

THE ECHOES OF GENOCIDAL CONFLICTS IN *THE KITE RUNNER* BY KHALED HUSSEINI

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Abstract

Purpose of the Study: The discourse aims to diagnose the causes of genocidal conflict between Pashtuns and Hazaras. It also aims to analyze the power exercised by the Pashtuns who have subjugated and marginalized the Hazaras since the 1221 century.

Methodology: The theoretical framework employed in the study is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2001). Fairclough's three-dimensional model is implemented to reflect the nature of social practices which comprises an understanding of discourse as a text (micro-level) discourse practice (Meso-level) and socio-cultural practice (macro-level).

Main Findings: The result of the study shows that Hazaras became the victim of the Genocidal conflict owing to their prior historical battle fought Between Khawarzamis (ancestors of Pashtuns) and Mongols (ancestor of Hazaras) in 1221CE. In the war Mongols loathed Khawarzamis as a result it adopted the shape of a genocidal conflict. With passing years, it coloured in many ways such as in the shape of cultural, socioeconomic, and religiopolitical conflicts, which in turn marginalized, subalternated, Othered, and killed thousands of Hazaras, and the conflict is still unstoppable.

Application of this Study: Since different books, websites, as well as the novel *The Kite Runner*, have been critically examined for a better understanding of the concept of genocidal conflict which is very helpful to understand the stance of genocidal conflict and the factors that prompt genocidal conflict. It can be helpful in sociology in political studies for power balance in society.

Keywords: *Genocidal Conflict, Pashtuns & Hazaras Conflict, Battle of Parwan 1221CE, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).*

INTRODUCTION

The present study gestures at the factors that play a vital role in terms of genocidal violence in Khaled Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner*. It exposes the very bedrock of genocidal conflict in its historical context in the *Kite Runner*. Pashtuns have colonized the Hazar as those who fell prey to high-scale violence. In other words, it can be claimed that there is a class hold developed in Afghanistan where Pashtuns have a stronghold as they are higher in number, 50% to 54% of the total population (Mazhar, Khan, & Goraya, 2012). Due to the higher frequency of the Pashtuns population, they have dominated Afghanistan since the mid-eighteenth century (Hanley, 2011). On the other hand, Hazaras are only 7% of the total population of Afghanistan (Rais, 2008). Just like Hindu society where they have divided society into four classes, the classification is based on occupation, which ultimately determines wealth, power, and privilege (Deshpande, 2010). Similarly, Hazaras are at the bottom in Afghanistan and are considered untouchable.

In *The Kite Runner*, the Hazaras have been stereotyped as "mice eating, flat-nosed, load-carrying donkeys." (Hosseini, p.23). Owing to this racial prejudice, the Pashtun characters Baba and Amir refuse to embrace Hassan and Ali despite how loyal they are to them. In the text, it can be noted that Pashtuns reject Hazaras who are human beings for no more thoughtful reason than racial difference, though they are equally harmless to both humans and non-humans. Hassan is a fine example of "judging a book by its cover". Though Amir and Hassan grew up and played together, he never assumes him as his friend, using the community that marks him as an outsider and alienated because of his ethnicity. A community that knows Hassan based on his ethnicity rather than how genuine and sincere he is. Regardless of historical accounts, your ethnicity does not define whether you are an insider or an outsider. Hazaras are denied lucrative occupations and are unable to possess private property, which contributes to their demise. Hazaras are typically workers, farmers, artisans, and laborers. These people are regarded as outcasts because they do odd jobs that are deemed dirty such as foraging, peeling, and dead animals. Therefore, they are not regarded to be a part of any caste system. This dehumanizing act takes us back to the history of the Genocidal conflict between Pashtuns and Hazaras. The hatred is solely based on ethnicity; they are called dirt and garbage because they are Hazaras. It seems like Hazaras are not for grants as humans in Afghanistan but more like filth that no one wants to see around in Afghanistan.

Research Questions

- 1) What are the ramifications of the genocidal conflict between Pashtuns and Hazaras?
- 2) How the grassroots thinking help to reduce or support the genocide?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic country where different ethnic groups or communities do exist. Till the 19th Century, there was no such term as ‘Ethnic Groups’ people were unconscious of the ethnic hierarchy. It was the foreign academicians and governments who injected the idea of ethnic hierarchy and split the people of Afghanistan into different groups based on cultural, religious, social, and linguistic differences, but all of this did not exist before the mid of 20th century ([Boboyorov, Poos & Schetter, 2009](#)). It was during the monarchy of Durrani in 1747 which caused a dramatic turning point and an ethnic group “Pashtuns” constituted an irresistible majority. After the Achaemenid period, multiple states rose and fell on the territory of what is now Afghanistan ([Saikal, 2006](#)). Since then, Afghanistan is dominated by Pashtuns, and whoever tries to rise against them, gets smashed by them. [Rais \(1999\)](#) stated that ethnically Afghanistan is, indeed, a very “diverse country that has been under the rule of the Pashtun majority at the top level since all the monarchs came from this tribe.” Nevertheless, before the Saur Revolution, ethnicity had never been a major issue in Afghan politics. The same is the case with Hazaras who are the decedent of Mongols, who had a war with Pashtuns in the late 19th century later it turned into a religious conflict that exists today.

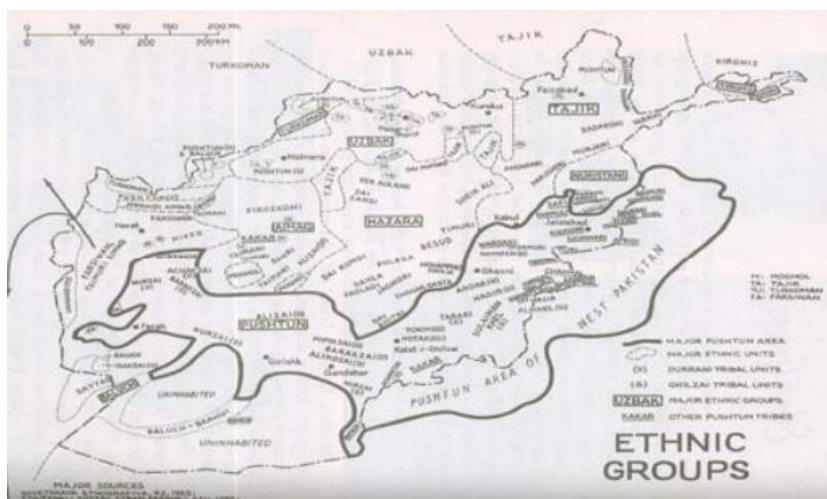


Figure 1: Ethnic Groups in Afghanistan

Source: Dupree & Louis, (2010) and Afghanistan. Oxford University Press

In the territory of Afghanistan Pashtuns are one of the largest ethnic groups in the country consisting of 50% to 54% of the total population. It is the Pashtuns ethnic group who have dominated the country since the mid of 18th century ([Hanley, 2011](#)). In contrast, Hazaras came to Afghanistan with Genghis Khan in the 13th Century and settled there. The total population of Hazaras in Afghanistan is just 7% and they are the poorest and the most marginalized ethnic community in the country ([Rais, 2008](#)). Throughout the world, ethnic features are as same as that of kinship both keep the base for developing identity. Although, at the same time ethnic groups play a key role in the history of Afghanistan when it comes to violence ([Hanley, 2011](#)). Owing to the fact that, the ethnic hierarchy, there is a great impact on the people of Afghanistan which is resulted in violence. Conventionally, there is no clash on resources but it is based on the ethnic and religious hierarchy since Afghanistan is a country consisting of different ethnic groups with various cultural traits, including language, religious practices, and physical appearances ([Goodson, 1998](#)). The plot and events of *The Kite Runner* revolve around the two ethnic groups, Pashtuns and Hazaras. Where Pashtuns are the leading, influential, and privileged ethnic group while the Hazaras are the persecuted, oppressed, and maltreated ethnic group.

A Historic Massacre of Genocidal Conflicts Among Different Nations

The word ‘Genocide’ is derived from Greek and Latin languages. Therefore, it is the combination of two words, the first part ‘Genos’ is derived from the Greek language means tribe, whereas the second part ‘Cide’ is derived from the Latin language which means Killing ([Lemkin, 2007](#)). The term Genocide can be defined as the holocaust (ethnic cleansing) of several people with particular ethnicity deliberately abolishing their existence, based on their race, ethnicity, religion, or hateful behavior towards their ancestors. [Lemkin \(2007\)](#) believes that genocidal conflicts are threats to the existential rights of a particular group. Genocidal conflicts result in illegal activities such as the massacre of a group of people based on ethnicity, harming a particular ethnic group physically or mentally, performing such activities that cause physical, mental, and even spiritual destruction in a particular ethnic group, illegal birth control in a particular ethnic group by imposing illegal measures, transferring the ethnicity of children from one group to another forcefully. For instance, in the war between Athenians and Melos in 416 BCE, the Melians were attacked by the Athenians. All the adult Melian men were killed, children and women were captured and enslaved, and their island was occupied ([Strassler, 1996](#)). In the same way, during the battle of Béziers in 1209, the brutal massacre of the Albigensian Crusade (Pope Innocent III) against the Cathars. During the battle, 20000 inhabitants were killed and it was declared by the Abbot of [Cîteaux](#), “Slaughter them all!” ([Harris, 2020](#)).

In the same line of reasoning, in World War I, the great catastrophe of Armenia by the Turkish Ottoman Empire. [De Waal \(2015\)](#) pointed out in his book *The Great Catastrophe* that the number of corpses was constantly changing, for instance, during the war in 1915, historians estimated that one million Armenians were killed but later after the war in 1919 the number decreased to 800,000, which was also approved by Kemal Atatürk. Then the massacre of European Jews Roma (Gypsies), and other groups by Nazi Germany during World War II.

Literature On Genocidal Conflict Between Pashtuns and Hazaras

Hazaras are one of the populated groups in Afghanistan who have undergone various forms of persecution such as enslavement, Exploitation, and displacement of their ancestral homes and territories by the Pashtun leaders and governments. As a result of these events, some individuals see Hazaras as one of the world's most oppressed groups. During the rule of Abdur Rahman Khan in the late 19th century, he fought a vicious war against Hazaras, which caused the ethnic cleansing of 60 percent of Hazaras, the rest got enslaved and the land was transferred to Pashtun tribes. Some scholars termed this bloodshed genocide.

"In it, I read that my people, the Pashtuns, had persecuted and oppressed the Hazaras. It said the Hazaras had tried to rise against the Pashtuns in the nineteenth century, but the Pashtuns had 'quelled them with unspeakable violence.'" The book said my people had killed the Hazaras driven from their lands, burned their homes, and sold their women. (Hosseini, p. 9)

Until the 1970s, they were continuously suppressed, discriminate and socio-economically marginalized to the extent that the Hazaras started hiding their identities. They could not get access to education, service in the army, or secure good jobs. In 1993 most of the Hazaras occupied Kabul's Shia areas which led the president, Burhanuddin Rabbani decide to begin an aggressive operation against them. As a result of the extreme bombardment, random executions of civilians, and targeting of Hazaras' men caused hundreds of slain and forcibly vanish. When the Taliban took over Afghanistan in 1998 and captured Mazar-e-Sharif, a city in northern Afghanistan, went on a rampage targeting Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras. According to Human Rights Organization, at least 2,000 individuals from various ethnic groups, including Hazaras, were massacred. According to the Hazara group, the number of deaths might be as high as 15,000 ([Mohammadiand & Askary, 2021](#)).

This is one side of the coin that leads us back to the historical battle of Parwan fought between the Pashtuns and the Hazaras in 1221. At that time Julolidine Manguberdi was a Muslim ruler of Pashtuns with many other tribes and Genghis Khan was a non-Muslim ruler with his soldiers and Hazaras. It is claimed that Hazaras are the descendants of Mongols who came to Afghanistan with Genghis Khan's army ([Vambery, 1864](#); [Pouchepadass, 1978](#); [Burnes, 1839](#) & [Quvondiq-qizi & Abdug'affarovich, 2021](#)). According to [Bellew \(1880\)](#)

"Mongol soldiers were planted here (central Afghanistan) as military colonists in detachments of a thousand fighting men by Genghis Khan in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. It is said that Genghis Khan left ten such detachments here, nine of them in the Hazarah of Kabul, and the tenth in the Hazara of Pakli (Pakhlai) to the east of the Indus." (Bellew, p. 114).

Even the Hazaras themselves claim that they are the descendent of Mongols. In the present day, many Hazaras' tribal and family names are taken from Mongol leaders and commanders ([Temirkhanov, 1980](#); [Orazgani, 1913](#)). The battle of Parwan was a massive battle between Muslims and Mongols which fought for constantly three days and finally on the third day the Mongols got defeated. Since then, this historical conflict between Hazaras and Pashtuns growing up day by day in different shapes. Presently, Pashtuns do not consider Hazaras as Afghans, but as colonizers rather who came in the 12th Century and got settled there. The reflection of this hatred between these two ethnic races (Pashtuns and Hazaras) can be observed in *The Kite Runner*.

"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." (Hosseini, p. 40)

Referring to the quote above, Pashtuns have never embraced them and regard them as outsiders. In *The Kite Runner*, different characters such as Assef, Baba, Amir, and Rahim Khan can be evidence that the land of Afghanistan is the Watan of Pashtuns and Hazaras are there to serve them and take care of their lands. We can observe Assef's view about ethnic supremacy from the above quotation. Assef claims that Afghanistan is meant for the Pashtuns. In Afghanistan "the quasi-caste system" according to Pashtuns who live in the uppermost positions. The Hazara, of whom Hassan is a member, would be considered "second-class" citizens. In a similar line of reasoning, Assef is someone who is inspired by Hitler as he killed hundreds of Jews in ethnic cleansing. Similarly, Assef wants ethnic cleansing of Hazaras as per ethnic clash, religious clash, their appearance, and sameness with Mongols. Therefore, Assef considers them pollutants in Afghanistan and wants them to be banished. It is not only Assef who hates Hazaras or the Taliban but the whole of the Pashtuns tribe for instance the old man. After the kite competition, Amir looks for Hassan and asks people around about Hassan, and comes across an old. The old man does not like this behavior of Amir as he is a Pashtun, someone superior, therefore, he should not be worrying about a Hazara's son so much as they are nothing but their caretaker.

"What is a boy like you doing here at this time of the day looking for a Hazara? He also says, He is? Lucky Hazara, having such a concerned master. His father should get on his knees, sweep the dust at your feet with his eyelashes." (Hosseini, p.70)

The above quotation signifies how Hazaras are beheld so down upon and suppressed. They are considered worshipers of Pashtuns, not men of their own will. Likewise, the old man dehumanizes Hazaras and attributes those to slaves as historically Mongols defeated Pashtuns, and now, they are taking revenge on Hazaras since they are the decedents of Hazaras who have no life of their own now but worship Pashtuns. Mentioning Hazara sweep the dust at your feet with his eyelashes is like treating him worse than an animal.

Similarly, in the very scene, Assef questions Hassan and Amir's friendship. Hassan tries to justify his friendship with Amir but Assef asks him to put himself in Amir's shoes, and whether or not Amir would sacrifice himself for Assef. Assef tells the whole scenario that you are nothing but an ugly pet for Amir as you are Hazara.

"But before you sacrifice yourself for him, think about this: Would he do the same for you? Have you ever wondered why he never includes you in games when he has guests? Why he only plays with you when no one else is around? I'll tell you why Hazara. Because to him, you're nothing but an ugly pet." (Hosseini, p. 72)

The above quote indicates the relationship between Hassan and Amir perceived by the people as well as how Amir is being selfish and disloyal to Hassan. For instance, he mocks Hassan while teaching him words meaning. He never defends Hassan, and when other friends visit him, he starts to avoid playing with him since Hassan is Hazara and he does not want to be ashamed.

"Afghanistan is like a beautiful mansion littered with garbage, and someone has to take out the garbage. That's what you were doing in Mazar, going door-to-door? Taking out the garbage? Precisely. In the west, they have an expression for that, I said. They call it ethnic cleansing." (Hosseini, p. 284)

The story of hatred is not finished yet. In the final meeting of Amir and Assef who has become the commander of the Taliban. Assef's statement illustrates strong and intensive rhetoric that motivates and supports ethnic cleansing. So here history is repeating itself. The first ethnic cleansing of Mongols occurred in the 19th Century. Now Assef wants to repeat the history of the ethnic cleansing of Hazaras who are outsiders, dirt, and not of his tribe, or religious sect but the descendants of Mongols. Assef has been taught that Afghanistan is a beautiful mention but without Hazaras who are the 'Garbage' that makes Afghanistan dirtier thus, they should be thrown out. Assef has no human sympathies toward Hazaras and regards them as vermin that he does not want to be in the country. But Amir responds to him very ironically that, *"in the west...they call it ethnic cleansing"* (Hosseini, p. 284) one that exposes the barbarousness of that vision. Amir sees how nasty and merciless Assef is and considers Hazaras to be dust that he wants to eradicate.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The current study is qualitative in nature where the data is collected from both primary and secondary sources based on genocidal conflict such as 'Great Catastrophe' (De-Waal, 2015), 'A Question of Genocide' (Suny, Göçek & Naimark, 2011), 'The Hazara of Afghanistan' (Mousavi, 2009) and 'History of the Indian Caste System and its Impact on India Today' (Deshpande, 2010) as well as some websites. The procedure of data analysis for the present paper is given below.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for the current research study is Critical Discourse Analysis CDA (Fairclough, 2001). CDA is an investigative tool used for the analysis of texts (written or spoken) concerning their discursive stance and their influence on the power structure and dominance relating to any social feature like social class, culture, gender, religion, or sexual identity (Trappes-Lomax, 2004). In the same line of reasoning Woodak & Meyer (2010) specified that CDA seeks to explore the links between explicit social structures and their implicit supportive discursive practices. Concerning literary analysis, CDA helps the readers comprehend the relationship between language and the social distribution of power. It has the potential to engage readers' interest in seeking out and addressing the link between texts, ideologies, and power (Cummins, 2000). Therefore, it can be claimed that CDA help in revealing hidden ideologies, power structure, and social identities (Fairclough, 2001). Every text has its meaning related to social issues to discuss such as social class, cultural, religious, political, or economic no text is neutral but has a specific purpose to achieve (Meacham, 2003). Likewise, literary texts, like *The Kite Runner* is not neutral but rather carry a sociological stance that needs to be dug out for the purpose to have a clear understanding of the underlying issues in connections with the texts. The article adopts a critical theoretical lens as an investigative tool to assess the genocidal conflict between Pashtuns and Hazaras.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis is based on Fairclough's three-dimensional analysis (Fairclough, 2001). Fairclough's three-dimensional model is implemented to reflect the nature of social practices which comprises an understanding of discourse as a text (micro-level) discourse practice (Meso-level) and socio-cultural practice (macro-level). Its purpose is to examine the relationship between language, ideology, and power to determine how power is exercised in society by a certain group and oppressed others. The reason Fairclough's three-dimensional analysis is employed for this study as it focuses on the power

dynamic executed by Pashtuns in the setting of Afghanistan whereby Hazaras are being persecuted, victimized, and preyed on by genocidal conflict after all these years.

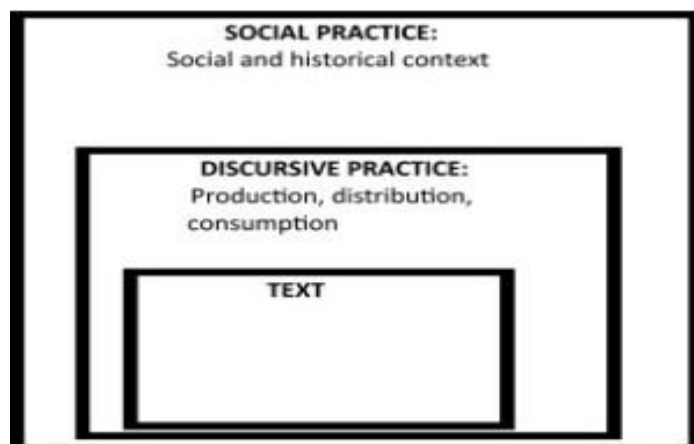


Figure 2: Fairclough's three-dimensional model for CDA

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Repercussion of Genocidal Conflicts can be examined in *The Kite Runner* written by [Khaled Hosseini \(2003\)](#). The after-effects of genocidal conflict between Pashtuns and Hazaras resulted in racial discrimination, dehumanization, sexual abuse, religious conflict, socio-political conflict, and economic conflict. The repercussion of genocidal conflict can be observed in the novel through different characters such as Ali, Hassan, Sanaubar, and Sohrab. Through these different characters, the Hazaras are presented as enslaved, subjugated, and marginalized by Pashtuns for no good reason but racial and religious, and socio-political differences.

Racial Discrimination Against Hazaras

In *The Kite Runner*, the causes of racial discrimination are social structure and psychological factors. The social structure factor influences how society regards Hazaras. The only thing that seems different between Pashtuns and Hazaras is their physical appearance as Hazaras resemble Chinese as they are the descendants of Mongols. Thereby, Hazaras are considered no-good work but low-wage workers who carry loads, sweep, and clean. This is how Amir was also told by the school teachers at a very young age. This eventually transforms students like Amir to become monsters for the Hazaras who despise anyone who belongs to Hazaras. Even if Amir would try to befriend Hassan, society and ethnic prejudice would never allow him.

"The book said a lot of things I didn't know, things my teachers hadn't mentioned ...It also said some things I did know, like that called Hazaras Mice-eating, flat-nosed, load-carrying donkeys." ([Hosseini, p. 9](#))

Amir may not hold any grudges any animosity toward Hassan, but a societal reason would compel him to do so. For instance, when Assef and his gang are raping Hassan, Amir wishes to help Hassan but he could not do it because he is afraid of the consequences as a regret, he could not face Hassan but rather attempts to get away from him. Assef and his gang rap Hassan to satisfy their ego as he is a Hazara as well as to illustrate ethnic and racial animosity towards Hazaras. Assef hates Hazaras so much that they did not even count rapping a Hazara as a transgression. When Wali discusses with Hassan that my father says it is sinful to which Hassan replies that there is nothing sinful about it since they are imparting a lesson to a disrespectful donkey.

"Your father won't find out," Assef said. "And there's nothing sinful about teaching a lesson to a disrespectful donkey." "I don't know," Wali muttered. "Suit yourself," Assef said. He turned to Kamal. "What about you?" "I...Well..." "It's just a Hazara," Assef said. (Hosseini, p. 75)

On the other hand, Amir stands up there and watches all this but could not do anything since he is frightened of Assef and also wants to gain Baba's trust. Hence, he turns his back on Hassan and rushes down the alley.

"I ran because I was a coward. I was afraid of Assef and what he would do to me. I was afraid of what he would do to me. That's what I told myself as I turned my back to the alley, to Hassan. That's what I made myself believe. I actually aspired to cowardice, because the alternative, the real reason I was running, was that Assef was right: Nothing was free in this world. May Hassan was the price I had to pay, the lamb I had to slay, to win Baba. Was it a fair price? The floated to my conscious mind before I could thwart it: He was just a Hazara, wasn't he?" (Hosseini, p.77)

It can be observed here how Amir becomes conflicted in the scene. On one hand, he wants to assist Hassan and save it from Assef and his friends but he is anxious about the repercussions. On the other hand, he also wants to retrieve the kite to present it to his father to win his trust but above all, he sacrifices Hassan by letting him in the hands of those savages.

However, later at the end of the novel, when he realizes therefore in the last line, he ironically explains why would he care as he is Hazara who does not have to exist. Similarly, near the end of the novel, he willingly puts himself in grave trouble to atone for his previous sins.

"I hadn't been happy and I hadn't felt better not at all. But I did now. My Body was broken ---just how badly I wouldn't find out until later---but I felt healed. Healed at last. I laughed." (Hosseini, p. 289)

When Amir returns to Afghanistan for Sohrab who was captured by Assef. By meeting Assef he gets beat so much that some of his bones get fractured yet deep down in his heart he feels relive as he considers it as his atonement for what he had done to Hassan. Amir sees there Sohrab, Hassan's son who is turned into a shemale and would get sexually abused since he is the son of a Hazara, Hassan. Amir knew it would not easy to save Sohrab from Assef and the Taliban but after all, he was ready for the costs because he was filled with enormous guilt and regret for being nothing than a treacherous and dishonest friend who had always deceived Sohrab's father Hassan and made him a sacrificial lamb in the name of friendship. To atone for his misdeeds, he materializes himself in front of Assef, to take Sohrab from him and give him the life that any innocent child deserved. All of Assef's animosity for Hassan and his son Sohrab stemmed from racial prejudice as Assef was a Pashtun and Hassan and his son were Hazaras. It seems as if the clash between Hazaras and Pashtuns is not only a racial but also a religious, and socio-political one. In a nutshell, Hazaras are regarded as second-class citizens who can never be equal to Pashtuns. It also establishes that Pashtuns are the bosses while Hazaras are their servants.

"Hassan and I fed from the same breasts. We took our first steps on the same lawn in the same yard. And, under the same roof, we spoke our first words." (Hosseini, p. 11)

It is coming out of that society and the outer exposure which helps Amir transforms his view toward humanity and realize the strong bond of friendship between himself and Hassan. When Amir moved to America he would sit back and recalls all the childhood memories he and Hassan had shared in the past. Even though he was aware that they were not brothers but they lived like brothers. Both of them were nurtured together, in the same house, and fed with the same breast, which explains the depth of the closeness he and Hassan had. This quote discloses the actual Amir and the camaraderie he shares with Hassan.

"But he's not my friend! I almost blurted. He is my servant! Had I really thought that? Of course, I hadn't. I hadn't. I treated Hassan well, just like a friend, better even, more like a brother. But if so, tan why, when Baba's friends came to visit with their kids, didn't I ever include Hassan in our games? Why did I play with Hassan only when no one else was around?" (Hosseini, p. 41)

Amir's thoughts immediately show the tumultuous nature of his relationship with Hassan. Though, Hassan is from Afghanistan's downtrodden Hazara minority race, while Amir is from the Pashtun ethnic group, which has traditionally subjugated the Hazaras. Hassan is living with Amir not just as an illegitimate child, but also as a member of an "inferior" ethnic group in Amir's eyes. As a small child, Amir strives to balance his sentiments of racial superiority with natural interpersonal bonds.

Subjugation and Marginalization of Hazaras

Deing (2014) who is a special adviser on the prevention of Genocide in the UN argued that genocide begins with 'Marginalization and Subjugation'. Thus, genocidal conflicts are the products of subjugation and marginalization. In the novel, Khaled Hosseini portrays the genocidal conflicts of Pashtuns and Hazaras through the character of Assef, a Taliban official who is heavily influenced by Rudolf Hitler's ethnic cleansing of Jews. Likewise, he desires the ethnic cleansing of Hazaras in Afghanistan as he regards them as waste. Assef abhors Hazaras since he was a youngster. Following the kite competition, Assef and his friends Kamal and Wali grab Hassan and take him down the alleyway. Assef asks Hassan to hand up the kite but he refuses which enrages Assef and rapes him. Assef commits such an action because he knew there is no one to question him about it since Hassan belongs to Hazaras and Hazaras did not have a voice for themselves even if they would who would even listen to them. Assef always enforces Amir not to befriend and be sympathetic towards Hassan as he was a Hazara and Afghanistan is the land of Pashtuns, not this "Flat nose here" (Hosseini, p.40). Later, in their final encounter, Amir and Assef, who have subsequently been revealed to be a Taliban leader, gives detailed information about how he mercilessly slaughters Hazaras in August 1998, which demonstrates his concept of *Freedom*.

"You want the real show, you should have been with me in Mazar. August 1998, that was." "I'm sorry?" "We left them out for the dogs, you know." I saw what he was getting at. He stood up, and paced around the sofa once, twice. Sat down again. He spoke rapidly. "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." He was almost panting now. "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 smoke blinded me" (Hosseini, p. 277)

The aforementioned quote illustrates how ruthlessly Asif, who represents the Taliban, a religious sect slaughters Hazaras. Assef and his Taliban comrades do not even forgive children and massacre them too. The way Assef describes the situation it seems as if he does not even see Hazaras as human beings but rather as stinking mosquitos which need to be sprayed off. He does not even realize how immoral and sinful the act was but above all, he was proud of it. He goes on and says he does

not do it for his gain but for the cause of God. This is how he blames Islam for everything he does. Even though every single Muslim is well aware this is not Islam. Islam never gives such teachings, but this is the result of his grievances and hatred toward Hazaras which Assef names freedom.

"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." (Hosseini, p. 277)

Assef explains that in the name of the Quran, he is on a mission to eliminate and cleans the garbage (Hazaras) from Afghanistan to purge it. Hereby the garbage, he means Hazaras whom he thought of no more than the trash. Assef believes that ultimate freedom entails braving a room full of bullets, and believing that you are doing God's order. It also exposes the ignorant Taliban, Assef's friends, and their misunderstanding and misinterpretation of Islam. Assef deems his lethal deeds to be honourable and desirable. This indicates how Assef and his friends are nothing more than a radicalized interpretation of Islam. Although, Allah says in the Holy Quran, surah Maida, chapter 5, verse number 32 if anyone kills any other human beings whether who is Muslim or Non-Muslim unless it be murder or for creating mischief in the land it is as though as killed all of humanity. Therefore, Islam has intensively focused on peace and fraternity. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) always encouraged people to share their food and blessings with others. Allah says in the Quran

"And what is wrong with you that you fight not in the Cause of Allah, and for those weak, ill-treated and oppressed among men, women, and children, whose cry is: 'Our Lord! Rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors, and raise for us from You one who will protect, and raise for us from You one who will help.'" (Quran, 004:075)

Thus, it is apparent that it is not Islam the way Assef is presenting but rather his unpleasant, harsh sentiments and grievance towards Hazaras that turned him into a demon. Following the Quran, there is the quote of the holy where Prophet Muhammad (SWA) professed that killing one human is just like killing all of mankind. Therefore, in no case, you can kill someone.

"The Taliban moved into the house, Rahim Khan said. The pretext was that they had evicted a trespasser. 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". (Hosseini, pp. 219-220)

When Amir returns to Pakistan from the US to meet Rahim Khan who is very sick there, Rahim Khan describes to Amir the scenario of Afghanistan. Rahim Khan elucidates how Hassan and Farzana were murdered by the Taliban and the extinction to which Afghanistan is ruined into disturbance and turmoil. Under the leadership of the Taliban, law, and administration, all have vanished, and persecutions are regularly dismissed on flimsy ground. Racial and ethnic discrimination is widespread and the Taliban executions are arbitrary. The fact that no one would jeopardize his/her life just for a couple of Hazara servants validates the oppression of Hazaras in Afghanistan. All these events clarify how Hazaras have been humiliated by Assef and his Talib friends. Hazaras are an unprivileged community in Afghanistan that are powerless to defend their rights.

Sexual Objectification of Hazaras

Men, women, and even children are objectified for sexual gratification, and those who abuse them do not view them as fellow people but rather as sexual objects (Khan, 2021). Similarly, In the novel *The Kite Runner*, it can be observed how Baba, Assef, and the soldiers sexually assault Hazaras in the shape of Hassan, Sanaubar, and Sohrab. It is publicized that not only Hazaras' women are getting raped but also young male children. Baba exploits Sanaubar, Ali's wife as a sexual tool and even he has an illegitimate son (Hassan) from her but neither Sanaubar nor Ali could do anything in this regard since they are aware of their racial position in the society. It is not only Baba who sexually objectifies Sanaubar but also the soldiers around them who are using her as a sexual toy. The troops and Baba all know that no one can stand in their way neither Ali nor anyone in his family since they are slaves to serve, even if it comes to their flesh. The soldier is so confident about the intercourse with Sanaubar that even he tells Hassan on his face that he had sex with his mother. Hassan being a child what one could do but avert his eyes and flee.

"You! The Hazara! Look at me when I'm talking to you!" the soldier barked. He handed his cigarette to the guy next to him and made a circle with the thumb and index finger of one hand. Poked the middle finger of his other hand through the circle. Poked it in and out. In and out. "I knew your mother, did you know that? I knew her really good. I took her from behind by that creek over there." (Hosseini, p. 7)

After giving birth to Hassan, Sanaubar flee away because she could not bear such sexual assault nor she could face the people around her as a piece of pleasure. Not only does Sanaubar suffer from sexual abuse but so does her son Hassan and even her grandson. Following Sanaubar's escape, it is her son, Hassan, who gets sexually objectified for showing loyalty toward his friend, Amir. To gain Baba's trust, Amir leaves Hassan there to Assef and his friends who raped him. Amir, to whom Hassan is loyal and close, watches all this but does nothing for Hassan and runs away from there as he thinks of Hassan as a sacrificial victim.

At the end of the novel when Amir attempts to atone for his betrayal of Hassan, travels to Afghanistan to rescue Sohrab from sexual slavery. At the end of the novel, it is Sanaubar's grandson who becomes a sexual object in the hands of Assef. Later it is Assef once again responsible for turning the young Sohrab into a sex toy. In the same line of reasoning, Thakur (2020) claimed that *The Kite Runner* is a dramatic story about Bacha Bazi or same-sex 'pedophilia' limited to adult males and teenage boys widespread in Afghanistan.

"The boy had his father's round moon face, his pointy stub of a chin, his twisted, seashell ears, and the same slight frame. It was the Chinese doll face of my childhood, the face peering above fanned-out playing cards all those winter days, the face behind the mosquito net when we slept on the roof of my father's house in the summer. His head was shaved, his eyes darkened with mascara, and his cheeks glowed with an unnatural red. When he stopped in the middle of the room, the bells strapped around his anklets stopped jingling." (Hosseini, p. 279)

The Socio-Political Conflict between Pashtuns and Hazaras

Genocidal conflict is not caused by similar factors rather it is determined by the diverse historical, social, and political backgrounds of each country or race such as how the perpetrators define the group and how they determine who is a part of that group (Karen, 1996). In the novel, it is depicted that genocidal conflicts outcome of political and social factors. Since Afghanistan has historically been ruled by Pashtun monarchs such as Abdur Rahman Khan, Dawood Khan, and many more which leads the Pashtuns as the ruling class of society. To dominate the Hazaras, both socially and politically, they have always denied opportunities for higher education or employment. The rulers deliberately encourage the genocidal warfare against Hazaras to keep them bend and never let them rise and revolt against the Pashtuns and their regime. Thus, it reflects that the rulers are promoting genocidal conflicts against Hazaras for socio-political reasons.

Similarly, in the novel, there is a depiction of socio-economical hierarchy. Although, Baba (Amir's father) puts great faith in Ali and trusts him a lot yet never considers him his friend. To retain his social rank, Baba treats him like a servant even though he cares for him. At the same time, Amir is recalling his memories where he thinks of the relationship between Baba and Ali who would set up together and Baba would tell the stories of his life but in none of the stories, does Baba ever mentions Ali's name as his friend or with whom he has a recollection. The same is true for Amir as he would spend the entire day playing with Hassan but never granted him as a friend.

"Amir talks of the closeness of Baba and Ali that Baba would tell us their childhood stories and laugh together. But in none of his stories did Baba ever refer to Ali as his friend." (Hosseini, p. 25)

At the time when Baba and Amir are leaving Afghanistan, they show no care for Ali and his family nor even his illegitimate son (Hassan) instead orders him to watch over the land till they return. This indicates Baba's callous treatment of Ali and his family. Even though Ali and his family show high devotion to Baba but still they turn their back on them. Not only does Baba deny equal opportunities to Hazaras but the whole Pashtuns community treats them as others. Amir would often imagine himself that if he ever dares to acknowledge Hassan as his friend society will spit on him the way Assef would threaten him since the two ethnic races were poles apart. Contemplating the equality of Pashtuns and Hazaras is like committing a crime.

"In the end, I was a Pashtun and he was a Hazara, and nothing was ever going to change that. Nothing" (Hosseini, p. 25)

This quote reveals that no matter how close a Hazara becomes to a Pashtun ethnic prejudice will never be overcome because of a significant power disparity between Pashtuns and Hazaras.

Religious Conflicts Towards Hazaras

Religious factors are equally important in triggering genocidal wars. Since 1996, when the Taliban took over Kabul since then the political conflict has devolved into a religious conflict that falls apart between Pashtuns and Hazaras. It is a dispute caused by religious disagreement. Pashtuns are Sunni, while Hazaras are Shia, *"the reason of Pashtuns had oppressed the Hazaras that Pashtun is Sunni Muslims, while Hazaras are Shia."* (Hosseini, p. 9) The discrepancy between Sunni and Shias aroused when the prophet Muhammad (SAW) the founder of Islam died. According to Hadith Muhammad (SAW) personally asked Abu Bakar (RA) to offer the prayer hence following Muhammad (SAW) one sect of Muslims elected Abu Bakar (RA) as their leader while the other sect elected Ali (RA). This quarrel segregated them into two sects and this is how the clashes started between the two sects. The Taliban who are Sunni also hated Hazaras for this fact and accused them of collaborating with their enemies, The Iranian army who are also Shias.

Similarly, the reflection of this religious strife may be seen in the shape of Amir and Hassan. Amir's idea early in the novel illustrates the religious conflict that develops in Amir and Hassan's relationship throughout the novel.

"Never mind any of those things. Because history isn't easy to overcome. Neither is religion. In the end, I was a Pashtun and he was a Hazara, I was Sunni and he was Shia and nothing was ever going to change that. Nothing." (Hosseini, p. 25)

Amir contends that just like history religion is not simple to eradicate. It exemplifies the schism division that religion and history may produce. Although, Amir and Hassan's familial and friendship bonds were so natural and solid Amir knew in his heart that it will come to an end one day as the detestation is so deeply rooted in Pashtuns.

Economic Conflict towards Hazaras

Economic factors are also major contributors to genocidal conflicts. Economic variables determine and exacerbate the consequences and scope (Utterwulge, 1999). Turshen (2001) claims that four socio-economic factors influence the magnitude of the genocide. Firstly, First, there was a significant decline in coffee prices, followed by currency depreciation in 1989 and fast inflation following 1990. Secondly, a structural modification program combined with a drought in the southern areas resulted in starvation. Thirdly, Third, the northern conflict (1990) depleted government resources and generated massive refugee camps on Kigali's north-western border. Fourthly, the 'paradox of African democratization' fuelled resistance to the already beleaguered administration.

Likewise, in the novel, economic considerations are identified as another major cause of genocidal conflicts between Pashtuns and Hazaras. Historically in 1993 when President Rabbani discovered that Shias (Hazaras) inhabited the majority of Kabul regions and became financially stable, he immediately launched an aggressive operation against them. After a massive bombardment on the Hazarajat, the Hazaras have driven from their lands and Pashtuns took control over their land which made the Hazaras financially unstable and weaker. Using the same logic, it can be observed that Pashtuns are having a more stable and prosperous economic standing than Hazaras. Hazaras have lower social status and are not permitted to own property or hold high-position jobs in Afghanistan. As Ali and his son, Hassan both are servants of Baba. Baba and Amir are living in a big mansion but Ali and his family are living in a shack. As a result of their low economic standing and minority status, they are unable to hold Pashtuns accountable for doing any injustice to them.

CONCLUSION

In *The Kite Runner*, the two sides of the coin are provided for interpretation. On one side, there is evidence of the historical battle of Parwan waged between Hazaras and Pashtuns in 1221 CE, and on the other side, the writer demonstrates contemplation on the present-day persecution Hazaras face. In that battle of Parwan 1221CE, Mongols (ancestors of Hazaras) killed and slaughtered Khwarzamis (ancestors of Pashtuns) mercilessly this emerges the hatred and animosity between these two ethnic groups. It is clear from the novel that Hazaras have no place in Afghanistan. In the eyes of Pashtuns, Hazaras are not indigenous people, but some outsiders who came to Afghanistan and got settled. Their language is different, their religion is different from Pashtuns who are Sunni and Hazaras are Shias which is another source of contention, their culture and norms are different, and they are thus regarded as second-class citizens who will never be equal to Pashtuns. Hazaras are being massacred every day for one or the other reason and this has been going on since the battle of Parwan (1221CE), yet no Hazara dares to speak out against them or demand their rights. Pashtuns are the bosses in Afghanistan while Hazaras are like slaves bred to serve Pashtuns. *The Kite Runner* depicts Pashtuns treating Hazaras as they are dirt, which should be thrown away.

The ethnic cleansing of Hazaras back in September 1221CE marked the beginning of the conflict between Pashtuns and Hazaras later in the 19th century under the regime of Abdur Rahman Khan, the ethnic cleansing of Hazaras caused 60% of its population dead. Later in 1993, under Burhanuddin Rabbani's regime, the ethnic cleansing of Hazaras once more resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Hazaras and forcible disappearance. At the time of the Taliban's takeover in 1998, they also massacred 1500 Hazaras. As of right now, Pashtuns still hold swaying Afghanistan, whereas Hazaras are marginalized and suppressed and their voices are muted just based on tribal, religious, cultural, or physical differences. Similar to this, Hazaras are depicted in *The Kite Runner*, as being the weakest and poorest race in Afghanistan leading to unfavourable preconceptions about them such as being impoverished, slaves, ignorant, and crippled. As a result, Hazaras experience prejudice and disdain frequently in society.

The current findings may offer a wealth of knowledge about genocidal conflicts between Pashtuns and Hazaras but there are still many open questions that required future investigation based on a new angle and more thorough approach. As genocidal conflicts are not only based on race, they also involve a great number of other factors therefore, I believe future researchers should be able to approach the topic from the perspectives of religious genocide, ethnic genocide, socio-political genocide, and ethnical genocide among others. Researchers who are interested in discovering the problems that are in some manner inherited from ancestors may find these findings to be helpful.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

As genocidal conflicts are not only based on race, they also involve a great number of other factors therefore, I believe future researchers should be able to approach the topic from the perspectives of religious genocide, ethnic genocide, socio-political genocide, and ethnical genocide among others.

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