

Representation of Terrorism in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*

Prof. Ridha Thanoon Ali
Assist. Lec. Atheer Jabbar Muhsin
College of Arts - University of Basrah

Abstract:

Khaled Hosseini is an Afghan-born American novelist whose reputation as a writer of grotesque novels is well known. His *The Kite Runner* (2003) gives a vision of what Afghanistan was before its association as a haven for terrorists. Hosseini deals with the theme of terrorism in his first novel *The Kite Runner*, in which he has given a genuine insight to the people of the world about the extremists Taliban, in particular, and the culture, and the traditions of Afghan people in general. This paper seeks to examine Hosseini's depiction of the complexities of life in Afghanistan during the regime of the Talibans. It shows how the country was seen as an asylum for some terrorists and their allies who are accused of the attack in the United States and other countries. Moreover, the paper addresses the need to fight against terrorism as a phenomenon to which the world became the witness of this gruesome reality. It, therefore, provides an analysis of terrorism, revealing the people's suffering caused by this terrorism.

تمثيل الارهاب في رواية خالد حسيني (الطائرة الورقية)

المدرس المساعد

الاستاذ

أثير جبار محسن

رضا ذنون علي

جامعة البصرة /كلية الآداب

الملخص:-

يعد خالد حسيني من الروائيين الامريكيين ذوي الاصل الافغاني و الذي اشتهر بكتابة روايات " غريبة". روايته *عداء الطائرة الورقية* التي كتبت عام ٢٠٠٣ حالة افغانستان قبل اتخاذها ملاذا للأرهابيين. يجسد حسيني في روايته هذه الارهاب برؤية ثاقبة كيف يرى الناس ارهابيو طالبان، خصوصا بالربط مع الحضارة و القيم للشعب الافغاني. تهتم هذه الدراسة بتفحص حسيني للأرهاب في الحياة الافغانية خلال فترة حكم نظام طالبان. أذ تبين كيف ان افغانستان اصبحت ملاذا للأرهابيين و حلفائهم ممن اتهموا بهجمات الولايات المتحدة الامريكية و البلدان الاخرى. علاوة على ذلك تحاكي الدراسة الحاجة الى محاربة الارهاب كظاهرة شهدتها العالم حقيقة واقعة. و لهذا فهي تقدم تحليلا للأرهاب مبينة معاناة الناس جراء الارهاب.

Introduction

In the tumult of the past three decades, Afghan writers have created a body of diaspora literature, which shows the plight of their country's men and women. A historical novel, *The Kite Runner* depicts the history of Afghanistan and the struggles of the everyday life of all sect of society. It is a country that is divided between political powers and religiously extremists' beliefs which create poverty and violence within the people on the one hand, and the government which is run by extremists on the other hand. More significantly, this novel explicates a cultural description of Afghanistan and its traditions including the lives of the ordinary people who live in Kabul. Hosseini provides an informed experience by the description of the country's ideological and political conflict with the Taliban. *The Kite Runner* continuously combines the compelling narratives of the central characters who give an insight of the nation. It also refers to The Soviet occupation, the occupation of the extremist groups and Hosseini's childhood experiences till the day when the whole family takes refuge in the U.S. Throughout the novel, Hosseini's fluctuation is explicit while he allows the human tendencies of love, friendship and brotherhood to replace the hostilities that drive the characters into extremely difficult situations.

1. Definitions of Terrorism

Defining terrorism is so complex task that there is no agreement upon a specific definition of the term. Such a complexity, undoubtedly, stems in many roots. It originates from the variety of groups who manipulate violence to install terror. This, however, has its own justification, in that the number of definitions cope with the ideological attitudes of the definers. Violence to some extent is made equal with terrorism in that

some parties view it according to their own policies and political interests.

The use of violence to create terror and fear or to coerce the people to certain demeanor is as old as the human civilization. Such a state of violence serves various regimes throughout the course of the human history. Etymologically, the term 'terrorism' " is derived from Latin word 'terrere' which means 'to frighten'. Gradually, it acquired its modern form during the Reign of Terror in France from 1793–1794"(Campbell, 2001). Speaking about terrorism, Robespierre (1794,5) says:

...terror is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible; it is therefore an emanation of virtue; it is not so much a special principle as it is a consequence of the general principle of democracy applied to our country's most urgent needs.

The main obstacles to forging consensus on the definition of terrorism are related to acts of terror committed by states; therefore the distinction between the activities of terrorists and of freedom fighters ever exist. Generally, terrorism is "an anxiety-inspiring method of brutal action, engaged by clandestine individual, group or state actors, for criminal or political reasons, whereby in contrast to eliminate the direct targets of violence are not the main targets" (Schmid, 1988, 3). In this respect Schmid (1988, 28) draws carefully the connection between the act of the terrorists and aims of different fighting groups which distinguished them from others when he says:

The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat and violence based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperilled) victims,

and main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience(s)), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought (Schmid, 1988, 3)

This means that terrorists have schemes based on different ideologies, political, religious, governmental, or otherwise. Nevertheless, there is a chance to recognize terrorists from other fighting groups engaged in violent acts. Terrorists use violence as a mean for terrifying people, contrary to liberal groups that use violence to achieve social and political goals aiming at achieving prosperity to their countries.

According to Waler Laqueur (1987,149), terrorism, "constitutes the illegitimate use of force to achieve a political objective when innocent people are targeted". Political purposes are, again, the motivators of violence. On his part, Drake(1988, 2) sees terrorism as "the recurrent use or threatened use of politically motivated and clandestinely organized violence, by a group whose aim is to influence a psychological target in order to make it behave in a way which the group desires."

The use of violence to accomplish political goals is something common to state and non-state groups. Nevertheless, the majority of definitions in use were written by agencies directly associated with various governments, and are systematically prejudiced to exclude governments from the definition. What is now ranked as "terrorist" is highly disrespectful, in that it denotes "a lack of legitimacy and morality"(UN Resolution, 94/60,1994:1). As a matter of fact, the so-called acts of "terrorism" are often a tactic committed by the actors as part of a larger military or geo-political agenda. The terrorist attacks of the US on September 11th, and the subsequent efforts by the

United States "to build a broad-based antiterrorism coalition, have thrown into sharp relief the question of what constitutes terrorism"(Ganor,2002:287). This variety of ideological advocacy of the term, no doubt, suggests that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" (Laqueur, 1987, 302).

The primary motivation of terrorists is not altruistic, provoked by a higher cause or ideology that is greater than their personal motifs. It is recognized that the terrorist may not be prompted in this way, "instead acting out a sense of revenge borne out of the individual's personal or familial experience or perceptions of ill-treatment or humiliation"(Scharader,2017,10). This seems to be common to all people over the world including the countries which are suffering from terrorism.

As is the case in Afghanistan, insurgency and regional retribution have been portrayed by many as the prime motivations for terrorist events linked to the occupation of the country. They intensified the rivalry between the urban elite, the rural traditionalists and the traditional elite inviting external support from The Soviet Union which occupied Afghanistan in late December 1979. Attempts to modernization are mainly confined to Kabul and other urban centers without looking for political and socio-economic reforms.

2. Terrorism in *The Kite Runner*

The struggle against terrorism has its roots deeply germinated in the socially divided Afghan society. The resistant tribal population had a separate existence and conducted their affairs according to their tribal traditions. The authority of the central government could not accommodate all parties because each party had its divided ideologies and divided interests. This led to the formation of several semi-clandestine groups and these Islamic groups began advocating their own selfish interests.

Urmila Phadnis in her book *Ethnicity and Nation-Building in South Asia* has rightfully said:

The existing balance of power between various groups may also change over time, thereby undermining elite cooperation. Furthermore, inter-ethnic cohesion achieved through institutionalized control and domination is difficult to maintain if the legitimacy of state authority is itself in doubt (Phadnis,1990, 47)

In this conflict, the role of the state is not of an oppressor but of a mediator; this, approach of shutting out all others had denied any access to power strategically for ethnic balancing. Although, after the Soviets have left the nation, political turmoil continued with the emergence of ethnic politics intertwined with religion. Therefore, religion has remained in a state of flux inviting more confusion and chaos. The political religion has heightened religious antagonism, and created space for religious militancy and terrorism. More importantly, Afghanistan has witnessed a resurgence of religious militancy with militant fundamentalism emerging under religious terrorism. The state has been torn throughout 25 years by wars through which the Taliban rule destroyed culture of the country creating thousands of refugees. So, many people migrated to the European countries keeping their own traditions. Really, Afghanistan is an Islamic country giving upper hand importance to the religious traditions, together with traditional tribal and ethic practices, which play an important role in personal conduct and existence. In Afghanistan, the celebration of Eid, Afghan literature, and kite flying tournament in Kabul are mainly depicted in this novel.

One feature of the phenomenon of religious extremism is to be found within the ranks of "believers in all of the great religions. They do not represent the essence of these religious traditions"(Zaoui, 2005); rather they reveal the agendas of those

extremists, with ideologies that never have relations whatsoever to their own religion. As a result of the 20 years of war and under the role of the unstable government, a new generation of violent fundamentalists emerged, who is inspired by the Taliban's unique Islamist model. Having hoped to overthrow their regimes in the future, innumerable foreign fighters are allied with Taliban.

The Kite Runner tells the story of the Afghan born Amir in the mid of self-loss, narrating the toil of place-find in the world of terrorism and tumult which causes emotional stress during the childhood events. Escaping to USA, he uncovers his life there with all its odd events. The narration constitutes a series of memories of Amir's childhood in Afghanistan. Side by side with his childhood experiences, Amir is tormented of faked relationship with his father, a vague relationship with Hassan (a Shi'a Muslim servant), and his confusion in getting a way for redemption.

One of the greatest struggles for Amir is his confusion of self-consciousness as a member of an elite class family. The relation between him and Hassan and his father seems more like that of family members. For Amir's father, the tenets and traditions of his culture are something not relevant to modern life, thus he confuses things for young Amir. As a member of Afghan society, Amir must also strive for the insecurity of the Afghan political system in the 1970s.

In a remarkable event, happening during kite flying game Amir decides not to act and this conscious choice of inaction gives rise to a state of feeling guilty, lying, inability and betrayal. With the continuous instability and rise of terrorism, Amir and his father succeeded to escape from Afghanistan.

America gives Amir a chance to forget and leave his past behind.

The memories of the past are inseparable, though Amir and his father struggle to be in a new life in the United States . Finally, Amir composed himself as mature to atone the guilt of childhood. He decided to return to Afghanistan to rescue the life of the dead Hassan's son, an opportunity which represents the last hope of redemption in the mid of terrorism and danger.

More significantly, *The Kite Runner* is a novel about complex relationships, social traditions confused with terrorist acts, violent scenes and fundamentalist obsession of power. Hosseini reveals the theme of violence in this novel as Mukherjee (2015, 1) notes that:

Throughout it, the writer has given an authentic insight to the people of the world about the Taliban in particular and the customs and traditions of the people of Afghanistan in general. It is Hosseini's close observation and great story telling skills that enable him to depict such complexities of life in Afghanistan during the regime of the Taliban. Moreover, the distance of time helps him to take a separate and objective view of the events depicted in the novel.

The novelist himself stresses this fact when he speaks about the composition of the novel, saying:

And I happened to write a short story called *The Kite Runner* back in the spring of 1999. I had seen a story about the Taliban banning kite flying in Kabul, and since I grew up in Kabul flying kites with my brother and my cousins, my friends, it struck a personal chord, and I wrote a short story, which I thought was going to be about kite flying, and it ended up being about something altogether different. And that short story sat around for two years until March of '01 when I picked it up, and my

wife found it and read it and she loved it. I went back to it, and I realized, "Wow! I think there is a novel in this thing. (Hosseini, *Achievement.org*.2008)

In Hossieni's words(Hosseini, *Achievement.org*), the banning of kite flying is a significant issue that inspires him to write a story about the Taliban kite flying. Then, the short story turned to be a complete novel reflecting the picture of Afghans traditions before and after the Taliban control. Therefore, it shows the contradictions resulting from the hard roles of terrorists. Again, kite flying, in his eyes, is a remarkable event in the life of Afghans people, which is integral part of their traditions.

As an attempt to examine the role played by the extremists in Afghanistan during Taliban's reign, the novel characterizes "the excesses and abuses of governments, including references to capital punishment, political and economic injustice, religious freedom, linguistic diversity, literacy and enfranchisement, and familial relationships" (Stuhr, 2009, 65). It, moreover, is more laudable so far as to consider the storylines and depiction of the critical themes such as ethnic clash, religion, and history. Throughout the course of the events, characters are caught in the mid of struggling against external forces. The inner lives of people are reflected by the brutality of the outside world. The decisions the Afghan make about their own lives are beyond control, culminating in revolutions, wars, extremism, and oppression.

The discussion of the concept of Islamic extremism and the Taliban violent dominance over the fate of people lies in the history of Afghanistan. From a historical perspective, Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* depicts the socio-political configuration of Afghanistan throughout the years from the late 1970s to the

Taliban government of the 1990s until its fall after the incident of September 11, 2001. Such an event, being a radical change to the destiny of the country, becomes the crucial incident in Afghanistan's history that took place in the past for a period of thirty years. Mohammad Asim Siddiqui (2012:194) plainly states the case saying: "the act of writing becomes a means to preserve a past, rather to recreate a past ...". *The Kite Runner's* portrayal of the condition of the Afghans unlinks the strict life in Afghanistan under the rule of the Taliban government. Showing Afghan life, Hosseini fathoms the serious cases like the political and economic changes of contemporary Afghanistan already mentioned above. Rebecca Stuhr (77-78) has rightly said that:

Hosseini writes compelling stories through which he questions assumptions and breaks apart stereotypes through the strengths and weaknesses of his characters. He interweaves into the action of his stories the details of history, culture, and daily life in Afghanistan. He challenges his readers to reflect on discrimination and political abuse within their own experience in light of instances of such abuses in a different and unfamiliar country.

Political conflicts with the Taliban new extremist government, as *The Kite Runner* reveals, change the face of Afghanistan as well as the law and order. The terrorists adhere to Islamic Shari'ah instead of the secular law of Afghanistan. The government does so purposefully to maintain Islamic environment as well as to keep people away from the modern world and enlightenment. Therefore, the modern history of Afghanistan clearly exhibits the failure of the extremist government. In Taliban's view "perhaps the most important item" required is "an artificial beard, black and chest length, Shari'a[h]-friendly" in order to maintain "at least the Taliban

version of *Shari'a[h]*" (Hosseini, *Kite Runner*, 202). However, the strict Shari'ah does not suit the citizens, hence; they look for help of the world to overthrow the Taliban. The Taliban believes that the world should not know about the oppression the Afghans are subjected to, because they fear the world will rescue people. With this hope, Farid's elder brother urged Amir to write a book about the miserable lot of the people of Afghanistan "May be you should write about Afghanistan ... Tell the rest of the world what the Taliban are doing to our country" (*The Kite Runner*, 206).

The Taliban implements Shari'ah law for punishing people; this is the way of torturing Afghans publically with no reservation as Amir himself witnesses one of these scenes. A group of Taliban punished and killed a woman and a man in the Stadium. The sight of the penalty of those who oppose Taliban reflects the brutal face of the extremist movement. This act is really significant in that it mirrors the dark face of extremism:

Two Talibs with Kalashnikovs stung across their shoulders helped the blindfolded man from the first truck and two others helped the *burqa* clad woman. The woman's knees buckled under her and she slumped to the ground. ...The blindfolded man, on the other hand, quietly allowed them to lower him into the hole dug for him..... A chubby, white-bearded cleric dressed in grey garments stood near the goalposts and cleared his throat into a handheld microphone ... He recited a lengthy prayer from the Koran.... (*The Kite Runner*, 235)*

*All Quatations of the novel are taken from Hosseini, Khalid.(2003). London: Bloosbury Plc.Print. Henceforth all quotations are referred to by page number only.

Violent voices in the talk of the cleric with rigidity in the tone, who had addressed the public at the stadium saying “brothers and sisters” after the completion of his prayer continuing thus:

We are here today to carry out *Shari'a*[h]. We are here to carry out justice. We are here today because the will of Allah and the word of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him ... God says that every sinner must be punished in a manner befitting his sin ... How shall we punish those who dishonor the sanctity of marriage? How shall we deal with those who spit in the face of God? WE SHALL THROW THE STONES BACK!” (235-36)

Such a statement moralizing in tone though reveals the rigidity of the Taliban regime. They pretend to provide justice, follow the *Shari'a* in punishing the sinners who are really not. This scene is an outstanding one concerning extremist vulgarity and barbarism. Even “the bloodied corpses had been unceremoniously tossed into the backs of red pickup trucks” so that “the teams took the field” and thus “second half was under way” (*Kite Runner*, 237). This scene accurately reveals the covered fact of the Taliban and their false and rude use of religion, stressing the wretched conditions of women in Afghanistan. Clearly.

Hosseini draws the attention to the issue of ethnic differences under the rule of extremists. This also resulted in racial clashes between different ethnic groups. Hosseini himself emphasizes racial discrimination plainly and vividly:

ascendancy or domination of one power or state within a league, confederation is apparent through the Russian invasion and America’s war against Afghanistan, the predominant influence of one social class over others. (Hegemony,2009)

This fact was reflected through the grim Taliban-Pushtun government's suppression over the Hazaras in the country. Afghanistan is a multiethnic country where about 17 communities live: "Pushtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Aimaq, Farsiwan, Turkmen, Qizilbash, Brahui, Baluch, Nuristani, Hindu, Sikh, Jew, Yahud, Pamiri, Kohistani, Gujar, Qirghiz, Arab, Jat Guji , Mongol" (Emadi, 2002, 3).

The majority of ethnic group is Pashtuns that (belong to the Sunni school of Afghanistan) which constitutes the bulk of the population of the country. This gives Taliban illegitimate justification to persecution of other ethnic minority communities of Afghanistan. However, the contempt and misery of the Hazaras is a sample of the other minority communities in Afghanistan during the reign of the extremists. This class distinction created by the extremists leads to the suffering of the weaker groups; Hosseini has skillfully hinted at the discrimination and marginalization represented by the character of Assef who claims that the Taliban had "massacred the Hazaras in Mazar-i-Sharif" (187) in 1998, and points out this incident with great pride:

Door to door we went, calling for the men and the boys. We'd shoot them right there in front of their families. Let them see. Let them remember who they were, where they belonged ... Sometimes, we broke down their doors and went inside their homes. And ... I'd ... I'd sweep the barrel of my machine gun around the room and fire and fire until the smoke blinded me ... You don't know the meaning of the word 'liberating' until you've done that, stood in a roomful of targets, let the bullets fly, free of guilt and remorse, knowing you are virtuous, good, and decent. Knowing you're doing God's work. It's breathtaking (242)

Through this event Hosseini clearly manifests how violent, cruel, and savage the extremists of Taliban are. This event can be seen as a dramatic show that clarifies the terrible life of the minorities and the Hazaras under the rule of the extremists Taliban that resulted in hatred which is considered a significant milestone in the disclosure of the real face of extremism. The deceitful pretention of imposing Shari'ah by the Taliban is ironical: the chief leader Assef “wasn’t much of a religious type” (247) since his childhood. Despite his showing some readiness to accept fact, he has justified his Taliban membership to Amir, who is supposed to take revenge on Hazaras and the communists. As a reasonable justification to Assef, he tells Amir the story of his arrest during the time of the communist rule saying:

... one night, when a group of *Parchami* soldiers marched into our house and ordered my father and me at gunpoint to follow them. The bastards didn’t give a reason, and they wouldn’t answer my mother’s questions. Not that it was a mystery; everyone knew the communists had no class. (247)

The prisoners, including him, are subject to the corporal punishment to the worst degree at regular interval; hardly could anybody escape the punishment. Experienced in being punished, Assef adds:

Every night the commandant, a half-Hazara, half-Uzbek thing who smelled like a rotting donkey, would have one of the prisoners dragged out of the cell and he’d beat him until sweat poured from his fat face ... One night, he picked me. It couldn’t have come at a worse time. I’d been peeing blood for three days. Kidney stones ... They dragged me out and he started kicking me. He had knee-high boots with steel toes that he wore every night for his little kicking game, and he used them on me. I was

screaming and screaming and he kept kicking me and then, suddenly, he kicked me on the left kidney and the stone passed ... I kept laughing and laughing because suddenly I knew that had been a message from God: He was on my side. He wanted me to live for a reason (247-48)

But this never made its way to the mind of Amir; therefore, he ridiculously comments on the abuses by the extremists mentioning how religion is misused to torture mercilessly the country people "Stoning adulterers? Raping children? Flogging women for wearing high heels? Massacring Hazaras? All in the name of Islam?"(248). Hosseini's view concerning these actions is well manifested through the thoughts of the protagonist. Amir is true in his heart, thus he follows his principle that there is no relation between Islam and terrorism and Islam does not sustain violence and horror. Assef, on the other hand, has his own reasons, his ultimate goals is to make Afghanistan void of the Hazaras. Assef has rightfully considered the Hazara to be "garbage". He says to Amir "Like pride in your people, your customs, your language. Afghanistan is like a beautiful mansion littered with garbage, and someone has to take out the garbage (249).

Later on, Assef shows his extreme hatred for extremist Hazaras that was further reflected through his speech during the time of his conversation with Amir. He expresses bewilderment to Amir for the latter's effort of coming to the former covering a long distance, from America to take the Hazara boy, Sohrab. According to Assef , it was a futile effort:

I wonder I wonder why you've come all this way, Amir, come all this way for a Hazara? Why are you here? Why are you *really* here?"(Hosseini, The Kite Runner 249) The long conversation between Amir and Assef ended up with a deal "to finish an old bit of business (252)

For this novel, one can discover Assef's nature, as being a man of belief who never leaves anybody of his/her deserved justice and listened to his own ethics and principles who is actually not. The battle for the boy began, and at least, after intense fight, Amir again gains victory. He obtains the possession of Sohrab from the clutches of Assef. The maltreatment given by Assef to the Hazaras and the other ethnic minorities reveals the double standards of the Taliban government. The Taliban delivered a kind of fair treatment and good wishes to the Pashtun and the maltreatment was the fate of the Hazaras and other minority communities. They pride in being Sunni and avoid the Shites. They favor the followers of the political and religious extremists and target the communists.

In the mid of the political turmoil and humiliating conditions of living of the smaller ethnic groups, Hazara we see the endurance torture of Hassan and his son, for not a single crime but rather for being born in a Hazara's -Shia- family. This is the essence of marginalization and oppression in Afghan Pashtun's dominating society. Hosseini, in the novel, shows Hazara as the victims of terrorism. Despite being marginalized, Hassan gives a vision of great deal of loyalty and courage to his Pashtun's master Rahim Khan. Therefore, he refuses to let the big house in Wazir Akbar Khan to the Taliban. Hassan and his wife (Farzana) are shot dead as Rahim Khan admitted saying: " So they took him to the street—... and shot him in the back of the head ... Farzana came screaming and attacked them—... shot her too. Self-defence, they claimed later"— (191-92). Rahim Khan further adds:

The Taliban moved into the house ... The pretext was that they had evicted a trespasser. Hassan's and Farzana's murders were dismissed as a case of self-defence. 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 (192-93)

The merciless death of Hassan and Farzana is a symbol of the brutal events and persecution imposed by violent groups of extremists against small ethnic communities. This scene confirms how Hazara has no right at all in their own society. On the other hand, nobody can question the murderers regarding the death of the couple of Hazara:

The country was now virtually split along north-south lines and also along Pashtun and non Pashtun lines. As a result of the Hazara uprising in the north, the Taliban proceeded to massacre Shi'a Hazara villagers everywhere (Hussain, 2003, 84).

This way of hideous and grievous death represents a tragic episode which is part of the terror and prejudice against small minorities that spread throughout the novel. The image of barren life during the Taliban times; the pomegranate tree which stands still but fruitless symbolizes Afghanistan under the dark regime of extremism. In the novel, the Taliban is depicted as a senseless violent group; their deeds capture the cruelty of life. In this sense, the story of Rahim Khan(the friend of Amir's father) of the two members of the Taliban who control Kabul, has implications to their will to control the house of the Baba in whose defense Hassan is seen effortless to prevent them. Despite his desperate attempts, they killed him. The act of killing in this way shows the member of Taliban as considering the life of Hazara valueless. *The Kite Runner* is a novel which shows the father-son relations as well. Hassan's life has great connection to Sohrab's in regards to fate and suffering for being a minority. Both the father and the son have the same destiny. Sohrab is no

far from danger. This is what Rahim Khan said to Amir, "I heard he's in an orphanage somewhere in Karteh-She" (193).

Several children, like Sohrab, are orphans. The orphanage is not a safe place for them during the Taliban reign. The images of repression and misery that the Afghanis suffered during the extremist regime of the Taliban government are vivid through Amir's dialogues with Rahim Khan, Farid, Dr. Rasul, and Zaman. The time he hears the news of his old friend Rahim Khan's illness, Amir visits Peshawar to meet him. Rahim Khan tells him the whole story of his country, Afghanistan, and the bad news of the Taliban reign there. Khan and Amir's discussion of the terrifying acts of the Taliban sheds light on terrorism and persecution. Speaking of it, he adds:

... 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)

It is not the extremist only who causes horror and terror, but the military troops are another source of terrorism in Afghanistan. Afghans tolerate the North Alliance no more, thus they would appreciate its fall joyfully. Khan admits this in front of Amir:

When the Taliban rolled in and kicked the Alliance out of Kabul, I actually danced on that street ... And, believe me, I wasn't alone. People were celebrating at *Chaman*, at *Deh-Mazang*, greeting the Taliban in the streets, climbing their tanks and posing for pictures with them. 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* (174)

The inhumanity of the North Alliance is clear in the view of Khan in comparison to that of the extremist Taliban cruelty. Farid, the taxi driver, gives more details of terrorism in Afghanistan during the time of the Taliban regime. This happens throughout the journey with Amir from Pakistan to Afghanistan. Farid depicts the situation as dominated by poverty and misery everywhere. His revelation gives a strong insight to the people regarding their conditions of living. In their journey, Farid describes the whole life of the Afghan nation saying:

He pointed to the crumbled, charred remains of a tiny village. It was just a tuft of blackened, roofless walls now ... I had a friend there once ... He was a very good bicycle repairman. He played the tabla well too. The Taliban killed him and his family and burned the village (214)

A close look at Farid uncovers the ironical tone in his words. It sounds so when he said to Amir during the time of their conversation in Kabul that “the only people in Kabul who get to eat lamb now are the Taliban” (216). Amir is able to realize its justification. The lamb is a symbol of ‘innocence’, so it is not only the lamb that the Taliban eat but they are responsible for the death of so many “innocent” people of Afghanistan. Surely, Amir can see the qualities of a lamb in Hassan, who is himself the victim of the Taliban. Amir now has his first encounter with the Taliban, the group of Islamic radicals that now control Afghanistan. Farid calls them the “Beard Patrol” as they approach in their red pickup truck. According to the Taliban, a man who shaves his beard is sinful, and they make it their job to punish any person caught sinning. Shaving was one of many illegal acts under the Taliban regime rule that controls the

minute details of people's life. Zaman, the orphanage director, tells Farid after prolonged discussion, that he has not been paid for six months and has already spent his life savings on the orphanage. Without money, he is unable to feed his children. Furthermore, if he protests, the officials (extremists) will take ten children instead of one. In his concern, Zaman is much similar to Hassan who was powerless to do anything against Assef; he is now powerless vis-a-vis the Taliban officials; and it is Sohrab, Hassan's orphaned son, who is the victim. More striking plight is seen when Zaman tells Amir that many of the children in the orphanage are not orphans:

... 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 ... This place is better than the street, but not that much better ... 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" (222).

The aftermath of extremism could be traced in all aspects of life. An image of the damage caused by extremism, the long term fight and the role of Islamic radicals are astonishing moment of Amir's meeting with an old university teacher, who is Amir's mother colleague and now a beggar struggling to earn his bread of the day. This encounter is the most shocking factor of the endless dilemma that the people of Afghanistan are subjected to during the times of terrorist role.

Khalid Hosseini has disclosed the worst thing that takes place during the Taliban reign, which is the trafficking of the orphans. Zaman is an eye-witness of such deeds. He reveals in front of Amir one secret related to the same orphanage where he himself encouraged it under bound circumstances: "There is a Talib official ... He visits once every month or two. He brings

cash with him, not a lot, but better than nothing at all ... Usually, he'll take a girl. But not always" (224).

It is also due to the outcome of the Taliban rule in Afghanistan that dead bodies are found hanging. On one occasion, Amir saw a dead body near the Khyber Restaurant in Kabul:

"There had been a hanging. A young man dangled from the end of a rope tied to a beam, his face puffy and blue, the clothes he'd worn on the last day of his life shredded, bloody. Hardly anyone seemed to notice him" (226).

On another occasion, while Amir was waiting for the Taliban leader who had taken Sohrab from the orphanage at three o'clock at the place fixed for appointment, he had seen a Taliban member murdering two people. Surprisingly, Amir later on, discovers that the very person is Assef. His identity is revealed during the time of Amir's exchange of heated dialogues with the other person. The oppressive nature of the Taliban is also echoed in the voice of Omar Faisal. Amir wanted to take Sohrab along with him to America. Pointing at the possible danger, Sohrab Omar says to Amir:

Well, it's like this. In the aftermath of a disaster, whether it be natural or man-made—and the Taliban are a disaster, Amir, believe me—it's always difficult to ascertain that a child is an orphan ... So the INS won't grant a visa unless it's clear the child meets the definition of an eligible orphan. (294)

Further, Omar explains to Amir that even in the case of a child who had lost his parent is not safe from Taliban. Amir gets infuriated and reacted, "What heritage? ... The Taliban have destroyed what heritage Afghans had. You saw what they did to the giant Buddhas in Bamiyan" (294). Then, the attack on the World trade Center (WTC) in U.S on September 11, 2001 affected the Taliban rule in Afghanistan very badly. This

hideous act reminded the Americans of the severe havoc and bitter experiences that they had undergone after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941. It astonishes the people of the whole world. Khalid Hosseini has also depicted this real incident of the collapse of the Twin Towers in 2001 in *The Kite Runner* very skillfully. In 2001, "One Tuesday morning last September, the Twin Towers came crumbling down and, overnight, the world changed" (*Kite Runner*, 316). But the most radical change that takes place was in Afghanistan. The American president converts his fury into action. "Soon after the attacks, America bombed Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance moved in, and the Taliban scurried like rats into the caves (316).

The Taliban fight till their last breath at the battle of Kandahar but had to bow down in front of the American force at the end of the day. What the Taliban are bound to do under such terrific circumstances is to hide themselves in the caves of the mountains and there are others who fled into the neighboring country of Pakistan.

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 and green *chapan* became famous" (316).

The *Kite Runner* discloses plainly the bad conditions of the people under the stress of the Taliban regime that the aggressive actions and the violent acts dominate the whole horoscope of the novel.

3. Conclusion

Now it becomes clear that, through the examination of Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, one can say that it is a depiction of the social condition of Afghanistan people during Afghan conflicts. Afghanistan, at that time, has the deadly mix of open

ended conflict, unabated poverty, Islamic extremism and literalism, which resulted in becoming a base for worldwide terrorist operations. Indeed, fighting extremism, and religious radicalism, is as old as war between good and evil. For ages, there remained no dearth of the agents of bigotry, who tactfully exploited the poor people's sentiments to channel their frustration against targets suited to their vested interests. Politicians, Taliban government or the like, also use it to their advantage by offering a Utopia of the future. This dictum rules over the situation in the present-day crisis across the globe, where extremist forces seek to justify anything and everything in the name of religion.

A story of dreadful situations, *The Kite Runner* reconciles these horrors with very real characters. Amir is a very flawed human, whose flaws are easy to comprehend. Using these technical powers, Hosseini renders a story of Afghani culture quite relevant and accessible to the American audience. Through the commonness of human flaws and sin, Americans are able to recognize Afghani culture that appears to be radically different from theirs. All readers are capable of discovering a great sense of humanity in this novel, and also a sense of kinship with characters. *The Kite Runner* opens by foregrounding the themes of sin, guilt, and terror that shape the narrative. Terrorism is the central part of the novel revealed through the action of extremists represented by Taliban. It is so nicely woven in the setting of Afghanistan and with the life of characters that becomes the integral part of the novel. The savage and vicious acts of violence and brutality that stalk the reader throughout the novel, though at first unwelcome, truly enhance the experience of *The Kite Runner*. Terrorism is the truth that hovers all around the world portrayed in this novel. Hosseini carefully rebuilds, at the end of the novel, the lost hope of his readers' with the ending message that wounds heal, and life gets better.

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