

# Deconstructing Betrayal, Discrimination and Guilt in Khaled Hosseini's "The Kite Runner"

Hussein K. Kanosh<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> English department, Basra College of Science and Technology, Basra, Iraq

Correspondence: Hussein K. Kanosh, English department, Basra College of Science and Technology, Basra, Iraq.

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## Abstract

The current study undertakes a detailed analysis of Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* representative novel. Hosseini, an Afghan born American writer depicts a war-torn Afghanistan in various universal themes *i.e.*, family re-union, discrimination, regret, childhood, guilt, womanhood, betrayal, religion and salvation that played a considerable role in abating commission of crimes in Afghanistan during pre and post-Taliban periods which ended up shaping the interminable psychological scars of the protagonist. In his work, Hosseini reveals the devastating status of Afghans in general and women and children in particular who have, for decades, been irrationally marginalized and confined to the four walls of their homes by the society. His quests for wealth, love, loyalty and unqualified peace among Afghan citizenry whom he equates to have rights just like other human beings globally is the only means through which the protagonist considers a key to chart out a new future. Moreover, in reference to the Pashtun and Hazara ethnic communities' customs and traditions and by use of historical, factual, real and fictional information, the article discusses the constructive human relations in a society bedeviled with mistrust, confusion, doubt and betrayal. Besides, by adopting the historical perspective method, the study examines how discrimination as a theme has been utilized to portray Hosseini's literary image as a protagonist writer. Finally, a summary of the paper along with recommendations is made in the conclusion section.

**Keywords:** guilt, betrayal, discrimination, human relations

## 1. Introduction

In 1999, while Khaled Hosseini,<sup>i</sup> an Afghan born American writer was watching the Cable News Network (CNN) evening news, it was reported that the Taliban had resolved to ban kite flying in Afghanistan.<sup>ii</sup> It was this news that inspired Hosseini to write *The Kite Runner* novel to showcase the despicable realities of the Afghan society, by using atrocious political events that occurred in Afghanistan between 1970 and 2001. The novel captures a memorable and heart breaking story of two boys (Amir and Hassan) who are from different ethnic and social class backgrounds to reveal how childhood decisions eventually affect a person's adult life particularly in the Middle East and America. The kites the boys fly together in the touching story symbolizes their implausible fragile relationship they find themselves entangled in and the same is clearly tested in the manner they sit and watch their eccentric old way of life disappear.

In *The Kite Runner* representative novel, Hosseini goes ahead to depict a war-torn Afghanistan in several universal themes *i.e.*, family re-union, discrimination, regret, childhood, guilt, womanhood, betrayal, religion and salvation that played a considerable role in abating commission of crimes in Afghanistan during pre and post-Taliban periods which ended up shaping the interminable psychological scars of the protagonist. In his work, Hosseini reveals the devastating socio-political and economic status of Afghans in general and women and children in particular who have, for decades, been irrationally marginalized and confined to the four walls of their homes by the society. His quests for wealth, love, loyalty and unqualified peace among Afghan citizenry whom he equates to have rights just like other human beings globally is the only means through which the protagonist considers a key to chart out a new future to a country that he passionately loves.

In reference to the Pashtun and Hazara ethnic communities' customs and traditions and by use of historical, factual, real and fictional information, the research article therefore discusses the constructive human relations in a society bedeviled with mistrust, confusion, doubt and betrayal. Besides, by adopting the historical perspective method, the study examines how discrimination as a theme has been utilized to portray Hosseini's literary image as a protagonist writer. Finally, a summary of the paper along with recommendations is made in the conclusion section.

## 2. Literature Review

The literary world by several writers analyzing various themes used by Khaled Hosseini in his novel *The Kite Runner* began with several authors among them Maria Elena Caballero Robb who gave a critique of the novel.<sup>iii</sup> In her work *Critical Essay on The Kite Runner Gale Virtual Reference Library: Literary Newsmakers for Students* published in 2006, she opines that Hosseini's work is mere an intertwine of public - private realms of experience and can be clearly demonstrated in the tragic political and personal relationship that existed between a servant Hassan and the privileged Amir. Such relationship, according to the author, is a mirror to the power shifts that

the Afghan people for long experienced (Maria, 1).<sup>iv</sup> Maria proceeds to question why *The Kite Runner* cannot be considered to be an allegory. In her words:

If the grown Assef appears to be a neatly sadism and the desire for absolute power, Amir's struggle to defeat him and save the young Sohrab appears to be an allegory for a broader struggle for Afghanistan (Maria, 3).<sup>v</sup>

Rosy Marini Seputri's *The Impassive Meaning of Afghanistan's Religiosity in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner: A Deconstructive Reading* of 2009 generally discusses about Islam. Following a detailed study of *The Kite Runner*, Rosy finds the specific meaning attached to Islam through the characters' utterances in the novel cannot be equated to religiosity of Afghans in general (Seputri, 28).<sup>vi</sup> In the same year, Sarah Hunt in her detailed work *Can the West Read? Western Readers, Orientalist, Stereotypes and the Sensational Response to The Kite Runner*, she reveals that Khaled Hosseini's novel narrates the unfortunate believe by westerners that by reading the novel they are establishing a 'bridge of understanding' between the Afghan people's culture and theirs but are instead identifying with orientalist or stereotypical way of understanding between the West and the East (Sarah, 3).<sup>vii</sup> In evaluating Hassan and Amir's relationship, Sarah points out that it only represents an incidence of ethnic division and tension within *The Kite Runner*. She proceeds to state that:

The relationship between Amir and Hassan ... is formulated to resonate with a familiar and easily identifiable western framework of characterization [since] Amir's dominant ethnicity and Hassan's inferiority ... [is] always ... present in their relationship. Amir undoubtedly becomes the internal orientalist and Hassan, the oriental subject for the purpose of western audience ... therefore sustaining the notion that the ethnic and social distinctions between Amir and Hassan function to create a binary between the East and the West and portray an orientaised Afghan culture (Sarah, 9, 10).<sup>viii</sup>

In regard to Assef's character, Sarah points out that he is an orientalist simply because he seems to fit well with the orientalist model of characterization which most westerners adopt (Sarah, 14).<sup>ix</sup> She finally tries to convince *The Kite Runner* readers that the work is merely a fiction as she was unable to understand Amir and Assef's cultural identities which she claims to have been heavily influenced by orientalist stereotypes (Sarah, 15).<sup>x</sup>

In the year 2011, Wardana Tomi wrote a thesis entitled *The Impacts of Afghan Conflicts as Reflected in The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini* in which he examined the impact of Afghanistan conflict through the lens of *The Kite Runner*. Wardana opines that the novel is a masterpiece that represents a clear description of the unfortunate incidences that took place in Afghanistan between 1970 and 2000 and in particular events relating to the Soviet invasion, Daoud coup and the Afghan civil war spearheaded by the Taliban. Wardana finally concludes that:

The conflicts [had a huge impact] for the Afghan people ... that [they completely] changed the lives of Afghan people. *First*, losing their family ... *second*, living in poverty ... *third*, getting trauma ... *fourth*, cultural alternation and *fifth*, escape (Wardana, 5, 12).<sup>xi</sup>

Jeffrey W. Hunter's *Twenty-First Century Novel: The First Decade* published in 2011 is yet another literary work that analyzes some of the universal themes of *The Kite Runner*. The author opines that *The Kite Runner* explores a number of universal themes *i.e.*, identity, friendship and family which perhaps make Americans to understand and appreciate a cultural touchstone for a complex Middle Eastern State that has gained prominence among the Americans (Hunter, 642).<sup>xii</sup> He further explains one more theme in the novel which is the intersection of the past and the present which he holds to be a pervasive aspect in *The Kite Runner* that generally intertwines private lives and atrocities of unstable political events and regimes that Afghan citizenry had to undergo (Hunter, 643, 645).<sup>xiii</sup>

Authors Mahmood, Malik and Shah who scripted *The Role of Linguistic Devices in Representing Ethnicity in The Kite Runner* of 2013 observed that Khaled Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner* adopts foregrounding, flashback, presupposition, omission and back-grounding as a linguistic devices in which he reveals the past events in ascertaining the validity of his tale. In particular, they opine that:

There is a historical realism in *The Kite Runner*. [The use of several] dates create an impression of chronological accuracy. [This is demonstrated through the manner] he describes the changing political games in Afghanistan, for instance, the era of King Zahir Shah, the Russian invasion in 1981, the Taliban's occupation in 1996 and the massacre of Hazaras in 1998. [Besides], by way of subtle manipulation of language, [Hosseini] successfully wields great influence on the presuppositions, beliefs and ideologies of the readers ... for the representation of ethnicity to materialize his political objective (Mahmood, *et.al.*, 170, 174).<sup>xiv</sup>

Malik, Murtaza and Shah in their paper entitled *Representation of Power Relationships in The Kite Runner* of 2014, they acknowledge that Khaled Hosseini's novel reveals major contemporary issues bedeviling Afghanistan *i.e.*, oppression, ethnic discrimination, extremism, unequal power relations, segregation, repressions, fundamentalism, dominance and marginalization of particularly women (Malik, *et.al.*, 17, 20, 21).<sup>xv</sup> While discussing matters ethnic discrimination, the authors gave examples of the sore relationship that existed between the Hazaras and Pashtuns as well as the clear divisions between the liberal Afghans like Baba and the iniquitous Islamic fundamentalist like Amir's father – Mullah Fatiullah Khan. The authors also proceeded to outline the supremacy of the burgeoning American culture in Afghanistan in the following words:

Amir and Hassan like Western movies, American actors especially John Wayne and Charles Bronson. They watch movies dubbed Farsi. The boys spend their money on imported snacks like rosewater, ice cream and pistachios. Baba drives a black Ford

Mustang which is the same car ... actor Steve McQueen has used in the American movie *Bullitt* (Malik, *et.al.*, 23).<sup>xvi</sup>

Sundaresan S., Sumathi K., and Kolappadhas P. have also had a chance to document the inopportune status of Afghanistan over a period of years. In their work *Literature Review on Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner and a Thousand Splendid Suns Novel* of 2018, they point out the fellowship reality in *The Kite Runner* which is clearly demonstrated in the Amir – Hassan and Amir – Sohrab's friendship in the period of contention despite the discriminative ethnic cultures in the Afghan society. The authors proceed to state that Afghan ladies have for a period of time been experiencing sexual orientation values as they cannot exercise their fundamental rights. This was captured in the characters of Laila and Mariam who were mostly tormented and confined by their male counterparts in the four walls of their homes (Sundaresan, 495).<sup>xvii</sup>

In 2019, Rakib Farooq Matta wrote a research article on *Impact of Afghan Conflicts as Reflected in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner*. The article gave a highlight of the Afghan conflict between 1970 and 2000. The author tried to explain the consequences of the conflict perpetuated by Daoud Khan's coup then followed by the Soviet invasion and later the civil war spearheaded by the Taliban regime.<sup>xviii</sup>

Another author Aryan Bammi scripted *An Analysis of The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini* in May 2021 that gives an account of the war-torn Afghanistan.<sup>xix</sup> The author attempts to make readers understand the cultural and social aspects of Hosseini's novel with the help of various examples.

Waladdin Panggabean and Khusnul Khatimah's literary work *Deixis in The Novel The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini* published in January 2022 have attempted to identify various deixis used by a number of characters in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* novel.<sup>xx</sup> The authors were perplexed to find out that at least five deixis are found in the novel and they are social deixis, person deixis (which is dominantly used in the novel), discourse deixis, time deixis and place deixis.

From the above analysis, it is evident that various authors have attempted to discuss a number of themes in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* save for betrayal, guilt and discrimination, its immediate psychological influence and the means of finding salvation at the long end. It is for that reason that the present research is undertaken to demonstrate the limitations of exploiting others for personal material and political gain.

### 3. Methodology

The present research is designed to mainly deconstruct betrayal, guilt and discrimination in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. In order to achieve the set objective, primary and secondary sources of data were referred to. In regard to secondary sources, the research was basically carried out through review of existing studies, published scholarly articles both online and hard copies, media features, websites and commentaries on *The Kite Runner*. These sources extensively provided crucial information on the life of Afghans in Kabul and their adored sport of kite flying. In other words, the research was undertaken with close and comparative reading of various materials on *The Kite Runner* published across the globe but with a thematic focus on betrayal, guilt and discrimination. Of course, *The Kite Runner* being the primary source text was expansively analyzed just to capture the required information for the article. Besides, narrative analysis was undertaken with the main focus on the speech content, as well as the cultural, social and political meaning of depicted situations.

The paper was prepared in six main segments in which the first part introduced the subject matter of the study, its significance and objectives. The second bit, dealt with literature review of the already studies that have been carried out in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. The third discussed the methodology adopted while the fourth and fifth were the crux of research that analyzed matters betrayal, guilt and discrimination. The final part comprehensively summarized the whole study and discussion as well as suggestions.

### 4. Entrapping Guilt and Betrayal in the Kite Runner

Betrayal is one of the themes used by Khaled Hosseini in *The Kite Runner*. For instance, the author attempts to explain the character of Amir, who hails from the wealthy Pashtun family from Kabul. By virtue of his status, Amir has a sense of ethnic identity and superiority despite the fact that he sometimes feels emotionally insecure which perhaps germinates in him as a result of his Baba's irritating attitude towards him. It is for this reasons that he continuously wished that his mother (who died during childbirth) was alive to grant him proper attention and care (Khemshcandani, 2007).<sup>xxi</sup> Hossein tries to show that Baba has indeed tried to provide everything (both financially and emotionally) for his beloved son Amir yet he does not recognize that but he rather holds:

Sometimes I could [request to sit with] Baba and his friends, but Baba [would say], "This is grown-ups' time. Why don't you go read one of those books of yours?" He'd close the door, [leaving] me to wonder why it was always grown-ups' time with him, I'd sit by the door, knees down to my chest. Sometimes I sat there for an hour, sometimes two, listening to their laughter, their chatter (Hosseini, 4-5).<sup>xxii</sup>

It is evident from Amir's words above that though he seems to crave for Baba's attention, he indeed feels betrayed and this can be attributed to his sense of guilt for being involved in the death of his own mother and which he is compelled to believe that it is the main reason for the bad blood between him and his father. He says: "I always felt like Baba hated me a little and why not, after all, I had killed his beloved wife, his beautiful princes, hadn't I?" (Hosseini, 17).<sup>xxiii</sup> Besides, Amir feels insecure as he believes that he is neither the kind of son that Baba understands or wished to have nor a person who can stand on his own against any evil. This stems from what he overheard Baba telling Rahim Khan: "If I hadn't seen the doctor pull him out of my wife with my own eyes I'd never believe he's my son ... [A sensitive and artistic] boy who won't stand up for himself becomes a man who can't stand up to anything" (Hosseini, 20).<sup>xxiv</sup> For the forgoing two reasons, Amir feels that he can only escape the dearth of Baba's attention, care and affection by hooking up with

Hassan and through making himself busy with reading books, travelling, carving, watching television and going for shopping. This is reflected as follows:

After school, Hassan and I met up, grabbed a book and trotted up a bowl-shaped hill just north of my father's property in Wazir Akbar Khan ... There was a pomegranate tree near the entrance to the cemetery. One summer day, I used one of Ali's kitchen knives to carve our names on it: "Amir and Hassan, the Sultans of Kabul (Hosseini, 24).<sup>xxv</sup>

Amir and Hassan are close friends but with some reservations (Hosseini, 64).<sup>xxvi</sup> Though they are from different ethnic groups, Amir feels comfortable being with Hassan just for the benefit of protection and companionship (Marini, 2009).<sup>xxvii</sup> He says, "I was a Pashtun and he was a Hazara, I was a Sunni and he was a Shia and nothing was ever going to change that" (Hosseini, 22).<sup>xxviii</sup> Amir however is unable to overcome his jealous and inner conflict over recognizing his friend Hassan as an equal. Amir was also aware of Baba's admiration for Hassan which irritates him even more. For the eighteen years Amir lived in Baba's mansion, he was jealous of the kind of treatment Hassan received from Baba (Caballero Robb and Maria Elena, 2006).<sup>xxix</sup> Amir considered Hassan to be receiving more attention from Baba than him as he could not live up to Baba's expectations. Betrayal then begins with a number of petty acts directed to Hassan by Amir. For instance, at the time Amir was threatened to be beaten by three Pashtun boys, it was Hassan who courageously and vigorously defended him despite Amir's untoward snap when he claimed: "He's not my friend ... He's my servant" (Hosseini, 36).<sup>xxx</sup> The remark implies that Amir believes in Hassan's inferiority as a result of cultural identity and is as such jealous of his good friend Hassan who perhaps is morally superior.<sup>xxxi</sup> This does not end there, Amir was also trying to betray his only friend Hassan. This is evident from the way Amir plays on the ignorance of Hassan for his personal delight. In fact he refers to Hassan as an imbecile (Hosseini, 25).<sup>xxxii</sup> Besides, he continuously showed less emotions and feeling for Hassan but tried to compensate such emotions with material things like offering Hassan his old shirts or broken toys whenever he felt guilty of betrayal (Hosseini, 25).<sup>xxxiii</sup> Further, when Hassan was being sexually abused by Assef, Amir never took any steps to prevent the assault on his friend. According to Mahmood and Rashid, he instead blamed Hassan for availing himself to be defiled and immediately ran away to not only avoid jeopardizing his own safety or social standing as a member of the Hazara community but to pick his disappearing kite.<sup>xxxiv</sup> In particular, Amir said:

I ran because I was a coward. I was afraid of Assef and what he would do to me. I was afraid of getting hurt. That is what I told myself as I turned my back to the alley, Hassan ... Hassan was the price I had to pay, the lamb I had to slay to win Baba. Was it a fair price? The answer floated to my conscious mind before I could thwart it. He was just a Hazara (Hosseini, 72-73).<sup>xxxv</sup>

Later, after realizing that he was guilty of betrayal for not saving Hassan, he began feeling empty and uneasy and began avoiding Hassan (Hosseini, 74).<sup>xxxvi</sup> To Amir, Hassan's constant presence rekindled his unfortunate act and clearly reminded him of his intentional betrayal to his close friend. He says:

When [Hassan] was around, the oxygen seeps out of the room. My chest tightened and I couldn't draw enough air. I'd stand there gasping in my own little airless bubble of atmosphere. But even when he wasn't around, he was ... everywhere I turned. I saw signs of his loyalty, his goddamn, unwavering loyalty (Hosseini, 78).<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Amir could not even bear the words he carved on the tree trunk relating to the whole incidence:

The word I'd craved on the tree trunk with Ali's kitchen knife, Amir and Hassan: The sultans of Kabul ... I couldn't stand looking at them now (Hosseini, 76).<sup>xxxviii</sup>

It is clearly demonstrated that Amir does not only betray his friend Hassan but he also betrays his own emotional and moral values, a realization that torments him day in day out (Asghar, Shah and Gulam, 18).<sup>xxxix</sup> According to Herbert Morris in his book *On the Guilt and Innocence*, he reiterates Khaled Hosseini's words by saying, "when one is guilty of wrongdoing, one separates oneself from another or others with whom one was joined."<sup>xl</sup> Similarly, Sigmund Freud in his work *Civilization and its Discontents: 1930* opines, "a sense of guilt [is felt] ... when [a person] does something he knows to be bad."<sup>xli</sup>

In regard to Baba's friends and the care he extended to orphans, Amir was totally uncomfortable with them. On one hand, though Amir knew quite well that Baba worked at a construction site, that could not be an excuse for him to abandon him. He persistently claimed that it was his friends that caused Baba to arrive home late and proceed to sleep without sharing a meal with him. Amir is also accused of falsely implicating Baba's friend, Ali and Hassan of stealing money and a watch. The accusation led Ali leaving Baba. Baba is then separated from both Hassan and Ali and it was at that point both Baba and Amir realize their guilt of betrayal of their lifelong Hazara friends. This is reflected as follows:

As it turned out, Baba and I were more alike than I'd ever known. We both betrayed the people who would have given their lives for us ... and with that came this realization: [I need] to atone not just for my sins but for Baba's too (Hosseini, 209).<sup>xlii</sup>

From Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* it is clear that Ali and Baba's relationship is quite similar to that of Hassan and Amir as they grew up together. Rahim Khan, one of Baba's friend had invited Amir to Pakistan in 2001. While there, Rahim revealed to Amir that Baba was indeed Hassan's biological father. Baba had on a number of occasions had intercourse with Ali's beloved wife Sanaubar who was the biological mother to Hassan. By engaging in sexual intercourse, Baba had not only betrayed Ali but also Amir since Amir was unable to understand Baba's special attention to Hassan (Yuan-yuan, 2018).<sup>xliii</sup> Usman Muhammad Khan points out that if Amir was aware that Hassan was his half-brother, he perhaps would not have mistreated him.<sup>xliiv</sup>

On the other hand, Amir's love for the orphans was minimal. This can be clearly reflected from his emotional words:

“I already hated all the kids he was building the orphanage for. Sometimes I wished they’d all die with their parents” (Hosseini, 16).<sup>xlv</sup>

Despite his love-hate relationship for Baba, Amir attempted to mend ties with Baba and in the winter of 1975, there was a golden opportunity to do so under which he was determined to participate and win the Kite Fighting Tournament. He says:

There was no other viable option. I was going to win and I was going to run that last kite. Then I’d bring it home and show Baba. Show him once and for all that his son was worthy (Hosseini, 49).<sup>xlvi</sup>

## 5. Discrimination as Depicted in the Kite Runner

Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner* is one of the outstanding novels that clearly highlight discrimination particularly between the Hazara and Pushtun communities primarily caused by social psychological and structural factors. While the Hazara are the minority Shia Muslim sect, the Pushtun are the majority Sunni Muslims. The Hazaras are discriminated against by the Pushtuns largely due to their weak economic, political and social status as well as their physical appearance that resemble the Chinese people.<sup>xlvii</sup> They thus, lived in streets or were mainly engaged as servants by the Pushtuns who lived in lavish houses.<sup>xlviii</sup> As depicted in *The Kite Runner*, the Hazaras were accordingly considered as dirty, stupid, less human, poor and nasty servant class persons who did not deserve any privilege (Khadawardi, 4).<sup>xlix</sup>

In *The Kite Runner*, Amir is a Pushtun, educated, smart and from a wealthy family. His father (Baba) was considered a rich merchant in Kabul while Hassan (from Hazara community and regularly referred to as a “flat-nosed Babalu”) was Amir’s best friend and half-brother but was openly discriminated against despite being a loyal, forgiving, trustworthy servant to Amir’s family (Hosseini, 42).<sup>1</sup> Amir’s neighbour, Assef was an egotistical person and often idolized himself as Adolf Hitler as he was privileged with power and authority. His father was a Pashtun and mother, a Germany citizen. He thus believed that Afghanistan was a territory meant for only Pushtuns. Assef’s brutal acts can be depicted in the manner he and his friends Wali and Kamal discriminated and raped Hassan merely because Hassan declined to hand over his kite for his freedom.

Amir was a person who loved to read a lot. One time as he was reading a History book, he encountered information on how the Hazaras were for a long period brutally suppressed and disrespected by the wealthy Pushtuns. It was clear from the book that the Hazaras were not equally treated as they were in most cases insulted, threatened, stereotyped by the Pushtuns who often referred to them as “flat-nosed, mice-eating and load carrying donkeys” (Hosseini, 10).<sup>ii</sup>

Khaled Hosseini has also tried to highlight discrimination in the education sector. The Pushtuns and the Hazaras did not receive the same standard of education. Children belonging from Hazaras community (Hassan) were not permitted to enroll in schools unlike those from the Pushtuns (Amir). As such, Amir used the knowledge gained from school to mock and despise Hassan whom he considered inferior, illiterate and dumb servant. It is for this reason that Amir is compelled to read poems and books to Hassan just to not only make him look stupid but to also make him realize that Amir is superior and powerful. Taking advantage of Hassan’s status, Amir even compels Hassan to do whatever he desires *i.e.*, to eat dirt and to be referred to as “Agha” just to buttress his social status.

Discrimination can also be depicted in *The Kite Runner*, when the Hazaras are sexually assaulted. The act was mainly meant to show dominance and control of Pushtuns over the Hazaras. Discrimination is portrayed when Assef and his two friends Wali and Kamal resolved to rape Hassan merely because he was a Hazara whom they considered have no cognizable rights. Assef believes that by so doing, Afghanistan was to be purified of the Hazaras and reserved only for the Pashtuns. Hassan was very much inwardly affected after being sexually abused but he never knew how to show his feelings to the outside world and as such, he chose to ignore and remain silent as if nothing had happened. This clearly shows that the Hazaras were oppressed, threatened and treated like slaves in their own country.

## 6. Conclusions

The study undertaken above is significant as it has proved to have a deep link and connection with legal, moral and religious philosophy of the Afghan people. Despite the loss, betrayal, pain, government oppression, guilt, discrimination and displacement that Khaled Hosseini depicts in *The Kite Runner*, the novel conveys an enduring sense of hope of a bright future for the Afghan people.

*The Kite Runner* is all about relationships. In particular, the story highlights an intricate relationship between the main characters Baba, Assef, Soraya, Rahim and Sohrab as well as that of Hassan and Amir. Betrayal and discrimination is the order of the day among the existing relationships in the novel. For instance, Amir is a child who is possessed of love and attention. He betrays and discriminates against his close Hazara friends just to seek attention from his Baba.

Unlike most mainstream novels that deal with sexual abuse of females, Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner* is one of the exceptions that deal with sexual assault on a male. In Afghanistan, matters sexual were mainly confined to adult persons only and sexual abuse, and particularly sodomy, was generally considered alien, an abominable act which was against the scheme of nature and hence ‘bad.’ From the foregoing, it is clear that both Hassan and Amir encounter sexual violence, the former being the unfortunate victim of violence while the later being a mere observer. This depicts that Amir was ready to betray his half-brother and best friend Hassan just to win the love and heart of his Baba. Immediately after the purported betrayal, Amir feels remorseful and guilty over what he had done to Hassan. It therefore demonstrates that sodomy is a deadly act which mentors, government officers, teachers, civil society organizations, medical experts, leaders, community volunteers, philosophers and religious clerics need to educate the young generation about.

From the foregoing thorough analysis of the selected themes of betrayal, guilt and discrimination as portrayed by the main characters in *The Kite Runner*, it may be concluded that Khaled Hosseini aptly captured the character's actions that not only posed a significant negative spillover on both the victims and the oppressors but also acknowledges the despicable nature of life riddled with betrayal, guilt, forgiveness and discrimination which an individual has to undergo from birth till death in Afghanistan.

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- <sup>i</sup> Khaled Hosseini, a professionally trained doctor was born in Kabul, Afghanistan in 1965. His father worked at the Afghan Foreign Ministry as a diplomat and the mother was a trained Farsi and History teacher at one of secondary schools in Kabul. The family sought asylum in the United States of America when Hossein was fifteen years old.
- <sup>ii</sup> Khaled Hosseini has authored three major and internationally best-selling books *And the Mountains Echoed*, *A Thousand Splendid Sun* and *The Kite Runner*
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- <sup>xxv</sup> *Ibid.* See, Jefferess D., (2009) 'To be Good: The Kite Runner as Allegory of Global Ethics,' *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 398-400.
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