

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Representation of Contemporary Afghan History in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite*

Runner

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Abstract

Representation of the contemporary Afghan history in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* is the main issue of this novel. Russian invasion in Afghanistan and their hegemony for decade and rise of Taliban brings war, hunger, uncertainty of life, land mine, refugee problem in Afghanistan. Russian soldiers destroy the village, mine, school and natural resources. On the other hand Taliban also prohibit in culture that is kite flying ritual. They destroy not only ethnic group like Hazara but also destroy the cultural heritage that is Buddha in Bamiyan. They are two thousand years old. Indirect domination of America to support the Taliban against Russia in the cold war period, and ethnic, religious and cultural differences among them create problems in Afghanistan. Moreover, *The Kite Runner* offers the present ethnic and religious conflicts in today's Afghanistan. The political land scape suddenly changes when twin towers had fallen in New York City in nine eleven. America suddenly invasion in Afghanistan and captured the government by creating discourse of terrorism to hegemonies Afghan people. To counter feat this discourse Khaled Hosseini writes this novel.

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I. *The Kite Runner* in the Afghan History

Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* attempts to represent contemporary Afghan history. The rise of Taliban and Russian invasion in Afghanistan and their conflictual situation brought war, hunger and refugees problem and destruction of Afghan culture, Hazara ethnicity and prohibited the ritual in Afghanistan are the main issues of the present research.

In the recent history, the world seems to have taken notice of Afghanistan once the Soviet army overthrew Hafizollah Amin, who had pronounced himself as the leader of the Communist party “khalq” (people) and as the president of Afghanistan after eliminating his predecessor Noor Mohammad Tarakee, who had come to power through a Soviet-backed coup more than a year earlier in 1977. Amin’s horrifying reign in the last months of 1978 was short-lived. It took the Soviets only five months to replace him with the exiled Babrak Karmal, who was the leader of the other Communist party “parcham” (the flag). There is a widespread belief that Karmal’s presidential speech was not delivered from Radio Kabul, the only official broadcasting station in Afghanistan, but from somewhere in the former Soviet Union preceding his arrival in the capital city. Afghanistan has been a familiar name around the world since then. It is probably fair to say that the country and its people were turned after the Soviet invasion into one of the most significant battle grounds of what is referred to now as the Cold War era.

Yet the name Afghanistan was to imprint itself upon the memory of the West and especially of the United States even more forcefully. Once the world knew that Al Qaida was behind the horrifying acts of September 11, the shock had the effect of something like what Freud called “belatedness.” Public punishments, such as the stoning to death of homosexuals and adulterous couples, the cutting off of the hands of thieves,

the mutilation of subdued opponents, ethnic cleansing, and the destruction of an almost two-thousand-year-old statue of Buddha in Bamyan—just to name only those acts and practices that were known to the mainstream media around the world even before September 11, 2001—came to be seen in a different light. Afghanistan, once again, came to be at the center of world politics, as the brutal regime of the Taliban and the land that they had conquered—after a period of lawlessness and bloody civil war following the fall of the Soviet-backed Communist regime, with the active support of the governments of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and not without the initial consent of the U.S. government at that time—were inseparable from the name Al-Qaida. Al-Qaida, the Taliban, and Afghanistan became synonymous.

Khaled Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner* is a meditation on this recent history of Afghanistan and its people. The temporal framework of the novel, however, goes back to the time of the constitutional monarchy in Afghanistan in the 1960s. The story is mediated through the perspective of an Afghan who was born and lived until adolescence in Kabul. Amir, the narrator and the protagonist, however, is certainly no longer an Afghan but an Afghan-American, because he leaves the country of his birth after the Soviet invasion as an adolescent and is fortunate enough to be granted asylum in the United States where he has been living since his departure from Afghanistan. Transcending the discriminatory boundaries of ethnic affiliations is the main constituent of the plot development.

Ethnicity, religion, language, cultural identity and nationalism in the modern European sense are a function of the interplay among ethnic, religious, and linguistic affiliations. While it is almost impossible to determine with certainty which of these forces has the highest potential for triggering or fostering prejudice and discriminating

among different groups of people, Hosseini's novel treats ethnic and religious affiliations as the source of injustice and socio-psychological imbalance in the Afghan society. The resolution that *The Kite Runner* offers for the present ethnic and religious conflicts in today's Afghanistan revolves around the recognition as equal of an oppressed Shi'a Hazara by a member of the ruling Shunni Pashtun. Linguistic and class issues as the source of conflict are almost entirely eliminated from the mix. This desirable outcome is justified in the novel at the level of blood relationship: Amir, a Pashtun (the Pashtuns have been in destruction of the culture, the possession of the political power in Afghanistan for nearly two and half centuries by now), transcends existing ethnic and religious taboos only when he learns that Hassan, officially known as the son of their Hazara servants Ali and his wife, is his half-brother.

However, the more difficult question facing reality, as well as its fictional representation, is how to transcend ethnic, religious, and linguistic differences in Afghan society on grounds other than blood relationship and other than a single person's act of benevolence. In other words, what could serve as a common denominator among various ethnic groups, the Shi'a and the Sun'a, the Persian and Pashtu speakers, to be constitutive of the kind of cultural and political identity that could bring about not only peaceful coexistence but also social cohesion in Afghanistan? An awareness of blood relation among various people in Afghanistan is not a recent phenomenon. If not the majority, at least a considerable portion of the population has always known about it. The multi-ethnic texture of the Afghan population is not only a consequence of Afghanistan being at the crossroads of so many conquerors throughout the last fifteen centuries, including the Arabs, the Turks, and the Moghuls; kings and rulers in Afghanistan have fostered the custom to engage in (forced or voluntary) marital relations with various ethnic groups

throughout the land in order to win their loyalty. So there is much historical and social resonance in what Hassan says to Amir within the framework of a childhood friendship: “For you, a thousand times over (The Kite Runner, 61).” History, however, has shown again and again that even fathers kill their sons or vice versa, and that brothers quite often get at each other’s throats.

Yet even with such a detour, it is exactly at this juncture that the novel takes for granted as its starting point what it actually needed to establish. One of the most difficult challenges with which Afghans have been faced throughout the twentieth century - -and which also constitutes one of the major concerns of the present socio-cultural struggle today - - is how to construct a cultural heritage common to all the different ethnic groups living in Afghanistan, when a sense of national identity and unity can hardly be achieved without attending to the history of the recent ethnic, religious, and linguistic dilemmas and traumas.

The conundrum consists in how to provide a common cultural heritage for a nation in which one major portion of it speaks Persian and the other Pashtu. Cultural memory, as is well known, is primarily a function of language. The imbalance between the two languages, in terms of their literary and cultural heritage, has been and still is without any doubt the most single contentious point between the two dominant linguistic cultures in Afghanistan. Assef, another Pashtun, is the exact opposite of Amir. His sense of Pashtun identity goes beyond a prejudiced and discriminatory view of other ethnic groups, most of which speak Persian:

Afghanistan is the land of Pashuns. It always has been, always will be.

We are the true Afghans, the pure Afghans, not this Flat-Nose [referring to

Hassan, who as a Hazara has Mongol features] here. His people pollute our homeland, our *watan*. They dirty our blood. (40)

The novel's suggestion seems to lie in accidentally making Persian cultural heritage constitutive of a Pashtun's sense of personal identity, which turns out to have redemptive effects.

This is certainly one possible option. There are numerous examples throughout history in which linguistic traditions (and for that matter, nations), in order to envision themselves beyond the static boundaries of their own paradigms of existence have tried to enlarge their cultural horizon by integrating ideas from other cultures or nations. After the rise of the Mudjahideen to power, especially with the Taliban, tendencies of religious dogmatism and intolerance have permeated the political and social spheres. There has been and still is a persistent inclination towards the official enforcement of religious codes of conduct in the domain of public life. (The religious institution of "the Ministry for Promoting virtue and Preventing Vice," which was to oversee the public life and personal conduct in strict agreement with religious laws under the Taliban, has just recently been called back to life by the present government of Afghanistan after it was banned five years ago following the fall of the Taliban.) The second hurdle is even more challenging, something that the novel takes as its point of departure, thereby forgoing the real obstacle to social cohesion in Afghanistan: how can the Pashtoo-speaking and the Persian-speaking populations of Afghanistan agree on a common cultural heritage that would enable them to envision their future as one nation? Is it at all possible to achieve cultural unity in spite of linguistic difference? How can the Persian-speaking and Pashtu-speaking peoples of Afghanistan align their versions of a shared history? The contemporary world of the novel presents a wider range of problems than the fictive

representation. Whether all ethnic and linguistic differences and conflicts in Afghanistan could be overcome by recourse to Islam as the common denominator remains to be seen. The adaptation and incorporation of social and political principles of the Western tradition since the Enlightenment represent another option for achieving peaceful coexistence. At the moment, the realization of civil society in Afghanistan remains a fairly distant goal.

Hosseini describes the suffering of his country under the tyranny of the Taliban, whom Amir encounters when he finally returns home, hoping to help Hassan and his family. The final or the third of the book is full of haunting images: a man, desperate to feed his children, trying to sell his artificial leg in the market; an adulterous couple stoned to death in a stadium during the halftime of a football match; a rouged young boy forced into prostitution, dancing the sort of steps once performed by an organ grinder's monkey. When Amir meets his old nemesis, now a powerful Taliban official, the book descends into some plot twists better suited to a folk tale than a modern novel. But in the end we are won over by Amir's compassion and his determination to atone for his youthful cowardice.

In *The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini gives us a vivid and engaging story that reminds us how long his people have been struggling to triumph over the forces of violence -- forces that continue to threaten them even today.

The History of Afghanistan during the Time of *The Kite Runner*

The Kite Runner deals with the country of Afghanistan from the 1970s to the year 2002. Like all places, Afghanistan has a long and complicated history but it came to international attention only after the coup of 1973. In order to orient ourselves, let us look at Afghanistan's geography. The nation is located in Central Asia and is made up of

thirty-four provinces. The country's capital is Kabul, which is also the capital of the northeast province of the same name. Afghanistan means "Land of Afghan," Afghan being a name the Pashtun majority used to describe themselves starting before the year 1000. It is bordered by Pakistan, Iran, Tajakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and for a short distance, China.

From 1933-1973, Afghanistan was a monarchy ruled by King Zahir Shah. On July 17, 1973, when the king was on vacation, Mohammad Daoud Khan seized power. Mohammad Daoud Khan was Zahir Shah's cousin and a former prime minister of Afghanistan. The military coup was nearly bloodless, but as we see through Amir's story, it was still a frightening time for the people of Kabul who heard rioting and shooting in the streets. For six years, Mohammad Daoud Khan was the president and prime minister of Afghanistan. Then, on April 27, 1978, he was violently overthrown by the PDPA, People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. Daoud was killed in the coup along with most of his family. Even though Afghanistan had long insisted on maintaining its independence from Russia, the PDPA was a Communist party and therefore held close ties to the Soviet Union.

The PDPA instituted many political and social reforms in Afghanistan, including abolition religious and traditional customs. These reforms incensed groups of Afghans who believed in adherence to traditional and religious laws. These factions began to challenge the government so rigorously that in 1979, the Soviet Army entered Afghanistan, beginning an occupation that would last for a decade. This is the historical point in *The Kite Runner* when Baba and Amir leave Afghanistan. Throughout the ten years of Soviet occupation, internal Muslim forces put up a resistance. Farid and his father are examples in *The Kite Runner* of these Mujahedins or men engaged in war on

the side of Islam. The United States was among the countries that supported the resistance, because of its own anti-Soviet policies. When the Soviet troops finally withdrew in 1989, Afghanistan remained under PDPA for three more years. Then in 1992, in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and therefore American support for the government, the Mujahedin finally won Afghanistan and converted it in to an Islamic State.

In the years following Soviet withdrawal, there was a great deal of infighting among rival militias, making everyday life in Afghanistan unsafe. In *The Kite Runner*, Rahim Khan describes fear in Kabul during this time. He remembers, "The infighting between the factions was fierce and no one knew if they would live to see the end of the day. Our ears became accustomed to the rumble of gunfire, our eyes familiar with the sight of men digging bodies out of piles of rubble. Kabul in those days ... was as close as you could get to that proverbial hell on earth. (185)" Then in 1996, the Taliban took control of Kabul. After so many years of insecurity and violence, the people welcomed the takeover. Rahim Khan remembers, "... We all celebrated in 1996 when the Taliban rolled in and put an end to the daily fighting"(186). The Taliban are a group of Pashtun supremacists who banded together and took complete control of the country. Despite their warm initial reception, they soon made life in Afghanistan dangerous again. Being Sunni fundamentalists supremacists, they systematically massacred Shiites including the Hazara people. They also enacted fundamentalist laws, most in famously those banning music and dance, and those severely restricting women's rights. In *The Kite Runner*, we see how the Talibans used fear and violence to control the people of Afghanistan, for example at the frequent executions in Ghazi Stadium.

After the events of September 11, 2001, the United States invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban. The end of *The Kite Runner* occurs in 2002, when a provisional government was in place. It was not until 2004 that the current president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, was elected. Today, there are countless Afghan refugees living in other parts of the world, just like Amir and his family. For those Afghans living in Afghanistan, life is still dangerous. In the South, conflict continues to rage on and the Taliban have managed to reemerge. According to Amnesty International's 2007 report, violence and human rights abuses are still a common reality in Afghanistan due to weak governance.

This research is a text based research so the text has been studied from the new historicist perspective. The differences and the conflict between the royal clan of Afghanistan, Pashtun, and the ethnic minority, Hazara are distinguished and analyzed . Similarly, the major conflicts and the misunderstandings among the two branches of Muslim, namely Sunni Muslim and Shi'a Muslim and the Russian invasion in Afghanistan and the Taliban's rule and their hegemony upon the minority and ethnicity are further analyzed.

The Kite Runner, Khaled Hosseini's first novel. Since its publication in 2003, the novel *The kite Runner* receive many critical eyes from its different perspectives. They have focused on different issues like trauma of the protagonist, Afghan Diaspora, migration, family relation, hypocrisy of those hiding their sins under the cloak of religious righteousness and the betrayal of friendship. Such perspectives and approaches are mostly reader oriented and the author oriented but they have talked less about the issue that this dissertation is going to explore. This dissertation primarily focuses on the

representation of contemporary Afghan history- cultural disaster, ethnic and minorities' domination and hegemony.

The critic Ronny Noor sees the novel by focusing the sin and redemption:

A novel of sin and redemption, a son trying to redeem his father's sins.

This lucidity written and often touching novel gives a vivid picture of not the Russian atrocities but also those of the Northern Alliance and the Taliban. As far as the Afghan conflict is concerned, we got a selective, simplistic, even simple –minded picture. (148)

The critic Geraldine S. Pearson responds text from the perspective of psychiatric and mental trauma:

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

For *Loyal Miles*, the novel is about the national identity:

The tensions in this relationship mirror Afghanistan's struggle in the 1970s to maintain a traditional sense of national identity in the face of government instability and invasions by a foreign power. Broader elements of Afghan society, such as ethnic and class divisions, also make it impossible for Amir to consider Hassan, his closest childhood companion and family servant boy, a friend. The gradual unraveling of both relationships and Amir's eventual attempts to reconcile with his

father and with Hassan provide a structure through which Hosseini compellingly examines Afghanistan's recent cultural and national history.(207)

Interpreting the text from the perspective of the betrayal of friendship, Bob Corbett remarks, "This is a beautiful and informative story of Amir, an Afghan boy who betrays his closet friend, Hassan, when they are just 12 years old. He lives with this guilt for many years, paying deeply in pain and suffering, always wanting to redeem himself for his betrayal"(371). Monika Mehta says, "*The Kite Runner* offers a moving portrait of modern Afghanistan, from its pre-Russian-invasion glory days through the terrible reign of the Taliban. Hosseini smoothly adds Farsi words to his clear, plot-driven prose; at one point, Amir's enemy eerily foreshadows the slaughter of a persecuted ethnic minority"(82). Such criticism and reviews do not talk much about the contemporary history of Afghanistan.

Stella Algoo Baksh describes *The Kite Runner* as a haunting and quite extraordinary first novel by Khaled Hosseini, an Afghan medical doctor now residing in the United States. According to Baksh, the novel:

Launches readers into the realities of Afghan society, using the political events of Afghanistan from the 1970s to 2001 to foreground a touching and memorable story of the friendship between two boys of differing social class and ethnic backgrounds. It foregrounds the complexity and difficulty of the achievement of personal salvation and the recognition of self (143).

But more than a touching and memorable story of friendship, *The Kite Runner* is a story of history and culture.

This dissertation is mainly divided into four parts. The first part of the thesis elaborates the statement of problem as well as the hypothesis. To prove the hypothesis, it gives some general framework of the theoretical tool as well. Some critics are also brought in the introduction part to introduce the whole thesis.

In the next part, the theoretical tool is discussed for the textual analysis of the text. And new historicism is discussed from the various perspectives of Foucaultian, Montrose, Greenblatt, and so on. After discussion the theoretical tool, *The Kite Runner* has been analyzed from new historicist perspective in the third chapter of this thesis. With the help of different lines of the text, it has been proved that there is the representation of Afghan contemporary history through the war in Afghanistan between Taliban and Russia and the indirect domination of America, on the other hand the ethnic, religious and cultural differences among them. It proves that conflicts among different ethnicities and the countries are the major factors to bring war, hunger, refugee problem in Afghanistan and destruction of the culture.

The final chapter of this dissertation consists of a short conclusion. The thesis concludes with the proof that the representation of contemporary Afghan history in the text is due to the Russian invasion and the Taliban résistance against the Russians, their rule in Afghanistan and prohibited the culture and the ethnic cleansing of Afghanistan.

II. New Historicism

New historicism as a new kind of historically based criticism highlights the historical nature of literary texts and at the same time the textual nature of histories. Instead of reading a text as "self-sufficient entity" and "autonomous body," and viewing it in isolation from its socio-cultural historical context as formalists and new critics did, new historicists primarily emphasize the historical and cultural conditions of its

production and also of its later critical interpretations and evaluations. New historicism turns towards history, culture, society, politics, institutions, class and gender conditions, the social context and so on. Being above the practice of interdisciplinary approach and ultimately emphasizing the "transdisciplinary" approach, it seeks to blur the generic boundaries between different disciplines such as history and fiction. Therefore, for new historicists literary texts and non-literary texts bear equal importance. They read them on equal footing, not making any hierarchy of 'high' and 'low', 'good' and 'bad', 'interesting' and 'boring', etc. It challenges the canonicity of texts and writers. Even within the literary field, some texts were paid much attention and placed at the top of the ranking, whereas others were less valued and placed at the bottom of the ranking by traditional critics. New historicism boldly challenges such practice of vertical ranking and advocates for horizontal reading. Indeed, this is one of the most important paradigm shifts vertical to horizontal reading from the traditional critical practices.

New historicism rejects the autonomy and individual genius of the authors and the autonomy of the literary texts as absolutely inseparable from their historical context. The role of the author is not completely negated, but it is a role that the author is at best only partially in command of. The author's role is to a large extent determined by historical circumstances. As the prominent new historicist Stephen Greenblatt has put it, "[T]he work of art is the product of a negotiation between a creator or class or creators, equipped with a complex, communally shared repertoire of conventions, and the institutions and practices of society"(12). The literary text, then, is always part of a much wider cultural, political, social and economic dispensation. The literary text is a time and place bound verbal construction that is always in one way or another political.

New historicism received its current meaning in 1982, when the prominent new historicist Stephen Greenblatt used this term to describe recent works of him and others in the Renaissance period. When Greenblatt published his book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* and when another prominent new historicist, Louis Montrose, argued for the presence of power in a genre usually not associated with its exercise, that of the pastoral. Following Foucault in his assumption that "social relations are, intrinsically, relation of power", Montrose examines the role of Elizabethan pastorals in "the symbolic meditation of social relationships" in his essays "Eliza, Queen of Sheperdes" and "The Pastoral of Power" (88). *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* argues that "in the sixteenth century there appears to be an increased self consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process" (Greenblatt 2).

The concept of 'historicity of the text' arose because of the thinking that sought to connect a text to the social, cultural and economic circumstances of its production. The text, now, was not to be read with the motto of 'art for art's sake'. It was but to be read in connection with all discursive practices and power relations expressed in it by the language that is , as argued by new historicists, necessarily dialogical and materially determined. Similarly, the idea of 'textuality of history' came as a jolt to the age-old search for metaphysical spirit that was said to be all pervasive throughout the historical movement. This was because new historicists tended towards less fact and eventorientedness. This may be perhaps because they realized that 'Truth' about what really happened could never be purely and objectively known. They, in this way, developed a theory of history which was no more linear and progressive, as something developing toward the 'present'. Such review considered history to be less identifiable in

terms of specific eras, each with a definite, persistent and consistent 'Geist' or 'Spirit of the age'.

Some attempts to put a text in its historical context can also be found in previous literary criticisms. The historicism of the 1930s, for instance, tried to examine literary works within the diverse and interrelated historical contexts by analyzing them with respect to the cultural and the social forces that influenced and were revealed through texts. The 'historicity of the text' therefore seems to have been practiced by critics even before new historicists.

The way history is dealt with by new historicists in their analysis of text differs from the previous approach at least in two ways. First, the latter tries to see the significance of a literary work along with the reception of that work in certain historical circumstances. Second, they seek to analyze a literary work with respect to historical forces that encompass power relations and discursive practices which were in operation during the composition of that work. This becomes clear when we take the reference of J. Hillis Miller's 1986 Presidential Address to the Modern Language Association. He, in his speech answers why new historicist reading of the text is 'new':

Literary study in the past few years has undergone a sudden, almost universal turn away from theory in the sense of an orientation toward language as such and has made a corresponding turn toward history, culture, society politics, institutions, class and gender conditions, the social content, and the material base. ("Triumph" 283)

Miller's notion seems though somewhat hyperbolic, sees a literary study turning away from theory. But his arena of theory implicitly includes formalism, new criticism and deconstruction which saw language as no concerned with outside things. This shift,

Miller says, forms the theoretical bases of historical and socio-economic circumstances in literary analysis, which however, seems to assume that works of literature both influence and are influenced by historical reality. It shares the belief in referentiality, that is, a belief that literature both refers, and is referred to by the things outside.

While analyzing a text with reference to all historical forces, it is not possible to have a single and definite meaning. New historicists therefore, are unlikely to suggest that literary text can have an easily identifiable historical context. With this parallel, then we can say that fictionalization of history and historicization of fiction, both result in indeterminacy and various 'truths'.

The argument of new historicists that we can never possess objective knowledge of history because historical writing is always entangled in tropes owes much to the philosopher and the 'historian of otherwise,' Michel Foucault. Although Foucault shares a lot with those new historicists, his redrawing of boundaries of history has had a central influence on the domain of the ideas like power, discourse and subject.

The new historicists' reciprocal concern with 'historicity of text and textuality of history' seems to have emerged from M.H. Abrams' clarification of Foucault's notion, which calls text "a discourse which, although, it may seem to present, or reflect an external reality, in fact consists of what are called representations"(183). The Foucauldian notion that views a text as verbal formation in the form of ideological products or cultural constructs of a certain historical era assists the concept of historicization of the text. The text, to Foucault, never represents or reflects pre-existing entities and orders of a historical situation, rather it speaks of the power structures, oppositions and hierarchies which are after all the products and propagators of power. A text, in Foucault's view, speaks of 'history' but not as it is described by traditional Marxists and historicists. It,

within itself, buries the 'situatedness' of institutions, social practices including their workings amidst the power relations and the hierarchies. So, a text becomes 'a history of otherwise' in that it presents a historical situation not as a 'background' but as something with which it can have constant interaction, for text is both product and the propagator of the power structures of the society.

In the final chapter of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault asks after a "history of bodies" which inquires into "the manner in which what is most material and vital in them has been invested" (152). In this (re)formation, he suggests that history acts not only on the body but also pervades the interiority of that subject. A question arises: What lies inside the body? Is it the soul? Absolutely not, for Foucault does not believe in it. Neither is the body a biological boundary for the soul. The 'inside' of the body is, as *Discipline and Punish* offers, an instrument of power through which the body is cultivated and formed. The 'inside' for Foucault is like 'form' of Aristotelian matter which is here equivalent to body.

Foucauldian radicalism of history manifests itself in three dimensions-- it rejects absolute truth or origin and argues for fictionalized history and historicized fiction, it confutes the linearity of history and exposes how a 'body' is imprinted and inscribed by history. This theory is 'radical' in the sense that it shocks us by going at least one step further than Marxism, Darwinism, Freudianism and even deconstruction, for all of them, unlike the

Foucauldian perspective, believe in progressive history that starts 'in the beginning' and comes to an end, the culmination. Considering Foucault's general history, we can conclude that he wants to confront 'essentialist' humanism by showing how the so called unique, unified and enduring personality is inscribed by the forces of history.

More importantly, new historicists do not believe in single, authentic and unified history as Louis Montrose in his famous article "New historicism" argues, "the various mode of what could be called poststructuralist historical criticism--including new historicism or cultural poetics, as well as modes of revisionist...--can be characterized by such a shift from history to histories" (411). Old or traditional historians focused on monolithic history, which has single narrative line that is taken for granted. For them facts or historical realities could successfully be known through textual form and also could be handed down to next generation. Besides, they took it for granted that there is single and unified history. In contrast, new historicists challenge such so-called 'authentic' and 'unified' narrative and put forward the idea of 'histories, not 'History.'

Unlike most traditional historians, who believe that history is a series of events with linear, causal relationship and we are perfectly capable of uncovering the facts about the particular historical events through objective analysis, new historicists argue:

Instead of a body of indisputable, retrievable facts, history becomes textualized; that is, becomes a group of linguistic traces that can be recalled, but which are always mediated through the historian/interpreter. Objective history is therefore impossibility; every account is just that—another text, and like any novel, play or poem, it is open to the same kind of critical interpretive scrutiny... History itself is a large amorphous text consisting of various and often disparate accounts. (Childers and Hentzi 207)

Therefore, new historicists posit the view that history is neither linear nor progressive, neither factual nor authentic. Instead, like any piece of literature, it is a constructed body to fit some ideological purposes, embedded in complex web of socio-political networks.

History itself is a text, an interpretation, and that there is no single history. Lois Tyson in her book *Critical Theory Today* opines that "history is a matter of interpretation, not facts, and that interpretations always occur within a framework of social conventions"(286).

Emphasizing the same issue, in the essay "Histories and Textuality," Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh write:

For new historicists, however, there can be no such seamless, overarching unity, but only the shifting and contradictory representations of numerous histories. History can only be a narrative construction involving a dialectical relationship of past and present concerns. Thus the critic is neither a transcendent commentator nor an objective chronicler because he/she is always implicated in the discourses which help to construct the object of knowledge. (252)

New historicists also acknowledge that "our subjectivity, or selfhood, is shaped by and shapes the culture into which we were born" (Tyson 280). For new historicists, our individual identity is neither merely a product of society nor is it merely a product of our own individual will and desire. Instead, individual identity and its cultural milieu inhabit, reflect and define each other.

Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle further explicate the issue in the book entitled *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*: "What is new about new historicism in particular is its recognition that history is the 'history of the present' that history is in the making, that, rather than being monumental and closed, history is radically open to transformation and rewriting" (112).

In this regard, new historicists argue that "man" is a construct of social and historical circumstances and not an autonomous agent of historical change. There is nothing essential about the actions of human being; there is not such thing as "human nature". Instead individuals undergo a process of "subjectification," which, on the one hand, shapes them and, on the other hand, places them in a social networks and cultural codes that exceed their comprehension or control. Since each individual's way of thinking is shaped by this process, it follows that the historicist is also a product of subjectification. Lois Tyson clarifies this idea as she writes:

Like all human beings, historians live in a particular time and space, and their views of both current and past events are influenced in innumerable conscious and unconscious ways by their own experience within their own culture. Historian may believe that they are being objective, but their own views of what is right and wrong, what is civilized and uncivilized, what is important and unimportant, and the like, will strongly influence the ways in which they interpret events. (279)

Historians themselves are biased even though they are unaware of it because they are controlled by certain discourses in a particular socio-political circumstance. Such circumstances form their view point about the world and that is the vantage point from which they interpret the things.

New historicism views historical accounts as narratives, as stories that are inevitably biased according to the point of view, or historical accounts as narrative, as stories that are inevitably biased according to the point of view, conscious or unconscious, of those who write them. The more unaware historians are of their biases, that is, the more 'objective' they think they are, the more those biases are able to control

their narratives. The historian operates within the horizon of her/his own worldview, a certain broad set of assumptions and beliefs. Therefore, it is impossible to overcome these beliefs to achieve objective history. Highlighting the same issue, Tyson further writes:

By and large, we know history only in textual form, that is, in the form of documents, written statistics, legal codes, diaries, letters, speeches, tracks, news articles, and the like in which are recorded the attitudes, politics, procedures, and events that occurred in a given time and place. That is, even when historians base their findings on the kinds of "primary source" listed above, rather than on the interpretation of other historians (secondary sources), those primary sources are almost always in the form of some sort of writing. As such they require the same kinds of analysis literary critics perform on literary texts. (283)

New historicism attempts to eradicate the distinction between literature and history, arguing that each partakes of the other and that both participates in social networks and deploy cultural codes that cannot be fully articulated. In this sense, new historicism deconstructs the traditional opposition between history (traditionally thought of as factual) and literature (traditionally thought of as fictional). As new historicism considered history a text that can be interpreted the same way literary critics interpret literary text, and conversely, it considers literary text as cultural artifacts that can tell us about the interplay of discourse, the web of social meanings, operating in the time and place in which those texts were written. Opposing the view that the categories of literature and history as intricably separate disciplines, new historicism argues that each partakes and influences each other.

The mutual relationship between history and literature is further highlighted by the often –quoted phrase " historicity of text and textuality of history " (Montrose 781). In his famous article, "Introduction: Professing the Renaissance: The poetics and Politics of culture", he acknowledges new historicism as "a reciprocal concern with the historicity of texts and textuality of histories (*Literary Theory: An Anthology* 781). M.H. Abrams further explains the phrase in his book *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. He writes:

That is, history is conceived not to be a set of fixed, objective facts but, like the literature with which it interacts, a text which itself needs to be interpreted. Any text, on the other hand , is conceived as a discourse which , although it may seem to present, or reflects, an external reality, in fact consists of what are called representations-that is , verbal formation which are the "ideological constructs" or "cultural constructs" of the historical conditions specific to an era. New historicists often claim also that these cultural and ideological representations in texts serve mainly to reproduce, confirm, and propagate the power-structures of domination and subordination which characterize a given society. (183-84)

In the same article, Louis Montrose further attempts to clarify the phrase historicity of the texts and textuality of the historicity in the following way:

By the historicity of texts, I mean to suggest the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing.... By the textuality of history, I mean to suggest, firstly, that we can have no access to a full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces...secondly, that those textual traces are themselves subject to subsequent textual mediations when they are constructed as the

"documents" upon which historians ground their own text, called "histories."(781)

Hence, new historicism subverts the notion that history is purely objective and provide factual data, and literature is purely subjective and supplies fictional data. Instead, for them, both option -- literary texts may provide factual data and history fictional -- are possible. In this sense, no longer does history act as the background to literary texts, and no longer are historical accounts considered reliable and unproblematic representation of what really went on during a particular time.

New historicists argue that since works of literature are based on particular socio-political and historical realities, they both influence and are influenced by historical reality. Like any other discourses, a work of art is a discourse, and also is the negotiated product of a private creator and the public practices of a given society. In this respect, viewing a work of art as a discourse, M.A.R. Habib points out: "It [new historicism] saw the literary text not as somehow unique but as a kind of discourse situated within a complex of cultural discourses- religious, political economic, aesthetic- which both shaped it and , in their turn, were shaped by it"(761).

Therefore, new historicists emphasize the need to examine and reexamine any piece of literature "within the broader context of its culture, in the context of other discourses ranging over politics, religion and aesthetic, as well as its economic context"(Habib 760). For them literature is neither a "transhistorical" category, independent of the social, political and economic conditions, specific to an era, nor a "timeless" body. Instead, a literary text is simply one of many kinds of texts configured by the particular conditions of a time and place. Like any kind of text, a work of literature is profoundly shaped by different socio-political, economic circumstances. Hence, new

historicists "view literature as one discourse among many cultural discourses" (Habib 762). To put it in another way, "literary text are bound up with other discourses" (Bennett and Royle 110). Therefore, it must be read against the backdrop of those different discourses of the complex web of social milieu of the time and place.

Stephen Greenblatt argues that literary texts themselves should be understood in terms of negotiation for any reading or writing of a literary text is question of negotiation, a negotiation between text and reader, and text and writer within a particular social and cultural situation. To clarify the issue, it is better to cite Greenblatt, who in *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*, writes, "work of art is the product of a negotiation between a creator or class of creators... and the institutions and practices of society"(158).

Literary texts are embedded with the social political and economic circumstances in which they are produced and consumed. But what is important for new historicists is that these circumstances are not stable in them and are susceptible to being rewritten and transformed. From this perspective, literary text is part of a larger circulation of social energies, both products of and influences on a particular culture or ideology.

Since literary texts, as new historicist argues, are situated within a particular social, cultural, political, economic climate, and since the writer operates within the horizon of her/his own world view (a certain broad set of assumptions and beliefs), the task of new historicists is to explore "the historicity of texts and textuality of histories"(Montrose 410). Therefore, while analyzing a piece of history, the questions like "is this account accurate? Or what does this event tell us about the spirit of the age? ...What happened? And what does the event tell us about the history?" (Tyson 278) are of less important.

Instead, as Tyson further argues "new historicists ask 'how has the event been interpreted?' and what do the interpretations tell us about the interpreters?" (278). Hence, the job of new historicists is to read a given piece in relation to other discursive practices in which it occurred. To put it differently, since the meaning of a literary text is situated in the complex web of discursive formation, the project of new historicists is to "analyze the interplay of culture-specific discursive practices" (Montrose 415). It attempts to explore how the given piece of literature or history or anything else fits within the complex web of competing ideologies and conflicting social, political, and cultural agendas of the time and place in which it occurred. Besides, new historicists explore how the given piece serves or opposes the certain discourse of time and place. To maintain dominance, control and power or to oppose them various discourse are circulated. Among them literature is one. In this respect. Habib in his book *History of Literary Criticism from Plato to the Present* points out, "New historicists...have been profoundly concerned not only with situating literary texts within power structures, but also with seeing them as crucially participating in conflicts of power between various forms of social and political authority" (762).

By this he points out that literary text not only carries certain ideological needs of certain socio-political authority but also involves the conflict between them. In the same book, citing Louis Montrose, Habib further highlights the issue that "new historicists' variously recognize the ability of literature to challenge social and political authority"(762). Indeed, they have acknowledged the "subversive potential of literature"(Habib 762). Besides, Hans Bertens in his book *Literary Theory: The Basics* points out the political nature of a literary text. In this regard he writes "Literary text is a time - and place - bound verbal construction that is always in one way or another political"(177).

In order to bring to light the political dimension of literary texts, new historicists and cultural materialists often read them in connection with non-literary texts and with reference to the dominant discourse or discourses of given time. Due to the similarity between them, cultural materialism departs from the new historicism. Here cultural materialists focus on the interventions whereby men and woman make their own history but new historicists focus on the less than ideal and ideological structures.

In a neat distinction Dollimore and Sinfield quote Marx to the effect that 'men and women make their own history but not in conditions of their own choosing' (p.3): cultural materialists, they say tend to concentrate on the interventions whereby men and women make their own history, whereas new historicists tend to focus on the less than ideal circumstances in which they do so, that is on the 'power of social and ideological structures' which restrain them. The result is a contrast between political optimism and political pessimism. (Peter Barry 185)

Further more Peter Barry discusses about the differences between cultural materialists and new historicists. The differences between these two approaches are partly the result of their different intellectual frameworks.

New historicism was much influenced by Foucault, whose 'discursive practices' are frequently a reinforcement of dominant ideology where as Cultural materialism owes much to Raymond Williams, whose 'structures of feeling' contain the seeds from which grows resistance to the dominant ideology.

Cultural materialists see new historicists as cutting themselves off from effective political positions by their acceptance of a particular version of post –structuralism[...]its radical skepticism about the possibility of

attaining secure knowledge. The rise of post-structuralism, problematises knowledge, language, truth etc, and this perspective is absorbed into new historicism and becomes an important part of it. The historicists' defence against this charge would be that being aware of the inbuilt uncertainty of all knowledge doesn't mean that we give up trying to establish truths, it simply means that we do so conscious of the dangers and limitations involved, thus giving their own intellectual enquiries a special authority. (185)

Again Peter Berry gives the difference between new historicism and cultural materialism. New historicists situate the literary text in the political situation whereas cultural materialists situate it within that of theirs. This is clear through these lines:

Where the former's co-texts are documents contemporary with Shakespeare, the latter's may be programme notes for a current Royal Shakespeare Company production, quotations of Shakespeare by a Gulf war pilot, or pronouncements on education by a government minister. To put this another way: the new historicist situates the literary text in the political situation of its own day, while the cultural materialist situates it within that of ours. This is really to restate the difference in political emphasis between the two approaches. (185-86)

These ideas show that new historicism and cultural materialism have more similarities than differences.

In the critical analysis and investigation of new historicism "discourse" and "power" bear important positions. "Discourse" and "power" give a certain stance to the critical practice of new historicism. Indeed, new historicism owes much to Foucault for

the concept of "discourse" and "power" by which it has strengthened its own critical stance. For Foucault "discourses are coherent, self-referential bodies of statements that produce an account of reality by generating 'knowledge' about particular objects or concept"(Childers and Hentzi 84).

Citing Foucault, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in their book *Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies* explain that "a discourse is a strongly bonded area of social knowledge, a system of statements within which the world can be known"(70). Discourses provide a so-called vantage point to know the world. Indeed, discourses both influence and are influenced by socio-historical and cultural climate as Tyson argues:

Discourse is a social language created by particular cultural conditions at a particular time and place, and it expresses a particular way of understanding human experience.... From a new historical perspective, no discourse, by itself can adequately explain the complex cultural dynamics of social power.... There is, instead, a dynamic interplay among discourses.... No discourse is permanent. (281)

Group of statements --discourses -- exists historically and get changed as their material conditions for their possibility change. Therefore, no discourse is final and permanent.

Besides, for Foucault, "discourse informs and shapes subjectivity, including the possible activities and knowledge of the individuals" (Childers and Hentzi 84-85).

Discourses both influence and are influenced by socio-historical realities. Therefore, "discourses wield power. For those I charge, but they also stimulate opposition to that power" (Tyson 281). Foucault's main concept regarding discourse is best expressed in his book *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. His other texts like *The Order of Things*, *The History of Sexuality (Vol.1)*, *Discipline and Punish and Madness and Civilization* also

touch upon the issue of discourse. In all of these texts Foucault refuses to accept the linearity of the development of discourses. All of these texts attempt to clarify how disciplinary institutions create and develop discourses in different fields of human knowledge. *The History of Sexuality* (vol. 1) deals with how the discourse called sexuality is developed for 'sex' and reveals how the discourse of 'sex' changes over time. *Madness and Civilization*, on the other hand, is concerned with discourse of psychiatry and shows how this discourse is defined by clinical institutions like the hospital. In the same way, criminology is studied in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.

Writing about Foucault's notion of discourse Arun Gupto writes:

Sex is the raw material of sexuality. When sex is not merely a physical and psychological matter, it is a discursive element. Thus sex has always been in the discourse of sexuality that can be studied in general historical framework [...]. That is when sex comes under Foucauldian archeological and genealogical research, it is the study of sexuality. (118)

In this way, the discourses are produced in specific historical and material conditions, i.e. archives. We can conclude that Foucault's main interest was in studying different discourses, which make a society but are themselves contradictory. Since discourses themselves are not absolutely true, there always lies gap between practice and statements of discourse. Commenting on this Foucauldian idea McHoul and Wendy Grace write that "[d]iscourse is not just a form of representation; it is a *material condition* (or set of conditions) which enables and constrains the socially productive 'imagination'. These conditions can therefore be referred to as 'discourses' or 'discursive formations of possibility" (34).

In "Truth and Power," Michel Foucault describes the concept of power and truth.

Regarding power and truth Foucault opines:

Now I believe that the problem does not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of scientific truth and that which comes under some other category, but in seeing historically how effects of truths are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false (qtd. in Adams 1139)

Foucault gives the idea how truth is changed under the discourses. It clears that when discourse changes the truth will be changes.

He further states that power is not only repression, it is something positive:

In defining the effect of the power as repression, one adopts purely juridical conception of such power, one identifies power with a law which says no power is taken above all as carrying the force of a prohibition [...] what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no but that it traverse and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. (1139)

According to Foucault, truth is not outside power, or lacking in power. It is rather a thing of this world which is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraints in a society. So, each society has its own regime of truth. Furthermore, the power diffuses itself in the system of authority and the effects of truth are produced within discourses. But the discourses in themselves are neither true nor false. Foucault argues, "Truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements" (1145). He further states that

"[t]ruth is linked in a circular relation with system of power which produces and sustains it, and to effects of power which it includes and which it induces and which extend it" (1145). Therefore, Foucault sees truth as a product of relations of power and it changes as system changes. Both literature and history are narratives and are in the form of discourses. They are entangled in the power relations of their time. Literary works are not secondary reflections of any coherent world – view but the active participants in the continual remaking of meanings. In short, all the texts, including history and literature, are simply the discourses which seek the power or ruling class – the power to govern and control. Hence, the dividing line between history and literature is effaced. Power circulates through discourses.

III. Representation of Contemporary Afghan History in Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*

In the novel *The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini explores the contemporary history in the background of Afghanistan. The text paints an eye opening picture of what Afghanistan was and what it has become. It describes vividly how the combination of war can devastate a country and people. *The Kite Runner* also illuminates the fact that most Afghan refugees are just that peace loving, law abiding people who are in America because their beloved homeland has been rendered uninhabitable. Furthermore the religious and ethnic consciousness shapes the individual mind resulting heart aching domination.

It talks to a great extent about the Russian invasion in Afghanistan and Taliban era in which study of Afghanistan would be incomplete without study of hunger, war, landmines, refugees, and so on. Hosseini left Afghanistan in 1976 at the age of 11 when his father was posted to Afghan Embassy in Paris. Following the 1978 coup and

subsequent Russian invasion the Hosseinis immigrated to the United States receiving political asylum in 1980. The beginning lines of the novel show Afghanistan of the 1970s:

I became what I am today at the age of twelve , on a frigid overcast day in the winter of 1975[...] That was long time ago , but it wrong what they say about the past , I've learned, about how you can burry it. Because the past claws its way out. Looking back now, I realize I have been peeking into that deserted alley for the last twenty-six years. (1)

Amir remembers his past Pashtun setting of his house

The living room downstairs had curved wall with custom-built cabinets. Inside sat framed family pictures: an old, grain photo of my grand father and King Nadir Shah taken in 1931, two years before the king's assassination; they are standing over a dead deer, dressed in knee-high boots, rifles slung over their shoulders.(5)

This description of the picture mirrors the life of the Pashtuns who are considered to be the royal clan in Afghanistan, superior to other ethnic groups like Hazara, Uzbeks, and Kuchis, Hosseini engages in nostalgic childhood recreation of a lost Afghanistan during the last days of the monarchy Zahir Shah and the regime that overthrew him in the first part of the novel.

The Pashtuns create discourse of hegemony upon the ethnic group Hazara: "They called him "flat-nose" because of Ali and Hassan's characteristic Hazara Mongoloid feature. For years, that was all I knew about the Hazaras, that they were Mogul descendants, and that they looked like the Chinese people (8)." He further describes the struggle between the Pashtuns and the Hazaras and the domination of the Pashtuns over the Hazaras.

Hazaras had tried to rise against the Pashtuns in the nineteenth century, but the Pashtuns had "quelled them with unspeakable violence." [...] My people had killed the Hazaras, driven them from their lands, burned their homes, and sold their women. [...] the reason Pashtuns had oppressed the Hazaras was that Pashtuns were Sunni Muslims, while Hazaras were Shi'a. [...] People called Hazaras *mice-eating, flat-nose, load-carrying donkeys*.(8)

Khaled Hosseini presents the existing social evils and shocking inhuman behavior by human on the basis of religious and ethnic consciousness. Particularly, it presents the heart breaking picture of marginalized Hazara and the devastating thinking of the so-called upper class Pashtuns which has been prevailing in Afghanistan for ages. The religious tussle between Shi'a and Sunni is further clarified in the novel: "[H]istory isn't easy to overcome. Neither is religion. In the end, I was Pashtun and he was a Hazara, I was Sunni and he was Shi'a, and nothing was ever going to change that " (22).

Khaled Hosseini vividly describes Afghanistan, both Russian invasion and the rule of the Taliban. These lines proved that how the Russian attack in Afghanistan.

Huddled together in the dining room and waiting for the sun to rise, non of us had any notion that a way of life had ended. Our way of life. If not quite yet, then at least it was the beginning of end. The end, the *official* end, would come first in April 1978 with the communist coup d'etat, and then in December 1979, when Russian tanks would roll into the very same streets where Hassan and I played, bringing the death of the Afghanistan I knew and marking the start of still ongoing era of bloodletting.(32)

Hosseini is the first Afghan novelist to fictionalize his culture for western reader, melding the personal struggle of ordinary people into the terrible historical sweep of a devastated country in a rich and soul-searching narrative.

The novel present more realistic picture:

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

Afghanistan had gone overnight from a monarchy to a republic. Tired of listening to the radio news, Amir and Hassan went to climb their favourite tree. On the way, a young "sociopath" named Assef and his friends confronted them. He taunts Hassan for being a Hazara; Assef also has a habit of taunting Ali, whom he called *Babalu*. He praises Hitler and then says that he wants to finish what Hitler started and rid Afghanistan of Hazaras:

Afghanistan is the land of Pashtuns. It always has been, always will be. We are the true Afghans, the pure Afghans, not this Flat-Nose here. His people pollute our homeland, our *watan*. They dirty our Blood." He made a sweeping, grandiose gesture with his hands. "Afghanistan for Pashtuns, I say. That's my vision. (35)

On the other side, this novel explores the activities of the Russian Coup in Afghanistan and how they patrolling their soldier in the street of the Afghanistan:"[...] Russian soldiers patrolling the sidewalks, no tanks rolling up and down the streets of my city, their turrets swiveling like accusing fingers, no rubble, no curfews, no Russian Army Personnel Carriers weaving through the bazaars" (99).

The Russian soldiers exploit psychologically and sexually to the Afghan women.

It is clear through these lines:

The Afghan soldier said something too, in a low, reasoning voice. But the Russian soldier shouted something that made the other two flinch. I could feel Baba tightening up next to me. Karim cleared his throat, dropped his head. Said the soldier wanted a half hour with the lady in the back of the truck.(100)

Furthermore he clarifies exploitation of Afghan women sexually through the Russian soldiers at the time of war:

"I want you to ask this man something ", Baba said. He said it to Karim, but looked directly at the Russian officer. "Ask him where his shame is." They spoke. "He says this is war. There is no shame in war." "Tell him he's wrong. War doesn't negate decency. It *demand*s it, even more than in times of peace." (100)

Due to the Russian invasion many Afghan people were compelled to leave their homeland and their property and seek for help in other country as refugees. Likewise, Amir and his father are also destined to leave their country. It further clarifies from these lines:

Standing on the shoulder of the road, I thought of the way we'd left the house where I'd lived my entire life, as if we were going out for a bite: dishes smeared with *kof*ta piled in the kitchen sink; laundry in the wicker basket in the foyer; beds unmade; Baba's business suits hanging in the closet. Tapestries still hung on the walls of the living room and my mother's books still crowded the shelves in Baba's study. The signs of our

elopement were subtle: My parents' wedding picture was gone, as was the grainy photograph of my grandfather and King Nader Shah standing over the dead deer. A few items of clothing were missing from the closets. The leather-bound notebook Rahim Khan had given me five years earlier was gone. (97-98)

Amir and his father and other refugees escape from their homeland by sitting in the tank.

In the tank they face the so many difficulties. What kind of difficulties they face is clear through this extract;

The basement had been dark. The fuel tank was pitch-black. I looked right left, up, down, waved my hands before my eyes, didn't see so much as a hint of movement. I blinked, blinked again. Nothing at all. The air wasn't right, it was too thick, almost solid. Air wasn't supposed to be solid. I wanted to reach out with my hands, crush the air into little pieces, stuff them down my windpipe. And the stench of gasoline. My eyes stung from the fumes, like someone had peeled my lids back and rubbed a lemon on them. My nose caught fire with each breath. You could die in a place like this, I thought. A scream was coming. Coming, coming.... (106)

The refugees are compelled to do hard labor in gas station, landmine in the others country for their bread.

Here Khaled Hosseini presents the reality of the refugees in the other country and what sort of job they do for survival;

Baba found a job off Washington Boulevard as an assistant at a gas station owned by an Afghan acquaintance – he'd started looking for work the same week we arrived. Six days a week, Baba pulled twelve-hour shifts

pumping gas running the register, changing oil, and washing windshields. I'd bring him lunch sometimes and find him looking for a pack of cigarettes on the shelves, a customer waiting on the other side of the oil-stained counter, Baba's face drawn and pale under the bright fluorescent lights. The electronic bell over the door would *ding-dong* when I walked in and Baba would look over his shoulder, wave, and smile, his eyes watering from fatigue. (113)

The Russians destroy villages and burn the school, kill the children and destroy the mine. These things are proved through these lines: "Long before the *Russi* marched into Afghanistan, long before villages were burned and schools destroyed, long before mines were planted like seeds of death and children buried in rock-piled graves, Kabul had become a city of ghosts for me. A city of hare-lipped ghosts" (119).

Here, the writer Khaled Hosseini describes how the Taliban is terrorizing Afghanistan and creating a discourse of hegemony. Through the help of his fictional character Rahim Khan who describes these things to the protagonist Amir in this way though they had been received initially as heroes. Once, at a soccer game, a man next to him cheered too loudly. A Talib pistol whipped Rahim Khan, thinking he had made the noise;

"Nay, it's worse. Much worse," he said. "They don't let you be human." He pointed to a scar above his right eye cutting a crooked path through his bushy eyebrow. "I was at a soccer game in Ghazi Stadium in 1998. Kabul against Mazar-i-Sharif, I think, and by the way the players weren't allowed to wear shorts. Indecent exposure, I guess." He gave a tired laugh. "Anyway, Kabul scored a goal and the man next to me cheered loudly. Suddenly this young bearded fellow who

was patrolling the aisles, eighteen years old at most by the look of him, he walked up to me and struck me on the forehead with the butt of his Kalashnikov. 'Do that again and I'll cut out your tongue, you old donkey!' he said." Rahim Khan rubbed the scar with a gnarled finger. "I was old enough to be his grandfather and I was sitting there, blood gushing down my face, apologizing to that son of a dog."(173)

It gives the real picture of the Afghanistan at time of the Talibans. They prohibited clapping and whistling in the sport event.

Rahim Khan further describes about the Talibans. People in Kabul are afraid of leaving their houses because of frequent shootings and bombings. Moreover, these lines givs detailed about the reality of Afghanistan during the period of 1992 to 1996 through this extract;

[...] [W]hen the Northern Alliance took over Kabul between 1992 and 1996 different factions claimed different parts of Kabul. "If you went from the Shar-e-Nau section to Kerteh-Parwan to buy a carpet, you risked getting shot by a sniper or getting blown up by a rocket – if you got past all the checkpoints, that was. You practically needed a visa to go from one neighborhood to the other. So People just stayed put, prayed the next rocket wouldn't hit their home." He told me how people knocked holes in the walls of their homes so they could bypass the dangerous streets and would move down the block from hole to hole. In other parts, people moved about in underground tunnels. (174)

Even the Talibans destroy the orphanage, with many children inside it. These lines further clarify the destruction of the Afghanistan.

Rahim Khan further explains the rule of Taliban and their power exercise in Afghanistan:

People were so tired of the constant fighting, tired of the rockets, the gunfire, the explosions, tired of watching Gulbuddin and his cohorts firing on anything that moved. The Alliance did more damage to Kabul than the *Shorawi*. They destroyed your father's orphanage, did you know that?"

(174)

The fictional character Rahim Khan narrates the story of Afghanistan by describing the daily activities and fighting which had happened in the street of Kabul and other cities. He describe accordingly: "[...] [O]ur ears became accustomed to the whistle of falling shells, to the rumble of gunfire, our eyes familiar with the sight of men digging bodies out of piles of rubble. Kabul in those days [...] proverbial hell on earth" (185-186).

He again describes about the prohibited culture of Afghanistan that is kite flying rituals. Every winter the people of Afghanistan enjoy flying kite but when the Taliban ruled upon the Afghanistan they prohibited Kite Flying and massacred the Hazara ethnic groups in Mazar-i-Sharif. He says "the Taliban banned kite fighting. And two years later, in 1998, they massacred the Hazaras in Mazar-i-Sharif (187)." It gives the real picture of Afghanistan during that time.

Khaled Hosseini furthermore describes the situation of Afghanistan with the help of Hassan. Hassan describes the details about the condition of the women and men in streets of Afghanistan and he further describes the victimization of the minorities by saying this extract:

Alas the Afganistan of our youth is long dead. Kindness is gone from the land and you cannot escape the killing. Always the killings. In Kabul, fear

is everywhere, in the streets, in the stadium, in the markets, it is a part of our lives here, Amir Agha. The savages who rule our *watan* don't care about human decency. [...] I do except stand and watch my wife get beaten? If I fought, that dog would happen to my Sohrab? The streets are full enough already of hungry orphans and every day I thank Allah that I am alive, not because I fear death, but because my wife has a husband and my son is not an orphan. (189-90)

Khaled Hosseini again describes the painful situation of the ethnic group the Hazaras, how the Talibans create discourse by destroying the Hazara ethnicity, Hazara are not the true Afghan .

He further makes it clear that through the given lines:

They accused him of lying when Hassan told them he was living with me even though many of the neighbors, including the one who called me, supported Hassan's story. The Talibs said he was a liar and thief like all Hazaras and ordered him to get his family out of the house by sundown. Hassan protested. But my neighbor said the Talibs were looking at the big house like- how did he say it? – yes, like 'wolves looking at a flock of sheep.' They told Hassan they would be moving in to supposedly keep if safe until I return. Hassan protested again. So they took him to street [...] but all I could manage was to whisper "No. No. No" over and over again. (191-92)

The way how the case of minority is dismissed in Taliban rule is clear through these lines: "Hassan's and Farzana's murders were dismissed as a case of self-defense. No one

said a word about it. Most of it was fear of the Taliban, I think. But no one was going to risk anything for a pair of Hazara servants" (193).

We can see that Amir has become a foreigner in his own homeland. At the same time, he is very much the person he was. It is true that in America, Amir experiences suffering and hardship, from having to learn English to not having money to seeing Baba degraded to watching him get sick and die. He says, "I feel like a tourist in my own country" (203).

War between the Russians and the Taliban create poverty, economic crisis, fear and uncertainty of life in Afghanistan. This kind of war destroyed the public's villages, streets, and other physical structures of Afghanistan. These things are presented very clearly in this novel. We can visualize that Khaled Hosseini presents the real history of the country. Through these lines he tries to present the situation of the after war period of Afghanistan and the hardship of its people:

We had crossed the border and the signs of poverty were everywhere. On either side of the road I saw chains of little villages sprouting here and there, like discarded toys among the rocks, broken mud houses and huts consisting of little more than four wooden poles and a tattered cloth as a roof. I saw children dressed in rags chasing a soccer ball outside the huts. A few miles later, I spotted a cluster of men sitting on their haunches, like a row of crows, on the carcass of an old burned-out Soviet tank, the wind fluttering the edges of the blankets thrown around them. Behind them, a woman in a brown *burqa* carried a large clay pot on shoulder, down a rutted path toward a string of mud houses. (203)

This extract clarifies the poverty of Afghanistan during the period of the war. This terrible war creates the difficulties in the daily life of the people and they are compelled to live under poverty.

He further says about the reality of the Afghans after the period of post war era:

[...] He pointed to an old man dressed in ragged clothes trudging down a dirt path, a large burlap pack filled with scrub grass tied to his back.

"That's the real Afghanistan, Agha Sahib. That's the Afghanistan I know.

You ? You've always been a tourist here, you just didn't know it." (204)

Here he tries to show the social reality of Afghanistan during the period of the war and how people are compelled to live in poverty:

The adobe ceiling was low, the dirt walls entirely bare, and the only light came from a pair of lanterns set in a corner. We took off our shoes and stepped on the straw mat that covered the floor. Along one of the walls sat three young boys, cross-legged, on a mattress covered with a blanket with shredded boarders. (205)

These lines further clarify poverty of the Afghan: "I'm sorry we can't offer you meat, "Wahid said." Only Taliban can afford meat now" (208). And how the Talibans exploit physically to the people is clear through these lines:

His hands are tied behind him with roughly woven rope cutting through the flesh of his wrists. He is blindfolded with black cloth. He is kneeling on the street, on the edge of a gutter filled with still water, his head drooping between his shoulders. His knees roll on the hard ground and bleed through his pants as he rocks in prayer. [...]He takes a step back and

raises the barrel. Places it on the back of the kneeling man's head. For a moment, fading sunlight catches in the metal and twinkles.

The rifle roars with a deafening crack. (209-10)

Here Khaled Hosseini presents the true picture of destructive village which is destroyed by Taliban and killed its people. There is not any record that is killed and displaced from the village.

The people were either dead or in refugee camp in Pakistan. It is further clear through these lines:

Most of those people, he said, were either dead or in refugee camps in Pakistan. "And sometimes the dead are luckier," he said.

He pointed to the crumbled, charred remains of a tiny village. It was just a tuft of blackened, roofless walls now. I saw a dog sleeping along one of the walls. "I had a friend there once," Farid said. "He was very good bicycle repairman. He played the tabla well too. The Taliban killed him and his family and burned the village." We drove past the burned village, and the dog didn't move. (214)

The Taliban have destroyed not only the village, natural resources, innocent people but also the cultural heritage which are built hundreds of years ago. They destroy the giant Buddhas in the Bamiyan: ""What heritage?" I said. "The Taliban have destroyed what heritage Afghanistan had. You saw what they did to the giant Buddhas in Bamiyan" (294).

Due to the war many children are compelled to leave their house and live in the street as beggars. They are seemed grim-faces and thin due to the lack of food. They sat in the lap of their burqua-clad mother alongside the busy street and chanted for money. It is clear that through these lines:

They squatted at every street corner, dressed in shredded burlap rags, mud-caked hands held out for a coin. And the beggars were mostly children now, thin and grim-faced, some no older than five or six. They sat in the laps of their *burqa*-clad mothers alongside gutters at busy street corners and chanted "*Bakhshesh, bakhshesh!*" And something else, something I hadn't noticed right away: Hardly any of them sat with an adult male – the wars had made fathers a rare commodity in Afghanistan. (214-15)

The writer Khaled Hosseini tries to show the destructive infrastructure which were damaged. It is symbolic representation of the war. We can easily learn that what kind of destruction happens in Afghanistan and how the people suffer from the war and displace from their country and being refugee in another country.

Here is the description of the place which is destroyed in the time of war:

Jadeh Maywand had turned into a giant castle. The buildings that hadn't entirely collapsed barely stood, with caved in roofs and walls pierced with rockets shells. Entire blocks had been obliterated to rubble. I saw a bullet – pocked sign half buried at an angle in a heap of debris. It read DRINK COCA CO - . I saw children playing in the ruins of a windowless building amid jagged stumps of brick and stone. Bicycle riders and mule-drawn carts swerved around kinds, stray dogs, and piles of debris. A haze of dust hovered over the city and, across the river, a single plume of smoke rose to the sky. (215)

There is not only destruction of the villages, cities and people but also destruction of the natural resources like jungle. People are compelled to destroy the trees for fire wood in

the winter. Because there is lack of good clothes and houses for the people of Afghanistan; "Where are the trees", I said. "People cut them down for firewood in the winter", Farid said. "The *Shorawi* cut a lot of them down too (215-216)."

The evidence of the war in Afghanistan gives clear through the broken and abandoned homes, ruin streets. These things are shown in the novel in this way:

[...] that karteck-She had been one of the most war-ravaged neighborhoods in Kabul, and, as we stepped out of the truck, the evidence was overwhelming. The cratered streets were flanked by little more than ruins of shelled buildings and abandoned homes. We passed the rusted skeleton of an overturned car, a TV set with no screen half-buried in rubble, a wall with the words ZENDA BAD TALIBAN! (Long live the Taliban!) Sprayed in black. (220)

Here Khaled Hosseini gives the reason why the children are compelled to go to orphanage and how the Talibans neglect the children by giving nothing to them. Zaman describes about the reality of the orphanage, he explains that they had no heat or hot water and very little food or supplies. The Talibans refuse to pay for renovation or improvement:

"More than we have room for. About two hundred and fifty," Zaman said over his shoulder. "But they're not all *yateem*. Many of them have lost their fathers in the war, and their mothers can't feed them because the Taliban don't allow them to work. So they bring their children here. "He made a sweeping gesture with his hand and hand and added ruefully, "This place is better than the street, but not that much better. This building was never meant to be live in – it used to be a storage ware house for a carpet

manufacture. So there's no water heater and they've let the well go dry."

He dropped his voice. "I've asked the Taliban for money to dig a new well more times than I remember and they just twirl their rosaries and tell me there is no money. No money." He snickered. (222)

He further says that the condition of the orphanage, shortage of food, bed, mattress, blanket for the winter in the orphanage.

It is the reality of Afghanistan during the period of the Taliban era:

He pointed to a row of beds along the wall. "We don't have enough beds, and not enough mattresses for the beds we do have. Worse, we don't have enough blankets." He showed us a little girl skipping rope with two other kids. "You see that girl? This past winter, the children had to share blankets. Her brother died exposure." He walks on. "The last time I checked, we have less than a month's supply of rice left in the warehouse, and, when that runs out, the children will have to eat bread and tea for breakfast and dinner." I noticed he made no mention of lunch. (222)

Khaled Hosseini further clarifies poverty and famine problem in Afghanistan. Due to this problem many children are compelled to live in the orphanages if there is no good food, water, clothes and so on. Orphanage was better than the street. These things are proved through these lines; "There is very little shelter here, almost no food, no clothes, no clean water. What I have in ample supply here is children who've lost their childhood. But the tragedy is that these are the lucky ones" (222).

He further describes the very painful situation of the poverty in Kabul. Due to poverty man is selling his artificial leg, no doubt to buy food for his children. He can feed his children for couple of weeks. It is the proof of poverty of country and its people due

to the long wars and destruction of the public property. These lines show this painful situation of the man who sells his artificial leg for feeding his children:

A few blocks north of Pashtunistan Square, Farid pointed to two men talking animatedly at a busy street corner. One of them was hobbling on one leg, his other leg amputated below the knee. He cradled an artificial leg in his arms. "You know what they're doing? Haggling over the leg."
"He's selling his leg?"

Farid nodded. "You can get good money for it on the black market. Feed your kids for a couple of weeks."(226)

In incorporating the stoning at Ghazi Stadium into his story, Hosseini brings to life something about which most non-Afghans have only heard. The event is all the more significant because we experience it through Amir's eyes--American eyes--eyes that are unaccustomed to this type of unchecked violence and injustice. Beyond their sheer violence, the deaths of the accused adulterers in Ghazi Stadium embody what is happening to the Afghan people under the Taliban. The victims are accused of being adulterers, but from what we know about the Taliban from Rahim Khan, Hassan, and Farid's accounts, they may just have looked at a Talib the wrong way. They are killed in public, supposedly to make an example for others; in truth, their public murders are meant to intimidate the masses and bring them under even closer control.

Not just the two victims in Ghazi Stadium, but the Afghan people as a whole, are being dragged into a pit of hopelessness from which there is no escape, degraded, and killed cruelly and unjustly. These things are proved through these lines which are narrated by the protagonist Amir:

The tall Talib with the black sunglasses walked to the pile of stones they had unloaded from the third truck. He picked up a rock and showed it to the crowd. The noise fell, replaced by a buzzing sound that rippled through the stadium. I looked around me and saw that everyone was tsk'ing. The Talib, looking absurdly like a baseball pitcher on the mound, hurled the stone at the blindfolded man in the hole. It struck the side of his head. The woman screamed again. The crowd made a startled "OH!" rhymed with each flinging of the stone, and that went on for a while. When they stopped, I asked Farid if it was over. He said no. I guessed the people's throats had tired. I don't know how much longer I sat with my face in my hands. I know that I reopened my eyes when I heard people around me asking, "*mord? Mord? Is he dead?*" (236-37)

Talibs create a discourse of God to dominate people. When someone commits adultery, he is publicly punished to death penalty like the events of Gazi stadium.

They impose their activities in the name of god. This extract gives the clear vision about there rule of law:

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

Khaled Hosseini presents the way of domination of Taliban. They go to people's house for food and prayer. They kill mainly the minority Hazara people with out any reason and left them in the streets.

Moreover, they compare the Hazara people with the dog:

We only rested for food and prayer," the Talib said. He said it fondly, like a man telling of a great party he'd attended. "We left the bodies in the streets, and if their families tried to sneak out to drag them back into their homes, we'd shoot them too. We left them in the streets for dogs. Dog meat for dogs.(243)

The political landscape had changed when the Twin Towers had fallen in New York City and the United States bombed Afghanistan and captured the government of Taliban and ruled over the country. In this act the Taliban are compelled to escape from the American's eye because America claimed that the Taliban protected Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan. America attacks Afghanistan to take revenge of the fallen twin towers and the destruction of the American people:

Tuesday morning last September, the Twin Towers came crumbling down and, overnight, the world changed. The American flag suddenly appeared everywhere, on the antennae of yellow cabs weaving around traffic, on the lapels of pedestrians walking the sidewalks in a steady stream [...] soon after the attacks, America bombed Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance moved in, and the Taliban scurried like rats into the caves. (316)

To take the revenge of the destruction of the twin towers, America suddenly attacked in Afghanistan which is ruled by Taliban. America blames that Taliban give shelter to

Osama Bin Laden. Due to the American invasion in Afghanistan, Taliban's were compelled to hide them with the fear of America. It is clear that America creates the discourse of hegemony by using the power.

After the American invasion in Afghanistan, America forms the new government with the leadership of the Hamid Karzai. He rules over Afghanistan at present:

Now Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw, and people sipping lattes at Starbucks were talking about the battle for Kunduz, the Taliban's last stronghold in the north. That December, Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras gathered in Bonn and, under the watchful eye of the UN, began the process that might someday end over twenty years of unhappiness in their *watan*. Hamid Karzai's *caracul hat green chapan* became famous. (316)

Khaled Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner* derives its name from an ancient Afghan hobby of dueling with kites. The title refers to a traditional tournament for Afghan Children in which kite flyers compete slicing through the strings of their opponents with their own razor -- sharp, grass-encrusted strings. To be the child who wins the tournament by drowning all the other kites--and to be the "runner" who chases down the last losing kite as it flutters to earth--is the greatest honor of all. Hosseini's novel soars in that metaphor of flyer and runner:

Every winter, districts in Kabul held a kite-fighting tournament. If you were a boy living in Kabul, the day of the tournament was undeniably the highlight of the cold season. I never slept the night before the tournament. I'd roll from side to side, make shadow animals on the wall, even sit on the balcony in the dark, a blanket wrapped around me. I felt like a soldier

trying to sleep in the trenches the night before a major battle. And that wasn't so far off. In Kabul, fighting kites was little like going to war. (43)

Similar to Afghanistan's tumultuous history, Afghan kite flying involves mid-air duels between the rivals. Kite flyers attempt to down their adversary's kites analogous to the fighting between the Afghan government and mujahidin guerrilla factions whose hands are cut and bloodied, as is the hand of the kite flyer when the ground grass coating of the kite string sears through the hands. In most cases, kite flyer is encouraged to kite duel aggressively at high altitudes by the 'string giver' who usually holds the string reel. His role is not much different than the foreign power that instigated all Afghan sides into battle to fight their proxy war by providing arms, training, and intelligence.

When the opponent's kite has been drowned, then the real battle turns into a race, the kite run, to see who retrieves the fallen kite. This is symbolic to the 1992 event in Afghanistan when ethno-religious warlords looted and pillaged Kabul and other cities in a race to see who can amass the most booty. Interestingly enough, in 1994 the emerging Taliban regime banned kite fighting and an assortment of other activities. The title *The Kite Runner* thus is symbolically presented by Hosseini in this text.

IV. Conclusion

Khaled Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner* describes the suffering of his country under the tyranny of Taliban. Russian invasion in Afghanistan and war between Taliban and Russian soldiers, Russian rule in Afghanistan for years and their hegemony over Afghan people and destruction of the culture, natural resources and old heritage of Afghanistan. It also describes the indirect American support to the Taliban against the Russian. It causes poverty, cultural disasters, refugee problems, and domination upon the

minority ethnicity, ethnic cleansing, hunger, landmine and so many problems in Afghanistan.

The novel turns dark when Hosseini describes the suffering of the country under the tyranny of the Taliban. The Taliban destroy not only the cultural heritage of Afghanistan but also cleanse the minority ethnic group like Hazara creating the discourse of hegemony by using their power. They create the discourse of ethnicity and religion. The Pashtun are the real Afghans but the Hazaras are not the real Afghan people so they want to cleanse these people from Afghanistan.

The Kite Runner is an effective reminder of the world-changing nature of the Soviet invasion in 1979, of the moral and practical value of the removal of the Taliban from power in 2001, and a message to Afghans themselves about why their tribal rivalries are foolish, disastrous, and immoral. Hosseini compresses Afghanistan's suffering into the experience of two Afghan boys, one a high-born Pashtun named Amir and the other a lowly Hazara named Hassan. There is a great gulf between Amir and Hassan. Sunni vs Shi'a, rich vs poor, Pashtun vs Hazara, literate vs non-literate.

The hardships of the Afghan people are revealed in passages of power and brutality and especially the long scene in which Amir and his father are being smuggled out of Afghanistan to Pakistan over the Khyber Pass -- an experience which is convincing, vivid, terrifying, and sickening.

Although Afghanistan has been hot subject recently, its pre-Soviet days have not been treated in fiction recently until *The Kite Runner*. Hosseini delivers an authentic Afghan experience, both in that period in Kabul and in the immigrant community in America. In *The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini gives us a vivid picture of the contemporary history of the Afghanistan by presenting the real historical events which

occurred in the history itself like Russian invasion, rise of Taliban and their decade long rule in Afghanistan, their domination upon the country, people and abolition of the culture and American hegemony upon Afghanistan and its people. This research proves that Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner* represents the contemporary history of Afghanistan by depicting the real historical events which really happened in Afghanistan.

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