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**Male Gaze upon Gender Roles: A Critical Discourse Analysis on Khaled
Hosseini's *The Kite Runner***

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Letter of Approval

This Thesis entitled “Male Gaze upon Gender Roles: A Critical Discourse Analysis on Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* Submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Sunil Dahal has been approved by the undersigned member of the Research Committee:

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Abstract

Khaled Hosseini's novel The Kite Runner is the depiction of masculine Afghan society where males bear the superior authority. In the novel, male characters like Amir, Baba, Rahim Khan and Assef are in the main roles who make discourses on gender role that masculinity is greater than femininity. As discourse is created by society with the use of language, Hosseini's characters also make manipulative use of language to claim masculinity as the superior gender and a person must have masculine characters to be a real man. The research takes various dialogues and speeches of characters in the novel as discourse created by them, especially males, and makes precise analysis of it to investigate the intention of such characters. The novel is analysed from different theoretical perspectives but the analysis of its language through Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate the gender roles is untouched. This research makes analysis of The Kite Runner through Critical Discourse Analysis and investigates how Hosseini's characters have manipulated the language to readdress the stereotypical gender roles, keeping masculinity at the superior position of it.

Key Words: discourse, language, gender roles, naming, prioritizing, ideology, manipulation

Introduction

This research paper analyses Khaled Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner* through the theoretical perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in order to argue how Hosseini's characters have implied their ideology of gender roles on their dialogue in the text. The researcher examines the novel's language to explore the speech of the characters and the narration of Amir which shows males' patriarchal notion upon gender roles and how they attempt to put masculinity at a higher position against femininity. It also considers naming and prioritizing as the tools to imply characters' ideology in the text. It takes the whole novel as a discourse created by society people as it is the depiction of the then Afghan society and makes a precise analysis of its language. Hosseini's characters create discourses to imply their ideology to make people believe that the (supposed to be) superior masculinity belongs to male and femininity to female. The major characters: Amir, Baba, Assef and Rahim Khan are at the position to create discourses and they imply their ideology of superior masculinity throughout the novel.

Hosseini's male characters, in the novel *The Kite Runner*, deal with gender roles through a patriarchal perspective. A question can be raised at this point: why have they done so? What would be the result if the narrator was a female? The research problem occurs here at the ideology of discourse makers while creating such discourses. The proposed research work deals with the question: what is the use of language in a certain way by Hosseini's characters that contributes to imply their ideology to recall stereotypical gender roles favouring males in the text. Thus, it mainly explores the manipulative use of language by major characters in the novel. Various linguistic components used in the novel have different meanings to make beyond the surface meaning of the overall text. The use of intensive language by the characters is highly noticeable. This research work aims at finding the causes of characters' use of stylistic language in the novel *The Kite Runner*. What is their ideology in doing this? Does it have any

effect? Are they manipulating language knowingly or is it happening spontaneously? These are the questions this research work attempts to answer. And the paper also endeavours to grab and analyze this issue to solve the problems of this text remaining at the level of language.

Discourse is created through language and language is a human construct. All discourses- texts or speeches we make- can be manipulated and put in favour of us through the stylistic application of language in our discourse. Hilary Janks argues, “CDA stems from a critical theory of language which sees the use of language as a form of social practice. All social practices are tied to specific historical contexts and are the means by which existing social relations are reproduced or contested and different interests are served” (1). Language is a social practice and it is the means to create discourses making it the by-product of society. The people in power can make discourse to favour that very group. So they use stylistic and ideological language to imply specific ideas that is convincing to receivers.

The intensive and manipulative use of language is precisely seen in Hosseini’s novel *The Kite Runner*. The main purpose of major characters’ strategic use of language is to readdress stereotypical gender roles which is said to be in favour of male. Hosseini’s narrator, Amir, is a male and he is narrating the story by having his own attitude towards gender roles while depicting other characters in the novel. As a narrator, he does not present the detailed introduction of the rare female characters but he closely observes and presents other male characters providing them the major roles. Female characters like Soraya and Farzana, wife of Amir and Hassan respectively are represented as the bearer of injustices to which women in Afghanistan are subjected. And if the narrator was female, the way characters speak and the discourses they make on gender roles would change drastically.

CDA claims that discourse differs as the discourse maker differs. Narrator’s strategy to make contact with few female characters and again let them speak very less also becomes

evidence to this claim. His ideology is to prioritize masculine roles in front of feminine roles through discourses. He has intentionally done it to imply his attitude towards feminine roles. The novel is the depiction of contemporary patriarchal Afghan society where males were at the position of making discourses upon gender roles and which used to be in favour of those males.

The notion of masculine superiority is presented in most of the male characters' speech. They are portrayed as the men of patriarchal society who do not want to accept the fact that both genders are equal. Moreover, male characters in the novel make their speeches structured as hypotaxis. Theory of hypotaxis and parataxis claims that males apply complex structures in their speech whereas females use very simple structure of sentences in their speech. Hypotaxis refers to formation of compound and complex speech by subordination and co-ordination. Parataxis refers to the use of simple and elaborative language. Green and Lebihan claim, "Women were thought to speak with a greater degree of *parataxis*; that is, where syntactic elements are juxtaposed and co-ordinated rather than bonded and subordinated (bonding and subordination are known jointly as *hypotaxis*)" (34). This also contributes to make their discourses more significant than that of female characters. Here, the male dominance over discourse occurs and makes easy to establish gender roles stereotype in favour of males.

The Kite Runner tells a story of Amir, a young boy from Afghanistan living with his father, Baba. His friend Hassan is son of his family servant Ali. Amir, son of a well-to-do Kabul merchant, is first-person narrator who moves to California, gets married with Soraya and writes novels. He remains haunted by a childhood incident in which he betrays his best friend's trust, a Hazara boy named Hassan, who receives brutal beating and rape from some local bullies. Amir returns his homeland to save Hassan's son. With a small fight with old rival Assef, he succeeds to take him back to California and finally adopts him. Some major

characters are Amir, Hassan, Baba, Ali, Assef and Rahim Khan. Other minor characters are Soraya, Sanaubar, Sohrab, General Taheri, Farzana and Farid. Most main events in the plot are grasped by major male characters where they create different discourses in favour of masculinity.

The Kite Runner's setting begins in USA but later on its plot moves to Afghanistan as Amir recalls his homeland reminiscences of his childhood. He remembers the kite-fighting tournaments, the tussle with other boys and Hassan's rape by Assef. Amir is always haunted by the guilt of pretending that he did not see the scene of Hassan's rape. And this incident later on leads to the departure of very closest two brother-like-friends. He remembers how they escaped Afghanistan in the back of the truck to Pakistan and to California after two years. Amir also recalls the story of their starting days in Fremont, his meeting and marriage with Soraya, his father's death by lung cancer and other major events of his life. He also remembers his writing career there. Then, story joins present days of Amir who is now called by Rahim Khan and gets informed about Sohrab, son of his childhood best friend Hassan. Rahim Khan also reveals a secret that Hassan, who is now shot dead by Taliban, is an illegitimate son of Baba. So Amir gets to know his brother-like-friend Hassan is his half-brother. Then after, spurred on by childhood guilt, Amir makes difficult journey to Kabul, only to learn Sohrab has been enslaved by a former childhood bully, Assef, who became a prominent Taliban official then. Amir and Sohrab succeed to escape from Assef's cruelty after a small fight and move to Fremont. The story ends with a kite-fighting tournament where Sohrab becomes Amir's assistant and with favourite trick of Hassan they eventually win the match.

Narrator presents himself in an oppositional mode with another major character Hassan, a best brother-like friend, in terms of their gender roles. Hassan has got masculine qualities and the narrator, Amir, has got feminine qualities. This presentation also readdresses

stereotypical gender roles. In the text, as story moves on, the way Baba asks Amir to be a man like Hassan time and again confirms his intention. The way he makes use of language prioritizing masculine roles aims not only to make Amir learn masculinity but also to teach wider audiences. Characters' conversation in this novel is direct representation of society-people who- through the use of discourse- create gender roles.

While naming different characters in the novel, the narrator uses words from his perspective. Respected words are given to male characters but female characters are called just by their name. The main evidence for this idea is that the real name of Baba is never mentioned throughout the novel. Prioritization also plays vital role in imposing characters ideology in their discourses. In most of the places male characters, while speaking, prioritize masculinity against femininity but they imply their ideology at the subordinate clauses most of the time. Males are in place of making discourse in novel and same thing happens in real life situation. Because of this fact, they create discourses upon gender roles which favour them. And with this, they claim masculinity is superior in front of femininity. Exactly same thing occurs in this novel as well. This research is in this track too which analyses that gender roles are not natural but the way people create discourses upon it through language makes it like natural. And it is widely said that all discourses are created intentionally.

KhaledHosseini's *The Kite Runner* has been interpreted at its levels by a number of scholars. It has been reviewed, analyzed and critiqued for its themes of friendship, betrayal, ethnicity, race, American dream, etc. A few critics have analyzed this text at its language level also. Many of the critics are at the same point that the text presents story of two young boys, their friendship, betrayal, guilt, redemption, atonement and the ruin of their life. HeshamKhadawardi inscribes, "The most elaborate theme and which is the central building block in *The Kite Runner* is that of guilt" (Khadawardi 88). He further claims that the plot of this novel "starts with a sin committed by the father against Ali (Hassan's father) and other

sins committed by Amir against Hassan and it ends up with acts of redemption and atonement by Amir” (89). He has made the interpretation of this novel at the level of its theme. He deals with the message Hosseini makes in his novel.

Akram Sadat Hosseini and EsmaeilZohdi interpret *The Kite Runner* on its issues on ethnicity and racism. They state Hosseini’s novel portrays “the two major Afghan ethnical populations, Pashtun and Hazara, and their social, cultural, and religious conflicts” (Hosseini and Zohdi 34). In their reading of the text, they “examine the root of ethnic prejudices and oppression among Afghan people in the novel and the reasons for their ethnic conducts are explained and analyzed based on the Feagin’s denial of human difference” (34). Their main focus is on the ethnic conflict, oppression, superiority and social inequalities represented in this novel of Hosseini.

Muhammad Asghar Malik analyzes the language manipulation of this novel through the lens of CDA. He writes in abstract of his article that, he has analyzed “how the social relations, identity, knowledge, and power were constructed through the use of linguistic devices in the text of the novel” (Malik 71). He claims that Hosseini has “employed linguistic manipulation as a powerful instrument for the construction of his version of reality” (71). He makes analysis of this text in three levels: the text as a whole, a sentence and a word. Malik further claims, “His effective use of linguistic devices acted as a catalyst to stimulate the reader’s emotions and curiosity about ethnicity” (73). Malik’s investigation on language aims to find out the ethnic inequalities in Afghan society during the era and the discourses created by so-called superior ethnic majority of Pashtuns over the ethnic minority of Hazara.

His main finding in this text is Hosseini’s intensive use of linguistic devices of “foregrounding, backgrounding, presupposition and omission to frame the contents of the text in favour of his objectives” (73). He asserts, “The writer manipulated the text for the construction of reality to materialize political objectives of supporting western agenda in

Afghanistan” (75). In his research, he makes analysis of various linguistic devices and concludes that Hosseini has played at the level of language to support the agenda of Occident. His claim is that with manipulative use of language in the text and by applying a number of literary devices, Hosseini examines western’s agenda to emerge ethnic inequalities in Afghan society.

Muhammad Asghar Malik again, in collaboration with Syed Kazim Shah and Rashid Mahmood, in their article “The Role of Linguistic Devices in Representing Ethnicity in *The Kite Runner*”, has made a detailed analysis of this text through theoretical perspectives of CDA. They have especially interpreted the issue of ethnicity in this text through a model suggested by Huckin. They have suggested in the abstract of the article that, “The result of this research reveals that the writer has employed linguistic manipulation as a powerful instrument to represent ethnicity” (Malik et. al. 161). They quote Guerin, “the writer chooses specific linguistic structures to manoeuvre the facts in order to make the readers accept ideological message of the text” (164). For them, “The writer presents Amir and Hassan as the representatives of different sides of the same society—the rich and poor, Sunni and Shia, Pashtun and Hazara, powerful and powerless” (166). Malik et. al. make analysis of *The Kite Runner* in a wider range including class discrimination, racial discrimination and the exploitation of power in Afghan society. They analyze various characters from different perspectives and conclude the discrimination lying in diverse layers of society.

Number of issues in Khaled Hosseini’s novel *The Kite Runner* has been analysed. It is mostly interpreted at its thematic level. Its linguistic tools are also analyzed. But, the issue this research raises here is a unique and unexplored yet. No researcher has studied the gender stereotype of this text through theoretical basis of CDA. For understanding fictional texts, a close study and analysis of language is a necessary prerequisite. Hence, this research is a distinctive reading and analysis of Hosseini’s novel and it formulates a very new way of

dealing with this text to understand it in a better way. Here, the theoretical lens of CDA as suggested by Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak is applied for the investigation of linguistic level of this novel.

‘Discourse’ refers to any type of verbal or non-verbal expressions in the form of language. This term is first used by Michel Foucault to describe how language is used by people and institutions to shape social reality. In this sense, Marshal Danesi in his book *Dictionary of Media and Communications*, defines discourse “as a form of power because it articulates and ensconces through language the ideas that are accepted as truth. The term is now extended to include non-verbal and other kinds of languages” (Danesi 99). So each and every text, produced by society, is discourse. It carries certain ideology or politics of discourse maker.

CDA mainly focuses on analysing intention discourse maker applies in the text, by manipulating language, to imply his or her ideology and to grab the objectives. The politics and ideology implied in language of text is interpreted by this theoretical domain. The term ‘ideology’ refers to intention or belief system that the discourse makers imply in their discourse. Slavoj Zizek defines ideology as a well-known phrase from Marx’s *Capital* “They do not know it. But they are doing it”. CDA claims that each discourse is made intentionally which aims at reaching the intention of the discourse makers. Ideology is defined in *Dictionary of Media and Communication* as:

A system of thought based on the specific set of assumptions, beliefs or viewpoints that appears to be a product of common sense, but which are actually socially constructed. Those strongly committed to particular ideology have difficulty understanding and communicating with supporters of conflicting ideology. For Karl Marx, ideology referred to the ideas and values of a ruling class, which are

reproduced by the dominant social institution (the law, family, religion, education).

(153)

The discourse makers imply their certain ideology in their discourse to achieve their pre-determined goals. So they manipulate their language as impressive as possible so that their audiences or readers do not know the idea is implied by the author or the speaker but they assume it as a natural phenomenon. MukeshDevrari quotes Gauba to make the clear sense of ideology, “In the contemporary literature the term ideology is applied to the set of ideas which are adopted by a group in order to motivate it for the achievements of pre-determined goals” (3). One or the other way, ideology is implied in every discourse. So nowadays, Discourse Analysis has become a very crucial part of interpretation of texts to recognize different implied meaning of it.

As it is mentioned above, the language of a text matters a lot in the creation of the meaning. For understanding the text and getting the intention and meaning of the writer we must interpret it at its language level. Dr.Lata Marina Varghese claims:

The primary texture of a text is its language. It is through language that the content of a text finds its fullest expression. So, when a text is analyzed, its linguistic features are of prime importance. One of the most obvious features of a writer’s individual style is his fondness for certain words or types of words, which provides a clue to the predominant attitude of the writer. (46)

Discourse is created through language. So, to understand the implied meaning and ideology the analysis of text at its language level comes at the fore. Discourse maker may use various literary devices in the content to make the discourse more persuasive and with-heavy-meaning. CDA is such discipline which aims to reveal such hidden truths of discourses.

MajidAmerian and FatemeEsmailiin their article “A Brief Overview of CDA in Relation to Gender Studies in English Language Textbooks”, claimthat CDA is an academic

research paradigm aiming to investigate “the power relations, ideological manipulations, and hegemony” (1033). People imply their certain ideology and politics in their discourse.

Language is always intentional. Van Dijk claims that CDA has become “the general label for a special approach to the study of texts and talks emerging from critical linguistics, critical semiotics and in general from a socio-politically conscious and oppositional way of investigating language, discourse and communication” (Dijk 17). Being a multi-dimensional approach to the text, CDA digs out different layers of text carrying variety of meanings.

CDA has now become the most important lens for analysing the ideology applied by the discourse makers in their discourses like text, speeches, advertisements and other discourses. As Murshida affirms:

CDA engages in concrete, linguistic textual analysis of language use in social interaction. CDA is critical in the sense that it aims to reveal the role of discursive practice in the maintenance of the social world, including those social relations that involve unequal relations of power. Its aim is to contribute to social change by uncovering those processes and practices which are often naturalized and taken for granted as common-sense notions. (Murshida 2)

CDA endeavours to generate the implied meaning of the discourse beyond the surface meaning by making analysis of each and every facets of language used in it. It focuses on the speaker, setting, used term and even the addressee.

Among the various aspects of CDA, this research takes Fairclough’s third dimension from the three-dimensional framework for conceiving and analyzing discourse which is about the ideological effects and hegemonic processes in which discourse is seen to operate. With this, the research makes specific analysis of characterization, prioritization, hypotaxis and parataxis to investigate the ideology and intention of male characters as well as their manipulation of language to succeed in implying their ideologies in the text.

Jennifer Coates's ideas of gender and language are applied for the investigation of hypotaxis and parataxis. The idea of hypotaxis and parataxis claims that the way male makes use of language differs from the way female does so. Green and Lebihan, in their book *Critical Theory and Practice*, show the difference between the language-use on the basis of gender of the speaker. Literally, parataxis refers to "the place side by side". It can be defined as a rhetorical term in which phrases and clauses are placed one after another independently, without coordinating or subordinating them through the use of conjunctions. Jespersen affirms that "the first common notion of women's speech is that it is essentially gossip or prattle" (Green and Lebihan 33). Jespersen considered females as less competent at complex syntactic structures because they do not think before they speak "low and infrequently to prove their manliness, as any elaboration is seen as flowery and womanly" (33). Hypotaxis literally means the grammatical arrangement where the clauses or phrases are subordinated and coordinated to one another within the sentence.

The philosophy of gender and language believes that men have the quality of hypotaxis and women have the quality of parataxis in their speech. This very notion has concluded that men have the superiority of language use in comparison to women. Men are centralized in this philosophical notion too and this is exactly presented in Hosseini's novel too. Males speak in a very systematic order using subordination and coordination but female characters in the novel rarely speak if not they only make gossips and prattles.

Going through the text *The Kite Runner* with CDA to investigate gender stereotype, the analysis of characterization is the foremost. Hosseini's most of the characters are male and they are in the main role. Female characters are subordinated as very minor characters. Amir, Baba, Hassan, Ali, Sohrab and Assef are males who occupy most of the plot. The story starts with Amir, whose mother died in childbirth, and his friend Hassan, whose mother left when he was five days old. Therefore, the central characters are all Afgan men. Minor female

characters appear only on the periphery. So, the novel is the fiction of males. It also links the novelist's intention for providing major roles to male characters which connotes the inner intention of the author that males are the major actors in the society. This demonstrates the author's emphasis on males' superiority too.

Amir narrates the story of two oppositional male characters including him in the text of leading roles. They are Amir and Hassan having feminine and masculine qualities respectively. This very featuring is the basic means for the narrator to readdress the stereotypical gender roles. The way Amir makes use of language in the plot plants his attitude towards gender roles to re-establish its stereotypical notion highlighting male superiority. Devrari affirms, ". . . language is a predecessor of discourse. Discourse cannot exist without language. To plant certain world view among the people, discourse is used and it includes art of logic which justifies claimants claim in the expression or artifact" (2). Baba, Amir's father also expresses his attitude that a man must have masculine qualities i.e. strength, courage, independence, violence and assertiveness. His son, Amir, lacks all of these qualities but instead he wants to become a literary writer. Hassan, in another side, is just same as what Baba calls 'a man'. So, Baba always wants Amir to become a man like Hassan. For him a man only becomes man if he has masculine character.

As the novel is narrated by the first person narrator, all the characters are named by him. Most of the male characters in the novel get some respected words added with their name as surnames like 'Baba', 'Kaka' and 'General'. Furthermore, they are also addressed with other respected words like 'sir'. But female characters are just addressed with their real name. Lesley Jeffries, in her book *Critical Stylistics*, claims that the way we make use of words to name someone makes a difference on their ideology. She affirms:

In the case of naming, there may be a perfectly acceptable choice between two or more ways of referencing the same things. For example, the name of someone (e.g.

Lisa Heywood) might alternate with another ‘innocent’ way of referencing the same person (e.g. my sister). On the other hand, there may be a more biased view possible with a further naming practice (e.g. the best singer in the school). In addition, there are other possible ways of referencing someone which might be seen as more unusual morphologically and thus semantically and lexically and these may have ideological significance in certain contexts (e.g. robo-sister). (Jeffries 18)

The discourse maker can use words to name a person according to his or her perspective. In the novel, *The Kite Runner*, most of the male characters are given respected words to name them. For instance, Amir’s father is not addressed with his real name but he is named with a very lovely and respected name ‘Baba’. In the song of Sanaubar for Ali, she gives some titles to him such as ‘Lion of God’ and ‘King of Men’. Amir has intentionally done this to keep males at the superior power. In the text, no evidence can be found where female characters are given such names. Amir himself is often called with the nickname ‘*agha*’ which is an honorific title. While having party in Kaka Homayoun’s house, Amir narrates all the people present there. While describing their names, he utters all the names of male characters but tells “the wives and daughters” (74) for all female characters. It shows that Amir is intentionally naming characters to impose his male gaze on gender roles.

Amir and Hassan together are named ‘*The Sultans of Kabul*’. But Amir describes Tanya, Assef’s mother as “a small, nervous woman who smiled and blinked a lot”. While talking about Soraya Taheri, Baba tells her as “a decent girl, hardworking and kind” and Amir calls her as “My Swap Meet Princess”. Here ‘swap meet’ refers to ‘exchanged’. This contrastive use of lexical items for two different genders proves Amir’s ideology to show females as inferior. And it also shows how he thinks about gender roles. Baba was given the nickname ‘*Toophan agha*’, or ‘Mr. Hurricane’ by Rahim Khan. Amir feels pride to utter this nickname. He describes his father as:

My father was a force of nature, a towering Pashtun specimen with a thick beard, a wayward crop of curly brown hair as unruly as the man himself, hands that looked capable of uprooting a willow tree, and a black glare that would ‘drop the devil to his knees begging for mercy’ . . . when all six-foot-five of him thundered into the room, attention shifted to him like sunflowers turning to the sun. (11)

Different names like these carry the ideology that masculinity is the superior power than femininity. On the contrary, female characters are given names which show them as inferior. Amir narrates, “. . .Sanaubar, a woman nineteen years younger, a beautiful but notoriously unscrupulous woman who lived up to her dishonourable reputation” (7). The way Amir modifies the noun for male characters differ vastly with the noun modification of female characters. This tool of naming in the novel makes males feel greater than females and this also represent their gender role. All male characters try to put significant names or nicknames to other male characters. This shows their male perspective towards gender and gender roles.

Prioritization is another tool that male characters use in this novel to show their patriarchal attitude towards gender roles. In *The Kite Runner* male characters prioritize masculinity to be superior to femininity. Lesley Jeffries claims:

The textual function of prioritizing presupposes that the writer/speaker has choices about how s/he constructs sentences, and that these choices may be, in some basic sense, equivalent to each other. It is also worth mentioning here that the choice about whether to include a particular piece of information is a choice which . . . is nevertheless related in effect to the issues of ideology. (80)

In discourses, discourse maker can prioritize their intention to make people realise what the speaker is telling. But in other places, discourse makers prioritize other information to make audience not to notice their main ideology and attitude. In the novel *The Kite Runner* when Baba explains Amir about the three real men in the world he says, “There are only three real

men in this world . . . America the brash savior, Britain, and Israel, the rest of them . . . they are like gossiping old women” (109). Here in this expression, readers take their first glance to the object of the first clause, ‘only three real men in this world . . . and Israel’ and they do not concern about the later clause where the ideology of discourse maker is hidden. In the next clause ‘the rest of them . . . they are like gossiping old women’, Baba is trying to dominate females by calling their roles as gossiping. Here, in the dialogue of Baba, the patriarchal attitude of a male is embedded in the last subordinate clause. This is done intentionally because readers or audiences do not consider the patriarchal ideology at a glance rather they let it go. They give their attention to the object of the main clause ‘only three real men in the world’. In this way discourse makers can prioritize different information and embed their ideology through subordination.

Teun A. van Dijk claims, “In order to study social problems or issues adequately, CDA work is typically inter- or multi-disciplinary, and specially focuses on the relations between discourse and society (including social cognition, politics and culture)” (17). In the same way, this research aims to interpret *The Kite Runner* to investigate the social inequalities existing at the level of gender which dominates females.

Amir’s father, Baba, is not satisfied towards the gender roles performed by Amir. So, time and again he speaks with Rahim Khan about ‘something missing’ in Amir. The day when Amir saw the violent and bloodshed portrait of Henry Kissinger, he started to weep and “cried all the way back home” (Hosseini 19). In the evening, he had listened Baba and Rahim Khan talking, where Baba tells about the feminine qualities that Amir inhabits:

. . . but he’s always buried in those books or shuffling around the house like he’s lost in some dream . . . I wasn’t like that at all, and neither were any of the kids I grew up with . . . sometimes I look out this window and I see him playing on the street with the

neighbourhood boys. I see how they push him around, take his toys from him, give him a shove here, a whack there. And, you know, he never fights back, Never. (19)

Here, Amir is portrayed as a man having feminine qualities and is questioned through the character Baba that a man is not a perfect man if he has female qualities and behaviours. Baba denied Rahim Khan's positive attitude towards his notion and tried to convince him that Amir is not a real man. He claims, "There is something missing in that boy... A boy who won't stand up for himself becomes a man who can't stand up to anything... something about Amir troubles me in a way that I can't express" (20). Baba is quite sure that Amir does not consist perfect manhood but rather he is full of feminine qualities.

Amir also thinks he neither inherited nor could acquire the manhood his father had expected. When Baba dies, he thinks his mentor has gone and he has to find his way himself. He is afraid whether he can be the man his father always wanted and conduct his life and family like a perfect man. He doubts, "The thought of it terrified me" (152). He is not very sure that he will be able to become a real man.

Baba has been troubled so much that he hardly believes Amir as his own son. He says, "If I hadn't seen the doctor pull him out of my wife with my own eyes, I'd never believe he's my son" (20). He also doubts Amir as a man by saying, "I mean to speak to you man to man. Do you think you can handle that for once?" (15). Amir also realizes that his father wants him to become a real man. He narrates, "Of course, marrying a poet was one thing, but fathering a son who preferred burying his face in poetry books to hunting . . . well, that wasn't how Baba had envisioned it, I suppose. Real men didn't read poetry- and God forbid they should ever write it! Real men- real boys- played soccer just as Baba had when he had been young" (17). Amir is continuously haunted by this lack on him that delivers his notion that a man must have masculinity to be a real man.

Amir is continuously made to remember about his femininity that he occupies by various circumstances though he was a man by birth. Rahim Khan requests Amir to fetch Sohrab from Kabul and to take care of him. But Amir hesitates to do so. Then, Rahim Khan questions his masculinity and makes him remember what his father always wanted in him. He tells, “You know, one time, when you weren’t around, your father and I were talking. And you know he always worried about you in those days. I remember he said to me, ‘Rahim, a boy who won’t stand up for himself becomes a man who can’t stand up to anything.’ I wonder, is that what you’ve become” (194). At this point, Amir also realizes his lacks in his life and gender roles and narrates, “I dropped my eyes” (194). Almost all the male characters know the masculine role that they have to encompass. Amir also knows that he is lacking this quality of a real man. And this very reality knocks him frequently throughout the novel. It proves that male characters, who are the representatives of contemporary Afghan society, are readdressing stereotypical masculine gender roles and claiming that if a male does not have masculinity, he cannot be a real man.

Within Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner*, the theme thoroughly displayed is gender roles in a male dominated society and the language of the text has highly contributed to finalize this theme. It shows male superiority, the supposed superiority of males, by distributing masculine gender roles to males. Through the novel, the male characters attempt to claim that a man only becomes real man if he contains masculinity.

Most of the actions performed by Amir do not seem brave and masculine. He seems to be coward every time. But other males like Hassan and Assef are not like him. With this contradictory characterization, it is remarked that a man must have masculine character. Assef acts as a brave boy having great masculine qualities. Once in a talk with Amir, he says, “I’m going to have a little chat with him (Daoud Khan), man to man, *mard to mard*” (35). And when Assef insults Hazaras and Hassan particularly, Amir writes by confessing his weak

heart, “Just let us go”, I said, hating the way my voice trembled, “We’re not bothering you” (36). Hassan, on the other hand, does his each and every task himself and most of the tasks are not included in the text. But on the other hand, Amir always needs help of Hassan in each and every works in his childhood. For instance, while flying kites, Hassan always is with him applying his special tricks. To make Amir protected from bullying boys, Hassan acts as saviour using his slingshot. But Amir becomes too frightened and requests Hassan not to fight and bargain. While they were going for cinema, a group of soldiers saw them and mocked Hassan about his mother Sanaubar’s physics. Amir confess and writes, “The way he grinned at us, leered, scared me. ‘Just keep walking’, I muttered to Hassan . . . I told Hassan to keep walking, keep walking” (7). The cowardice of Amir is precisely reflected here that Hassan tries to protest the soldier but because of fear, he requests Hassan to go as fast as possible away from those soldiers. So, Amir encompasses feminine qualities.

The most important evidence of Amir’s femininity is that he takes help of Hassan to run for the last kite that he has won. And this very kite is the main element to show his masculinity to his father. He expects Hassan to run the last kite for him so that he could show it to his father as a symbol of manhood that his father always quests in him.

Amir’s femininity is again precisely seen in the scene of Hassan’s rape by Assef. When he looks at Assef mocking and assaulting Hassan, he just witnesses being unnoticed by them. Instead of protecting Hassan by fighting with Assef as a man, he hides himself at another side of the wall, frightened. He narrates, “I realized I hadn’t breathed out. I exhaled, slowly, quietly. I felt paralyzed. I watched them close in on the boy I’d grown up with, the boy whose hare-lipped face had been my first memory” (63). And as Assef prepares to rape Hassan, he again narrates, “I opened my mouth, almost said something. Almost. The rest of my life might have turned out differently if I had. But I didn’t. I just watched. Paralyzed . . . I bit on my fist. Shut my eyes” (64). He becomes just eye-witness of the rape of his saviour

instead of protecting him by fighting with those bullies but he sits “weeping” (67). He narrates, “I had one last chance to make a decision. One final opportunity to decide who I was going to be” (68). Here, Amir himself is confused with his gender roles. He is in dilemma whether he is a perfect man. So he is at the point to decide who he is going to be. He could “step into that alley, stand up for Hassan- the way he’d stood up for me all those times in the past- and accept whatever would happen to me. Or I could run. In the end, I ran” (68). Amir later accepts his feminine characteristics by saying himself “a coward” (68). “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 alley, to Hassan” (68). As a man, Amir does not show his manly courage and fight for his best friend but quite opposite, he turns his back and runs away in fear. It also shows Amir is not a pure man as Baba thinks.

Amir, with the great assist of Hassan, attempts to prove his manhood by bringing the last kite to Baba. And Baba, according to Amir, becomes very happy, “a smile played on my father’s lips. He opened his arms. I put the kite down and walked into his thick hairy arms. I buried my face in the warmth of his chest and wept. Baba held me close to him, rocking me back and forth. In his arms, I forgot what I’d done. And that was good” (69). As Amir was carving to show his manhood to his father, he shows his kite- though it is given by Hassan to him- to say that he is also a perfect man. Baba becomes happy that his son has done a great job like a man. Here, male gaze towards gender role is clearly depicted in the character Baba because till Amir does not perform any manly work, Baba does not become happy. So it shows males’ ideology in the discourse *The Kite Runner* that masculinity is at the superior position than femininity.

Patriarchal attitude towards gender roles can be precisely seen at the contradiction on roles male characters perform and it is of female characters in the novel. Females are

involved in very minor tasks within the periphery of domestic walls. Female characters rarely occur in the novel but only in very feminine roles such as passive, caring and soft.

CDA aims to reveal the underlying meaning and intention of the discourse makers. Its prior purpose is to uncover inequality and domination in the society. M. C. Devrany asserts CDA aims to “reveal unequal distributions of economic, political and cultural goods in modern societies. Through the analysis it can disclose inequalities and thereby it is of great help in achieving a more equal social condition” (2). Amir narrates a dinner party in Kaka Homayoun’s white, two-story house in Jalalabad where “The women were cooking . . . Baba, Rahim Khan, Kaka Homayoun and Kaka Nader were sitting on the balcony, smoking” (74). Here, Amir has represented the then Afghan patriarchal society in his narration where women are subjugated within the domestic boundary. Men are at the position of power. They are just sitting on the balcony, smoking but women are busy doing household works. Amir narrates, “The wives and daughters served dinner” (74). The narrator, Amir, is a male. The author, Hosseini, is also a male. Most of the characters are males and they are in power. The real Afghan society is patriarchal too where males are at the position of power and they create various discourses to keep on their position. So, these all men, in the novel, are also creating discourses on gender roles that men should perform masculine roles and women should perform feminine roles. With such practices, Hosseini is prioritizing the males over females.

When Amir and Baba were leaving Afghanistan and heading towards Pakistan, they bore lots of struggle. But there also, males are the people who faced every obstacle and females are just the passive eye-witnesses. When an army officer asks for a half an hour to sleep with a lady who was in their group, she just can hide her face and weep. Amir narrates, “The young woman pulled the shawl down over her face. Burst into tears. The toddler sitting in her husband’s lap started crying too” (100). A woman is compared with a little newly-born baby.

But her husband, on the other hand, requests the soldier to think about his sister, mother and wife. Baba shows his masculinity by arguing with that soldier to let them go. But Amir, showing his femininity, tries to stop his father not to fight with such bad person. He thinks in himself as Baba was arguing with the Russian soldier, “Do you have to always be the hero? I thought, my heart fluttering. Can’t you just let it go for once? But I knew he couldn’t - it wasn’t in his nature” (101). With this thought, Amir thinks that he does not have the quality that his father has, the quality of defending for others, the quality of masculinity. He confesses it by saying, “Sometimes, I too wondered if I was really Baba’s son” (101). It proves that Amir is not satisfied with gender role that he encompasses and he time and again admits it too.

In *The Kite Runner*, Amir narrates various beliefs, expectations and cultural traditions about characteristics, traits and activities- domains that are considered appropriate for women. Therefore, cultural expectations of a woman differ from man as they have specific duties and roles that are socially constructed. General Taheri, so-called of higher position, speaksto females rudely in the novel, “While you’re busy knitting sweaters, my dear, I have to deal with the community’s perceptions of our family” (315). Here, his statement intends to explain women are meant to do household works such as cooking, cleaning and taking care of kids whereas men’s job is to work and provide for the family. The Afghan society was used to keep women inside the four walls of house whereas men function as the wage-earners of the family. The same idea occurs in *The Kite Runner*.

The demarcation of female roles time and again appears in the novel. When Rahim Khan describes about the birth of Sohrab to Amir, he recalls the female roles representing Sanaubar. He calls Sohrab as the centre of attraction for all and the “existence” of Sanaubar. He furthermore describes, “She sewed clothes for him, built him toys form scarps of wood, rags and dried grass. When he caught fever, she stayed up all night, and fasted for three days.

She burned *isfand* for him on a skillet to cast our *nazar*, the evil eye” (185). It shows that women are said to be the caretakers of males being inside the four walls of the house.

Baba, time and again, reminds Amir about the pride of men in front of women. As he harks back Amir as he is fascinated with Soraya Taheri, “‘Remember this,’ Baba said, pointing at me, ‘The man is a Pashtun to the root. He has *nang* and *namoos*.’

Nang.Namoos.Honor and pride.The tenets of Pashtun men.Especially when it came to the chastity of a wife.Or a daughter” (127). At a point when he talked with Soraya for the first time, Amir also presents how society takes women and men when they talk to each other for a while. He exclaims, “I was fully aware of the Afghan double standard that favoured my gender. Not *Did you see him chatting with her? But Wooooy! Did you see how she wouldn't let him go? What a lochak!*” (128). This evidence shows how Afgan society takes men and women. Gender roles are social construct. And in Afghan society, men are supposed to be of superior gender than women. The same idea is presented by Amir when, in the process of talking, Soraya tells him that she knows he writes. He talks to himself:

I wondered if her father had told her, maybe she had asked him. I immediately dismissed both scenarios as absurd. Fathers and sons could talk freely about women. But no Afghan girl- no decent and *mohtaram* Afghan girl, at least- queried her father about a young man. And no father, especially a Pashtun with *nangand namoos*, would discuss a *mojarad* with his daughter, not unless the fellow in question was a *khastegar*, a suitor, who had done the honourable thing and sent his father to knock on the door. (129)

Gender inequality has addressed the stereotypical gender roles in this novel in such a way that a man can directly talk with his father and other men about any woman but a woman cannot even ask with her father or other men about her to-be bridegroom. It shows superiority of males who creates discourses on gender roles to make women speak less and the least with

men. It has obliged women not to talk with men as an equal gender but they have to maintain their distance and not to talk.

Amir, as having feminine qualities (said by his father), repeatedly accepts this fact. He also knows to be a man one must perform masculine roles and he is upset with himself that he cannot be a perfect man as his father wants. When they go to General Taheri for asking the hand of Soraya, he admits she is more courageous than him. He states, "I suspected there were many ways in which SorayaTaheri was a better person than me. Courage was just one of them" (144). Amir worries on the matter that he could not become a perfect man his father wants him to be. When Soraya finds his childhood notebook given by Rahim Khan, he cries and narrates, "Baba hated it when I cried" (151). This example also clarifies that Baba was not satisfied about the feminine character of his son, Amir.

In the text, frequently Amir reflects the roles women have to play. He repeats continuously that women are supposed to do various household works inside the four walls. Women are only taken as caretakers of the family, kids and neighbourhood. After his marriage with Soraya, as his father Baba was severely ill, she kept herself busy in doing all the household works rather than working outside as a wage-earner. But before marriage, she used to work in her father's office and read different books too. And Amir, being a man, becomes happy that she does so. He asserts:

Soraya dedicated herself to taking care of my father. She made his toast and tea in the morning, and helped him in and out of bed. She gave him his pain pills, washed his clothes, read him the international section of the newspaper every afternoon. She cooked his favourite dish, potato *shorwa*, though he could scarcely eat more than a few spoonfuls, and took him out every day for a brief walk around the block. And when he became bedridden, she turned him on his side every hour so he wouldn't get a bedsore. (150)

This expression of Amir shows his (a man's) happiness that Soraya is performing the way a woman is supposed to perform according to stereotypical gender roles created by males. The activities that Soraya does here are the representatives of feminine roles projected by patriarchal perspective. They are supposed to be inside house serving men, elder people and the children.

Khanum Taheri, General Taheri's wife, is capable of singing with her enchanting voice. But her passion is stopped by General Taheri, a male, who does not allow her to sing in public. Amir explains, ". . . she never sing in public had been one of the general's conditions when they had married. Soraya told me that her mother had wanted to sing at our wedding, only one song, but the general gave her one of his looks and the matter was buried" (154). Singing is the act of socialization but a man buries this passion of a woman as he is of superior gender. And instead of it he makes his woman to spend her days "in the garden, tending to her roses, geraniums, potato vines, and orchids" (155). This point shows that men are at the position of power in Afghan society, who encompass the authority of determining gender roles. Amir proudly claims, "Every woman needed a husband. Even if he did silence the song in her" (155). Discourse is the matter of power too. Who is at the position of power, creates discourse in favour of him/her. Here in this novel, the agent is men.

Soraya appears to be a 'New Woman' who questions and shows her dissatisfaction towards gender roles. She criticizes the attitude of men and women upon women. She questions the double standard of gender inequality on women. At one level, they are suppressed by men and on another level, by women themselves. She reveals the truth of it by saying, "Their sons go out to nightclubs looking for meat and get their girlfriends pregnant, they have kids out of wedlock and no one says a goddamn thing. Oh, they're just men having fun! I make one mistake and suddenly everyone is talking *nang* and *namoos*, and I have to have my face rubbed in it for the rest of my life" (156). Men are encouraged to go out and

explore, but women are stuck within the confines of their homes. Soraya also points out how warped it is that a man will be excused for impregnating a woman, but she says woman will be criticized and shamed. It shows how women are oppressed at two layers of social order. But here also, Soraya cannot speak in front of public but with a man who is not being able to perform his manhood. This is a great irony in the novel.

To describe the inferiority of females, Amir has narrated the story of some female characters too. Rahim Khan, while narrating the time he spent with Hassan recently to Amir, describes Farzana's behaviour as a very passive woman who is afraid of speaking in patriarchal society. He narrates, "She was a shy woman, so courteous she spoke in a voice barely higher than a whisper and she would not raise her pretty hazel eyes to meet my gaze. But the way she was looking at Hassan, he might as well have been sitting on the throne at the *Arg*" (180). Farzana is just a representative female character of women of the era in Afghan society. Their task is just to remain passive and follow the instructions given by males without saying 'no'. This is also evident when Rahim Khan describes the character of Sanaubar. Her features are linked with her physical beauty and the affection she used to create among the men. She is not judged by her internal factors but by how beautiful she looks. Rahim Khan sketches her as ". . . a vision. She had a dimpled smile and a walk that drove men crazy. No one who passed her on the street, be it a man or a woman, could look at her only once" (184). Such language used by the narrator and other male characters to judge females by their physicality is to overlook their potentiality and to show them inferior.

The idea of hypotaxis and parataxis claims that the way male makes use of language differs from the way female does so. Jennifer Coates claims that while speaking, males use various ways of subordination and coordination to make their expression logical and serious. That is why the pattern of males' use of language is called hypotaxis. But while females make use of language, they cannot use such approach to use subordination and coordination.

So their pattern of language use is called parataxis. This philosophy of Jennifer has also tried to take female under the shade of males. The same idea is used by the characters in this novel *The Kite Runner* that female characters, being less too, do not speak much. If they speak, they just make some gossips and prattles but not so much logical and serious matter. But males are the people in the novel who make serious notes and logical talks by using compound and complex sentences. This also plays a vital role for gaining discourse makers' objective to show females, inferior to males. Amir, while narrating, plays at the level of language by providing such expressions for female characters and philosophical and logical talks for male characters. He means to show that females cannot talk logically so they just make gossips and prattles.

Female characters in the novel talk very less than males. Their talk does not look like any serious talk on serious matter. Mostly, they do not follow the compound and complex pattern of sentence but they make use of only simple sentences. They just make gossips and prattles. For the first time in the novel, the wife of Kaka Homayoun speaks representing female characters. She only speaks to congratulate Amir for winning the last kite in the kite flying competition. She does not use any complex structures. She screams, "Wahwah, Amir jan, we're all so proud of you!" (73). She does not talk much more than that. And the language she uses is just a form of gossip. Her utterance is just a very simple sentence lacking compound and complex sentences. But at the same time, Amir's narration includes subordination and coordination.

Green and Lebihan argue, "Subordination is seen as an advanced grammatical structure which requires complex brain functions (which women, for Jespersen, cannot perform)" (34). In Amir's birthday party, lots of men and women appear but no woman speaks. Assef and his father wish him happy birthday. But Assef's mother, Tanya "a small, nervous woman" what she does is she just "smiled and blinked a lot". Women, among the

men, cannot even speak. This evidence suggests Amir, as a narrator, is making women silent to recall his attitude on gender role that females must be silent and cannot talk much. Green and Lebihan again assert, “On the one hand, women are supposed to only be able to master simple sentence structure, while on the other they lean towards the elaborate in expression. Similarly, men are supposed to speak ‘low and infrequently’ to prove their manliness, as any elaboration (or, by implication, subordination) is seen as ‘flowery’ and ‘womanly’ (34). Amir again narrates, “Assef’s mother looked at me like she wanted to say something, but she didn’t” (85). Males are not allowing women to speak because all in all this novel discourse is the compilation of males who think masculinity is superior to femininity. So, they do not like to see a woman talking much. And it is intentionally done by male characters, especially the narrator.

On the other hand, male characters in this novel are the characters who talk all the time. They use various structures of sentence (simple, compound, complex) too. They express their philosophical beliefs, national and international talks, talks of war and peace and about the future of Afghanistan too. The same instance can be taken again, when Baba teaches Amir about the three real men in the world, he says, “There are only three real men in this world, Amir . . . America the brash saviour, Britain and Israel. The rest of them . . . they’re like gossiping old women” (109). Here, Baba’s claim is that real men talks about serious matters and the women only make gossips. Almost all male characters are talking and using complex language too. Even illiterate Hassan is taught language by Amir and his son Sohrab is taught by Hassan and Rahim Khan. They are making males to be capable to rule the society by being superior at any cost. This also shows patriarchal ideology that men must be at the position of power to rule over the females and the society. For this purpose, Amir makes all male characters to speak language very gently with variable structures in the pattern of

hypotaxis but female are only given the talks like prattles and gossips in the pattern of parataxis.

Only one research paper cannot find out all the gaps remaining in a novel. Though this novel of Hosseini has been investigated by number of scholars through number of theoretical perspectives, some areas are still untouched. Researchers can analyze the relation of symbols and metaphor used in the novel. For instance, the connection between Kite and the relation between two mutual friends, Amir and Hassan can be examined. Hosseini's mode of autobiographical writing also can be noted in other research to find out how the writer's life affects in his/ her writings. Issues of marginalization, power and domination also can be raised to understand the text very easily. The contextual study of this novel can also help further readers to understand the text easily. Research is a way of finding out gaps and filling it through various instances and findings. So to understand *The Kite Runner* in better way, it can be interpreted at other different layers.

To conclude, Khaled Hosseini's characters in his novel *The Kite Runner* create discourse to readdress stereotypical gender roles which says masculinity encompassed by males is superior to the femininity encompassed by females. As a male narrator, Amir has presented his point of view upon this idea and highlights masculinity by manipulating language of text in narration and also by using various literary devices. He has implied his ideology of gender roles by making most of the male characters to point out which roles are designated for males and which for females. The connotative interpretation of the narration of this novel and the characters conclude that Amir always feels he is lacking something to be a perfect man. And of course, that lacking in him is masculinity. In this way characters keep masculinity at the superior position to femininity.

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