Many of our efforts to comprehend the cultural trauma, he shows, continue to suffer from the traumatizing effects of its events and require a working through of that trauma if we are to gain a more profound understanding of the meaning of the Holocaust. (54)

Dominick LaCapra projects a new clarity to the issue of Holocaust trauma as he examines the intersections between historical events and the theory through which we struggle to understand them. LaCapra dwells upon the problematic that are involved in the historical mode of understanding trauma. He explores the problems faced by historians, critics, and thinkers. According to them, the efforts of theorists to understand Holocaust trauma is vain and fruitless. He considers the role of canon formation and the dynamic of revisionist historiography. Throughout, LaCapra demonstrates that psychoanalysis is not merely a psychology of the individual, but that its concepts have socio-cultural dimensions. It can help us perceive the relationship between the present and the past.

The Kite Runner beautifully blends the intersection of the private lives of its characters with the political life of Afghanistan and Afghans. One of the most

enduring themes of the novel, is how the past persists in the lives of its characters. It is a reminder that our deeds do not go unrewarded or unpunished. A watershed event which happens in the first half of the novel pursues and haunts Amir for the rest of his life and the rest of the novel actually rests on this event plot-wise. Amir, a rich Pashtun boy who is Sunni Muslim is friends with Hassan, an ethnic Hazara boy who follows Shia Islam and whose father works for Amir's father. The two boys are friends and spend their days flying kites in Kabul. Assef, another Pashtun boy is a school brat who terrorizes weaker boys. Ethnic discrimination is rife in Afghanistan and thus his antics pulled out on Hazara boys are tolerated by everyone.

Amir wins the kite flying tournament and Hassan tries to get the trophy kite but is waylaid by Assef and is raped by him, while Amir watches and does not help. This leads to separation between Amir and Hassan and they never see each other again

Drawing on her extensive clinical experience and the latest research, Laura S. Brown shows therapists how to become more sensitive to individual identity when working with clients who have suffered trauma:

Few of the excellent models that have been developed for working with trauma survivors take into account the complexity of an individual's unique background and experience. Of particular interest is the role of systems of faith and meaning-making in trauma therapy. Given the ubiquity of trauma in its various forms, all therapists, from trainees to seasoned professionals will find this volume educative and thought-provoking. (107)

Brown explains how culturally sensitive therapists draw upon multiple strategies for treating patients. He is aware of both dominant group privilege and of their identity and culture. The deep seated tradition and the emerging modernity are in clash. The

clash between antiquity and modernity hinders the delicate minds of people. So they are prone to the haunting experiences and episodes of trauma. The external and internal realities are put together through the common reference to a traumatic state or situation which is their nexus. Traumatic events create a multifaceted complex of reactions, which may even be contradictory at times.

The plot of *The Kite Runner* is completely dependent upon the past of the lives of its primary characters and how it haunts them. It is the silent witnessing on Amir's part of the rape of the minority Hazara boy Hassan at the hands of the majority Pashtun boy Assef which drives the story forward. It is because of this guilt that Amir remembers his native Afghanistan more than anything else. He always remembers how Hassan must be and how his life turned out to be. In his conversations with his father, he reminisces about Afghanistan and often remembers Hassan. After the death of his father, the haunting image of Hassan is what compels him to contemplate a trip back to Afghanistan.

Later he comes to know that Hassan is dead at the hands of the Taliban and so is his wife. He is compelled to respond to the new situation and jump upon the offer of Rahim Khan who gives him the option of redeeming himself. It is because of the watershed event of the rape of Hassan that he goes back to Afghanistan. And then when he comes to know that now Sohrab is in the hands of Assef, the Taliban fighter he is even more compelled to redeem his shame, of his childhood when he abandoned Sohrab's father Hassan to be raped by Assef. The persistence of the past is very palpable in *The Kite Runner* and is what drives the story.

According to Alexander, "the trauma process, when the collective experience of massive disruption, and social crises, becomes a crisis of meaning and identity" (54). In this trauma process carrier groups are central in articulating the claims, and

representing the interests and desires, of the affected to a wider public. His view is cited below:

In this case, intellectuals, in the terms widest sense, play a significant role. Intellectual here will refer to a socially constructed, historically conditioned role rather than to a structurally determined position or a personality type. Although bound up with particular individuals, the notion will refer more to what they do than to who they are. (23)

Generally speaking, intellectuals mediate between the cultural and political spheres that characterize modern societies, not so much representing and giving voice to their own ideas and interests, but rather articulating ideas to and for others. Intellectuals are mediators and one of the most common of insults that are heaped upon the ethnic Hazara minority is that their facial features are flat as compared to the features of the majority Pashtuns which are more like their fellow Persian brothers. In *The Kite Runner*, the villain Assef is in the habit of calling the minority Hazara Hassan as flat-nosed. Assef's racist hatred of Hassan stems from his religious upbringing which instigates him to hate others on the basis of their birth and not their deeds. It is not only his fault. The racism of Assef is not just individual racism. It is also religious racism which is ingrained in the religious beliefs that he has imbibed from his peers and his contemporaries, from people like Mullah Fatiullah Khan, the teacher of Amir.

Thus *The Kite Runner* is the story of Amir, a Sunni Muslim, who struggles to find his place in the world because of the aftereffects and fallout from a series of traumatic childhood events. An adult Amir opens the novel in the present-day United States with a vague reference to one of these events, and then the novel flashes back to Amir's childhood in Afghanistan. In addition to typical childhood experiences, Amir struggles with forging a closer relationship with his father, Baba; with

determining the exact nature of his relationship with Hassan, his Shi'a Muslim servant; and eventually with finding a way to atone for pre-adolescent decisions that have lasting repercussions. Along the way, readers are able to experience growing up in Afghanistan in a single-parent home, a situation that bears remarkable similarities to many contemporary households.

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

In addition to the issues affecting his personal life, Amir must also contend with the instability of the Afghan political system in the 1970s. During a crucial episode, which takes place during an important kite flying tournament, Amir decides not to act — he decides not to confront bullies and aggressors when he has the chance — and this conscious choice of inaction sets off a chain reaction that leads to guilt, lies, and betrayals. Eventually, because of the changing political climate, Amir and his father are forced to flee Afghanistan. Amir views coming to America as an opportunity to leave his past behind.

Although Amir and Baba toil to create a new life for themselves in the United States, the past is unable to stay buried. When it rears its ugly head, Amir is forced to return to his homeland to face the demons and decisions of his youth, with only a slim hope to make amends. Ultimately, *The Kite Runner* is a novel about relationships —

specifically the relationships between Amir and Hassan, Baba, Rahim Khan, Soraya, and Sohrab — and how the complex relationships in our lives overlap and connect to make us the people we are.

Thus, it can be reiterated that the major character Amir passes through several ups and downs while struggling to create distinct identity. Amir is neither fully American nor completely Afghanistan. He is culturally uprooted. He passes through the arduous task of cultural division and dislocated identity. In the entire colonial culture of India undergoes shock, mobility and then anti-colonial unrest. But it takes decade long time for Afghanistan culture to recovery from the shock of cultural trauma.

Chapter IV

Hosseini's Concern with Cultural Admixture

The conclusive finding of this research is that Indian immigrants in America are likely to cultivate dislocated identity. They are culturally and spiritually divided. The case of Amir is the same case of in-betweenness and dislocatedness. In *The Kite Runner*, the plight of Amir who succeeds in going to America with the help of Baba undergoes the rapid process of Americanization.

Amir recalls an event that happened twenty-six years before, when he was still a boy in Afghanistan, and says that that made him who he is. Before the event, he lives in a nice home in Kabul, Afghanistan, with Baba, his father. They have two servants, Ali and his son, Hassan, who are Hazaras, an ethnic minority. Baba's close friend, Rahim Khan, is also around often. When Afghanistan's king is overthrown, things begin to change. One day, Amir and Hassan are playing when they run into three boys, Assef, Wali, and Kamal. Assef threatens to beat up Amir for hanging around with a Hazara, but Hassan uses his slingshot to stop Assef.

The story skips to winter, when the kite-fighting tournament occurs. Boys cover their kite strings in glass and battle to see who can sever the string of the opposing kite. When a kite loses, boys chase and retrieve it, called kite running. When Amir wins the tournament, Hassan sets off to run the losing kite. Amir looks for him and finds Hassan trapped at the end of an alley, pinned with his pants down. Wali and Kamal hold him, and Assef rapes him. Amir runs away, and when Hassan appears with the kite, Amir pretends he doesn't know what happened. Afterward, Amir and Hassan drift apart. Amir, who is racked by guilt, decides either he or Hassan must leave. He stuffs money and a watch under Hassan's pillow and tells Baba that Hassan stole it. When Baba confronts them, Hassan admits to it, though he didn't do it.

Shortly after, Ali and Hassan move away.

The story jumps to March 1981. Baba and Amir are in the back of a truck as they escape from Kabul, which was invaded by the Soviets and has become a war-zone. After a hellish journey, they make it to Pakistan. Two years later, Baba and Amir live in Fremont, California. While Baba works at a gas station, Amir finishes high school and goes to college. Baba and Amir sell things at a flea market on Sundays, and Baba sees an old friend, General Taheri. Amir notices General Taheri's daughter, Soraya. When Amir finally speaks to her, General Taheri catches him and tells him there is a proper way to do things. Not long after, Baba is diagnosed with lung cancer. Amir asks Baba if he will get General Taheri's consent for Amir to marry Soraya. General Taheri accepts the proposal. They hold the wedding quickly because of Baba's health, and Baba dies a month later. Amir and Soraya try unsuccessfully to have a baby while Amir works on his writing career.

Amir gets a call from Rahim Khan. Rahim Khan is sick and wants Amir to see him in Pakistan. Amir meets him a week later, and Rahim Khan tells Amir about the devastation in Kabul. He says things only got worse after the Soviets were forced out. Now the Taliban rule by violence. He has a favor to ask of Amir, but first he needs to tell him about Hassan. When Baba and Amir left Afghanistan, Rahim Khan watched their house. Out of loneliness and because he was getting older, he decided to find Hassan. He convinced Hassan and Hassan's wife, Farzana, to come back to Kabul with him. Farzana and Hassan eventually had a little boy, Sohrab. A few years later Rahim Khan went to Pakistan for medical treatment, but he received a call from a neighbor in Kabul. The Taliban went to Baba's house and shot Hassan and Farzana and sent Sohrab to an orphanage.

Rahim Khan wants Amir to go to Kabul and bring Sohrab back to Pakistan,

where a couple lives that will take care of him. He tells Amir that Baba was Hassan's father, and Amir agrees to do it. In Afghanistan, Amir finds the orphanage where Sohrab is supposed to be, but he is not there. The orphanage director says a Taliban official took Sohrab a month earlier. If Amir wants to find the official, he will be at the soccer stadium during the game the next day. Amir goes to the game, and at half-time, the Taliban put a man and a woman in holes in the ground and the official Amir is looking for stones them to death. Through one of the Taliban guards, Amir sets up a meeting with the official.

When they meet, Amir tells the official he is looking for a boy, Sohrab, and the official tells the guards to bring the boy in. Sohrab is wearing a blue silk outfit and mascara, making him appear more feminine and suggesting that the men sexually abuse him. The official says something Amir recognizes, and suddenly Amir realizes the official is Assef. Assef says he wants to settle some unfinished business. He beats Amir with brass knuckles, breaking Amir's ribs and splitting his lip. Sohrab threatens Assef with his slingshot, and when Assef lunges at him, Sohrab shoots him in the eye, allowing Amir and Sohrab to escape. As Amir recovers in the hospital, he finds out there never was a couple that could care for Sohrab. Amir asks Sohrab to live with him in the U.S., and Sohrab accepts.

The adoption officials tell Amir that adopting Sohrab will be impossible since he can't prove Sohrab's parents are dead, and Amir tells Sohrab he may have to go back to an orphanage. Amir and Soraya figure out a way to get Sohrab to the U.S., but before they can tell Sohrab, Sohrab tries to kill himself. He lives, but he stops speaking entirely. Even after they bring Sohrab to California, Sohrab remains withdrawn. One day, they go to a park with other Afghans. People are flying kites. Amir buys one and gets Sohrab to fly it with him. They spot another kite and battle it.

Using one of Hassan's favorite tricks, they win. Sohrab smiles, and as the losing kite flies loose, Amir sets off to run it for Sohrab.

Works Cited

- Abrams, M. H..*Glossary of Literary Terms*. New York: Norton, 2001, Print.
- Alexander, Jeffrey. *History of Cultural Trauma*. New Delhi: Vivian Publication, 2005, Print.
- Belsey, Catherine. *Literature, History, Politics*. New York: Routledge, 1985, Print.
- Benton, Thomas. *Vision of Liberation and Crisis*. London: HarperCollins, 2012, Print.
- Bowra, Cecil Maurice, *The Heritage of Symbolism*. London: Macmillan, 1962, Print.
- Brown, Laura S. *History and Trauma: Critique of Culture*. California: California UP, 2001, Print.
- Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience*. New York: Rutledge, 2004, Print.
- Doctorow, Jonathan. *The Kite Runner: A Reflection on Trauma and Loss*. New Delhi: Vivian Publication, Print.
- Eliot, T. S..*The Waste Land*. London: Horace Live right, 1922, Print.
- Ellimann, Richard. *The Modern Tradition*. London: Oxford University Press, 1965, Print.
- Eyerman, Ron. *Trajectory of Cultural Trauma*. New Delhi: Delhi University, 2001, Print.
- Firestone, Sulamith. *Inter-Islamic Unrest and Fallout*. New Delhi: Diamond Publication, 2011, Print.
- Henderson, Wylie. *Invasion of Afghan and Cultural Turmoil*. London: Macmillan, 2012, Print.
- Hosseni, Khalid. *The Kite Runners*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011, Print.
- Hosseni, Khalid. *Encyclopedia Britannica*.Encyclopedia Britannica Ultimate ReferenceSuit. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2011, Print.
- Johnson, Robert. *Orientalistic Ethos in The Kite Runner*. New York: Penguin, 2010,

Print.

LaCapra, Dominick. *Traumatic Loss and Despair*. New Delhi: Rupa Publication, 2004, Print.

Lewiston, David. *Concern with Realism in Hussein's Fiction*. New York: Penguin, 2012, Print.

Robinson, Peter. *Survey of Afghan Literature in English*. New York: Rutledge, 2010, Print.

Wilson, Edmund. *Axel's Castle*. New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1931, Print.

Zetkin, Clara. *Chaos in Afghan Society*. New York: Norton Publication, 2010, Print.