

Adverse Elements of Culture:

In Nuruddin Farah's *Links* and Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*.



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Dedication

I dedicate my humble effort to my sweet and loving
Father and Mother,
Whose love, encouragement and prayers make me able to get such success and honor,
Along with all hard working and respected
Teachers.

Acknowledgements

The great teacher makes a few simple points. The powerful teacher leaves one or two fundamental truths. And the memorable teacher makes the point not by telling but by helping the students discover on their own.

Professor Jacob Neusner

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Abstract:

The object of this study is to examine elements of culture in two novels; Nuruddin Farah's *Links* and Khaled Housseini's *The Kite Runner*. The connection between the two novels lies in the cultural and political conditions that the Somali and the Afghan population live in. Respectively both societies share common features. They are Muslim, decolonized, and they live in civil conflicts. The political problems led to an impact on cultural life. The aim of this study is to find two elements of culture to which both novels express such cultural influence on real life, mainly, the women status and religion as a cultural system. The research is divided into two chapters. The first one is thematic. It deals with the two elements of culture that both novels share. The second chapter is technical. It explores the literary devices used to highlight these elements of culture, focusing on their structure and meaning.

General Introduction:

First and foremost, it should be appropriate to begin with a definition to the term culture. The term seems simplistic in its meaning. However, no absolute agreement has been reached on a single definition of it. David C Thomas and Kerr Inkson conversely define the term: “Culture is a word that is familiar to everyone, but its precise meaning can be elusive.”¹ If we want to provide a reliable definition to the term, we must suggest a reliable source. In our opinion, among the cultural critics that construe the term culture broadly is Edward Said. According to him culture is:

First of all it means all those practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economic, social and political realms and that often exists in aesthetic forms. One of whose principal aim is pleasure[...]Second and almost imperceptibly, culture is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society’s reservoir of the best that has been known and thought[...]culture comes to be associated, often aggressively with the nation or the state, this differentiate ‘us’ from ‘them’.²

As a useful definition by noted Palestinian American academic is that culture is a unique set of norms, traditions, language, behaviors, etc that differentiate one community from another. Still, this concept of culture is not a stagnant aspect, rather it is a dynamic one. It must change throughout the actual existence of all societies.

Now that the key term has been established. The next focus will lie on examining the writings of the two novels *The Kite Runner* and *Links* written respectively by the Afghan writer Khaled Hosseini, and the Somali writer Nuruddin Farah. We will try to discuss two aspects of the culture of the two societies and how they are represented through the works of these two Postcolonial writers. Religion as a cultural system, and the status of women are two controversial topics in the field of social science, specifically in decolonized societies like Afghanistan and Somalia. These societies deal with a huge challenge of triggering a national cultural awakening.

¹ David Thomas, *Cultural Intelligence: People Skills for Global Business*, (2008), 29, <https://books.google.dz/books?id=Wxh3SoS>

² Edward W Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xii, https://archive.org/stream/CultureAndImperialismByEdwardW.Said_201606/Culture%20and%20Imperialism%20by%20Edward%20W.%20Said_djvu.txt

That change could not occur during colonization, because the colonial powers tended to damage the colonized's culture to exploit his natural resources and subdue him. But why the present state of the postcolonial societies is still the same after fifty years of independence. Postcolonial literature deals with colonialism and its aftermath. It makes the portrayal of the decolonized their subject matter. In composing these writings novelists use a foreign tongue to express the features that forge the postcolonial culture such as traditions, language, and norms. Writers such as Chinua Achebe, and Sefi Atta chose to convey their messages in English rather than in one of their countries native tongue because they desired to reach as broad as possible of an audience. Through The colonial language they succeeded to convey a respectful message about their indigenous culture.

In this case, the writers in question are Nuruddin Farah, the recurrent nominee for the Nobel Prize in Literature, and Khaled Hosseini the 'publishing phenomenon' as the international media portrays him. These writers depict their culture and their peoples through their writings. Discussing their works allows us to understand the representation of the aspects of culture. For that the main questions that we will try to grapple with are:

- What is the nature of the Afghan and the Somali culture when dealing with women's rights and duties?
- What are the factors that diminish women's role in reconstructing their societies?
- What are the consequences of imposing some social restraints based on gender discrimination against these women?
- Furthermore, the postcolonial political powers that control these societies, do they struggle to achieve national unity? Or they are just governments with self serving tendencies?
- Which influence does religion have on the military conflicts and the social issues in Afghanistan and Somalia?

This work will deal with analysis based on the theoretical structure of postcolonial theory. Accordingly, it will hold a two-chapter structure. It will have a general introduction with a historical background of Afghanistan and Somalia, the body in two chapters, and a general conclusion. It will deal with two negative aspects

of culture in the two societies and how culture influences the manner these people live and behave.

The first chapter affords a theoretical insight. It deals with how the two writers from two different backgrounds express negative attitudes to the misinterpretation of religion and the low status attached to women in their societies. The two themes are explored through the way characters live and behave.

The second chapter will be devoted to the literary devices employed by Farah and Hosseini to decry these two elements of culture, and discover how these literary tools interrelate to construct the expression of the two themes.

There is a need for a historical background of both societies: Afghan and Somali in order to understand the context of the two novels which are written respectively by Khaled Hosseini and Nuruddin Farah.

1. Afghanistan, a historical background:

The Kite Runner is a book that was published in 2003. It is about the period from 1979 to 2001 in the Afghan history. We can divide this period into three sub-periods. First one is the Communist rule and Soviet Occupation (1979-1992). Then, the Civil War (1992-1996). Finally, Taliban War (1996-2001).

1.2. Communist rule and Soviet occupation (1979-1992):

Afghanistan enjoyed its longest period of peace and stability during the reign of king Zahir Shah (1933-73). The king's cousin, Mohammad Daoud Khan, seized power in a coup by 1973. He instituted a republic. Daoud's reforms did not satisfy the national communist parties which staged a coup led by Nur Mohammad Taraki to overthrow and execute Daoud in 1978. The suppression and violence to executing socialist reforms, led by the pro- Soviet communist Afghan government, caused the start of the so called Islamic resistance who become known as the mujahadeen.³ The wide spread of the resistance led to the Soviet Military invasion of Afghanistan in late December 1979. Afghan government and Soviet forces controlled the urban areas such as Kabul, whereas a guerilla war was waged by mujahadeen groups in rural areas.

The Soviets and Afghan government confronted the mujahadeen attacks through cruel strategies. Civilian places were destroyed by airstrikes and mines were laid in rural areas to stop the resistance supplies. The long term conflict damaged the country's infrastructure and left disabled people and victims of land mines. There was a mass migration of refugees within and outside the country. The number of the population that fled to Iran and Pakistan was over five million and two million were displaced within the country.⁴

The Soviets planned to withdraw their military forces from Afghanistan. The latter refused to accept the withdrawal of the Soviet forces because they were the fortress of the Afghan Government from the mujahadeen attacks. By the year 1989, the

³ Ashley Jackson, *The Cost of War: Afghanistan Experiences of Conflict, 1978-2009*(2009), 07, <http://www.oxfam.org/files/afghanistan-the-cost-of-war.pdf>.

⁴ William Byrd, *Lessons from Afghanistan's History for the Current Transition and Beyond* (Washington, Dc: the United States Institute of Peace, 2012), 07, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR314.pdf>.

USSR removed its combat troops from Afghanistan. From 1989 to 1992, Najibullah government remained in control after the Soviet withdrawal. It was a government that relied on pro-government militias to repress the mujahadeen rebellion. By March 1992, temporary government was formed. This impelled the militias to ally with other Islamic factions to support the uprising against the system.⁵ The Najibullah government collapsed in April 1992. The fall of the Soviet Union cut the material support and aid that backed its client regime for years.

1.2. Civil war (1992-1996):

The Major mujahadeen groups supported the presidency of Sibghatullah Mojadeddi, leader of the Afghan National Liberation Front and Rabbani was his successor. Shari'a law was declared binding by the new Islamic government. Their power was weak and limited to few areas of the countryside and parts of the capital were under their control. Rabbani's government faced opposition from other mujahadeen groups because of his refusal to leave presidency. By the year 1992, the conflict sparked a civil war which turned the country in a state of disorder.⁶

Warlordism subjected the local populations to executions, imprisonment, sexual violence and other forms of torment. The Amnesty International report of 1994 stated that there were 'thousands' of imprisoned Afghans and abducted individuals. Militia leaders legitimized women rights abuses including sexual violence and forced marriages. Women and girls were a way of "rewarding" fighters.⁷ Schooling for girls and working for woman were not permissible. Moreover, the threat of sexual abuse obliged the girls' families to arrange marriages for them at younger ages.

The country's infrastructure collapsed. The national government was not able to provide essential basics for its population. There was a culture of corruption among fighting forces because of the absence of regular salaries. They perpetrated organized and disorganized forms of crime. People fled to Iran and Pakistan in search of living in peace. They were about two million refugees by 1994.

The Pashtun movement known as Taliban based in Kandahar, put an end to the chaos and established order. Their fighting forces were young uneducated and were

⁵ Ibid., 07.

⁶ Ashley Jackson, *The Cost of War: Afghanistan Experiences of Conflict, 1978-2009*(2009), 09, <http://www.oxfam.org/files/afghanistan-the-cost-of-warpdf>

⁷ Ibid., 10.

brought from Pakistan's refugee camps. The financial and technical source of support was from Pakistan. Taliban took over Kandahar in 1994 and by the end of 1995 held ninety percent of Afghanistan's territory and controlled Kabul the following year.⁸

1.3. Taliban rule (1996-2001):

As soon as the Taliban came to power, severe laws were imposed on the population. These laws were adopted from the radical interpretations of Islam and Shari'a law. Besides being deprived from education and work, women were enforced to have male escorting and to wear burqa whenever they leave home. The women lack of means of support, work or income, forced them to beg on the streets. War caused them psychological damages like post-traumatic stress disorder and a decline in their state of mind.⁹

Men and women suffered public humiliation from the Ministry of the Promotion of Virtue and the Suppression of Vice. In sports stadium on Fridays, adulterers and convicts were publicly executed. Moreover, men, women and children were forced to attend the execution. Leisure activities like music and kite running were forbidden.

Ethnic and religious groups were persecuted and massacred. Hazara, a Non-Pashtun ethnic minority, were subjected to ethnic cleansing. By the year 2001, approximately three hundred Hazara were victims of a massacre in a mosque in Yakaolang. Humanitarian agencies and international organizations provided basic food supplies for the half of the population of Kabul during the severe drought that affected the country in 2000. The access to health care services and education was poor. Poverty, ignorance and unemployment were profound in the Taliban era. Refugees poured over the borders of Iran, Pakistan and other countries to escape political, racial or religious persecution.

The Taliban created an alliance with Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda.¹⁰ After 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington DC, the United States of America declared war on Taliban. Foreign troops were welcomed by the Afghans in hope of protecting them from the Afghan damaging forces that slid the country into chaos.

⁸ William Byrd, *Lessons from Afghanistan's History for the Current Transition and Beyond* (Washington, Dc: the United States Institute of Peace, 2012), 09, 10. <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR314.pdf>.

⁹ Ashley Jackson, *The Cost of War: Afghanistan Experiences of Conflict, 1978-2009*(2009), 11, <http://www.oxfam.org/files/afghanistan-the-cost-of-warpdf>

¹⁰ Ibid., 12.

2. Somalia, a historical background:

Links is a book that is published in 2003. It covers the period from 1960 to 1995. This period can be divided into three distinct phases. The first phase is the Post Colonial Period (1960-1969). Second, the Military Regime (1969-1991). The last one is the Civil War and United Nation Interventions (1991-1995). The following summary can provide the major events that help the reader to understand the context of the story.

2.1. Postcolonial period (1960-1969):

Somalia gained independence on July 1, 1960. Former British Somaliland and Italian Somalia united to form the Somali Republic. The first president of Somalia was Aden Abdullah Osman. In the year 1961 he was elected by the Somali people after the ratification of the constitution that was drafted in 1960. The establishment of stable and unified political institutions remained a challenge facing the national unity because of the traditional clan structure that governed the political and social life in Somalia.¹¹

The Somalia's leaders managed the country following the West model. The modern state system they aimed to pursue contrasted with the Post- Colonial Somali state that was based on traditional and political institutions.¹²

In the post independence years the belief in Pan- Somalism increased. The union aimed to liberate the Somali occupied territories in Ethiopia and Kenya. The late years of 1960 were differentiated by corruption and allegation of improving relationships with Ethiopia.¹³ The Somali state depended massively on foreign aids to settle its internal disputes and make up its financial deficit. However, external contributions for development did not improve the Somali civil conditions.¹⁴

In October 1969, the second Somali president, Abdirashid Ali Shermarke, was assassinated by one of his bodyguards. The incident enabled the army to take over the government under the command of the Major General Muhammed Siad Barre. The Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC), representing the new military regime, appointed Siad Barre president. The new government body launched development

¹¹ A. Abukar, LL.M., *Somalia: A Brief Country Report* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands, AWEPA, 2015), 20, <http://www.awepa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Somalia-A-Brief-and-country-Report.pdf>.

¹² *Ibid.*, 20.

¹³ Diana Briton and Mohamood Cabdi Noor, *The Somali Their History and Culture* (1993), 08, http://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/migrated/where/united_states.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

projects to reconstruct the social and economic institutions and promised to eradicate corruption.¹⁵

2.2. The military regime (1969-1991):

The military regime headed by President Siad Barre justified the army coup they launched in 1969 with the claim that it was for the sake of national safety and independence of the republic of Somalia. The government committed itself to introduce a revolutionary change in the social and political institutions.¹⁶ Among the practical reforms that were instituted was the adoption of Latin alphabet for the Somali script in 1973. Once the Somali script was formed, the government replaced the colonial languages such as Italian and French in the educational system with the Somali language.

Barre's regime succeeded in improving the life conditions of the Somali population. The right of education and healthcare expanded. Women could enjoy a relative educational and employment status. However, the religious scholars in Somalia opposed the laws introduced by the government claiming that these laws opposed the Islamic law.¹⁷

The political system based on "clanism" did not satisfy the new government that aspired to a modern state. The regime initiated a campaign to undermine the authority of the clan system from the political and social life. Elders and chiefs of clans were named "peace seekers" in an attempt to weaken their traditional position.¹⁸ The radical changes mounted a growing opposition that led to the imprisonment and execution of military and political officers, and civilian leaders.

Barre's regime was faced for the first time by armed groups composed of clan members named The Somali National Movement. Another opposition movement was formed by the year 1989; it was the United Somali Congress. The clan groups spread among the country and the conflict between them and the government proceeded.¹⁹ On

¹⁵ A. Abukar, LL.M., *Somalia: A Brief Country Report* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands, AWEPA, 2015), 21, <http://www.awepa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Somalia-A-Brief-and-country-Report.pdf>

¹⁶ Ibid., 22.

¹⁷ Diana Briton and Mohamood Cabdi Noor, *The Somali Their History and Culture* (1993), 09, http://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/migrated/where/united_states

¹⁸ A. Abukar, LL.M., *Somalia: A Brief Country Report* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands, AWEPA, 2015), 22, <http://www.awepa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Somalia-A-Brief-and-country-Report.pdf>

¹⁹ Diana Briton and Mohamood Cabdi Noor, *The Somali Their History and Culture* (1993), 09, http://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/migrated/where/united_states

January 27, 1991 the clan organized armed movements and succeeded in overthrowing General Barre.

2.3. Civil war and UN interventions (1991-1995):

After the removal of Barre's regime, major clans competed for power. The United Somali Congress, headed by Ali Mahdi Mohammed, established an interim government. In response, the Somali National Movement declared the North an independent entity and becomes known as the Somaliland republic. In the South the United Somali Congress split into two groups. One led by the General Mohamed Farah Aideed, the other led by Ali Mahdi Mohammed. The outcome of the clans' clashes and competition for control over Mogadishu was a division of the city between Northerners and Southerners.²⁰

Struggle between the military factions ended in chaos in Mogadishu, Southern and Eastern Somalia. There were crime victims of killing and looting. Moreover, the fighting displaced and threatened millions of Somalis with starvation, according to the United Nations.²¹ Armed militias headed by the local warlords disrupted the food distribution. They mainly stole food aid to have power over the local unarmed civilians.

To settle the dispute in Somalia, the united State of America launched Operation Provide Relief in August 1992 and Operation Restore Hope in December 1992. The Operations cooperated with the Disaster Assistance Response Team at the US and the United Nations to ensure the safe delivery of Humanitarian supplies and reduce the level of violence.²²

Besides investing efforts in restoring peace and order in Somalia, the United Nations sought to provide a secure environment that would improve the economic, social and political life. The fundamental challenge that faced the UN was the opposition of warlord Muhammed Farah Aideed. He managed to shoot down two Black Hawk helicopters in a fight that led to the death of US soldiers and hundreds of

²⁰ A. Abukar, LLM, *Somalia: A Brief Country Report* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands, AWEPA, 2015), 25, <http://www.awepa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Somalia-A-Brief-and-country-Report.pdf>

²¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

²² Diana Briton and Mohamood Cabdi Noor, *The Somali Their History and Culture* (1993), 12, http://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/migrated/where/united_states

Somali civilians.²³ The incident caused the US government to remove its troops from the country in March 1994. The following year witnessed the UN withdrawal that left the country in a situation of disorder.

²³ A. Abukar, LL.M., *Somalia: A Brief Country Report* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands, AWEPA, 2015), 26, <http://www.awepa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Somalia-A-Brief-and-country-Report.pdf>

Chapter one:

Negative Elements of Culture in *Links* and *The Kite Runner*.

1.The status of women in Afghanistan:

1.1.Women and family institutions:

Traditional family notions in Afghanistan determine the position of woman in society. Male members of the family are the source of power and decision- makers of literally speaking almost all aspects of life. The position that Afghan women hold in their families is inferior to that of male members of the same family. Moreover, the economic support they provide for them determines the position women occupy in their families. Women are expected to bear children and to obey unquestioningly their husband's orders. Their time and attention are regarded as men's divine right to own. The discrimination against women exists inside Afghan families. It is one of the problems that prevent the positive change in their social and professional life in their communities.

Be it discrimination or violence against women, both are overt and inherited from generation to generation. 'The masculine family codes of behavior'²⁴ glorify the right of using violence against women to suppress any act of disobedience. The cultural influence empowers the male family members to justify the physical and psychological abuse they commit upon women. The family environment that Afghan women grow up in is in itself stressful and not supportive.²⁵ The opportunities for education and employment are unavailable since female members are not regarded autonomous individuals who have aspirations and hopes

Gender discrimination punishes females for defying the traditions of their patriarchal society. They believe that men have the right to defend the family's honor by preserving the honor of their female relatives, sometimes at the cost of their own lives. In the novel Soraya is a young unmarried daughter of an Afghan war refugee that served as a general during the pre-communist rule. His name is General Taheri. Even though the General lived a long period of his life in the USA, he never abandoned the hope that one day he would return to his beloved Afghanistan and revive the good old days. Taheri's reputation has been ruined when his daughter Soraya ran away with an Afghan man. That incident happened when Soraya was eighteen. It damaged her

²⁴ AHRDO. feb 15 *Women in the Eyes of Men*(2015),27,
<http://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AHRDO%20Feb%2015>

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

chance to be a good wife and crushed her parent's hope that someday she will meet the prospective husband and live a happy life beside him.

The polite interest Amir has shown to Soraya awakened the desperate hope in her mother Khala Jamila that faded years ago after her daughter's scandal. In the following passage the writer states openly that even when it comes to committing moral wrongs woman is expected to carry around a deep shame over what she did, rather than man whose masculinity grants him the right to be treated differently.

‘And now this women, this mother, with her heartbreakingly eager, crooked smile and the barely veiled hope in her eyes. I cringed a little in at the position of power I'd been granted, and all because I had won at the genetic lottery that had determined my sex’.²⁶

The role of women is limited in maintaining the house hold, whereas men struggle to provide all the family members with food, clothes and other basic needs. However, it is difficult to expect from one person to satisfy the whole family's needs. The productive position that women could play is one of the ways that will improve her situation in the family.²⁷ Moreover, Afghan society, like other underdeveloped societies, entered economic difficulty; this requires massive efforts from all the members of the community to escape from. Women could redefine their roles in their communities through participating in building a strong economy.²⁸ This challenge could not be confronted without a cultural transformation. However, the conservative and typical families adhere to certain customs and beliefs that restrict the movement and the public visibility of women.

1.2. Women and the religious institutions:

The religious institutions in Afghanistan play the most important role in the daily life of people. The Mullahs, who are the religious leaders of the madrasas and the mosques, possess religious authority which influences, if not shapes, people's

²⁶ Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*(2003),125. <http://www.thehazeleyacademy.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/IB-English-The-Kite-Runner-Full-Text.pdf>

²⁷ AHRDO. feb 15 *Women in the Eyes of Men*(2015),27, <http://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AHRDO%20Feb%2015>

²⁸ Huma Ahmad-Ghosh. *A History of Women in Afghanistan: Lessons learnt for the Future*(2003),08,https: <http://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1577&context=jiws>

attitudes.²⁹ Concerning women's rights in Afghanistan, some Mullahs argued that Shari'a Law forbids that Muslim women work outside home or learn except basic knowledge of Islam. Some others described the situation of women in arguing that 'The role models for a Muslim woman are the Prophet's wives and daughter. The best women are those who stay at home. A woman's main duty is to manage the household and bring up children in accordance with accepted Islamic morals.'³⁰ This view caused positive reaction from individuals and family members that use religion as an excuse to suppress any attempt from women to break the rule of 'staying home'.

The public opposition of women's education and employment from 'radical' Mullah³¹ strengthened their hand in usurping women's social, economic and political rights. The conservative Mullah accused even the individuals who defended women's rights by criticizing their support for the active role of women in Afghan society. They depend on religious teaching such as: 'no nation whose leader is a woman will be salvaged'³² to condemn the tiny educated women, who occupy high positions in NGOs and other public institutions, for being infidels.

The religious forces and institutions hold power over the civil society. Therefore, women's chance to enhance their status is million-to-one because of the deep influence of religious forces in Afghan society.

1.3.The status of women in Afghanistan during Taliban's regime:

Women during Taliban era were not allowed to work outside the home, attend school or to leave their homes unless escorted by a husband, father, brother, or son. Women appeared publically in *burqa* that cover them from head to toes, with a mesh opening to see and breathe. Even the shoes that make noise while walking were forbidden. The public bathhouses for women were closed and the access to health care was limited.³³ Restrictions on women public visibility and movement varied from region to region, and the non- Pashtun ethnicities were objected to tougher restrictions.

²⁹ Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organization, *Women in the Eyes of Men*(2015),17, <http://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AHRDO%20Feb%2015>

³⁰ M.H Hasrat and Alexandra Pfefferle. *Women Status in Afghanistan*(2012),20, http://www.aihrc.org.af/media/files/VAW_Final%20Draft-20.12.pdf

³¹ Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organization, *Women in the Eyes of Men*(2015),18, <http://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AHRDO%20Feb%2015>

³² . M.H Hasrat and Alexandra Pfefferle, *Women Status in Afghanistan*(2012),20,http://www.aihrc.org.af/media/files/VAW_Final%20Draft-20.12.pdf

³³ Minakshi Das and Sir Rata Fellow, *Taliban's War on Women*(London: Mianski, 2006),24, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/asiaResearchCentre/files/ARCWP13-Das.pdf>

Because Taliban regime was basically governed by Pashtun elements, they excluded and persecuted the other ethnic and religious minorities such as the Hazara.

Since the occupation of the Taliban, women's situation in Afghan society remained vulnerable. The women who could get access to medical care, education and employment represented an exception to the rule due to the pressure that the local and the international community put on official policies' makers.³⁴

1.3.1. Women and violence:

Violence against women is deeply rooted in Afghan culture. What makes the difference is the forms and the level of violence these women experienced throughout the history of Afghanistan. However, the period of Taliban rule became known as the symbol of women's oppression in the local and global society. The Department of 'Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice' was the body that permitted beating women publically in case of violating the rules. These rules districted women's dress, mobility, and social behaviors. For instance, if a woman raised her voice in the streets, she would be beaten by a cable for breaking Shari'a law that prohibits women to speak loudly.

Hossenni pictures a horrific scene of violence perpetrated against a woman and man who are accused of adultery. Taliban's convention dictates that people who commit adultery will be hurled stones till death. Besides, this act will be performed on public view. Men, women and even children are forced to witness the so called 'fitting punishment' inflicted on adulterers.

Two Talibs Kalashnikovs slung across their shoulders helped the blindfolded man from the first truck and two others helped the burqa-clad woman. The women's knees buckled under her and she slumped to the ground. The soldiers pulled her up and she slumped again. When they tried to lift her again, she screamed and kicked. I will never, as long as I draw breath, forget the sound of that scream. It was the cry of a wild animal trying to pry its mangled leg free from the bear trap. Two more Talibs joined in and helped force her into one of the chest-deep holes. The blind folded man, on the other hand, quietly allowed them to lower him into

³⁴ Ibid.,25.

the hole dug for him. Now only the accused pair's torsos protruded from the ground.³⁵

1.3.2. Women and health:

Female patients in the family were not allowed to undergo a medical examination in health centers and hospitals. The cultural and religious beliefs prohibited men to expose their daughters or wives to male doctors to be examined. In life-threatening emergencies only, male doctors could see their female patients in the presence of a father or a husband, and without touching them. Diagnose and treatment were often not effective because of the unfavorable conditions the doctors worked in. The lack of female professionals in health service caused patriarchal families to request help from local hakims to treat their wives or daughters. In desperate attempt they accompanied them to the sacred shrines of the spiritual masters rather than medical centers to seek cure.³⁶

Women's value was measured by their fertility. They were expected to give birth to children in order to provide the family with a future labor force that would contribute in supplementing the family's income.

The dominant tradition in Afghan families dictated that men had the right to enjoy the finest food while women lived on what was leftover. Women's health needs were undermined by such a cultural practice that caused one of the major health problems that Afghan women suffered from, which was the inadequate nutrition.³⁷ Some may suggest that women were willing to sacrifice their wellbeing for their families. However, the difference lies in the complete submission they were forced into rather than the will to compromise for a noble deed.

1.3.3. Women and education:

The era of Taliban regime restricted the movement of women and that included even attending schools. After the age of eight girls were not allowed to be educated. For those who did not get to this age, the only study that was permissible for them was the learning of the Quran.³⁸ Even the boys' education was affected by the ban of women's work as teachers, because historically the majority of teachers in Afghan society were women.

³⁵ Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner* (2003), 231. <http://www.thehazeleyacademy.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/IB-English-The-Kite-Runner-Full-Text.pdf>

³⁶ Minakshi Das and Sir Rata Fellow, *Taliban's War on Women* (London: Mianski, 2006), 25. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/asiaResearchCentre/files/ARCWP13-Das.pdf>

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 26,

³⁸ Hafiza Yazdany, *Women in Afghanistan: Lack of Educational Opportunities* (Stadtschlaing, Austria: Ronald H. Tuschl, 2008), 17, http://epu.ac.at/fileadmin/downloads/research/rp_0808.pdf

Some literate women could manage somehow to contribute to primary and secondary education for girls. Private home schools were the new education settings to resume studies for girls and women. Reading and writing skills were taught and even the English language was taught as an optional subject. The schools were run by the female employees that were dismissed from their jobs by Taliban regime.³⁹The international agencies financed such aid programs, however, they could not stand against Taliban's insults and beatings of women's working for these agencies.

Even though women were officially banned from education, there were a growing number of girls and women being educated due to the cooperation of the international non-governmental agencies and the literate women. In the five years that Taliban ruled the country, they practiced discrimination on the ground of gender. The reformed educational system expelled women's right in schooling while it allowed male schooling, using religion as an excuse to justify their acts.

1.3.4. Women and employment:

The great majority of Afghan working women carried out teaching or nursing jobs before Taliban's rule. But In the first years of Taliban's control there was a sharp decrease in the number of female employees. However, the need for them in medical sectors compelled a change in the regime's policy. In 1999, Taliban allowed health NGO's to recruit doctors and nurses in order to treat women only. Widows also benefited from the NGO's aid programs and worked as female staff of bakeries in World Food Programme's. In 2000, Taliban issued another edict that banned women's employment except in health centers and hospitals. The prohibition order forced the United Nations to enter into negotiations with Taliban but they failed to reach an agreement.⁴⁰

³⁹ International Home Group, *Women and Conflict in Afghanistan*(Bressels, Belgium, 2013),05, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/252-women-and-conflict-in-afghanistan.pdf>

⁴⁰ Minakshi Das and Sir Rata Fellow, *Taliban's War on Women*(London: Mianski, 2006),27, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/asiaResearchCentre/files/ARCWP13-Das.pdf>

Employment discrimination forced some widowed women to beg for food for themselves and their children. Some others were involved into prostitution⁴¹ in order to survive. Taliban made their lives impossible when they prevented their movement without male escort. These women were left with no visible means of support; no work, no income. They were deprived of the chance to provide a decent living for their fatherless children. In a touching scene described by Amir, the protagonist, during his journey to his home town in Kabul, Hosseini writes:

And the beggars were mostly children now, thin and grim-faced, some no older than five or six. They sat on the laps of their burqa-clad mothers alongside gutters at busy street corners and chanted “Bakhshesh, bakhshesh!” And something else, something I hadn’t noticed right away: Hardly any of them sat with an adult male--the wars had made fathers a rare commodity in Afghanistan’.⁴²

2. Status of women in Somalia:

2.1 Women’s specified gender roles in the family:

The roles that the Somali women occupy are crucial to their families’ survival. Besides being dutiful wives and full-time mothers, they operate and work on the family’s livestock to provide food. The traditional nomadic system in Somalia depends heavily on women’s strategies to move the families’ dwellings that require a constant change of place. Women are responsible for constructing homes and procuring daily supplies besides cooking and harvesting crops.⁴³

Urban women may hold jobs in shops and offices. The conflict in Somalia brought some women to carry on continuing struggle in the marketplace to establish their own business. The women’s economic roles contribute to improve their families’ life conditions, especially when their unemployed or injured husbands could no longer fulfill the basic stands of living. Jeebleh’s mother provides an illustrative example of hard working Somali women. She is a woman who struggled to survive he and her only son living in harsh conditions when none of their relatives accepted to afford them

⁴¹International Home Group, *Women and Conflict in Afghanistan*(Bressels, Belgium, 2013),05, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/252-women-and-conflict-in-afghanistan.pdf>

⁴² Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*(2003),208-09, <http://www.thehazeleyacademy.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/IB-English-The-Kite-Runner-Full-Text.pdf>

⁴³UNICEF , *Women’s rights in Islam and Somali Culture* (Hargeysa, Somaliland, 2002), 21. http://www.unicef.org/somalia/SOM_WomenInIslam.pdf

a shelter. The bright future that the mother envisioned to her son saved Jeebleh from a possibility of a miserable life in a country ravaged by clan conflicts. The following passage indicates how Farah describes Jeebleh's mother role in bringing up her dependent child.

An only son, Jeebleh had been raised by a strong woman with iron determination. His father was a lowlife; he had sold the house the family lived in and the family plot of land he had inherited from his own family to pay off gambling debts. After the divorce, Jeebleh's mother made it her mission in life to insure that Jeebleh grew up to be very different from his father. She impressed into his memory his uniqueness, repeatedly telling him that he could do anything he put his hand to.

She possessed no more than a brick-and-mud single-room hut, a barn with two cows and a calf tied to poles buried in the earth, an outdoor latrine, and an undying hope in her son's future success. And even though she loved him to excess, she was firm with him. Within half a year of being divorced, she borrowed a few hundred shillings from a woman friend and started a neighborhood stall, selling tomatoes, onions and matches spread on a cardboard box. Day in and day out, she sat on the very mat where she and her son slept at night.⁴⁴

By representing strong women characters like Jeebleh's mother, Farah brings about the idea of a feminist consciousness expressed by female characters involved in the societal transformation besides resisting the male hegemony in patriarchal Somali society.

2.2 Women's rights after 1991(civil war):

Women's status in Somalia changed markedly after the year 1991. During Said Barre's rule women could occupy high positions in society such as colonels, ambassadors and judges. However, the president's social reforms did not appeal to the tribal and clan system that emerged as a governing force just after the collapse of president Barre's regime. The absence of a centralized government encouraged women's rights violations and exposed them to various forms of abuses. The clan

⁴⁴ Nuruddin Farah, *Links* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 94.

system resorted to Shari'a and customary law to limit women's freedom and even enforcing public stoning on women who have committed adultery.⁴⁵

Women have been deprived of the right to belong to any clan, because clan affiliation was exclusively masculine. However, when it came to clan-related retaliation and attacks the victims were mainly defenseless women and young girls.

Because of the deteriorated infrastructure and poor health care services in Somalia maternal mortality and morbidity rates were high. The absence of health care for Somali women has been tackled in Farah's links. When Bile's sister Shanta has a difficult delivery with her daughter Raasta, Bile himself helps his sister to give birth to her child. The possibility that a doctor can help his sister to deliver her baby is unacceptable according to the medical standards and the customary law in Somalia. Concerning this incident Bile says:

I [Bile] wish I had seriously considered the ethical implications of a brother delivering his younger sister's baby, but there was no time—the lives of the mother and the baby weighed heavily in favor of an intervention, mine. These were abnormal times. There were no hospitals functioning, and I had to, and got down to work right way, conscious of the conditions I was working in, which were far from ideal... For me, however, everything was unreal, and I took delight in touching, hugging, being touched and hugged, because I didn't remember what I had just done—helped at the delivery of my sister's baby, which by medical standards in our country is unethical.⁴⁶

The harmful traditional practice known as the Female Genital Mutilation (FMG), also called Infibulation, created number of health issues. Statistics showed that 98% of females were subjected to this cruel surgical procedure in Somalia. The reason behind this practice was that women's chastity could be ensured until they would be rightly married. Even though this procedure risked the women's lives and sometimes resulted in their death from infections and massive blood loss, it was widespread throughout the country and preserved as a traditional custom that must be maintained.

⁴⁵David W.Graney," *Women's Rights in Somalia: Women's Role in Conflict Resolution*" (2010). http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/Academic/hrreconpb_womensrightsinsomalia_graney_april2010.pdf

⁴⁶Nuruddin Farah, *Links* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 173.

During Barre's rule, that procedure was totally banned but it was revived by the traditional leaders and clan elders after the overthrow of his regime.⁴⁷

The educational status of women in Somalia was inferior to that of men because the Somali families gave priority to boys' schooling rather than girls' schooling. Boys were considered a profitable investment that might improve the families' standards of living.⁴⁸ Also, the declining economy of the country compelled women to think about how to make a living for them and their families. Therefore, education was a right enjoyed by the privileged few among Somali women, and poverty was a serious impediment that denied them that right.

2.3 Child marriage in Somalia:

Child marriage is defined as marriage in which the bride or groom is under age of 18 and primarily involves girls.⁴⁹ In Somalia and especially in rural areas, parents marry off their daughters usually without asking for their opinion. Some of the girls accept their fathers' decision without protest mostly because they are too young to make a decision about their spouses. Some of the girls who resist the marriage they experience physical violence and psychological pressure to force them to accept the marriage proposal which is seen as an honor that the bride's father cannot deny.⁵⁰

The issue of child marriage has been raised in one of the scenes of Farah's *Links*. In a conversation between Jeebleh, one of the central characters in the novel, and Caloosha, the antagonist, the latter speaks about his fifteen years old wife that he has married saying that she is: 'the latest acquisition of an old man ready to retire'.⁵¹ Jeebleh despises Caloosha for being such a despicable person, however his determination to reveal the truth behind Rasta's missing overcomes his will to make an end to his life. Jeebleh comments on Caloosha's speech: 'She could've been your granddaughter!' wondering if that could make him feel a little bit ashamed. But Caloosha makes things worse when he adds: 'She is very pretty, of Xamari descent'

⁴⁷ David W. Graney, "Women's Rights in Somalia: Women's Role in Conflict Resolution" (2010).
http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/Academic/hrreconpb_womensrightsinsomalia_graney_april2010.pdf

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Farzaneh Roudi and Shaimaa Ibrahim, *Ending Child Marriage in The Arab Region* (Washington, DC, 2013), 02.
<https://www.prb.org/pdf13/child-marriage-arab-region-pdf>.

⁵⁰ Gerald J. and Dorothy R., *Child Protection in the Somali Region of Ethiopia* (2011), 13.
https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/FINALChild_Protection_in_the_Somali_Region_30

⁵¹ Nuruddin Farah, *Links* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 104.

Caloosha said with grin and a wink. ‘And as I said before, we thank God for all His mercies, great and small. She’s been a blessing to me in my old age, my young thing.’⁵² It seems that this is one of Caloosha’s ways to test Jeeblah’s patience and it must be a blunt statement that young girls are regarded as sex objects more than life partners.

Attitudes about the status of girls and women in Somalia and other countries in the world should be changed. The religious leaders and policymakers are responsible for raising the awareness of families about the damage they inflict on their daughters and the whole society. Because sexual relationships and childbearing are not the only qualifications that enable women to become wives and mothers.

2.4 Women’s contribution to peace in Somalia:

Among the issues that Farah discusses in this interview is women’s right to contribute to restore peace in Somalia. The television interviewer’s question and Farah’s answer come respectively as the following:

You have written a lot about the power men hold over women. And the evident from the African development Bank and others is clear. Transfer resources into the hands of women, they will spend more on food more on health, more on education. How to make the shift?

Well I think that first of all, there are legal impediments to women gaining power; legal juridical. And one has to work on that, and one has to really and truly educate the women so that they know what they are worth. Individual women work, close to eighteen hours every single day, keeping the family going, putting food on the table. These are the responsibilities they are left in the hands of women and they have done it wonderfully, Which is one of the reasons why I often insist that if you actually want peace in Somalia, you must have in power more women, you must make sure of that half of the positions of power, at least half of them are offered to women.⁵³

Being a ‘feminist’ might be the first judgment given to the writer Nuruddin Farah because of his attitude of granting women political power in the Somali government. For Farah, women deserve that position because of the efforts they devote

⁵² Ibid., 105.

⁵³ Nuruddin Farah, interviewed by breaking views with unicef, *Challenges for Women and Children in Somalia: Discussing Education and Conflict with Nuruddin Farah*, ENCA, jan24, 2014.

to support their families and resolve the continued conflict that brought the country into ruin. The need for better social and political conditions compels the system to grant women governmental positions that allow the effective change to occur.

Women have been excluded from power by the traditions and culture that dictate that women are dependent on men to survive, and they are unqualified to make decisions that concern the community. That fact has been changed to some degree by the civil war. Women acted as intermediaries between the warring clans because their loyalty did not lie with their fathers' or husbands' clans. They had loyalty to peace rather than blood relationships.

Shanta is one of Farah's fictional characters in the novel. She is a friend of Jeebleh, the protagonist. In her conversation with him she complains about the way her brother Bile and her husband Faahiye are treating each other in which sometimes it requires mediation by her to settle the conflict between them.

They were at each other's throats, because of what happened, she said "and it fell on me to make peace between them. It's always fallen to women to forge the peace between all these hot-blooded men, always ready to go to war at the slightest provocation. Faahiye and my brothers are no different from the majority of men who've brought Somalia to ruin! Why do men behave the way they do, warring?"⁵⁴

Or maybe why do women behave the way they do? In response to the question we may say that the impact of war has made the shift in women's position from being victims of armed conflict to peace messengers. Women have to take on the role of mothers and provide their families with income in the absence of their husbands. The civil war added to the traditional role that women embrace another burden which is working for peace, economic survival and political change. However, the patriarchal culture in Somalia lowers the status of women despite the remarkable commitment they demonstrate for improving the Somali condition.

When jeebleh asked the question whose idea was it that dinners at The Refuge should be a 'communal affair'⁵⁵, Shanta replied that it could only have been a woman's idea and added:

⁵⁴ Nuruddin Farah, *Links* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 211.

⁵⁵ Nuruddin Farah, *Links* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 212.

For one thing, women waste less food, she said. For another, eating together from the same plate is more gregarious. Besides, as you well know, we women have always eaten together, after serving our husbands. That women are content with seconds or leftovers suggests that we're prepared to compromise for the sake of peace. Not so men!⁵⁶

Men turn the blind eye to women's sacrifice and underestimate the worth of their contribution in maintaining the contact between their extended family members. Unlike men, women place a high priority on family and communal issues rather than engaging in a damaging dispute over leadership.

3. Strategic use of Islam in Afghanistan:

3.1 Situating the Hazaras in the Ethno-religious landscape of Afghanistan:

"When God created the donkey, the Hazaras cried." This is an Afghan saying that sums up the position of the Hazaras among the other ethnicities in Afghanistan. Besides being ethnic minority, the Hazaras are also a religious minority which follows Shi'a Islam in a country that has an overwhelming majority of Sunni Muslims. They are distinguished by their physical features that bear a resemblance to the East Asian features. There is a long-held belief in Afghanistan that the Hazaras have descent from Genghis Khan's invading armies that occupied Afghanistan in the thirteenth century.⁵⁷ Their distinctive appearance and religious belief subject them to persecution that lasted for centuries, and sometimes this persecution demonstrates itself in a form of ethnic cleansing.

Due to the Shi'a faith the Hazaras are perceived to be infidels. Their acts and places of worship differ from those of the Sunni Afghans. For instance, the Hazaras celebrate the martyrdom of Imam Hussein and beat themselves in memory of this incident. This practice is opposed by the Sunni sect, and was prohibited during the Taliban regime.

In Hosseni's book, Hassan is the playmate of Amir. He is Ali's son, who works as a male servant for Amir's father Baba, they are Hazaras hired by Pashtun family. The two boys are peers; their age is about twelve. But a vast wealth and racial gap

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Annika Frantzell, "Human Security, Peacebuilding, and the Hazara Minority of Afghanistan" (Master's Thesis in Global Studies, Department of Political Studies, 2011) 22, <http://www.atlanticcommunity.org/app/webroot/files/articlepdf/Hazara.pdf>

separates them from each other. Amir and Hassan live in the same home but they actually live in two different worlds. Amir enjoys a high quality of life; he attends school, always appear in gorgeous cloths, and most importantly, he belongs to the upper social rank in the society. While the Hazara boy Hassan spends most of the day helping his father with the housework and when Amir finishes school he begs him to read stories for him, because the Hazara boy does not know how to read and write. Illiteracy among the Hazaras is not by choice because the people and the system in Afghanistan deny them the right to attend the same schools the other ethnic groups do, even if their financial situation helps them to do so.

Hosseini highlights the extent of hatred for the Hazaras when he sets a scene in which Amir comes across one of his mother's books that describes the Hazaras suffering oppression at the hands of Pashtuns. Amir says:

They called him "flat-nosed" because of Ali and Hassan's characteristics Hazara Mongoloid features. For years, that was all I knew about the Hazaras, that they were Mogul descendants, and that they looked a little like Chinese people.... One day.... I found one of my mother's old history books.... [I] was stunned to find an entire chapter on Hazara history.... 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 that my people had killed the Hazaras, driven them from their lands burned their homes, and sold their women. The book said part of the reason Pashtuns had oppressed the Hazaras was that Pashtuns were Sunni Muslims, while Hazaras were Shi'a.⁵⁸

The theme of ethnicity is complicated in *The Kite Runner*. The Pashtuns are Sunni Muslims and the Hazaras are Shi'a Muslims. The latter has been mistreated by the former because of their ethnicity and religion. In an attempt to erase the Hazara people from the history of the country, the Pashtuns committed genocide against them. The Instance of Amir's betrayal of Hassan resonates in Hosseini's story to engender a feeling of regret over abusing Hassan's loyalty toward Amir.

3.2 Taliban's version of Islam:

When the Taliban first appeared in the south of Afghanistan, they were viewed by the Pashtun population as the historical traditional leaders that would end the

political crisis in the country. The population responded to Taliban's call to surrender their arms and fight for them. That facilitated Taliban's conquest of the country.⁵⁹

Taliban's objectives from occupying Afghanistan were stated publically. The most desired objective was creating a state that is based on Shari'a law. They imposed behavioral and dress codes on the population, with a complete ban on the visual arts and music. Musical and folk culture, that Afghans enjoy most in their celebrations, witnessed a sharp decline because of the radical ideas implemented by the Taliban group claiming that their high priority was to clean the society from its presumed decadence that revealed itself in such forms.⁶⁰

The arrival of Taliban caused loss of jobs for women, closure of schools for girls, destruction of economic and social infrastructure as well as disrupted the operation of basic services. The population's public welfare was not given attention. Taliban's concern was not to eradicate poverty or to provide education and health care. They claimed that welfare programs would come after fulfilling their military objectives of invading the country.⁶¹

In Hosseini's book *The Kite Runner*, Assef is the antagonist of the novel. He is the son of a German mother and an Afghan father. Assef boasts of his partial German origin and glorifies Hitler's achievements. As a child he used to torment the children with his brass knuckles, and later he abused Hassan sexually. Assef's idolization to Hitler is an obvious hint that he will resort to violence and abuse when he will become an adult. The Taliban's presence gives him a free reign to exercise his aggressive nature on the defenseless people. In search of Hassan's son, and in the middle of Taliban's danger and persecuting 'traitors', Amir finds himself obliged to meet his old enemy of childhood Assef. The slight difference in Assef's personality traits between childhood and now is his insatiable thirst to blood and his absence of conscious. He describes a scene to Amir when he was in a mission saying:

He [Assef] leaned toward me, like a man about to share a great secret. "You don't know the meaning of the word 'liberating' until you've done that, stood

⁵⁹ Peter Marsden, *Afghanistan: Minorities, Conflict and the Search for Peace* (UK, London), 21. <http://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/old-site-downloads/download-132-Afghanistan-Minorities-Conflict-and-the-Search-for-Peace.pdf>

⁶⁰ Ibid., 24.

⁶¹ Sarah Lister, *The Community Fora Process in Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan: a case study* (Kabul, Afghanistan, 2004), 04. http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTSF/Resources/395669-1126194965141/1635383-1154459301238/Lister_Afghanistan_CaseStudy_14Dec04.pdf

in a roomful of targets, let the bullets fly free of guilt and remorse, knowing you are virtuous, good, and decent. Knowing you are doing God's work. It's breathtaking. He kissed the prayer beads, tilted his head.⁶²

Hosseini creates Assef's character to unveil the real reason behind Taliban's ideology. They justify the crimes they commit through religion and foster the illusion that Man's mission on earth is to carry out justice that is based on God's holy book Koran and his Prophet Muhammad's Sunnah, even if the persons who administer this justice themselves interpret and violate these laws to serve their own interest. In the novel, Amir sums up the proclaimed mission of Taliban on earth when he bursts out "What mission is that?" I heard myself say. "Stoning adulterers? Raping children? Flogging women for wearing high heels? Massacring Hazaras? All in the name of Islam?"⁶³

3.3 Religious and ethnic Persecution of Hazaras during Taliban's control:

Most Shi'a Muslims in Afghanistan are Hazara. The country's history contains incidents of conflicts between the Hazaras and other Afghan ethnic groups over lands and politics. However, the main factor leading to their persecution is their religious adherence to Shi'a rather than ethnic identity.

3.3.1 The Hazaras massacre in Mazar-i-Sharif:

Mazar-i-Sharif is a city in Afghanistan. In 1998, the Taliban perpetrated a bloody massacre of civilians in this city. Their human targets were mainly the Hazaras. The particular reason for these attacks was the revenge for the defeat they had gone down to by the Hazaras in the same city a year before. Another reason was that the clash between Sunni fundamentalists and Shi'a liberals incited the racial hatred for the Hazaras by the other ethnic groups who permitted killing them by saying: 'Hazaras are not Muslim. You can kill them. It is not a sin.'⁶⁴

Human Rights Watch reported that more than 8000 Hazara men and women were massacred by Taliban armed groups in the attack in 1998.⁶⁵ The long-standing intolerance felt by many Sunni Afghans towards this Shi'a ethnic and religious group

⁶² Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner* (2003), 237, <http://www.thehazeleyacademy.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/IB-English-The-Kite-Runner-Full-Text.pdf>

⁶³ Ibid., 243.

⁶⁴ Jennifer Creasy, "The Religious Identity of the Hazaras of Afghanistan Modern-day Pakistan" (thesis for the degree of MTh., University of Glasgow, July 2009), 40, <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/1277/1/2009CreasyMTh.pdf>

⁶⁵ Ibid., 40.

fueled the Taliban hostile reaction when they recaptured this area. Taliban forces had deliberately killed civilians, and sometimes had their throats slit, either in their homes, streets or during house- to- house searches. Women, children and the elderly were shot as they tried to flee.⁶⁶

This hostile attack on Mazar’s civilians, mainly the Hazaras, is described by Hossieni in his book when Assef goes into the details of this massacre to irritate Amir. He expresses his great pleasure in exterminating the Hazara civilians and how they left their dead discarded bodies littering the streets of Mazar for days. Amir describes Assef’s expressive gestures and hateful speech as following:

He [Assef] stood up, 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...sweep the barrel of my machine gun around the room and fire and fire until the smoke blinded me”.⁶⁷

Another Talib added:

“Door-to-door. We only rested for food and prayer,” the Talib said. He said it fondly, like a man telling of a great party he’d attended. “We left the bodies in the streets, and if their families tried to sneak out to drag them back into their homes, we’d shoot them too. We left them in the streets for days. We left them for the dogs. Dog meat for dogs.”⁶⁸

Assef holds unjustified hostility towards the Hazaras which is derived from the past. In order to remove them all from the region of Afghanistan, Assef joins Taliban who are mostly Pashtuns. He kills many Hazaras in Hazarajat, which is the Hazaras hometown, in a massacre. Power in the hands of Pashtuns’ majority provokes discrimination and imbalance among the Afghan community in which the inferior race is excluded from the social participation and even the human rights.

3.4 Secular Islam and radical Islam in *The Kite Runner*:

Baba is one of Hosseini’s characters in the novel. He is a secular Muslim who upholds certain moral principles that are not based on religion. Baba is a self-made

⁶⁶ Ibid., 22.

⁶⁷ Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner* (2003), 237,

<http://www.thehazeleyacademy.com/wpcontent/uploads/2014/07/IB-English-The-Kite-Runner-Full-Text.pdf>

⁶⁸ Ibid.

man, who achieved wealth through hard and honest work. Baba's unforgivable sin is committing adultery with Ali's wife Sanaubar, and he is Hassan's biological father. The guilty secret has been held from Amir till Baba's death.

This character could represent secular Afghanistan in the seventies, when practicing Islam was considered a religious freedom more than rigorous enforcement. Baba's despise for the religious figures in Afghanistan could be rationally justified. He sees that Koran is a book that is written in a foreign language, and to understand it they should at least master thoroughly the Arabic language then decide which is permissible and which is not. In a day Amir is at school, he narrates:

When I was in fifth grade, we had a mullah taught us about Islam.... He made us memorize verses from the Koran--and though he never translated the words for us, he did stress, sometimes with the help of a stripped willow branch, that we had to pronounce the Arabic words correctly so God would hear us better. He told us one day that Islam considered drinking a terrible sin.... In those days, drinking was fairly common in Kabul. No one gave you a public lashing for it, but those Afghans who did drink did so in private, out of respect. People bought their scotch as "medicine" in brown paper bags from selected "pharmacies". They would leave with the bag tucked out of sight, sometimes drawing furtive, disapproving glances from those who knew about the store's reputation for such transactions.⁶⁹

When Amir tells Baba what mullah says about drinking, bearing in mind that Baba drinks whisky occasionally, and asks if does this make him a sinner, Baba responds with a pure contempt: "I mean all of them. Piss on the beards of all those self-righteous monkeys"... "They do nothing but thumb their prayer beads and recite a book written in a tongue they don't even understand." He took a sip. "God help us all if Afghanistan even falls into their hands".⁷⁰

Drinking is one of Baba's imperfections in his character, but that does not hide the good side of him. He is a man whose acts of generosity are appreciated by the poor and orphans. In Baba's philosophy, improving one's life or helping someone to preserve his dignity is much better than engaging in sterile arguments about whom

⁶⁹ Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner* (2003), 11-12,

<http://www.thehazeleyacademy.com/wpcontent/uploads/2014/07/IB-English-The-Kite-Runner-Full-Text.pdf>

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

should go to hell and whom should go to paradise. Baba finishes his conversation with Amir with: “If there is a God out there, then I would hope he has more important things to attend to than my drinking scotch or eating pork”.⁷¹

The main character that represents radical Muslims in the novel is Assef. However, according to Hosseini’s portrayal to this character Assef is not a real Muslim. He is a psychopath who uses religion as a cover to make his terrorist and immoral acts justified by Shari’a law. He rapes children, murder innocents, and meanwhile punishes the sinners of adultery by stoning them to death. The scene of stoning the adulterers reveals the religious rituals the cleric goes through to convince the audiences that through this act Afghan Muslims obey God’s will. Amir says:

When the prayer was done, the cleric cleared his throat. “Brothers and sisters!”
.... We are here today to carry out Shari’a. We are here today to carry out justice. We are here today because the will of Allah and the word of the prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, are alive and well here in Afghanistan.... We listen to what God says and we obey because we are nothing but humble, powerless creatures before God’s greatness.... God says that every sinner must be punished in a manner befitting his sin.... “And what manner of punishment, brothers and sisters, befits the adulterers? How shall we punish those who dishonor the sanctity of marriage?... How shall we answer those who throw stones at the windows of God’s house? WE SHALL THROW THE STONES BACK!”... Next to me, Farid was shaking his head. “And they call themselves Muslims.”⁷²

By narrating this incident, Hosseini makes the point that the Taliban are responsible for injustice and social inequalities. In the name of Islam they legitimize their extremist and criminal activities which they commit against civilian population.

From the writer’s description of radical Muslims and secular Muslims, we conclude that he is in a kind of search for the middle ground between the two contradictory beliefs. One adheres to religion and uses it as a means to absolve itself of the crimes and human rights violations committed in the name of Islam. And the other

⁷¹ Ibid., 14.

⁷² Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner* (2003), 231-32,

<http://www.thehazeleyacademy.com/wpcontent/uploads/2014/07/IB-English-The-Kite-Runner-Full-Text.pdf>

one allows the least influence that religion may have on people's actions and thoughts, and make them live a spiritual void caused by a liberal philosophy of religion.

4. Religion and conflict in Somalia:

4.1 The origin of Islam in Somalia:

Through trade and migration, mainly from Yemen and Oman, the faith reached the Horn of Africa during the 15th century AD. In Somalia today, almost 100% of the population are Sunni Muslims, generally holding a Shaf'i Sunni school of thought. That what makes the country one of the few countries in Africa whose population is almost entirely Muslim.⁷³

'One of the greatest and most powerful Islamic states that existed in the Horn of Africa', is the Audal Kingdom. Its Islamic rule lasted from the 15th to the 16th centuries. The Muslim majority that Somalia witnesses today is a result of a lasting staying power and sustained efforts from the Arab-Islamic leaders to ensure the existence of Islam in this country. Shortly after the fall of the Islamic empire, Muslim countries fell to the European powers in the 17th and 18th centuries and the golden age of Islam lost its gleam. Yet the memory of 'Islamic caliphate'⁷⁴ remained strong within the minds of Muslims and the conception of a fearsome and impenetrable Islamic empire was transmitted throughout generations.

After the colonial powers dominated the Muslim countries, Muslims suffered humiliating failure of recapturing the glory days of Islamic caliphate. And as a reaction, nationalistic and religious movements sprung up against the western thoughts to bring Islam to take over the leadership of the society.⁷⁵

In a short passage in *Links*, Nurrudin Farah describes the presence of the Muslims in Somalia as a damaging force which brought about the same destruction as the successive colonial powers did. The reader may find that the comparison between the impact of the Muslim and the European powers on Somalia is unfair. History shows that the Muslim civilization created cultural and scientific revolution that

⁷³ Fiederike Teutsch, *Collapsing Expectation : National Identity and Disintegration of the State in Somalia*, 26, http://www.cas.ed.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/27342/No_078_Collapsing_Expectation-National_Identity_and_Distingr.pdf

⁷⁴ Michael Shank, *Understanding political Islam in Somalia*(2007), 05, http://www.michaelshank.net/images/Understanding_Political_Islam_in_Somalia.pdf

⁷⁵ Muddle Suzanne Lilius, *Variations of the theme of Somaliness* (Turku, Finland, 1998), 332, http://dspace-roma3.caspur.it/bitstream/2307/4956/1/Tribaons%20on%20the%20basics%20oalism%20and%20Islam_Variatif%20Somaliness.pdf

brought prosperity to the lands they occupied. Even if there were a damage caused by the Muslim rulers, it could not be as exploitative and oppressive as the rule of the colonial powers. Besides that, Islam would not be the prevailing religion and the Somali people would not adhere to it till today. Farah says:

As one of the most ancient cities in Africa south of the Sahara, Mogadiscio had known centuries of attrition: one army leaving death and destruction in its wake, to be replaced by another and yet another, all equally destructive: the Arabs arrived and got some purchase on the peninsula, and after they pushed their commerce and along with it the Islamic faith, they were replaced by the Italians, then the Russians, and more recently the Americans, nervous, trigger-happy, shooting before they were shot at. The city became awash with guns, and the presence of the gun- crazy Americans escalated the conflict to greater heights. Would Mogadiscio ever know peace? Would the city's inhabitants enjoy this commodity ever again?⁷⁶

4.2 The role of religious leaders of Somalia in peacemaking:

The historical role of religious leaders in Somalia included resolving societal issues. Such as dealing with inheritance, curing the sick through Quranic recitals, praying for rain during the drought periods or most importantly spread Islam and bring people out of ignorance through education. The religious leaders enjoyed a high status in the Somali society and they were viewed as individuals that had special aptitudes, especially when they settled the inter-clan disputes in peaceful manners.⁷⁷

Yet the political turmoil that Somalia experienced by the state collapse in 1991 weakened the crucial role of the religious leaders they occupied before the national crisis. They became involved in the military conflict and they were not independent mediators. But the vacancy in the central government coupled with the growing conflict and the humanitarian disasters, that worsened the crisis situation in the country, created the need for the religious leaders and gave them a chance to retain their waning influence.⁷⁸

For the Somali population, religious leaders are important mediators who have Islamic duty to solve disputes. This task assures them trust and respect from the Somali

⁷⁶ Nuruddin Farah, *Links* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 15.

⁷⁷ Georg-Sebastian Holzer, *Political Islam in Somalia: A Fertile Ground for Radical Islamic Groups*, 36-37, <http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/5337~v~Political Islam in Somalia A Fertile Ground for Radical Islamic Groups.pdf>

⁷⁸ Ibid.

society. However, the negative image of religious leaders and clan elders in Farah's *Links* reveals a serious accusation of betrayal against them from the writer's point of view. For Farah, a category of the Somali population conspires against his country and takes advantages of its adversities. The role of religious leaders we have mentioned above does not seem compatible with how Farah portrays it in his novel. The following passage is a piece of evidence to confirm this.

Jeebleh went to the hall where the imams were. He found them ready for a well-earned break. The head imam presented the prayer to Jeebleh, the official "owner of the corpse." He received the blessings, his hands cupped, palms up, in the gesture of devotee humbling himself before a deity.... Jeebleh thought of how the country had been buried under the rubble of political ruin, and how Somalis woke to being betrayed by the religious men and the clan elders who were in cahoots with a cabal of warlords to share the gain they could make out of ordinary people's miseries. The clan elders got their reward in corrupt gifts of cash; the religious elders, turning themselves into cabaret artists, conned the rest of the populace as they carved an earthly kingdom for themselves.⁷⁹

4.3 Islamic fundamentalism in Somalia:

The conflict in Somalia had been fueled by competing ideologies of the religious groups that exist in the country. The religious interpretations of the Shaf'i school did not appeal to the radical Islamists that begun to emerge in the 1980's. The state collapse in 1991 and the interventions of the United Nations and the United State of America accelerated the spread of these radical groups.⁸⁰

The objective of these radicals is to establish an Islamic state in Somalia and enforce Shari'a law. Imposing strict Islamic law on the population such as stoning sinners to death and enforcing the penalty of amputation for theft were practices that alienated them from the large Somalis Muslims. The origin of these ideologies is traced back to Western and Arabian countries that supplied the fundamentalists with funds and militant strategies.⁸¹

Jeebleh, the central character in Farah's *Links*, while taking a rest he observes a women's dress code that is foreign to him. It is neither of western style nor of

⁷⁹ Nuruddin Farah, *Links* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 328-329.

⁸⁰ Joseph Kioi Mbugua, *Drivers of Insecurity in Somalia: Mapping Contours of Violence* (Nairobi, Kenya, 2013), 18-19, http://www.ipstc.org/media/documents/Occasional_Paper_4-3.pdf

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

traditional Somali clothes. That makes him wonder from where the Somali women borrow this code of dress. The writer says:

Alone in the courtyard, Jeebleh was stuck by the night's beauty, and gave himself time to admire its starry quality. His gaze fell on a tree in the distance, silhouetted by moonlight, and he was startled to notice a human figure wrapped in a subdued gray, sitting under the tree. The shape seemed detached from both time and space, reminding him of a well-trodden floor and a tableau vivant. He assumed he was looking at a woman, age determinate. Somehow, the woman's figure evoked in him a funeral sorrow. Moving closer realized that there were in fact two women, sitting so close to each other that their veils merged and became one. They were so still for such a long time, neither speaking.... In the pause that followed Jeebleh was unable to say much, still shaken by the image of two women merging into one. He and Ali walked back to a table surrounded by chairs. Jeebleh asked, "What manner of veils do Somali women wear these days?"

"A lot has changed since you were last here."

"I don't remember these."

The manager explained that the influence came from the heartland of Islamic fundamentalism, from societies such as Pakistan and Afghanistan, where knowledge about the faith was essentialist, or Saudi Arabia, where the people were traditionalist.⁸²

4.4 Stateless justice in Somalia:

Somalia is a country without state since 1991. Instead of the government's secular law, two legal systems were adopted: traditional law *xeer*⁸³ and the Islamic Shari'a. They had been used as a means of resolving disputes, mediating conflicts, negotiating peace agreements, and approving compensation payments between clans.⁸⁴

To improve local security conditions in Somalia, a combination of Somali militia-group leaders, businessmen, clan elders and community leaders worked together with Somali religious leaders to establish Shari'a courts. However, the hidden

⁸² Nuruddin Farah, *Links* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 44-45.

⁸³ The traditional legal system of Somalia, believed to predate Islam in which elders serve as mediators and people are responsible for the actions of their families.

Glosbe online dictionary, <https://glosbe.com/en/en/xeer>

⁸⁴ Nikolaus Grubeck, *Civilian Harm in Somalia: Creating an Appropriate Response* (Washington, DC, USA, 2011), 31, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_Report_2845.pdf

motive behind the establishment of these courts was personal profits. Faction leaders aimed to preserve public support through fostering the illusion of improving security conditions. The Somali businessmen also benefited from the courts when the latter provided a secure environment for their trade to prosper without concern that a surprise attack by militia and bandits would occur. The last beneficiary of these courts was the small number of Islamic radicals who attempted to adopt Shari'a law as the one law to all Somalis.⁸⁵

Harsh penalties and firm interpretations of Islamic law were enforced by Shari'a courts. Decisions were made by the court judges who were educated through informal religious studies in Somalia. Moreover, these judges applied their personal reading of the Qu'ran to pass their decisions that often caused harm to the claimant or the defendant. In *Links*, Farah does not neglect the effect of the absence of justice in Somalia. Through the fictional character Jeebleh, he expresses his bitter anger against the tyranny of the powerful over the weak, when vulnerable people are singled out for harsh unequal treatment by the unjust law. Farah says:

He [Jeebleh] took an intent look around the room in search of a secret place where he might hide his valuables....The room contained the minimum essentials....a threadbare facecloth, a bidet to the right of the stand, and near it, a plastic kettle. The kettle reminded him that he was back in an Islamic country, where one performed the rite of ablution several times a day.

He thought ahead, imagining that a hotel employee had stolen his valuables. Caught and found guilty, the thief would lose his hands. Jeebleh was distressed, because he didn't want to confront the hard realities of today's Somalia—where the limbs of the small fry are amputated, while the warlords are treated with deference. He pulled out the wallet holding his cash, and felt the freshness of the dollar bills between his fingers. His whole body shook at the thought of receiving an amputated hand as compensation.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁸⁶ Nuruddin Farah, *Links* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 42-43.

Chapter two:

Elements of Fiction in Farah's *Links* and Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*.

1. Postmodernist reading of the two novels:

In an attempt to understand the meaning of a literary work we resort to certain literary theories. The application of these theories on literature allows different ways of interpretation. These interpretations must be valid to achieve the desired effect on the readers. In my research, I look forward to reveal the meaning of a few literary elements in Farah's *Links* and Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* through providing critical analysis based on Postmodernist Theories. The reader might wonder why using Postmodernist theories among other approaches. We defend our choice by highlighting some of the leading characteristics of Postmodernism in these two literary works.

Postmodernist fiction is based on discussing crucial aspects of contemporary life. For instance when dealing with social classification, economic incompetence or political instability in a society like Afghanistan or Somalia, the aim from raising these topics is to bring a needed awareness towards them. When Hosseini deals with the Hazaras, the oppressed ethnic and religious minority in Afghanistan, he questions the authority that the Pashtuns assume to have over the Hazara population. He destabilizes the concept of racial superiority that historical accounts encourage through centuries in Afghanistan. The negative implications of this social classification in Afghanistan compel a cultural transformation in order to overcome the cycles of warfare between these two ethnicities. Hosseini highlights that fault-lines are separating the Afghan society, which are race and class. These divisions that are presumed to be stable and objective, they breakdown the social relationship instead of bringing together the Afghan people.

Hosseini also attacks gender divisions through portraying the life of Afghan women during Taliban era. Women become a marginalized element of society. Where schooling or freedom to choose their spouses are considered as a moral decay caused by the Western culture fostered by the previous regime within the Afghan society. It is true that before the militia warfare in Afghanistan people used to live a semi Western life style. It is the later era of the peaceful years what is depicted by Hosseini in his book; 'Kabul as a place where bazaars, schools, parks and movie theatres are a common feature of everyday's life. Women could join universities and some of them

were professors there⁸⁷. What makes the change in their status is the fundamentalist ruling regime that governed Afghanistan after this era. Muslim Fundamentalists resort to a religious law which is Shari'a to impose illegal constraints on Afghan women.

Islam as a religion is one of the foundations of identity formation for Afghan society. It is the system that affects all aspects of life and it reinforces them. Therefore, fundamentalists believe that it is religion what grants them the political power to exercise control over the population. The years that preceded the Taliban were marked by militia warfare which came to end by the Taliban. Afghans feared the absence of law that led to chaos during this period, therefore they welcomed the aid of the Taliban and they became subject to their will. Albert Memmi discusses the issue of law in the decolonized countries and he states that “the fundamentalists know about the institutional violence in the decolonized countries and await their moment. They hope to establish the ‘Law of God’ through countering that violence with a greater violence”.⁸⁸

The Taliban came to power in 1996. They governed the country for five years, yet the damage they inflicted on this society was extensive. The population was subjected to a brutal persecution and a poor standard of living. Intellectuals fled political persecution and all who had the chance to qualify as a refugee fled the country. Only the lower class in society, the vulnerable people suffered the profound consequences of living under the oppressive regime. However, what the Hazara minority experienced under that administration remains exception. These people do not exist in the structure of power in Afghan society, which is dominated by the Pashtun, moreover, they are denied equal economic and social status in the society.

Gayatri Spivak is an Indian theorist whose theory is based on the least powerful in a given society whom she called the ‘Subaltern’. She argues that these members cannot express their concerns, or enter into dialogues with those in power, and even if they speak their voice will not be heard. In Hosseini’s book, the Hazaras are represented as a Subaltern class. The two characters Ali and Hassan are the male Hazara servants in Baba’s house. Even though they receive generous treatment from Baba and Amir, they are not acknowledged equal to them. Hassan, the Hazara boy

⁸⁷ Khaled Hosseini: *The Kite Runner Graphic Novel*, lecturing in Dominican University of California, September 15, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6Wz33eaTl4>

⁸⁸ Albert Memmi, Robert Bonnono, *Decolonization and the decolonized* (Minnesota press), 61.

cannot join school because of his social class more than his economic status. The Pashtun do not associate with the Hazaras and do not allow them to improve their position through education. They are thoroughly despised for their ethnic origin and religious belief. Assef, who rapes Hassan viciously, is actually a representation of the Pashtun exercising power over this vulnerable minority. In the story, the three generations of the Hazaras, Ali the father, Hassan the son, and Sohrab the grandson witness the same amount of humiliation and hatred. That proves that this category cannot bring about changes that might improve their situation because of the political culture maintained by the dominant group in power. The writer points out to the issues of this marginalized society but no solutions are provided to resolve their problems. This is one of the predominant characteristics of postmodernism. It allows the readers to have their own conceptions of the answer of the problem raised.

Farah also tells a story that reflects and explores the chaos in Somalia. *Links* is a book that narrates the account of a population that suffers constant negative changes in government which exerts harmful effect on the ordinary lives. Farah depicts the life of a decolonized people that live in extreme poverty, ignorance and devastated by open militia warfare. The outcome of the competition for control is the division of the capital Mogadishu between Southerners and Northerners. This social division is based on large supportive families known as clans. Farah creates the character Jeeblah who opposes this traditional clan structure in Somalia. Jeeblah returns from exile to Somalia to look for his mother's unmarked grave and through the story events he comes to the conclusion that the clan system that governs Somalia fails to create a unite nation, but instead it generates political and social turmoil.

The Postcolonial period in Somalia is marked by internal disputes and financial deficit. The next military regime headed by Said Barre embraced Western thoughts in which he gave voice to women and undermined the authority of clan members. However, Barre's structural and social reforms were opposed by the religious scholars who claimed that these reformations opposed the Shari'a law. As a result, the clan armed movements succeeded in removing this regime from power, and since then the warring factions claim sovereignty over the Somali territories. The decentralized government caused the absence of order that permits human rights violations and hatred towards the marginalized elements within society. As Farah writes, Somalia was

once beautiful and peaceful with beaches, restaurants and late night movies, unlike now which is a city of death. Wasn't Afghanistan like Somalia peaceful and beautiful before? And why the shift from a prosperous future to a tragic fate? The answer lies in the persistence on radical changes based on Shari'a Law. Fundamentalist Muslims recognized that political power could be seized through proclaiming that the West is the source of the third world problems and the new Islamic governments is going to create a society based on Shari'a Law to preserve the components of identity in these countries. First they give the impression of being conventional, but under the surface the intentions are evil. The outcomes of their actions are worse than the effect of mimicking Western life. 'At least, during this era people enjoyed quiet simple life basically peaceful, unlike the present chaotic situation created by the tyrannical regimes'.⁸⁹

The crucial role the governments play in shaping the nation's destiny has not been fulfilled yet. Women are not getting the full rights and respect all citizens are supposed to enjoy because they are repressed by the patriarchal Somali and Afghan societies. However, in Farah's book women are not represented vulnerable although the heavy burden imposed on them because of the support their families need in the absence of their husbands. They are depicted as a productive force and effective peacemakers. In Hosseini's book, women are the most alienated and marginalized element in society especially during Taliban's regime. Their role in rebuilding the Afghan society is not acknowledged yet. The religious and family institutions encourage gender discrimination and violence toward women. In the novel scenes of widowed mothers allowed to beg but not to get jobs and support their dependent children. The regime imposes severe constraints on them without providing basic needs for them such as food or treatment.

We conclude that decolonized people have not developed yet a sense of commitment towards reforming and eliminating the negative outcome of colonization. Evaluating the society's need is the first step to positive change. For instance, the reformation of the backward educational system, and women's integration into the social and the political system must be encouraged.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Roland Algrant, *Somalia a government at war with its people* (Washington, DC, 1990),14.

https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/somalia_1990.pdf

⁹⁰ Albert Memmi, *Decolonization and the Decolonized* (Minnesota press), 61.

2. The literary devices used in *The Kite Runner*:

Hosseini employs in his novel *The Kite Runner* a non linear narrative to recount the events of the story. A non linear narrative is when the events of the story are portrayed out of a chronological order. A story should have the following order: a beginning, a middle and an end. However, the order is reversed in *The Kite Runner*. The writer opens the book in 2001, with Amir's memory of his childhood in Afghanistan. It's the memory of the tragic event that occurred in 1975. It haunts Amir and brings him back to Afghanistan to search for a way to "be good again". Rahim's phone call is a wake-up call to Amir to go back to the past and unfold dramatic and disastrous events. At the present moment the protagonist is an adult living in the US. What brought him to America, and under which circumstances he left his country are uncovered by the reader so far. At the beginning of the second chapter, Amir jumps back in time to recount his recollections with Hassan, and depicts the cultural and political history of Afghanistan to inform the reader that Afghanistan has been misrepresented by media. This country used to be a safe place where ordinary people in Kabul could visit parks, go to cinemas and women could join universities.

Hosseini represents the liberal Americanized side of Afghanistan through Amir's father, Baba who demonstrates a deep contempt for the conservative fundamentalist Muslims. Baba says: 'God help us all if Afghanistan even falls into their hands'⁹¹ his words foreshadow the coming of the Taliban regime which will institute a violent religious law. Assef, the antagonist of the novel, appears in the narrative as bullying, violent and full of hatred towards the Hazaras. His arrival to the narration also shadows the future events by which the violent will be given power over the weak. The writer weaves into the narrative historical facts about the political change in Afghanistan. External Russian forces invade the country and they lead to more violence and turmoil. Then the setting shifts to America where Amir and Baba escape the drastic change in the political situation in their home country. Hosseini puts a twist on the chronological order of the conventional narrative. The events of the story take place in multiple time periods, in which the elements of past and present are combined to tell human experiences. The writer intends to tell a story that is full of violent events such as Soviets' brutal reign, racial discrimination within the Afghan

⁹¹ Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner* (2003), 13,
<http://www.thehazeleyacademy.com/wpcontent/uploads/2014/07/IB-English-The-Kite-Runner-Full-Text.pdf>

society, loved ones dying and loss of homeland because of civil war. These violent events leave traumatic effects on the characters in the novel. Amir witnessed the rape of Hassan when he was a child, besides the insults and humiliation that his playmate went through. These memories changed Amir permanently. They resonate in the present time space and make the narrative fragmented.

The story skips forward in time, and the father and the son have been living in California. They live among Afghan community where they can feel more at home in America. The principal character has become a successful novelist and married man, but he cannot disassociate himself from Afghanistan. The guilty past and the terrible things happening in his beloved country keep him from happiness. At this point the narrative returns to the beginning of the novel. Rahim Khan's call makes the ground under Amir's feet not very solid. He appears as a connecting link between Amir and Afghanistan. Hosseini repeats the exact parts of the narrative from the opening chapter. The presentation of Kites stands as a nostalgic memory of Kabul and his playmate Hassan.

The use of dream in the novel reveals a flashback to relate how the relationship between Amir and Hassan is deteriorated, and also the dream might foreshadow things that might happen, and this is for the benefit of the reader. The scene of Hassan running in the snow, whispering in Amir's ear "For you, a thousand times over!" advances the plot in which at that point Amir gets on a plane for Pakistan. He finally shows the willing that to make things right he must take some positive steps. The decision is life-changing because Kabul has become a city that destroys itself. Hosseini crafts grisly scenes of Taliban using violence freely to institute a daily terror.

At this point, Amir recognizes that he and Baba were among the privileged few who had the financial ability to go to America, escaping to be caught up in wars or left as starving refugees. On the other hand, the second illegitimate son of Baba Hassan continues to live in Afghanistan where he establishes a family, but unluckily the Hazara boy and his wife have been executed leaving an orphaned child behind. Hosseini creates Hassan's character to attract the readers' sympathy then he uses tragedy to make his piece of fiction more exciting and engaging. Critic David Ansen describes the novel as: "*The Kite Runner* isn't subtle, but it allows us to see a country and a culture from the inside: it puts a human face on a tragedy most of us know from

headlines and glimpses on the nightly news.”⁹² The reader expects to see Hassan overcoming obstacles and living happily ever after, however what happens to Hassan hurts the readers on the personal level. The writer’s aim is to create a convincing character that cannot be defeated by injustice or cruelty and becomes example to readers to survive the impact of tough times.

The narrative returns to Amir. He describes his search for his nephew Sohrab. That search takes him on a dangerous journey across Kabul. Tragedy is again deployed by Hosseini to depict the reality of today’s Afghanistan through this journey, beggars, fatherless sons, and widowed mothers roaming the streets for a loaf of bread. The true decline of Afghanistan is highlighted by the university professor who begs Amir for food. Amir’s mother was once his colleague at university. This broken city was once a beautiful, peaceful place where elite members of society were treated with respect regardless their gender. The reason that a university professor becomes homeless and starving is to undermine the role of thriving scientific education in building a community of leading citizens. The women who are forbidden from working send their kids away to unequipped orphanage in order not to watch them starve. The image of mothers and their fatherless children begging in streets captures the tragedy of daily life in the Taliban’s Afghanistan, where the powerful are taking advantage of the weak.

Amir first narrates his sweet memories of his childhood in Afghanistan. After a lengthy period of time, he returns to Afghanistan to search in wreckage for a source of joy. But nothing is left to yearn for. Streets, houses and trees in Kabul are symbolically dead. Therefore, Hosseini depicts the beautiful peaceful Afghanistan then he brings to light the disastrous impact of the Soviet and Taliban control over this country. The psychological effects of the fragmented timeline of the novel reflect the disturbing, tragic events that are unlikely to be forgotten by the protagonist. In *Paripex, Indian Journal of Research*, a research paper deals with the personal trauma of the protagonist Amir and indicates that:

the novel exploits different structural ploys like unconventional, non-linear narrative style, fragmented storyline with gaps and lacunas, in order to explore issues that have been avoided in popular fiction for a long time. But the fact that makes *The Kite Runner* unique is not its precise and subtle representation

⁹² David Ansen, “Review: The Kite Runner”. (accessed May 10, 20017) <http://www.newsweek.com/review-kite-runner-94841>

of trauma on multiple levels, but the comprehensiveness with which the novel connects past and present, most horrible traumatic experiences with tender human emotions like love, loyalty or compassion. In its efforts to provide a non- political solution to the ethnic hierarchies and antagonisms, the novel gives us the ray of hope that defines the very essence of humanity.⁹³

Hosseini constructs the narrative of past events to make the reader understand that Afghanistan was not always the instable place where the Taliban, suicide bombings, and terrorism ruin people's lives. It was actually a really nice place to live in. The author wants to foster a sympathetic attitude among his readers toward an issue that was previously unknown and let the world hear the voice of the vulnerable and the oppressed people within the Afghan society.

Another literary device that the author employs in the novel is the usage of Farsi terms. Throughout the novel Farsi is used frequently to refer to the Afghan culture. For instance, the words 'namoos', which means reputation, or 'namaz', which means the five prayers in Islam, give a glimpse to a culture that the average Western reader is not familiar with. Moreover, the translation of the Farsi language is left to the reader to decipher it by context to arouse more curiosity about that aspect of the Afghan culture. The writer invites his mother tongue in his writing to express his thoughts and emotions toward his population. Since language is one aspect of identity formation, Hosseini intends to prove that he does not detach himself from his commitments toward his Afghan Community in order to defend their human rights and establish a social justice through voicing their human and political crisis. Readers also experience how to conceptualize the authentic setting that Hosseini creates through using Farsi language, in order to shape the characters' values and aspirations in a real place.

Hosseini also uses an important literary device which is irony. In the book, Amir denies Hassan's friendship because Hazara people like Hassan cannot be equal to Pashtuns. Although Amir enjoys Hassan's close companionship, he has never thought of him as a close friend. The Hazara are considered to be inferior to Pashtuns. It is the racial gap that separates between them. What is ironic about the person that Amir persists on disassociating himself from is eventually his brother. The ultimate irony is also when Assef has become a religious leader who stones adulterers and meanwhile

⁹³ "Trauma in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*". *Paripex, Indian Journal of research* 4(2015): 30. https://www.worldwidejournals.com/paripex/file.php?val=July_2015_1438319840_61.pdf

takes children from the orphanage as sex slaves. The strict and harsh way that the Taliban punish the ‘criminals’ with is not a jury or a judge who pronounces the man and woman guilty. It is the religious cleric who enforces a violent public death on them for a sexual sin. It is true that the Qur’an says that adultery is wrong, however before a person maybe stoned by Islamic people there are rules to be respected. The Islamic government must provide four eye witnesses or accusers who saw the couple interact, otherwise they are supposed not to tell anyone. In Afghanistan, especially during Taliban rule the stoning of adulterers is not believed to be unjust. According to Dr Abdel Salem Sidahmed: “Stoning is used [in Afghan society] in the form of community justice and also as a judicial form of capital punishment.”⁹⁴ Hosseini depicts adultery as a punishable and serious matter according to the interpretations of the Islamic law that Taliban embrace. In fact, the writer tackles the paradox in implementing death penalty on citizens by the so called Afghan government while these laws’ enforcement agents violate them.

3. The literary devices used in *Links*:

The opening chapter in *Links* describes the scene of Jeebleh arriving at the airport in Mogadishu. He sets his first foot in Somalia after being forcibly exiled from his country for twenty years. Jeebleh’s return to Somalia is not emotional. He has never felt a nostalgic memory for the place where he was persecuted politically and thrown into jail, then forced into exile by the dictator regime. It is difficult for him to avoid the impression that his country has become worse than it was ever. The predominant feeling that overwhelms him in his homeland is distrust and discomfort. His decision to return is influenced by a moral dilemma about how to intervene in rescuing Bile’s niece and her playmate, besides the search for his mother’s grave.

Farah uses a linear narrative to constitute this main plot line, however the ‘simultaneous narrative’⁹⁵ does not construct the overall events in the novel. Therefore

⁹⁴Abdel Salam, Sidahmed, “Adultery (*Islamic Law*)”, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2001), 187.
http://www.jstor.org/stable/826124?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

⁹⁵Elini Coundouriotis, *War Fiction in The Post Colony* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 245.
https://books.google.dz/books?id=VUpGCgAAQBAJ&pg=PA248&lpg=PA248&dq=who+narrates+the+story+in+Farah%27s+Links&source=bl&ots=DLschME0vD&sig=lyg7qpnmJsAwOUVdOjD_2nURpVY&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwip5d3zuZLTAhWFPRoKHSUBkYQ6AEIKJAC#v=onepage&q=who%20narrates%20the%20story%20in%20Farah's%20Links&f=false

he employs a ‘past tense narrative’⁹⁶ that tells stories of remembrance through conversational passages. Through that storytelling the reader encounters memories of Jeeblah, Bile and Caloosha, the antagonist. And what explains the attitudes and the reactions of these characters toward a particular situation is always memory. Through memory we know that Caloosha is Bile’s half-brother. Yet they are not considered to be of the same clan family because their fathers belonged to different clans, despite the fact that they have the same mother. On the other hand, Jeebleh has a different mother and father but he and Caloosha, his old enemy, have the same clan identity. This is how severe family binds replace friendship and affection in the Somali society.

Farah uses flashbacks to recount incidents from childhood experiences of the three characters. The role of their mothers in raising them determines their future at the end. The two single mothers supported their kids in an environment dominated by male preeminence. Jeebleh’s mother had been accused of causing the failure of her marriage by her husband’s clan elders, moreover They refused to help her when she most needed. Farah employs symbolism where he portrays the Somali women as a building force in their community. The present narrative also depicts women as a supportive and productive force in the society, although the violence and oppression they suffer when a dispute between the clans erupts.

What Farah names ‘The Refuge’ is a symbol of what Somalia should be and in which way the population should behave in the current circumstances. A place where clan affiliation does not bind members of society but human values do. Farah creates a dysfunctional setting to the protagonist of the story. At the airport Jeebleh witnesses a shooting of a boy killed for fun by young soldiers just because they could aim at him. Jeebleh feels compelled to intervene, but moments before the shooting happens, Af Laawe explains to Jeebleh what is the present danger about:

It’s a sport to them, a game to play when they are bored. The one who hits the target is the winner.

And that’s what they are doing now?

I suspect so.

Can’t we intervene?

I doubt it.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

What if I talk to them?

Why take unnecessary risks?

Because somebody has to.

If I were you, I wouldn't.⁹⁷

What leaves Jeebleh shocked is that no one in the crowd of people showed the will to confront the assassins, leaving him unable to grasp the unsympathetic attitude the Somali community displays toward crime. In another scene, in the city streets Jeebleh ends to intervene to help an epileptic who is having a convulsion, and again the people gather around to satisfy their curiosity instead of providing help to the sick man. The reason behind their unconcern is that the man is unknown to them, therefore they are not obliged to help. In response, Jeebleh shouts at the crowd: "But he is a human being like you and me! ... Do you need to know his clan family before you help him? What's wrong with you? You make me sick all of you" (109). The conclusion that Jeebleh can draw from these experiences is that the conditions of Mogadishu wipe out humanity and destroy the sense of self. Farah says: "people living in such vile conditions were bound to lose touch with their own humanity, he thought; you couldn't expect from an iota of human kindness from a community coexisting daily with so much putrefaction" (201).

Jeebleh is compelled to intervene not only in rescuing the abducted girls, but also in preparing to take revenge on the abhorrent and degraded warlord Caloosha. The latter lives in a plundered property with a fifteen years old girl. Caloosha considers her his 'latest acquisition'(104), and his 'young thing' (105). The author employs metaphor as a literary technique to make the reader sympathized with the girl who is represented as a sex slave and forced to live with a soulless villain like Caloosha. Farah describes Jeebleh as a nonviolent intervener who cherishes the value of talk in settling disputes, however his attitude changed after meeting Caloosha. He needs to end his life to free the lives that are under his mercy.

The usage of conversational passages as a literary device is a fundamental aspect of Farah's piece of literature. The writer draws the character into conversations with each other in a form of dialogues. Jeebleh is the character who initiates these

⁹⁷ Subsequent references to this novel are from this edition. Nurrudin Farah, *Links* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003),16.

conversations in order to have answers about his inquiries. The narrative does not provide a deep understanding of characters as dialogues do. In the book, as if Farah's characters reveal suppressed emotions and buried secrets on a psychiatrist's couch. When Jeebleh talks to Shanta about why she, her husband Faahiye and her brother Bile 'have been very unhappy'(210) she mentions the 'curse'(211) they have been under, because her brother Bile helps her to deliver her baby in which he is not supposed to according to the medical standards and the customary law in Somalia.

Jeebleh's analytical mind offers explanations for readers about how the influential members of society conspire to divert attention away from the political matters in Somalia in order to 'make out gain of ordinary people's miseries'³²⁹. Concerning this point, Farah employs irony to highlight the contrast between expectations and reality. Bile is a doctor who is responsible for running the camp and saves peoples life under even difficult conditions, but his reputation suffers because his source of funds is suspected, this is based on people's talk. On the other hand, Af Laawe, who claims association with Bile, sells human organs to an illicit market yet he earns a good reputation for his humanitarian organization that provides Islamic burials to the dead discarded in the city which is in fact a front for a criminal business.

Farah, unlike Hosseini, employs little terms in the Somali language, besides that he adds translation to provide the exact meaning for them. Such as the expression: 'noolaadaa dhinta!' which means 'who lives, dies!' That expression is written on the van of Af Laawe's organization that gives decent Islamic burials to the scattered corpses in streets. The usage of a foreign language here is not to arouse curiosity about the Somali culture as much as it is to exert a negative impression about it. The implicit meaning that the readers may decipher from this expression is that 'death' has become one of the aspects of people's religious culture in Somalia. People do not bother to ask about the death circumstances and accept the loss of lives as if it is a fateful encounter with death. Jeebleh comes to the conclusion that 'the total lack of human sympathy toward human lives' losses is what encourages criminal violation and widespread violence.

Writing style is what makes writers unique. We mean by style the way in which an author conveys his ideas and message. He or she uses certain words, sounds, imagery and sentence structure, etc, to create a distinct feeling for his or her work.

Concerning this point, we try to draw a comparison between Farah's and Hosseini's writing style. Hosseini's debut novel has been described as an easy read book. Usually, such kinds of books do not engage readers because they are not challenging when it comes to the choice of words, the structure of sentences, and the writer's voice. *The Kite runner* is a kind of prose writing which is characterized by simplicity and clarity in language, but this simplicity of language allows the tragic plot to develop. Hosseini is interested in providing little-known facts about his cultural and political background to foster a sympathetic attitude among readers toward the fears and hopes of Afghan people. In a brief review in *Publishers Weekly* describes the novel as: "a complete work of literature that succeeds in exploring the culture of a previously obscure nature that has become a pivot point in the global politics of the new millennium."⁹⁸ In the *New York Times Book Review*, Edward Hower praises the novel for its detailed descriptions of life in Kabul in the 1970's: "Hosseini's depiction of pre-revolutionary Afghanistan is rich in warmth and humor but also tense with the friction of different ethnic groups."⁹⁹ Class distinctions between Amir and Hassan are also noted by Hower who says: "Amir is served breakfast every morning by Hassan; then he is driven to school by a shiny Mustang while his friend stays at home to clean the house."¹⁰⁰

Hosseini's book is the first novel written in English by an Afghan writer. It has become a window to Afghan culture and Afghan life to Western readers. We do not neglect the fact the unfamiliarity with the Afghan life sparks curiosity to know more about a country being misrepresented widely by media.

Farah's writing style is the soul of his literary works. He has a linguistic ability in English which helps him to create a fluent style. He structures sentences with a complicated vocabulary in which the reader faces some sort of obstacles in grasping the meaning of symbols, metaphor, simile and proverbs which are the things that distinguish his writings. In *Goodreads* reviews one of the readers comments on Farah's writing style in *Links* as:

"I see complaints from some reviewers about Farah's idiosyncratic, sometimes rather formal, even artificial style. But I find his style, with his offbeat similes,

⁹⁸ Gale, Cengage Learning, *A Study Guide for Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner*, (USA: Farmington Hill), 03. https://books.google.dz/books?id=MKNwCgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=a+study+guide+for+khaled+hosseini%27s+the+kite+runner&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=a%20study%20guide%20for%20khaled%20hosseini%27s%20the%20kite%20runner&f=false

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

for example, to lend an appropriate strangeness to a story in which characters desperately and often unsuccessfully seek to find meaning in a society that has become close to collapse. The book represents various struggles with madness that seem created by the setting of Mogadishu itself.”¹⁰¹

The following excerpt is picked from *Links* to illustrate the difficulty of interpreting the exact meaning. Farah says “Every way of assessing the civil war was as futile as pouring wet sand through the interstices of history”¹⁰² What does Farah mean by spotting the similarity between the action of assessing the civil war and fixing the cracks of history with a wet sand? What does he mean by ‘interstices’ and furthermore, is it the world history that is pointed out by the writer? The probable explanation is, even though history is trusted because it is based on logical interpretations of what happened in the past, it is still incomplete and parts of it are uncovered. Therefore Farah compares the analyses about civil war to the wet sand that will not glue together the missing pieces of the real story.

Farah states plainly in one of the interviews he does with the Commonwealth club that one level writings do not engage critical readers. He describes his style, which he calls a ‘way of self expression’ as: ‘I like a landscape to be full of mountains, hills, the sea swarms, different forms that nature expresses itself in, and that way you have the full- fledged self expression of nature, and that is what attracts me’¹⁰³ Farah grew up in a multi lingual environment and learned different languages such as Somali, Arabic, English, and Italian. Later he becomes a self taught writer who is engaged in cosmopolitan literature which enables him to gain foreign audiences who appreciate the way he recovers the reality they do not know about the other. His writing style is not derivative and reflects an original insight about the tragic everyday life in Somalia.

4. Key element of fiction in *The Kite runner*: characters.

The main protagonist and the narrator of the story is Amir. He is a wealthy boy who grows up in Kabul with Hassan his loyal companion. Through Amir’s voice Hosseini provides a vivid account of a social and political instability which resulted from the bloody years of war. Amir’s childhood portrays Afghanistan before the Russian invasion. It wasn’t heaven on earth, but at least people could envision

¹⁰¹ Goodreads, (2013). Available at <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/74827.Links>

¹⁰² Nuruddin Farah, *Links* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 331.

¹⁰³ Nuruddin Farah, interviewed by The Commonwealth Club of California, 2007, uploaded on August 23, 2010. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVRgyZ8YZi8>

promising future to their lives. Amir lives in a luxurious house with his father and their Hazaras servants Ali and Hassan. Baba and Amir are Pashtun by descent while Ali and Hassan are Hazara. The former is the dominant ethnic and religious majority in Afghan society, whereas the latter is the inferior ethnic and religious minority. The relationship between the two families is based on loyalty and genuine affection, although the wealth and the racial gap that separates them. This is a world created by Hosseini to let these two conflicting religious beliefs to meet in a house where the social norms, that dictate that the Pashtun are superior to the Hazara, are eliminated by humanity. However, outside that house Hassan and Ali suffer a degrading treatment at the hands of the rest of the Pashtun in the neighborhood.

The hatred against the Hazara is intense. Pashtuns proclaim that the Hazaras do not belong to Afghanistan because their facial features bear resemblance to Moguls more than Afghans. Besides that, the Hazaras are Shi'a Muslims. That second division of Islam is not recognized by the Afghan Sunni Muslims. Assef, the antagonist of novel is a sadistic boy who lives in Amir's neighborhood in Kabul. He torments children with his brass knuckles. He is the son of a German mother and an Afghan father. Assef despises the Hazaras and advocates the Pashtun dominance over them. As a teenager he rapes Hassan, and as an adult he repeatedly abuses Hassan's son sexually. After becoming a religious leader during Taliban control he mainly persecutes the Hazaras, and orders public execution of men and women that are accused of adultery, by stoning. His cruelties also include taking children of both sexes from orphanage and subject them to regular sex abuse. Assef represents the oppressive system whose number-one priority is not eradicating poverty, or providing health care for their people. It is a system that rests on political ideologies to feed on people's misery.

When Amir returns to Afghanistan, he witnesses destruction brought about by civil war. Widowed mothers banned from making a decent living to their fatherless children. The implications of Taliban's regime on women's education lie in depriving them from performing an integral role in rebuilding their community. Unlike Housseini, Farah represents Somali women as a dynamic and productive force in society. Although they are oppressed by strict societal rules enforced by a patriarchal culture, they participate economically and socially in the life of their families and the

whole society. Jeebleh's admits that without his mother's unwavering support he wouldn't enjoy the successful life he has. His mother was abandoned by her gambling husband and left homeless by his clan. Jeebleh was her worthwhile investment. A mother with her dependent child living in a society that denies women ability to exist independently struggles to prove that her status is not subordinate to men and that her position within the family and society is valuable.

Soraya is one of Housseini's female characters in the book. She is the daughter of a former general during the Soviet regime in Afghanistan. Soraya lives with her parents in California, USA. The writer offers a character that represents another stereotyped image of Afghan women, however this category of Afghan women exists outside its original roots. We mean by a 'category' is that unlike the great majority of women in Afghanistan, who are less educated than men and forced to marry young besides the ongoing family violence they suffer, Soraya had the chance to be educated and treated fairly by her parents. But the thing that makes the shift in her position within her family and within the Afghan community in America is the unbeatable traditional Afghan morality which assumes that woman who loses her virginity out of wedlock is filthy and damaged. Soraya's scandalous affair becomes a source of gossip even after her marriage to Amir. She confesses her sin but she refuses the unfair treatment of women in her society.

Through Soraya's voice Housseini criticizes the Afghan social norms on the ground that they discriminate unfairly against women concerning challenging conventional morality. The following excerpt is a piece of evidence to confirm this. Soraya says with a bitter tone: "their sons go out to night clubs...and get their girlfriends pregnant, they have kids out of wedlock, and no one says a thing... I make one mistake and suddenly everyone is talking *nang* and *namoos*, and I have to have my face rubbed in it for the rest of my life".¹⁰⁴

5. Key element of fiction in *Links*: characters.

Farah offers us characters with wartime missions. In the text we encounter characters with a will to create a coherent identity for themselves and search for meaningful social structures in their society. Most of the novel is devoted to the protagonist of the story Jeebleh. His conversations with people in the city help to

¹⁰⁴Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner* (2003), 179,
<http://www.thehazeleyacademy.com/wpcontent/uploads/2014/07/IB-English-The-Kite-Runner-Full-Text.pdf>

understand the harshness of Somali violence. Jeebleh has come to a city with a dysfunctional civil society and an absolute absence of a political or economic infrastructure. In the middle of investigating in the kidnapping of his friend's niece, he comes to the conclusion that arranging the killing of the root of all evil Caloosha would release their friends from his cruelties.

The conflict between Jeebleh and Caloosha arises from old personal grudges and continues to affect the story events. Jeebleh's and Amir's motives to return to a country being forced to leave are similar to a great extent. Assef in *the Kite Runner* and Caloosha in *Links* represent the image of the greatest villains in their societies. They favor helpless victims to feed on them. Caloosha's youngest wife is referred to as his sex slave. Her family has been murdered by the warlord Caloosha and the girl has been captured as war booty. Farah uses Caloosha to emphasize the impact of war on women's situation in Somalia, a situation that is deteriorated by the patriarchal society and worsened by the brutality of civil war. Even Shanta, who is Bile's sister, is psychologically disturbed because of the fact that she has been helped by her brother to deliver her baby. Although she is an educated woman, she refuses to accept that Bile's conductance is based on an ethical ground. She has been overwhelmed by feelings of guilt for not respecting the customary law that would let a mother and her baby die for the sake of being preserved.

The position of women in Afghanistan is more vulnerable than that of the Somalis women according to the writers' representation. Hosseini introduces to his readers nameless and named female characters in his book. The woman, being dragged to the hole to be stoned to death beside the man who is assumed to have committed adultery with, elicits sympathy among foreign readers although the writer provides no background about her or even gives a name for her. In such situations people's races, tongues, or religious affiliations melt into a larger human society. Another nameless woman has been beaten violently by a cable by a Taliban because she has raised her voice in street. These scenes and some others picture the degrading treatment that Afghan women suffer in their society. Likewise the Somali women, Afghan women find it harder to reject the social customs and norms among their families and communities which are based on religion. Their religion is important to them. However the wrong and hostile interpretations of Islam stand as a major obstacle to fulfill their needs and aspirations.

Af Laawe is Jeebleh's guide through the city and provides armed escort for him in a city in civil war. This man makes profits from the bodies of Somalis whereas he sells their human organs to a global market. Moreover, he pretends to have a humanitarian organization which provides Islamic burials to the dead abandoned in the streets. A criminal enterprise that grows and expands on the anguish of people is one of many atrocities that are perpetrated against the civilian population in Somalia. Af Laawe as warlords and religious leaders in Somalia reap personal profits from the civil war. It makes them rich and politically powerful. The absence of a government makes Somalis believe that clan elders and religious leaders are a reliable power which can deal with the disputes. Nonetheless, these dependable authorities continue to abuse the trust of the people. Farah uses Jeebleh's perspective to speak about the role of capital in making the country a theater of war for political players and warlords who sell Somalis down the river. Farah says:

Jeebleh thought of [...] how Somalis woke to being betrayed by the religious men and the clan elders who were in cahoots with a cabal of warlords to share the gain they could make out of ordinary people's miseries. The clan elders got their reward in corrupt gifts of cash; the religious elders, turning themselves into cabaret artists, conned the rest of the populace, as they carved an earthly kingdom for themselves.¹⁰⁵

The author insists on finding a message of hope in the middle of chaos and insecurity portraying characters with benevolent intentions opposing great powers of evil. Bile that devotes himself to construct a society where he encourages the belief that people who share food will not kill each other becomes a victim to one of the greatest social evils Caloosha. Bile chooses to serve his country and population instead of fleeing abroad escaping the war. He and Seamus are running an orphanage and health clinic in The Refuge. In this place people mean to reinvent and reconstruct their fragmented society by establishing intimate relationships among them.

The role of intellectuals, such Bile is to take the trouble to evaluate the society's needs first, then engage their vision and dynamism in relieving the society from its regressive leaders. Albert Memmi describes them as 'the source of all progress'.¹⁰⁶ Yet, not all of them want to play a part in the national improvement as the oppressive

¹⁰⁵ Nurrudin Farah, *Links* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 331.

¹⁰⁶ Albert Memmi, *decolonization and the decolonized* (Minnesota press), 36.

system continues its violent if necessary murderous confrontations with them. Bile determines to stay in Somalia after the collapse while Jeebleh favors to settle in America. Both of them constitute the intelligentsia, the thinkers and researchers that are supposed to exert progressive influence on the nation. Jeebleh could establish a prosperous life and he is financially comfortable. On the other hand Bile barely endures the everyday misery including suffering Caloosha's assaults.

The educated class cannot prosper in a hostile atmosphere unlike the comfortable one that allows productivity to flourish. Nonetheless, Bile's decision is a way of expressing loyalty to his country while better options were available for him to escape the anguish of war. Jeebleh's return to Somalia is also a way of expressing longing and solidarity with his country Somalia and his long-time friend Bile. But he could not allow these emotions to influence his opinion that today's Somalia is a real danger and that playing a part in the conflict is like engaging in a losing battle.

It is a binary opposition of good versus evil Farah uses to explore that these two notions cannot coexist, therefore by the end of the story he creates a relative happy ending accomplished by the killing of Caloosha on the hands of Jeebleh. Although the fiction ends with the protagonist disappearing into a thin air from The Refuge, which seems incompatible to the nature of this character. It is a touch of realism the novelist adds to give a logical resolution to the plot.

General Conclusion:

This research attempted to investigate how the culture of Postcolonial societies is explored in the literary works of the two novelists Nuruddin Farah and Khaled Hosseini. Afghanistan and Somalia, both are decolonized, Muslim countries but they belong to different geographical locations. However the similarities between the two societies' traditional culture are certainly remarkable. According to Farah, the oppressive system destroys any chance for the Somali women to contribute in the political and economic advance, or even enjoy the basic rights of all citizens.

In *Links*, Farah portrays women as a building force that keeps the family going through child-bearing and labor. They bear weighty responsibility toward their society, however men get their needs first over them. The government, the religious and tribal groups affect women's position in Somalia by subjecting them to the unfair treatment in order to disallow them to participate in politics and public life. The portrayal of Farah to the Somali women offers a positive message about them. Although the poor conditions that surround them in their male-dominated society, they seek to accommodate changes in peace processes.

Likewise Somali women, Afghan women also are marginalized and oppressed in their society. A society that is markedly patriarchal and paternalistic. Hosseini vividly depicts the vulnerable situations these women are placed in by their society's cultural and political arrangements. In *The Kite Runner*, Hosseini draws characters from reality of women suffering rape, murder, ignorance because of the burning of girls' schools, restricted mobility, widows starving, and women forced to wear burqa which is a foreign dress code to the Afghan culture.

What is remarkable in Hosseini's representation of Afghan women is the comparison he draws between the status of women during, and before the Taliban's control. At least women could enjoy educational and employment status. Dissimilar to the degrading treatment they receive during the Taliban regime. It means that the political transitions also affect women's freedom and prospect. Comparing between the status of Afghan women and the Somali women through how Hosseini and Farah portray them permits us to shape an understanding that women's human rights across these two cultures are violated because of backward, violent cultural traditions, like honor crimes. Generally too, their condition is discounted by the authorities and taken as the norm.

Conclusively, we notice a slight degree of improvement in the Somali women's situation according to that of Afghan women. In *Links*, Farah creates female characters contributing in the reconstruction of their community and struggling to survive hardships in the middle of civil war. In *The Kite Runner*, Hosseini's female characters are depicted vulnerable and impotent to improve their conditions because of the patriarchal domination in their society represented in the tribal and the religious groups.

This dissertation aimed also to contribute to the understanding of the role of religion in the military conflicts and the social issues in the Afghan and the Somali contexts as represented respectively by Hosseini in *The Kite Runner*, and Farah in *Links*. The Afghan novelist Hosseini reveals a religious and racial discrimination against a minority called the Hazaras in the Afghan society. Viciously targeted and persecuted by Taliban faction because of their Shi'a Muslim faith. Hosseini depicts the lives of individuals ruined because of religious intolerance. Religious leaders encouraging degrading treatment and perpetration of massacres against the Hazaras in the name of God. Girls banned from school, women forced to wear burqa and falsely accused of adultery are also practices justified by Shari'a Law. The misinterpretations of Islam adversely affect the social and the political life in Afghanistan, and if people search for peace and stability they must reconstruct a correct understanding of Islam.

Farah's representation of the role of religion in the political turmoil offers insights about the conflict in Somalia. The religious leaders that are supposed to offer spiritual and moral guidance turn to serve their own benefits when their country needs them most. Farah depicts religious leaders conspiring with clan elders and warlords to destroy peace efforts because they damage their business which flourishes on people's misery. Justice that is controlled by religious leaders using Shari'a Law to justify their unjust sentences toward vulnerable people, while the real criminals such as warlords are set free. In both societies religion is used as an instrument to gain a political power. Not to achieve a social development or at least prevent deadly conflicts within society.

While portraying vivid scenes and historical facts in their literary works, the two novelists use literary elements that convey a specific meaning. Farah's fiction *Links* reflects the distinctive writing style of the writer. Through a linear narrative embellished with symbolism, flashbacks, irony, and conversational passages, Farah reinforces the message that current situation of Somalia would lead nowhere if a positive change

wouldn't occur. There is a touch of humor to break the seriousness of matters and bring a slight joy to readers. It is a way to escape the harsh reality of a nation consumed by civil war.

In comparison to Farah's writing style, Hosseini turn to use a non-linear narrative that reflects the psychological trauma of characters recalling soothing past events to shield them from cruel reality. Unforgettable characters leave an emotional impact on Hosseini's readers which make him succeed in providing an account on the political turmoil and some cultural practices in Afghanistan.

Comparison between Postcolonial writers belonging to different backgrounds and sharing the same experience could be of a great use in understanding how different writers perceive the issue of negative aspects of culture on the life of individuals. This comparison could be done for instance between Arab writers and Asian writers. Comparison could also be done regarding other aspects of culture in the works of some female Postcolonial literature.

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