

**Khaled Hosseini's Portrayal of the Other: A Critical Study of the Representation of
Diaspora and Women in His Novels**

Thesis

Submitted to

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For the award of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in English



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December 2019

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Through his three novels, Khaled Hosseini has established himself as an accomplished writer in the literary world. Gifted with a Dickensian knack of story-telling, Hosseini provides vivid pictures of Afghan life along with the struggles and hardships that the nation has faced since the last century. Without considering the ethical issues involved, Hosseini's representations provide a graphic picture of the Afghan culture through his meticulous description of the Afghan cuisine, the popular Afghan costumes, the mention of the different Afghan poets and singers and a plethora of Farsi words and phrases. Due to their "authentic" portrayal of Afghanistan, these novels have been considered mouthpieces of Afghanistan for the American subcontinent. In order to inculcate in the students a sense of compassion for the diversity of races within America, to help students acknowledge the multicultural scenario and to develop cultural sensitivity, Hosseini's writings have been included in the curricula of several American classrooms as representative of the Islamic Middle-Eastern region and the diasporic Afghan presence in the American landscape. From being a popular fiction to being included in the mainstream syllabi of American schools, the rise in the importance of *The Kite Runner* signifies the rise to prominence of Hosseini.

In one of his interviews, the eminent English novelist Neil Gaiman (Gaiman, 00:00-00:20) observes that all fiction needs to be honest. In order to make the readers respond to it, the author needs to make the fiction relatable. If there is an apparent detachment between the narration and its readers, it becomes difficult for the audience to accept it. Hosseini uses a similar strategy in his novels and presents to the global readers three tales skillfully crafted with the recurring themes of pain, sorrow, sin, suffering and redemption. However, in his rendition, he maintains the subtle balance of

familiarity and foreignness, to keep his audience riveted to the tale. While helping the reader identify with the universal themes of love, friendship, guilt, compassion and loss, he manages to maintain the exoticism in the novels. Through the description of the exotic land and the culture of Afghanistan, the author manages to provide the necessary fodder for the curious Western reader for whom the Middle-East has always been an enigma. So, the writings of Hosseini simultaneously enable the reader to resonate with the universal human emotions while exploring the unknown exotic Orient. *The Times* very rightly comments on *The Kite Runner* that Hosseini “is not afraid to pull every string in your heart to make it sing” (qtd. in Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*). For Hosseini himself, sad stories are the preferable genre and it is by evoking the faculty of compassion within the reader that he makes his heart “sing”. Through the concurrent processes of commodifying the Orient for his western readers and eliciting their affective sympathy, Hosseini creates a niche for himself as a master story-teller.

As far as an author is concerned about the acknowledgement of his literary genius by his readers, Hosseini seems to have already acquired that. His writings have been honoured with numerous accolades ranging from the Richard and Jury award to rave reviews from popular Western media houses. However, there remains a fundamental contradiction in Hosseini’s depiction of Afghanistan and non-fictional accounts. Between Hosseini’s fictional depiction of the lives of Afghan women (especially the favourable change in their lives that has been depicted to have happened after the American intervention) and the real-life accounts from the UN Watch Report, there remains an immense gulf towards which Hosseini remains blissfully oblivious. In each of his novels, he paints a picture of Afghanistan which has transformed into a peaceful land with the

help of the American intervention after the Taliban and Mujahideen anarchy. However, such a proposition is in direct contrast to the reports of the UN Watch. These are some of the excerpts from the novels of Hosseini which project the immediate return of normalcy within the Afghan state as a result of the American intervention. In *The Kite Runner*, the protagonist presents a sudden turn of events after the blast of the Twin Towers in America on September 11, 2001. “Soon after the attack, America bombed Afghanistan, the Northern alliance moved in, and the Talibans scurried like rats into the caves” (316).

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, when Laila returns to Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban regime, the author presents a picture of the dilapidated Afghan state being rebuilt, aided by the foreign monetary grants, under the American supervision. Apart from the material reconstruction of the city, the description is replete with pictures of rebirth and normalcy being restored. Hosseini’s portrayal indicates that not only is the fall of the Taliban regime welcome by the people of Afghanistan, but also reciprocated by the natural, celestial forces as it rains after a long time to bring an end to the long-drawn drought. Amidst the rubble which permeates entire Afghanistan, the author mentions saplings being planted and gardens being planned, signifying a return of life in the wasteland of Afghanistan. Hosseini writes:

Laila finds it strange to be back in Kabul. The city has changed. Every day now she sees people planting saplings, painting old houses, carrying bricks for new ones. They dig gutters and wells. On windowsills, Laila spots flowers potted... the Gardens of Babur, which are being renovated. For the first time in years, Laila hears music in Kabul’s street corners... old Ahmad Zahir songs... The

orphanage playground has a row of apple saplings now... They have repainted the exterior and interior of the orphanage... *Anis*, one of Kabul's newspapers, had run a story the month before on the renovation of the orphanage. (398-99)

In the third novel *And the Mountains Echoed*, Hosseini recreates another image of Afghanistan which goes through a similar phase of reconstruction, when new edifices are being constructed and the damages of the war are being mended. From the point of view of Nabi, Hosseini writes:

Then one day in 2002... the Taliban had been driven out by the Northern Alliance, and the Americans had come to Afghanistan. Thousands of aid workers were flocking to Kabul from all over the world to build clinics and schools, to repair roads and irrigation canals, to bring food and shelter and jobs. (146)

From the quoted instances in the three novels, the reader builds the perception that an immediate transformation happens in Afghanistan with the receding Taliban regime and the onset of the American influence. Such a perception establishes America as the citadel of justice in accordance with the discourse of legal Orientalism. However, the UN Watch report suggests a contradictory picture of Afghanistan post the American intervention. With the disruption of the Taliban stronghold, the Mujahideens, who were favoured by the American government since the times of Nixon, came back to prominence. The warlords who were marked by their Islamist fanaticism were restored to power, though not on official mandate. Therefore, even with the retreat of the Talibans, the general Afghans and especially the women were not saved of oppression, violence and other violation of their basic human rights. After being repressed for five years during the Taliban rule, the Mujahideens, responding to the reactionary power game,

reinstated their dominance over the territory by a show of their might on the general civilians. Thus, with the American support, one set of warlords was replaced by another set which was equally radical in Islamist beliefs and driven by a strong urge for revenge and domination instead of the projected American agenda of liberating the women. Therefore, even after the American intervention, the torture of women, the mass killing, abduction and rape continued to blight the nation as it had done throughout the Mujahideen and Taliban era. Even within Kabul, the Human Rights Watch reports women being harassed and abused for not agreeing to follow the conservative mandates regarding clothing. In 2002, two unveiled women from a working NGO were travelling on the streets of Afghanistan with a male colleague. They were stopped, interrogated and abused by three men and the Human Rights Watch reports these “vigilantes” threatening them: “It doesn’t matter that the Taliban are no longer here, because the Mujahideen are here.” (*Human Rights Watch* 2002 qtd. in Berry 143). In May 2002, Human Rights Watch (HRW) notes: “Women in Mazar [Mazar-i-Sharif] reported that they live under constant fears of physical assault and feel compelled to limit their movement, expression, and dress to avoid becoming targets of such violence” (*Human Rights Watch* 2002 qtd. in Berry 144).

Women felt threatened to step out of their household and limited their participation in public life. Rampant rape, including numerous cases of gang rape and other means of violence, were inflicted upon women by the Mujahideens in order to mark their superiority in the power struggle waged across ethnic lines. The Talibans were a group comprised of higher class Pashtun men and the Mujahideens were formed of men from various ethnic origins, albeit lower than the Pashtuns in the social

hierarchy. This gave a different dimension to the war—being a struggle for domination between the superior and the subaltern social classes. Women became the most vulnerable victim for both the groups on whom dominance can be established and inscribed. In his article, “*The Symbolic use of Afghan Women in the war on terror*”, Kim Berry mentions:

Throughout northern Afghanistan, ethnic Pashtuns suffered from attacks, including rape, immediately after the fall of the Taliban. And in the months following the implementation of the Bonn agreement, attacks on women of diverse ethnicities were an integral part of the warlords' power struggles. (144)

UNICEF reports in 2018 that more than 50% of Afghan girls restrict themselves from visiting schools. Even for those who do visit, there is a high percentage of dropouts at an early age as they are required to participate in the labour force for supporting their families. Though there was abject poverty during the Taliban era, UNICEF mentions that the spiraling currents of poverty post-2001 have forced a greater number of women into prostitution. The cases of trafficking of young girls and self-immolation have mushroomed to unprecedented levels.

With the shift in power after the dissolution of the Taliban regime, the same warlords and commanders who had been abusing human rights during their reign but kept being loyal to the American authority were reinstated in the seats of law enforcers. As a result, even after the American intervention, violence against women, including the cases of honour killing kept rising, under the watchful eyes of America. Backed by the American ignorance, the Afghan authorities refused to investigate women complaints and made no attempts in trying to protect the basic women rights for the women victims.

The issue of misrepresentation in the novels of Hosseini is however not limited to the depiction of women. It stretches to the other domains that have been presented in the thesis. The justification of the American intervention is one of them. In the previous paragraph, three quotations have been demonstrated through which the characters express their gratitude towards America. The characters being the mouthpiece of Hosseini, their opinion can be comprehended as the opinion of the author himself, especially since the same idea is being reiterated in each of the three novels. Thus, the idea of American greatness in the works of Hosseini closely resembles the rhetoric in the nationalistic discourse and in the popular media of America especially after the incident of 9/11. In order to legitimize their incessant bombing on Afghanistan, America posed as the liberator of the Afghan woman, the enforcer of law who was responsible for ushering in the age of modernity in Afghanistan, rescuing the Afghan land from the clutches of the Talibans. While the American media highlighted the American aggression as a necessary evil to dismantle the tyranny, it conveniently erased the American intentions of establishing their dominance in the Afghan land for securing their own personal agenda. We get a clearer picture of America's ill intentions and its mercenary attitude when we consider America's role in using the Afghan state as a bait to demolish the Soviet powers in order to gain supremacy in the Cold War. For the US, the demolition of the Soviet powers was more important than the emancipation of Afghanistan. So, displaying shrewd diplomacy and complete lack of ethics, they sacrificed Afghanistan for securing their own political agenda. Ignoring the demands of the rightful secular and the nationalist forces, America provided its support to the Islamists fanatic group of the Mujahideens during the Civil War in Afghanistan, leading to the rise of Al-Qaida,

Taliban and the long chain of anarchy that still continues in Afghanistan. In a way, the Western powers and America, in particular, were responsible for the Civil War in Afghanistan which had its lasting and catastrophic impact on the Afghan economy and its population. The American state, which has been thoroughly eulogised in the tales of Hosseini, catered to its political needs at the cost of 1.5 million Afghans who died in the Civil War and a further 7 million who had to abandon their country and take refuge in the neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Iran (Povey 20-21). In 1998, the former US National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski confirmed that US aid was provided to the Mujahideens. After the World Trade Center collapsed on 9/11, on being asked of any possible regret for supporting the radical Islamist group, Brzezinski replies:

Regret what? The secret operation was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap and you want me to regret it? The day that the Soviets officially crossed the border I wrote to President Carter: we now have the opportunity of giving the USSR its own Vietnam War ... What is more important to the history of the world? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? A few crazed Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War? (qtd. in Povey 20)

This quote from an eminent statesman clearly reflects the real motives that America had, one that was masked by masquerading as the enforcer of law and the liberator of the Afghan women. It also proves the Underclass theory that was forwarded by Jean Allain (Allain 391-404). According to Allain, the Middle East, being a part of the Orient has been transformed by the West into a zone where the dictates of international law need not hold. The Orient, thus, emerges as an underclass of the

international community, where rampant bombings can happen, detention and killing of civilians is normalised, aggression and emergency is naturalized, and international law, can be interpreted arbitrarily, applied selectively, and enforced punitively. The fact that the American Security Advisor considered entire Afghanistan as “a few crazed Muslims” and normalised their destruction for the liberation of the higher cause—the collapse of Soviet Russia—explains how Afghanistan functions as the underclass.

What appears to be more shocking than America’s tampering of facts for their own national integrity is Hosseini’s fanning of it. In his fictions, while claiming to be the authentic “representative” of Afghanistan, he draws an incomplete and politicized role of the American intervention in Afghanistan. As has been pointed out earlier, each of Hosseini’s novels suggests an immediate onset of normalcy within Afghanistan with the American intervention. However, real-life accounts completely differ from such a claim questioning the charitable nature of America. The involvement of the US in the region can at best be described as a strategic intervention as they encouraged the growing influence of the marginalised radical Islamist group in the shape of the Mujahideen and then remained silent during the evolution of its more extremist offshoot—the Taliban. All the while, the social and political scenario in Afghanistan was changing under the watchful eyes of America. Kim Berry in his article *“The Symbolic use of the Afghan woman in the War on Terror”* points out that up until 1997, America reserved a blind-eye for the Mujahideen/Taliban forces.

It was not until 1997 that the US first criticised the human rights violations of the Taliban... perhaps due to the pressure from US feminist organisations and their campaign against gender apartheid. And it was only after the bombings of

the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that US policy towards the Taliban changed to a cold distancing... (142)

Apart from this, there were other instances of American insouciance towards the rising radical waves in Afghanistan. In 1995, America stayed silent when the Afghan President did not allow women delegations from Afghanistan to participate in the 4th World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995(Crossette cited in Berry 143). The Northern Alliance, which was being prominently backed by America, prevented women in Kabul from taking part in the marches demanding “women liberation”. Later when America got directly involved in the war post 9/11, it did not consider the possible “collateral damages” that innocent civilians incurred from their incessant bombing on the plea of eradicating the Taliban forces. The justness of the American aggression was thus claimed that the civilian casualties from misdirected bombs were a price that the innocent Afghans had to pay for the misdeeds of the Talibans. The image of being the peacemaker receives a jolt when these American atrocities are considered. While demonstrating the American might on Afghanistan and chastising the entire Afghan community for the Taliban attack on the twin towers, the US refused to have a ceasefire in order to allow aid agencies such as Oxfam and World Food Programme an entry into the affected area to distribute winter clothes and refill their food supplies. “Expensive and extraordinary measures were then required to stem the suffering from what could have been a tragic humanitarian crisis” (Oxfam qtd. in Berry 145). In December 2001, a coalition of Afghan women was formed in Brussels and they formulated a list of 62 demands for the emancipation of women in Afghanistan. These demands included right to basic amenities such as health, education, medical care, food, clean water, renewal of

the food programmes and a plea for disarmament in Afghanistan. Since the Brussels proclamation, it has already been twenty years and Afghanistan is still suffering from the lack of these aforementioned social amenities.

The duplicity of the American government is once more revealed in the comments of Laura Bush, the then first-lady of America on 8th March 2002, when she addressed the United Nations on women's day. While the Afghan plea for help went unheard, Laura Bush highlighted the support that the US and the international community had lent to the Afghans and the women in particular. In her speech, she said:

Today the world is helping Afghan women return to the lives they once knew...

Today on international women's day, we affirm our mission to protect human rights for women in Afghanistan and around the world. And we affirm our support of all Afghans as they recover from war and injustice (US Department of State 2002 qtd. in Berry 144)

Had the US government actually been concerned for Afghanistan and its women, it would have reflected in its decisions and diplomatic policies regarding Afghanistan since the end of the Cold War. Rather, since the Bush government, America has resorted to creating a facade through its national discourse and popular media emphasising the American "contribution" for the betterment of the Afghan woman. While on one hand, America efficiently manages to evoke feminist sympathies for the struggles of the Afghan women, it simultaneously nurtures and arms the loyal Mujahideens (who served the American cause by fighting against Soviet Russia and the Talibans) and enables the warlords to maintain their dominion over the territory. Thus, the concern for the Afghan woman merely serves as a project under the guise of which the US demonstrated its

might to the entire world by penalising the Talibans as well as Afghanistan for the 9/11 disaster. The women cause served merely as a facade for America as it successfully rebuilt its reputation of the “Big Brother” after the 9/11 blemish was inflicted by the Al-Qaida.

The conjoined assistance in Afghanistan from the UN, the USA and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has failed to improve the existing conditions in Afghanistan. Hydratelife, a non-profitable venture who aims to design sustainable projects for clean water and sanitation, ranks Afghanistan as the worst in the world in terms of access to clean water. While 80% of the population does not have access to clean water, 95% of the Afghan people do not have the required provisions to maintain safe sanitation. WHO records that more than 25% of Afghan children perish before the age of five years. In terms of maternal mortality rate, the country ranks second. Until 2018, according to the data released by the Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey (ALCS), more than 54% of the Afghan population lived under the poverty line. According to the UNESCO reports, the adult literacy rate of Afghanistan comes to a paltry 31.74%.

In his portrayal, Hosseini is strangely unable to see through this American negligence and inhumanity and is absurdly benevolent to the American cause. His politicised portrayal of the “true” account of Afghanistan also serves other American concerns and thereby strays away from the truth. As has already been mentioned, Hosseini provides a detailed description of the Taliban oppression but strategically reserves his penmanship while describing the Mujahideen period, resonating the American nation’s support towards this fanatic Islamist group. Thus, Hosseini succumbs to the

pressure of the consumerist bias of the Occidental readership and maintains his affiliation to his hostland America. His “authentic” sketch of the Afghan land reaffirms the Orientalist idea of the bestial Orient and lends credibility to it. Through his narration, Hosseini emerges as a re-Orientalist as he Otherizes the Oriental Islamic nation of Afghanistan for the Occidental Self which he identifies with. While this serves the purpose of legitimizing the Occidental intervention by America in Afghanistan, which falls within the “uncivilized” domains of the globe, in order to supposedly initiate modernisation and carry out the white man’s burden of civilizing the brutes, it also makes the novels more acceptable and relatable to the Occidental readership. The famous British literary figure George Orwell once said, “political language was designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind” (Orwell 252-65). Hosseini’s justification of America’s intentions in touching words needs to be understood in this vein.

The US has repeatedly used the state apparatus as well as agencies from the media and popular culture to shroud its various acts of aggression throughout the world and project a justified, rational image for itself. However, as a diaspora, when Hosseini too agrees to be an American mouthpiece in this vicious American scheme and provides a politicised account of Afghanistan in order to make it more agreeable to the American audience, he not only provides credibility to the American version of lies but also prevents the world from being aware of the real conditions which persist in Afghanistan.

Spivak critiques the practice of using a native informant to understand the subaltern because the native informant exists at the margins of the elite and the subaltern; therefore does not exist at all, and is defined by erasure (Maggio 427).

Hosseini, who serves as a native informant on behalf of Afghanistan to the western world, gets incorporated into the elitist company of the hostland and severs all ties from the motherland. He incorporates his own biases and fabricated ideas about his motherland and its people which differ significantly from the real-life experiences of the Otherised lives. From his lofty position, both as a male and as a privileged diasporic person detached from the landscape of Afghanistan, it is nearly impossible for Hosseini to be the mouthpiece of the Otherised woman himself. Moreover, as a political proxy, Hosseini's definition of the Afghan woman and their struggles has multiple consequences. Hosseini functions as the biased Afghan voice representing the nation and voicing their aspirations, desires and gratification of those desires according to the terms that have been covertly implied by America. Through this strategic representation, Hosseini expresses the magnanimity of America and how eternally grateful the Afghans remain to them for their timely and just intervention. In his pursuit, he strategically refrains from depicting the small scale women resistance of Afghan women themselves that was building up during the Taliban reign, thereby projecting the women as anointed victims who are waiting to be rescued by the American troops. When a privileged individual like Hosseini who hails from the first world, tries to define the marginalised Other through an act of epistemic violence, the representer robs the subjects at the margins of their own unmediated voices. Being incentivised by his hostland or being truly incapable of representing the life of the subject at the margin while residing at the centre, such a first world intellectual fails to provide an account which reflects the ground reality. Such instances of unethical representation occur in plentiful in Hosseini's novels. In line with the American bias towards the Mujahideen, Hosseini depicts the Taliban forces repeatedly

as the most maleficent, radical, extremist force in Afghanistan. Women have been presented as the subservient, dehumanised entities who have succumbed to the oppression of patriarchy within the household and to that of the Taliban mandates outside. However, the real-life accounts from social scientists and journalists differ from that of Hosseini's.

In her book *Afghan Women: Identity and Invasion*, Elaheh Rostami Povey writes:

In some ways women's situation was worse during the civil war than during Taliban rule. This is because so many women were murdered and raped by the Mujaheddin. The Taliban disarmed the commanders and warlords and brutally enforced their own model of law and order. They imposed the Chadari on women and punished those women who did not obey its law. (26)

Even during the oppressive Taliban rule, quite a number of professional women stayed back in Afghanistan. They formed their own networks in solidarity with other women, supporting each other in times of need. By forming social cohesion among women, these networks provided a sense of empowerment to women. Suraya Parlyka, the head of the National Union of Women in Afghanistan informs that throughout the Taliban reign, these networks of women continued their efforts of empowering other women either openly or secretly (Povey 29). Being associated with other women facing similar circumstances, such feminist organisations helped its members to survive the hardships that the Talibans inflicted on their lives. In Povey's book Suraya Parlyka informs:

Both during the civil war and under the Taliban committing suicide was widespread amongst women. Under the Taliban, we tried to stop women

committing suicide when their families imposed forced marriages on them. We advised women not to fight their families, pretend that they will accept and near the time to escape and come to us for protection. We saved a large number of women this way. We organized carpet weaving and other skills and women were able to survive this way... The non-governmental Women's Vocational Centre was active for twenty years and offered women in Kabul courses in English and German. It also provided them with courses on handicrafts, animal husbandry, bee-keeping, honey-making and also made provisions for income generation for the poor women in the rural areas... Despite the horrors of war and violent conflict, some women in Afghanistan emerged from such times empowered. They became aware of their own capacities to organize and found ways to survive. Women's secret organizations and networks in Afghanistan were the only functioning organizations trusted by the community. (Povey 29-32)

There were secret schools for both boys and girls managed and financed by women. The women instructors not only imparted training in basic literacy but also taught them specific subjects like English, German, Arabic and the different branches of science. They were also taught how to cook, knit, sew and do other household works. Thus at the heart of the women resistance were the twin concepts of education and empowerment. While the Taliban and Mujahideen males fought their battles on the basis of ethnic diversity, the women from all the diverse ethnicities joined to form their respective groups. Utilising the food distribution projects which were agreed upon by the Taliban and the UN, these women continued their efforts of educating by distributing pamphlets and printed materials along with the food. Povey mentions that numerous

women were caught, tortured, jailed or persecuted by the Talibans for their efforts. Even then, the Afghan women's resistance remained undeterred. While sensitising their struggle and oppression, Hosseini does not find it necessary to reveal this undaunted nature of Afghan femininity. This may be because it could have hampered the cult status of the nation which provided Hosseini with a refuge at a time of crisis; portraying the empowered women could have possibly dampened the justification that America claimed for intervening in Afghan affairs.

This same strain of misinterpretation continues in the other facets of feminine life—the veil of the Muslim woman being one of them. In case of both Mariam and Laila, Hosseini portrays the burqa as their means to hide—a respite that helps them stay concealed from the rest of the world. In order to hide their undignified existence from the public gaze, the women prefer to stay behind the burqa despite their physical discomfort. However, the ramifications of the veiled woman arise with the presence of the unveiled woman in America and the unveiled, liberated woman in Afghanistan (in the form of Nila Wahdati). Through the characters of Soraya, Khanum Taheri, Pari Wahdati, Pari (Abdullah's daughter) and Nila, the unveiled woman signifies the educated, liberated, modern woman in both Afghanistan and America while the veil is subtly linked with negative connotations of being the symbol of oppression, subjugation and conservatism by the author. Such a portrayal stands in stark contrast to the necessity of the veil that helped women combat the oppression of the Talibans. While the utility of the veil for the characters in the novel is restricted to conceal their disempowered state, in reality, the veil functioned as the primary weapon in the arsenal of the Afghan women. During the Taliban era, burqa for the Afghan women did not symbolize

restriction, it was rather a device which aided women empowerment. By politicising the burqa, Hosseini once again resonates with the popular American discourse which also looks at unveiling as a symbol of progression and liberation of Afghan woman. However, Afghan women themselves never considered the veil to be an issue of contention. While fighting the persistent poverty, lack of food, lack of housing and clothing, and lack of husband and children, being veiled or unveiled did not matter to the Afghan women. Rather, to make their intervention in Afghanistan and supposed “war on terror” justified, to demystify the hooded Oriental woman and to make the American achievements visible to the entire world, it was necessity for the American forces to unveil the Afghan woman. The Afghan women have repeatedly harped on the importance that burqa have in their lives. Dr Rahima Zafar Staniczaio, a prominent woman activist stated that “First we need peace. Then we need a central government. Then we need education. After all that, we will be in a position to make a decision on the burka” (Lacoya qtd. in Berry 156). In her book *Afghan Woman: Identity and Invasion*, Povey documents the opinion of Shafiqa, the director of the Woman’s Vocational Training Center. According to her- “Wearing Chadari allowed us to do some work” (Povey 30). Povey also informs of the various ways in which the burqa used to facilitate the woman. She writes: “Women and girls... hid their books, notebooks, pens and pencils under their burqas... Women’s mobility depended entirely on burqa...” (33,36) On being interviewed, women mentioned the American obsession of unveiling them which in no way improved their living condition. Povey provides the opinion of two Afghan women who survived the Taliban regime and witnessed the influence of the American intervention. One of the women, named Farida expressed her anger at the present

condition: "All I hear since the fall of the Taliban is Chadari Chadari Chadari. My problem is not Chadari; my problem is that I don't have any food to feed myself and my children." (37) On Chadari, another woman named Nasira commented:

The Taliban imposed it on us. After five years it has become a part of our culture, we feel comfortable with it. Our community and society do not accept women without Chadari. We will not take it off just because the West wants us to ... Some of us may take it off once we are ready and our society is ready. To be pressured by the West to take off our Chadari is as bad as Taliban imposing [it] on us [in the first place]. We have the right to choose what to wear. (37)

It is therefore evident how Hosseini repeatedly assumes, approximates and defines the subjectivity of his characters to make America appear magnanimous. Due to this unethical representation of women and their struggles in Afghanistan, the women come across an added layer of Otherisation from the author himself. While the women's voice is already silenced due to her marginalisation firstly by the patriarchal Islamist Order and secondly by the Eurocentric Occidental forces, her voice is further subdued through the misrepresentation of the author.

For all the criticism that has been labelled at Hosseini for his misrepresentations, he must also be credited for his true portrayal of the diasporic life. Through the depiction of Amir and Baba in *The Kite Runner*, and Pari Wahdati, Nila, Abdullah and his daughter Pari in *And The Mountains Echoed* Hosseini presents a believable description of diasporic lives and longings while being settled within the host territory.

When compared to his misrepresentation of Afghan women and men, the unethically of representing the diasporic overtures seems to be minimal for Hosseini. The narrative reliability that we find in these diasporic projections once again proves Spivak's emphasis on the attachment of the representer to the zone which he is representing. Hosseini, being a part of the Afghan diaspora which is positioned in the host country of America, is able to draw from his lived experiences in order to create the subjectivity of the diasporic individuals in the novel. In this aspect, he accurately functions as the authentic informant—a role he was unable to perform while being the mouthpiece of the women and of Afghanistan. The only aspect in the diasporic lives which seems to be politicised and strategically omitted from the narration is the American aggression on Muslim diasporas, especially after the incident of 9/11.

These contortions of the truth by the author once again prove how Hosseini's popular novels tend to serve the concern of the American state. Had Hosseini, standing true to his responsibilities of being the face and voice of Afghanistan, sketched the true condition of Afghans both in Afghanistan and in America, he would have endangered the claims of the American narratives and his novels would have been identified as a threat by both the American and the Western readership. To absolve himself from being identified as a possible threat and to maintain his affiliations to the host nation, he resorts to the easier options of sensitizing the oppression and poverty of the Afghan woman, commodifying the Orient with adequate doses of scar culture for the Western consumers and the persistent objectification of the Islamic women, men and nations. By resorting to these ploys, Hosseini not only maintains his commitment towards America but also creates three best-selling books out of it. The misrepresentation on the part of

Hosseini becomes a significant point of contention which can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, it can be understood as an act which proceeds from the American incentivization for misinformation from the native Afghan. If that is the case, then Hosseini's novels perform the task of being the American instruments through which their dominance is justified and power is asserted. Given the opportunity, Hosseini too maximizes the gains out of it. Rather than being an artist functioning as a representative, the writer ends up becoming a supplier and trader of palatable dishes to the Western readership according to their taste. In this context, another diasporic writer Anita Desai concedes that a writer soon learns that "if he wishes to earn he must learn to please" (qtd. in Lau 25). The other possible hypothesis is that Hosseini, himself a diaspora, is indoctrinated in the political ideology of America which he upholds in his novels. Althusser had described the role ideology plays in maintaining the different hegemonic relationships within a political setup. Through the process of ideological interpellation, the ideology of the dominant host country is interpellated into the Otherised diasporas in such a way that their own oppression and Otherisation get normalised. Being robbed of their subjectivity, they tend to view the world from the perception of the Self—the host country. Foucault in *Discipline and Power* had mentioned about the role of the micro-forces of the society and the various social institutions in invading the body and regulating the mind of the subjects (cited in Bartky, 129-54). The social institutions through their constant vigilance and uninterrupted coercion produce subjects as "docile bodies" who could be controlled and manipulated according to the needs of the political regime. If the characterisation within the novels is to be believed as a true reflection of Hosseini's perception of truth, it goes on to indicate the over-arching influence of the state-apparatus which transforms

Hosseini into one of Foucault's "docile bodies". Not only does the host land contain him within the identity of a diaspora but also constructs his nuanced subjectivity through its disciplinary project for the immigrants. Through radical and extensive measures, the American nation makes the Afghan diaspora go through a psychological transformation and creates a psyche which would be more malleable to the contorted truths produced by the American discourse and favourable to the existing regimes of power. Like Hosseini, the diasporas in his novels also go through a similar transformation where the native perceptions, moral values and ethical system are transformed, and their experiences of truth and lies are tampered and are coerced into believing the altered versions of reality which are inexplicably linked to the dominant regimes of political power. A measure of shame is attached to their diasporic identity and they are made to believe that their previous existence in the Oriental territories was essentially "defective" and 'inferior'. Gradually they get indoctrinated in the discourse produced by the host nation and believe in their latent "lack". A reflection of the aforementioned phenomenon occurs in the novels of Hosseini who creates a flawed yet convenient narrative for the Western readership either to live up to the expectations of Western propriety or from his own faith in the legal Orientalist and re-Orientalist discourses, or both.

Irrespective of the reason, the thesis depicts the issues of unethical representation and problematizes the ethical standpoint of diasporic writers in general and Hosseini in particular. However, it limits itself to the study of Hosseini's works alone without making a comparison with any other diasporic author. Moreover, the field of legal Orientalism that the study bases on is nascent and requires more academic works to form a considerable body of research in the field. Further studies may be conducted

along similar lines comparing the issues of representation between Hosseini and other diasporic authors, or between Hosseini and other Afghan authors stationed in Afghanistan. This study, however, makes a critical intervention into Hosseini's works alone, exposing and analysing his intentions and the bias that colour his writings.

Being inspired by the Russian novel *We* (1924) by Yevgeny Zamyatin, Orwell in *1984* (1949) and Huxley in *Brave New World* (1932) create a fictional world which shows a vigilant society characterised by its relentless scrutiny of the subjects and their thought processes. Through the various state apparatus, these citizens get conditioned into the state propaganda. The same apparatus are used to keep a check on the citizens' private and public life and new "ministries of truth" are being formed by the government to contort the history and create new knowledge which conforms to the state's propaganda. Drawing from such Foucaldian principles and the insinuations that were evoked by authors like Orwell and Huxley, this thesis also hints at the potential that the nation-states possess in transforming their citizens, altering histories and creating inauthentic knowledge in order to make the national rhetoric and the state propaganda more believable and justifiable.