

The Politics of Voice in the Stereotypical Representation of the Pashtuns: A Critical Study of Khaled Hosseini's Novels

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Abstract

*The current study is an attempt to critically analyze the role and politics of voice in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* in terms of categorical and stereotypical representation of the Pashtuns. It is a critical discourse study (Norman Fairclough, 1989, 2018) of the selected data. Moreover, the data is viewed from the perspective of critical discourse studies. The novels under study are polyphonic in nature, and the characters belong to various Afghan ethnic backgrounds, like the Pashtuns, the Tajiks and the Hazaras. The study concludes that the novelist's choice of the characters with their respective voices and the roles assigned to them are political, ideological and somewhat biased. The Pashtuns have been stereotypically represented by categorizing them as the social, well-educated and more or less liberal Pashtuns, the tribal and traditionalist Pashtuns, extremist and fundamentalist Pashtuns, like Taliban. Misrepresentation of the tribal and fundamentalist Pashtuns as racists, ethnic nationalists, ideologists, sexists, exclusionists, traditionalists and power-abusers is indicative of the novelist's biasedness and exaggeration.*

Key Words:

Stereotypical Representation, Interpretive and Explanatory Analysis, Pashtuns, Ethnicity

Background of the Study

Khaled Hosseini's novels under study are more or less true representations of the Afghan ethnic communities. His discourses are multi-voiced, and the focal point of the current study is to question why and how the Pashtun characters have been assigned certain roles, and how the politics has been played in the choice and (mis)representation of and through their voices. Tools of Norman Fairclough's (1989, 2018) critical discourse analysis as a viably used research method are applied for the analysis of purposively selected data. The role of voices is multiplex and multifarious in various literary and non-literary discourses with more or less literary and socio-political orientation and manipulation. Thus, the role of voice in most of the discourses is politicized and politically cashed. As the

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novels provide a discursive and/or literary site for the representation of a host of voices, therefore, voices in most of the novels are politically and economically exploited because a novel is created with an intension, purpose and motif.

In Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) view, voice refers to the words spoken by a speaking consciousness. Voice not only refers to the spoken or written words, but also to the individual or collective representation of a character or community. Voice in discourse represents the identity and recognition of both the discourse and its producer. The concept of inclusion/exclusion and foregrounding/backgrounding of voices determine his/her personal and socio-political viewpoint and aim or agenda. The presence or absence of a voice in discourse can pinpoint the equal or unequal social relations among the represented and unrepresented voices in discourse. Some discourses, if not all, through their embedded voices attempt to challenge the established or existing socio-political power and status quo for bringing egalitarianism, equality and equity.

Research Question

The current study seeks to answer the following research question:

Q. How and why does the discourse-producer (novelist) play politics of voices in the categorical and stereotypical (mis)representation of the Pashtuns in his discourses (novels): *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*?

Review of Related Literature on the Role and Politics of Voice in Discourse

The politics and positioning of voice in discourse raises the issue of the speaker's or writer's position or stance. Whose voice and why this voice was highly valued and preferred may become a crucial question of the speaker's or writer's prejudice and discrimination. This discrimination leads to questions of self and other representation in the literary and sociopolitical structure. This particular preference to a single voice in discourse creates a sense of dictatorial and privileged tendency of the producer or the represented voice as argued by Gagiano (2004, p. 824) that "excessive prominence given to any single voice, whether it be the political leader's or the famous writer's, creates a type of *dictatorship*—foregrounding the declarative, single and overpowering voice that would tell us who we are, and what we need."

The position and status of voice can be best understood and recognized in a chorus of other social voices. Which voice sounds louder and longer signifies its status and stature in the literary and socio-political polyphony, and for the resounding and recognition of the unheard voice, it will have to enter into a struggle to be fought in relation to others so that its identity is acquired.

Power is an influential and shaping or constitutive role-player in the construction and emergence of discourse. It attempts to mould the discourse within the normative boundary of power structure. It restricts and restrains voice from its open and creative echo in discourse. Simultaneously, it is also noteworthy and remarkable that institutional or organizational powers differ in the way or means they implement power in discourses according to the institutional norms and behavior.

Scollon (1997) compares and contrasts the English and Chinese journalistic discourses in relation to the institutional powers of their origin. He argues that the same power is discursively exercised in these two kinds of journalistic discourses, but with different foci – focus is either given on the institutional voices or on the individual voices of the presenters, reporters and newsmakers through the same discursive means. He argues that “what is different between these two discourses is not the exercise of power through discursive means, but the explicit focusing of that power” (Scollon, 1997, p. 383).

It is how institutional powers play politics of voice in discourse by the way voices as identities are foregrounded or back grounded in news discourses. According to him, the individual voices of the presenter, reporter and newsmaker are highlighted discursively in the English or Western journalism whereas the Hong Kong Chinese news discourse tends to highlight the voices of the news organization. Individual voices of the presenter, reporter and newsmaker are marginalized or less favoured (Scollon, 1997).

Lazar (2005, 2007) and Mills (1995, 1997 and 2008) are critical feminist authors whose voices in their feminist discourses play feminist politics to advocate and support female gender. Lazar argues: “The central concern of feminist critical discourse analysts is with critiquing discourses which sustain a patriarchal social order—relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group, and disadvantage, exclude, and disempower women as a social group” (2007, p. 145).

Similarly, Mills (1997) highlights the significance of certain voices which are included in or excluded from discourses. Women are very concerned about the inclusion or exclusion of their voices and about their freedom of expression in the vital societal discourses. The inclusion or exclusion of certain voices in discourses leads to the issue of representation of the included or excluded voices in discourses. The concept of voice in discourse is a suitable and sensitive site in and through which a community's stereotyping can be encoded and decoded, represented and challenged.

The position of voice is actually the position of its producer and representative. Voice is always associated with the speaking subject whose positioning in discourse differs with the changing circumstances and contexts (Bakhtin, 1981). The position of voice in discourse is not fixed and permanent because positions change with the changing roles and interests of the speaking

and representing subjects. Granting more space or value to a single voice over the other voices in discourse involves identity and power politics. The privileged voices may be more powerful than the unprivileged ones. Again, it depends on the discourse-producer's intention and interest because sometimes politicians try to raise the voices of the suppressed minority for their own malignant and maliciously political aims, interests and agenda.

Some of the primary genres (discourses), like meetings, conferences and news discourses, instantiate the influential and determining tendency of the institutional power exercised for the positioning of voices (granting and/or denying voices) in discourses. Secondary genres, like literary and creative works, are discursive sites where the writer is fully powerful and open in deciding how much space and value is to be given to voices in his/her literary or intellectual discourse. He/she has to observe the literary norms to a greater or lesser extent, but his/her imaginative and intuitive work exercises liberation and openness in positioning of the selected voices. Poetry, drama, prose and novels are instances of such discourses, but novel is a special sort of narrative discourse where the novelist represents and depicts discursively a multiplicity of social voices which are given a novelistic platform to speak what they feel and perceive as real social agents.

It is only the novel which is more dialogic than the drama or other literary dialogic or multi-voiced discourses. Jha (1983, p. 42) argues that “a polyphonic structure would demand a plurality of full-valued voices within the bounds of a single text.” It seems difficult to give equal space, value and position to each voice in discourse, but due and deserved spaces, positions and values can be granted to all the voices in discourse (novel). Each voice in discourse (novel) fights a battle of identity and recognition, of power and position with other voices in the polyphonic discourse. Novels can be one of the best sites which provide a playground of polyphony – a polyphonic playground which also plays the voices of those unheard and marginalized, yet the novel cannot guarantee whether or not the depicted and represented voices will be heard in society. Bueno (1996, p. 192) recognizes “the crucial importance of the presence of the others’ voices in the text . . . [yet] the text alone, the novel alone does not necessarily guarantee that the “other,” the subaltern, will be heard in the wider society.” In addition to this, it is arguable that such voices can be ideologically and politically manipulated for positive or negative representation of a community. The novels under study unveil the mentioned ideological and political manipulation of multiple voices for diverse ends.

Research Methodology

The current study applies Norman Fairclough's (1989, 2018) critical discourse analysis for the analysis of the selected data. It includes three stages/steps of

discourse analysis: description stage, interpretation stage and explanation stage. Description stage deals with the consideration of discourse as a text wherein formal textual/linguistic forms and features are identified and labeled in terms of the following ten tools/questions:

1. Lexicalisation: this tool is related to the choice of lexemes and the way various lexemes are manipulated by the speaker/writer for multiple functions and ends.
2. Patterns of transitivity: the tool focuses on the identification and analysis of various forms of verbs and their ideological use for plural functions and purposes.
3. Activization and passivization: the choice of the speaker or writer's active or passive form is questioned by the analyst for exploring the speaker or writer's intension and motif.
4. The use of nominalization: the analyst identifies and questions the choice of the speaker or writer's nominalisations. The analysis of various nominalizations used contributes to meeting the intended or unintended goals.
5. Choices of mode: Various modes of sentence are identified and labeled while applying this tool/question.
6. Choices of modality or polarity: What forms of modality have been used in the text by the writer are labeled, and then critically analysed in the last stage of explanation.
7. The information focus: this tool is applied for identifying and analyzing various textual techniques and strategies used to foreground or background a piece of information.
8. The use of cohesive devices: the analyst identifies and labels different cohesive devices used in the text for producing cohesion and coherence.
9. Interactional conventions: the analyst looks for interactional conventions and explores the equal or unequal engagement of the participants in a conversation or dialogue.
10. Thematic structure of the text: each discourse carries and conveys a certain theme, and the entire structure of a discourse with its integral elements contributes to the formation of overall theme of the discourse. Therefore, the structure of discourse under study is thematically studies.

Interpretation stage deals with the significance of the aforementioned choices/uses. It also focuses on the analysis of presuppositions and speech acts. Similarly, explanation stage is concerned with the social analysis of the topic under study wherein the descriptive analysis of the text is linked with the wider social context.

Data Analysis

The selected data under study is a combination of various chunks related to different characters' voices. The purpose of analyzing the pool of various characters and their voices is to answer the research question of this study that how the Pashtuns have been categorically and stereotypically represented in/through multiple voices of different characters, and how the discourse-producer's choice and selection of characters and voices is ideological, political, purposeful, somewhat biased and inclined to exaggeration. "Afghanistan is the land of Pashtuns. It always has been, always will be. We are the true Afghans, the pure Afghans, not this Flat-Nose here. His people pollute our homeland, our *watan*. They dirty our blood." (Hosseini, 2003, p. 38; italics in original) . . . "Remember this," Baba said, pointing at me, "The man is a Pashtun to the root. He has *nang* and *namoos*." *Nang. Namooos*. Honor and pride. The tenets of Pashtun men. Especially when it came to the chastity of a wife. Or a daughter. (2003, p. 134; italics in original) . . . "*We may be hardheaded and I know we're far too proud, but, in the hour of need, believe me that there's no one you'd rather have at your side than a Pashtun*" (2003, p. 147; italics in original) . . . The savages who rule our *watan* don't care about human decency . . . If I fought, that dog would have surely put a bullet in me, and gladly! (2003, pp. 200-201; italics in original; ellipsis mine) . . . "But I'm a different breed of man, Mariam. Where I come from, one wrong look, one improper word, and blood is spilled. Where I come from, a woman's face is her husband's business only. (2007, p. 63; italics in original) . . . "I'll say it this way: If she were a car, she would be a Volga." . . . "You," Rasheed said to the girl, "you, on the other hand, would be a Benz. A brand-new, first-class, shiny Benz." (2007, p. 199; italics & ellipses in original) . . . "It's those *savages*, those *wahshis*, who are to blame. They bring shame on me as a Pashtun. They've disgraced the name of my people." (2007, p. 283) . . . "They're bloodhounds" (2007, p. 318; italics in original; 1st ellipsis mine).

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis of the selected data in light of Norman Fairclough's (1989, 2018) ten tools/questions of description stage reveals use of the following textual/linguistic forms and features in the text under study:

1. Lexicalization: "We," "true Afghans," "pure Afghans," "Flat-Nose," "our homeland," "our blood," "pride and honor," "*hardheaded*," "*far too proud*," "The savages," "that dog," "my people," "shame," "bloodhounds," "Volga," "Benz" (Tool No. 1)
2. Patterns of transitivity: "pollute," "dirty" (Tool No. 2)
3. Activization and passivization: "blood is spilled" (Tool No. 3)

4. Choice of mood: "Remember this," "believe me" (Tool No. 5)
5. The information focus: "always," "our *watan*" (Tool No. 7)
6. The use of cohesive devices: "but," "But" (Tool No. 8)

Interpretive and Explanatory Analysis

Analysis of the aforementioned data answers how the discourse-producer, in his novels, has represented and categorized the Pashtuns in three types – the modern, moderate and democratic-minded, anti-Taliban Pashtuns like Tariq and Zaman; the tribal, traditionalist and pro-Taliban Pashtuns like Rasheed; the extremist and fundamentalist Pashtuns like the Taliban. It also indicates that there are multiple Pashtun identities, like other multiple social identities. The analysis also answers how the discourse-producer has played politics in the choice of characters and the voices attributed to them in representing and stereotyping the Pashtuns.

The discourse-producer has discursively constructed and represented Assef's ethnic nationalism, ethnic exclusion and racism in Assef's voice. Assef excludes all other Afghan ethnic groups, especially the Hazaras by the expression "Afghanistan is the land of Pashtuns." He voices that it has been and will be the land of Pashtuns forever. The repetition of the word "always" in the same sentence indicates Assef's exclusionary agenda for making Afghanistan as a nation-state for the Pashtuns only.

The analysis of data also indicates the elevated discursive construction of the Pashtuns and the exclusion of the Hazaras. He attributes the Pashtuns including himself as "the true Afghans, the pure Afghans," and discriminately excludes Hassan and other Hazaras having "Flat-Nose." The inclusive "We" has been used for the Pashtuns, not for the Hazaras. Looking at these lines from critical discourse studies perspective, it can be argued that Assef, in his voice, represents the Pashtuns positively and the Hazaras negatively, but this self and other representation is the discourse-producer's attempt to demonstrate Assef's racism as discrimination against and exclusion of the Hazaras like Hassan. Assef's racism in self and other representation confirms van Dijk's view that "our good things tend to be emphasized, and our bad things (like racism) de-emphasized – and the converse for the Others, whose bad things are stressed, and whose good things ignored" (van Dijk, 2005, p. 10).

As Assef is an ethnic nationalist who wants a nation-state for the Pashtuns only, therefore, he disgustingly voices that Hassan's people ("His people") "pollute" their motherland, and "dirty" their "blood." The phrase "our homeland, our *watan*" indicates that Assef as a bad Pashtun voices his own view for the Pashtun nationalism excluding all other ethnic nationalities.

The discourse-producer has given 'voices' to both the characters in the lines in such a way that none of them apparently interrupts each other's turn of talking. Baba emphatically advises Amir to remember that Soraya's father is "a Pashtun

to the root.” The Pashtun identity is discursively constructed in a manner that “Honor and pride” as the “tenets of Pashtun men” have been given high regard. The repetitive use of “*nang*” (honor) and “*namoos*” (pride) indicates that the Pashtuns, particularly well-educated and social Pashtuns, like Baba, regard honor and pride highly, especially when these are associated with the safety and sanctity of women (“the chastity of a wife” or “a daughter”). The data also indicate how others, like Baba, positively ascribe and represent member of their own community, like Soraya’s Pashtun father, in their own linguistic representation and communication (Joseph, 2004). Both Baba and Soraya’s father are constructive-minded, good Pashtuns.

The Pashtuns, in general, are represented as hard-headed, very proud and matchlessly helpful to the needy. Amir refers to this very fact about the Pashtuns when his sick father is shown to the doctor, and general Taheri, who is a Pashtun like Amir and Baba, offers him any sort of help the way a brother asks his own brother for help. At this juncture, Amir remembers Baba’s remark about the Pashtuns that we, the Pashtuns may be very proud and hardheaded, but it is the Pashtun who stands ready for your help at an hour of need.

The Taliban in rule are attributed (represented) as “savages” who ignore “human decency.” It is another sentence wherein the discourse-producer, through Hassan’s voice, challenges power abuse, and attributes the Talib as “that dog” who would have surely and happily pierced a bullet into Hassan if he had resisted the Talib in scuffle and strife. The Taliban are discursively constructed and represented by the discourse-producer as dogs and savages who had abused their power in imposing their own will (a set of principles, rules and conventions to be followed) and ideology. The discourse-producer has his own ‘regime of truth’ which justifies the validity and truthfulness of calling the Taliban as the wrong-doers (see Foucault, 1980 for regime of truth). Hassan compromised for his son, Sohrab when he did not resist the Talib as the interrogative expression indicates.

The very use of “But” by Rasheed indicates the point of his critical argument. Yes, he as a tribal and traditionalist Pashtun possesses such ideology and identity which differs from the mentioned men’s. The discourse-producer, through Rasheed’s voice, discursively constructs and represents his racial and ethnic identity with the expression “But I’m a different breed of man.” The repetition of “Where I come from” indicates that “Where” refers to the region of the Pashtuns like him where they, according to the discourse-producer, spill/shed blood of the person casting “one wrong look” or uttering “one improper word.” If one wrong look or one improper word causes blood-shedding, it means that the Pashtuns like Rasheed are so concerned about their honor and pride that they harshly bring the guilty to book. This is the region of such Pashtuns where “a woman’s face is her husband’s business only.” This sentence indicates that such

Pashtuns' wives will have to cover their faces, and that they can expose their faces only to their husbands.

Mariam is discriminated against by Rasheed when he attributes her as “a car” and/or “a Volga.” Rasheed’s sexist attitude and belief are expressed in his discursive practice when he attributes Mariam as a good worker and as a car. It is direct sexism as Rasheed’s discursive practice directly indicates that he intends to “belittle and undermine women [like Mariam] as an inferior, subordinated, exploitable and different group like a minority group at the individual” level (see Mills, 2008 for more details). Terms used for her indicate Rasheed’s intentional attempt to insult and mock at her as an inferior, subordinate and sexual tool. A discriminatory comparison between Mariam and Laila is made by Rasheed, and Laila is attributed as “a Benz,” a “brand new, first-class, shiny Benz” him. Rasheed favors and prefers Laila (“a Benz”) to Mariam (“a Volga”) on account of Laila’s charm and prettiness.

The discourse-producer, through Zaman’s voice, discursively constructs and represents the Taliban as savage people, and holds them wholly responsible for the orphans and their miserable condition in the orphanage by the attribution “those *savages*, those *wahshis*, who are to blame.” As Zaman, according to the discourse-producer’s discursive construction, is among the good Pashtuns, so he is ashamed of the Taliban’s nefarious and condemnable deeds which misrepresent good Pashtuns like Zaman. He constructs his own identity as a favorable Pashtun, and distances himself from the Taliban (bad Pashtuns) who “bring shame on [him] as a Pashtun,” and who have “disgraced the name of [his] people.” The discourse-producer has used discursive strategies like naming and attribution (e.g. “me as a Pashtun” and “the name of my people”) to highlight and represent good Pashtuns, like Zaman, and he has also manipulated the same strategies to represent the Taliban as bad Pashtuns by othering them as “They” and “those *savages*.” What Zaman is doing here is positive self and negative other-representation (see van Dijk, 2005 for more details).

Mariam attributes the Taliban as “bloodhounds” which indicates how the discourse-producer, through voice of Mariam, represents the Taliban and challenges their power abuse. If they are bloodhounds, then their prey are the innocent Afghans, particularly the Afghan women, like Mariam and Laila. It indicates the discourse-producer’s negative representation of the Taliban (see van Dijk, 2005 for more details).

Conclusion

The role and politics of voice are involved in discourses representing the Pashtuns stereotypically. The Pashtuns have been stereotypically (mis) represented in three distinct categories which also demonstrate the politics of polyphony in the novels under study. The Pashtuns have been categorized as

(more or less) liberal, educated and modern-minded Pashtuns like Amir, Baba and Rahim Khan in *The Kite Runner*, Tariq and Zaman in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the fundamentalist and extremist Pashtuns like the Taliban and Assef in *The Kite Runner*, and the tribal and traditionalist Pashtuns like Rasheed in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The selection of heroes and villains in both of Hosseini's novels is political and ideologically loaded/contested. Amir, hero and narrator of *The Kite Runner*, represents more or less truly the constructive-minded social, modern and well-educated Pashtuns. Characters, like Amir, Baba and Rahim Khan, belong to such good Pashtuns. These people possess their own ideology challenging the ones of the Taliban, and of the tribal and traditionalist Pashtuns.

Many characteristics related to such Pashtuns have been constructed and represented discursively and narratively such as honor and pride, valor, hospitality, love and care, courage, physical power, helpful nature and the like. These characteristics and associations of the Pashtun identity as discursively constructed and represented in different 'voices' are more or less generalizable. These Pashtuns, as the discourse-producer has represented, are not fundamentalists and extremists like Mullahs and the Taliban, and they challenge/resist strict and extremist ideology of these people. The Mullahs and bearded people (including the Taliban) have been negatively represented by the discourse-producer in such a manner that he has granted voice to Baba, who is a liberal and modern-minded Pashtun, to speak against and challenge the bearded people's ideology. Modern Pashtuns like Baba, as the discourse-producer has demonstrated, will not support the bearded Mullahs and the Taliban to impose rule of their own strict ideology in Afghanistan. The discourse-producer has given voice to Baba to represent Mullahs and bearded people negatively by challenging their ideology (and religious patriarchy). The Pashtuns of this category, like Amir and Baba, are represented as accommodating and recognizing the Hazara ethnicity as the Afghans without any apparent discrimination against and power abuse over them. The Pashtuns have been represented as more patriarchal and challenging in issues like honor, pride and valor, and the traits of the Pashtun identity (especially the Pashtun men) like honor and pride have been discursively highlighted throughout the novels under study.

Similarly, Tariq and his parents, in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, have been constructed and represented discursively as more or less true representatives and spokespersons of good and modern-minded Pashtuns. Like Amir as a Pashtun hero in *The Kite Runner*, Tariq is a Pashtun hero in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Tariq and his parents are so good, loving and caring that they spoke Farsi when Laila, a Farsi-speaking Tajik and Tariq's beloved, was at their home. Such Pashtuns, according to the discourse-producer, are neither racists nor ethnic

nationalists. They have accommodating and integrating views about all the different ethnic groups in Afghanistan.

Stereotyping of the Tribal and Traditionalist Pashtuns

The second category of the Pashtuns is tribal and traditionalist Pashtuns, like Rasheed in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The role allocation for a character and the representation of his/her perspective in his/her voice involve the discourse-producer's politics and ideological stance. Rasheed as a tribal and traditionalist Pashtun has been assigned the role of an antagonist whose patriarchal ideology and power cause oppression for women, like Mariam and Laila. The discourse-producer is more or less liberal and modern-minded Afghan-born American, and his ideology and perspective differ from those of Rasheed-like Pashtuns who keep women's freedom restricted in some of their domestic and social matters. Consequently, he challenges such people's custom, tradition and ideological stance suppressing women's emancipation. Rasheed was a rigid, arrogant, relentless, egoist, imposing, challenging, and tribal and traditionalist Pashtun who treated his wives as workers and lust-gratifying objects. He was egregious, and against egalitarianism and women's emancipation. He was the emblem and embodiment of torment and torture, tribalism and traditionalism. He has been discursively represented as the Taliban's supporter and vice versa.

Such Pashtuns, according to the discourse-producer, value sons highly as their heirs and dominating embodiments of their identity and power. The analysis indicates that domestic violence as made by Rasheed on trivial matters. The analysis of the novels under study reveal that infertility, inability to produce male children or incapability to work well at home and defiance to husband's will are the main causes of domestic violence, burden and divorce as the effects of power abuse in tribal and traditionalist Pashtuns' families.

Representation of the Taliban

The discourse-producer has discursively constructed and represented the Taliban as a militant and guerrilla force of those Pashtuns who are extremist, fundamentalist, racist, ethnic nationalist, sexist, tyrant, ant progressive, power-abuser, anti-liberal, controllers of women's emancipation, more patriarchal, trouble-makers, violence-creators, torture-givers, misfits, challenging, imposers of strict Islamic ideology at any cost and misrepresentative of Islam. He exaggerates in misrepresenting the Taliban. The analysis indicates that the narrator has granted voice to his liberal father to speak against the Mullahs and the bearded people including the Taliban. The discourse-producer, through Baba's voice, calls such ideologists as "bearded idiots" and "self-righteous monkeys" who are unable to comprehend the language of the Qur'an, and no

learnable thing can be learnt from them. Moreover, they are likened to Genghis Khan who was a savagely tyrant warrior.

The Taliban are also demonstrated in the discursively constructed views and dialogues. The characters are historically shown as the real victims of the Taliban's power abuse. Moreover, the Hazara minority has been discursively represented as the target of ethnic cleansing by the Taliban. The discourse-producer has manipulated language excellently in representing the Taliban. He puts forward the characters' views, experiences, observations, aspirations, sentiments, relations and oppressions in monologues and dialogues, and attempts to construct a certain world view of the readers against the Taliban. He manipulates Hassan's voice in some linguistic chunks as a discursive device and strategy to discursively represent the Taliban as savage and inhuman. Hassan expresses his view about the Taliban in his voice thus: "The savages who rule our *watan* [country] don't care about human decency." He also calls the beating Talib as "that dog." Similarly, the discourse-producer, through Farid's voice, calls the Taliban's patrol as "Beard Patrol" which indicates the negative representation of the Taliban whose beards are ridiculed. As already mentioned, the discourse-producer has played politics in the selection of characters and the roles assigned to them, and also in the discursive representation of some socio-political issues through their 'voices.' Assef, a bad Pashtun who becomes a Talib official later on, is assigned the role of a villain/antagonist in *The Kite Runner* under study. The role allocation obviously manifests that the Taliban have been represented as villains in Afghanistan. Assef as a character is introduced in a manner befitting his role as Hitler and Mullah Omar. However, the discourse-producer's representation of Mullah Omar and the Taliban is biased, negative, exaggeratory and discriminatory.

According to the discourse-producer's discursive depiction of Assef, Assef, like the Taliban, was relentless, savage, tyrant, ethnic nationalist, racist, trouble-maker and power-abuser in oppressing civilians, especially women and the Hazaras. Rahim Khan explains that he was "apologizing to that son of a dog [the Talib]" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 184). Such is the discursive technique and strategy of the discourse-producer who puts one or more characters' 'voices' in competition and clash with the voice of a Talib or the Taliban in a discourse to instill the negative impression of the Taliban into the readers' minds, and thus shaping, transforming and changing their world views. sheep" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 202). The Taliban's extremist ideology and actions are discursively resisted by the discourse-producer mostly in the guise of other characters' 'voices.' For instance, Wahid suggests Amir to write about Afghanistan, and "Tell the rest of the world what the Taliban are doing to our country" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 218). Moreover, it is through Zaman's voice that the discourse-producer discursively represents the Taliban, especially Assef as power-abusers who sexually abuse and harass children of the orphanage. The discourse-producer has manipulated

several discursive devices and strategies, like similes and metaphors, to represent the Taliban as hounds and bears whose prey are the Afghans, especially the Afghan offenders.

The discourse-producer discursively challenges the Taliban's extremist ideologies and savage actions by negatively representing the Taliban through his language as a powerful tool, medium, weapon and shield. To fulfill his aim and agenda, such words are put into Assef's mouth which indicates his genocidal and exclusionary views and actions. For instance, Assef as a Talib official, voices: "We left them [the Hazaras] in the streets for days. We left them for the dogs. Dog meat for dogs" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 255). Moreover, the discourse-producer, through Omar Faisal's voice, calls the Taliban as a force of disaster (Hosseini, 2003, p. 309). The discourse-producer has attempted to represent the Taliban negatively, and for doing so he has manipulated not only the narrator's voice, but also other characters' 'voices' (including their ideologies and points of view). The analysis also manifests the fact that the discourse-producer has isolated good Pashtuns, like Zaman, from bad Pashtuns, like the Taliban. As mentioned earlier, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* has been narrated from female perspective in which not only the discourse-producer himself, through his direct or indirect comments, but also through the oppressed female characters' 'voices,' have challenged both the tribal patriarchy in the form of Rasheed and the religious patriarchy in the form of the Taliban.

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