



Unveiling the Subaltern: Exploring Ethnic Divide, Political Instability, and Domination in "The Kite Runner" by Khaled Hosseini

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Abstract

"The Kite Runner" by Khaled Hosseini explores themes of subaltern portrayal, ethnic divide, and political instability in Afghanistan. This research paper focuses on the novel's depiction of the Pashtun-Hazara ethnic divide and its impact on individuals and the nation. Central characters Amir and Hassan exemplify the complexities of friendship and ethnic differences. Through characters like Hassan, Ali, and Sohrab, who face marginalization and persecution, the subaltern aspect is examined under different ruling powers. The paper investigates the social, political, and religious norms that dominate Afghan society, particularly affecting men and women. It analyzes Afghanistan's multiethnic dynamics, emphasizing discrimination based on gender, race, and religious commitments, notably between Pashtuns (Sunni Muslims) and Hazaras (Shi'a Muslims). By uncovering the silencing and internalized inferiority experienced by subordinate characters, the paper highlights the oppressive treatment of Hazaras by Pashtuns, exemplified by Assef. The consequences faced by the characters in a Taliban-dominated society and the challenges of seeking justice are explored. The paper also touches on the marginalized status of women in the novel. Overall, it underscores the importance of acknowledging and addressing the plight of subaltern individuals, as depicted by Hosseini in "The Kite Runner."

KEYWORDS: Domination, Subaltern, Consciousness, Pashtuns, Taliban, Hazaras.

INTRODUCTION

"The Kite Runner" stands as the debut novel of Khaled Hosseini. Throughout the novel, He brings up many different concerns, one of which is how subalterns are portrayed. This novel portrays the ethnic divide existing between the Pashtun and Hazara communities in Afghanistan, as well as the profound impact of political instability on both these groups and the nation as a whole. Two characters—Amir, an ethnic Pashtun, and Hassan, an ethnic Hazara—serve as the central figures in the story. In Kabul, the two boys mature as close friends. A common theme running through the story is ethnic difference, polarization, and division. The characters Hassan, his father Ali, and Sohrab, Hassan's son, bring attention to the subaltern aspect of this novel. Both the Taliban government and other ethnic groups ruled over them. The voice of the underclass characters is suppressed; as a result of "power" and "domination," the characters are torn apart, flee their homes, and find sanctuary in other nations. These characters' battle for justice results in their execution by political and Taliban regulations in a brutal, cruel, and public manner.

The Kite Runner depicts various aspects of an individual's persecution in Afghan society. It focuses on how social, political, and religious norms are used to dominate both men and women. Hosseini portrays a lot of male characters in this novel. They are oppressed by other males because of their ethnic differences and Islamic laws.

AFGHANISTAN AS A MULTIETHNIC SOCIETY

Afghanistan has a diverse ethnic population. The nation's population is split up into a wide range of ethnolinguistic groups. This study aims to explain the miseries of the Afghan people who are oppressed because of their gender, racial discrimination, and religious commitments. People are repressed in Afghanistan under the guise of religion. Hosseini writes clearly about the crimes committed in the name of religion. It does not imply that the people's religious beliefs are sinful, but it does draw attention to the sufferings of those who are viewed as victims. The novel's protagonists internalize their inferior or superior position, which is passed down to subsequent generations. The socioeconomic circumstances in Afghanistan show how people discriminate against one another based on their physical characteristics and ethnic groups, as well as the disparity between Sunni Muslims (Pashtun) and Shi'a Muslims (Hazaras).

To explain these social divisions and how the Taliban's terrorism affects Afghanistan, Khaled Hosseini has written several books. The Taliban government is viewed as the dominating force in Afghanistan, and the interest, conviction, and adherence to a religion that they

exhibit are shared by the whole population. The mute state of the Afghan people is depicted by Hosseini by fusing political history and everyday life. The residents of Afghanistan should consciously adopt their social standing because if they do not, they will be subject to the death penalty.

THE SUBALTERN ASPECT IN THE KITE RUNNER

Hosseini depicts the path of the subordinate characters in *The Kite Runner*, who are silenced and prevented from speaking due to their ingrained fear. The fiction is set in the year 2002. Amir the protagonist was an Afghani child living along with his father Baba who was one of the wealthiest and most charitable Pashtun men in Kabul. The harelipped Hassan, who was Amir's best friend and a Hazara, was also his helper. He was incredibly close to his father Ali who was Baba's helper. Amir and Hassan were bonded despite their differences.

Rahim Khan, a Pashtun of ethnicity, is a close friend and business partner of Baba. His friendship with Amir is strong. Hassan's treatment by Amir varies, depending on whether he sees him as a buddy or a slave to serve his whims—basically, to have fun without giving a damn about how he feels. Amir frequently harbors resentment towards Hassan for getting all of Baba's attention. Because they did not have the privilege of being born into a wealthy family, those in lower social classes are compelled to work hard for what they had. The daily tasks of Hasan's life demonstrate how he is a diligent young man of a lower social level who values things and strives to make the most of his circumstances. It also demonstrates how much more easily the lower classes may enjoy the minor things in life than the higher classes. Due to the need for exerting greater effort, they develop a deeper appreciation for their accomplishments.

Assef, an older boy with a cruel penchant for violence, ridicules Amir for associating with a Hazara, whom he considers to be part of an inferior race and believes should only reside in Hazarat. With a German mother and a typically blond-haired, blue-eyed German countenance, Assef is just partially Pashtun. He makes plans to attack Amir with brass knuckles one day, but Hassan stands up for him and threatens to use his catapult to tear out Assef's eye, forcing him to retreat but vowing to exact revenge in the future.

Amir eventually receives Baba's approval after he wins the neighborhood kite-fighting competition one triumphant day. Hassan says to Amir as he races for the final cut kite, a fantastic trophy, "For you, a thousand times over" But after discovering the kite, Hassan runs into Assef in a back alley. Hassan refuses to give up the kite so he was beaten up severely and raped by Assef. Amir sees the deed but is too afraid to stop it. This demonstrates unequivocally how poorly ethnic Pashtuns, who make up the majority and dominating class, treat the Hazaras, a marginalized group.

The Soviet Union military intervened in Afghanistan. Amir and his father flee as refugees to Pakistan and eventually landed in America. While Amir marries Soraya, the daughter of a former Afghan general, his father accepts a position as a petrol station manager in the US. Then Rahim Khan, Amir's father's friend calls him. To meet with him, Amir takes a flight to Peshawar. Hassan, an old buddy of Amir's, is revealed by Rahim Khan to be the putative son of Ali, the family's housekeeper. Anyone who attempts to speak out against the Pashtun elite is stoned to death, and the minority class was threatened. The marginalized class in Afghanistan is represented by Hassan and his family, who endure daily insults, threats, abuse, and exploitation. Hassan's mother is seduced by Amir's father. In truth, Hassan is Amir's half-brother and the child of Ali's wife and his father. In the novel, the female characters are likewise marginalized. Both Pashtun and Hazara women are treated with subordinate status in these societies. They are viewed as a thing that fulfills the wants of men.

In the later part of the novel, Assef rules over the characters who are being oppressed and takes satisfaction in being a Taliban. Hassan and his son Sohrab are Assef's victims. Assef commits rape on both of them. Among the Pashtun people, they had no voice. They continued to put up with Assef's mistreatment while accepting their low rank. This demonstrates the Hazara people of Afghanistan's verbal impotence. A person's innate social and economic status is the main cause of oppression. They are treated differently than other people and are unable to speak up for their identity or their rights. Amir was forced to acknowledge his errors by Hassan's quiet affection and his belief in friendship. Amir does not defend his friend by fighting or protesting Assef's rape of Hassan. To protect his life, he acted selfishly and ran away from the dangerous circumstance. Subordinates are occasionally disregarded and forced into hopeless situations.

The rules of religion perpetuate dominance. There is a perpetual change of power in Afghanistan as the center and the periphery, the hierarchical structures are repositioned in the society. These changes oppress the characters, making it impossible for the weak to defend their rights. To describe the life of the underclass, it is a step ahead to represent the margin.

CONCLUSION

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak mentions that the subaltern cannot speak or can the subaltern speak? Spivak uses the term "subaltern" to emphasize the plight of individuals who are given "secondary" space in society. In contrast to other authors, Hosseini gives a unique perspective on Afghanistan. His novels mainly focus on the struggles of people who are considered inferior in society. He presents a realistic picture of the situation of the subaltern in Afghanistan. Yet he depicts the Hazaras as completely passive subalterns who, manage to promote their conditions.

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