Journal of Literature and Linguistics Studies
ISSN: 3078-4832
DOI: https://doi.org/10.61424/jlls.v4i4.1126
Date Published Online: November 13, 2026
Journal Homepage: https://bluemarkpublishers.com/index.php/JLLS

JLLS
BLUEMARK PUBLISHERS

| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Ethnic Superiority, Marginalization and Pseudo-Islamism in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*

Sima Roy
Lecturer, Northern University of Business and Technology Khulna, Bangladesh
Corresponding Author: Sima Roy, **E-mail**: simaroy614@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

This paper will enquire into the portraiture of Islam in Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003). Islam, a religion that always leads people toward the path of fraternity and peace. Islam is misused and persecuted by the pseudo-religious Taliban, who have used religion as a tool. Their religion is confined to a fundamentalist view. The Taliban use religion as an excuse for violence and wreckage. For them, Islam is just a pretext for their pathological cruelty. In Afghanistan, there are two major ethnic groups divided by Shia and Sunni believers. And the conflict between Hazara and Pashtun in the name of Islam is evident throughout Doud khan's coup, the invasion of the Soviet Union, the governance of the Taliban, and the continuous civil war in Afghanistan. This paper aims to explore that religious impingement and the background of that fray. It will mostly focus on the persecution of Hazaras in the name of Shariah law, where the Shia community is inferiorized by the Sunnis' view of "ethnic cleansing" (Hosseini, p.249). Thereafter, Amir, the protagonist of the novel, fled to America, where people are afraid of Islam after 9/11, and their grasp of Islam is terrorism, and there is the spread of Islamophobia. Again, this paper will also talk about Hosseini's secularist concern, as it is imprinted in the novel that, in the name of Islam and Allah, the Islamists just fight against each other to perceive their gain, and his investigation towards a godly society where mullahs are the commanders and they just provide society with their superstitions and irrational notions that are devoid of humanity. And in this way, there remains the segregation between Shia and Sunni, Hazara and Pashtun, and the true Islamic aura is just being diminished by their fascist and totalitarian Islamism.

| KEYWORDS

Hazara, Pashtun, Islamophobia, Ethnicity, Islamic fundamentalism

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: October 11, 2026 **PUBLISHED:** November 13, 2026 **DOI:** https://doi.org/10.61424/jlls.v4i4.1126

1. Introduction

The story is set in the Afghan community in Fremont, California, from the 1980s to the early 2000s, and then in Afghanistan from the late 1970s to 1981, at the start of the Soviet occupation.

The Kite Runner (2003) is the tale of strained family ties between a father and son and between two brothers. It explores how they navigate guilt and forgiveness as well as how they deal with Afghanistan's political and social changes from the 1970s to 2001. In 2001, The Kite Runner was released. Amir, the adult narrator, is reflecting on his past while living in San Francisco and pondering a childhood buddy he has wronged.

Copyright: © 2026 The Author(s). This open access article is distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC- BY-NC-SA) License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/), published by Bluemark Publishers.

The book depicts the political and economic costs of Afghanistan's instability under various regimes, from the fall of the monarchy through the Soviet-backed government of the 1980s to the fundamentalist Taliban administration of the 1990s. This is done against the backdrop of Afghanistan's modern history. The action ends shortly after the Taliban are overthrown and refers to Hamid Karzai being the head of a new Afghan government following September 11.

2. Description

The political and economic upheaval of Afghanistan is the sequel to its religious intolerance. Islam, a religion, teaches tolerance, not hatred; universal brotherhood, not enmity; and peace, not violence. Islam is misspent and represented by the Taliban. For them, religion is an ideological apparatus to control people; according to the Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca, for the common people religion is always true. And for wise people, it is false; on the contrary, religion is ever useful for the rulers.

And those representative rulers of Islam are personified by characters like Assef, and their Islam is made for a mission. As he utters-

"Afghanistan for Pashtuns, I say. That's my vision ……..
Too late for Hitler,....But not for us..... I'll ask the president
To do what the king didn't want to do. To rid Afghanistan of all the dirty, kasseef Hazaras" (Hosseini, Chap. 5, p. 35-36).

And that mission is questioned by Amir. As he speaks-

"What mission is that? Stoning adulterers? Raping children?
Flogging women for wearing high heels? Massacring Hazaras? All in the name of Islam"
(Hosseini, Chap.22 p.248)?

Here, Islam, the religion of peace, is just being unsheltered and misrepresented.

In the book *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan* (2003), Jeffery J. Roberts shows that the Shias in Afghanistan are mostly made up of Hazaras who count for 9% of the population of Afghanistan. They are mistreated through several periods and have physical features that help distinguish them from Sunnis and other ethnic groups inside Afghanistan. They are enslaved, tortured, and persecuted throughout history.

Moreover, living in America, Amir has to face the outcome of an Islamophobic situation, and this Islamophobia is genuinely a conspiracy against Islam, as Calum Kerr has shown in the article named "The Great Game to 9/11: The Historical Context of *The Kite Runner*"(Kerr, p.33-48).

In an interview, Hosseini expressed his view that it is not something that he has consciously written all the things. He wanted to bridge gaps, bring understanding to people, and portray the truth about Islam.

In the book *The Hazaras of Afghanistan: A Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study* (2009), Sayed Askar Mousavi has depicted that, in the history of Afghan ethnicity, Hazaras are described as an underclass ethnic people, and religious issues have played an important role here. And as it is seen that Islam has a part to play in each part of the novel, as Amir speaks about mullah-

the mullah "make us memorize verses from the Koran though he never translated the words for us and we had to pronounce the Arabic words correctly so that God would hear us better"

(Hosseini, Chap.3 p.14).

And for that mullah-type teacher, the Hazaras are like a kind of disease, and that is their Islamism, which has only brought death and destruction.

The renowned critic Hayes S. Judy remarks that Hosseini's view is, in many ways, secular. But in terms of Islam, he wanted to portray the true Islamic aura where there is no type of oppressive propaganda, where there is no Islamic communitarianism

In Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*(2003), the true Islamic values are carried out by Hassan, whereas he and his Shia community are inferiorized by Sunni's view of "ethnic cleansing"(Hosseini, Chap. 22, p. 249), and Quranic principles are just radicalized.

In the article "Historicity in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*", Ramesh Prasad Adhikary picturizes the oppressive history of Shia Hazaras and other minor ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Throughout history, Shia Muslims are the victims, as Amir states-

"History is not easy to overcome. Neither is religion. In the end, I was a Pashtun, and he (Hassan) was a Hazara, I was a Sunni, and he was a Shia, and nothing was never going to change. Nothing" (Hosseini, Chap. 4, p. 22).

In the paper named "Afghanistan's Ethnic Divides", Abubakar Siddique has shown that the real problem is not religion, but rather in power-practice policy, and it covers a wide international affair.

The Taliban exercises Islam as an excuse for ferocity. As Assef utters-

"Afghanistan is the land of Pashtuns. It always has been, always will be. We are the true Afghans, not this Flat-Nose. His people pollute our homeland, our watan. They dirty our Blood"(Hosseini, Chap.5 p.35).

Thereafter, Amir's father's view toward Islam is quite progressive. As he has talked about the religious fundamentalists who teach and preach Islam in Afghanistan-

"You'll never learn anything of value from those Bearded idiots. Piss on the beards of those self-righteous monkeys.
God help us all if Afghanistan Ever falls into their hands"(Hosseini, Chap.3 p.15)

3. Conclusion

In all respects of the novel, it is depicted how Islam has become a political weapon in the power struggle. And in that process, the novel has made a distinction between extremists and liberals. And their disparity has created a noteworthy perception that Islam has always been a way to eternal quietude. Nevertheless, it is conducted relentlessly. Hence, Islam itself needs devout cooperation, and Islam does not need those Taliban who are always in the state of Salafiya and want their Salaf back by persecuting people.

Funding: This research received no external funding.
Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Disclosure: The authors declare that no artificial intelligence tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript.

References

[1] Adhikary, R. P. (2020) Historicity in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner. *Critical Literary Studies*, Vol 2, Spring and Summer 2020.

[2] Hosseini, K. (2020). *The Kite Runner*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003. 3. Kerr, Calum.'The Great Game to 9/11". *Critical Insights: The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini*. Tredell, N. Ipswich, Mass: Salem Press, p. 33-48, 2020.

[3] Mousavi, S. A. (2009). *The Hazaras of Afghanistan: A Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[4] Roberts, J. (2003). J...*The Origin Of Conflict in Afghanistan*.California: Praeger.

[5] Siddique A (2012). "Afghanistan's Ethnic Divides", 2012, CIDOB