

Power Abuse In The Kite Runner: The Foucauldian Perspective

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Abstract

This research aims to explore power abuse by the prominent characters in Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, through Foucauldian perspective of "Disciplinary Power". The novel is based in Kabul and the story reveals utilization of power position by controlling others. For instance, Assef uses his power to oppress and abuse Hassan and his son, Sohrab, who belong to a different ethnic group Hazara. His hatred towards Hazaras is reflected through his offensive dialogues in the story. Amir, the protagonist of the novel is represented as the oppressed as well as the oppressor. Baba's role in the novel is of a strong patriarch whose illegitimate relationship with Hassan's mother remains concealed until his death. He manages to maintain his reputation in the society throughout his life and deprives his sons from the truth to know about their birth and brotherhood.

Keywords: Disciplinary Power, Hazara, Illegitimate Relationship, Power Abuse

Introduction

The Kite Runner (2005), set in Kabul and US, is a narrative of two childhood friends, Amir and Hassan. Amir comes from the elite class of Pashtuns and lives in a grand mansion with his father Baba. He enjoys all facilities of life which are evident from his education status and life style. On the other hand, Hassan is a less privileged kid who has no opportunities of education and who spends most of his time in doing household chores. Besides, he belongs to Hazara minority who are often considered subordinate as compared to other ethnic groups of Pashtun society. Although they used to play together but Hassan is always looked down upon by Amir because of his illiteracy. In front of Assef, who is the novel's antagonist, Amir denies calling Hassan as his friend. Baba is an authoritative personality who misuses his power.

He is biased towards Hassan and also is unable to be a fatherly figure which Amir yearns for, all his childhood.

The term abuse has been defined by many critics and scholar, and they generally agree upon the notion that abuse is an improper treatment or employment, improper use or application, to do wrong to, injure, dishonour, violate, deceive, maltreating, defilement, impose on take undue advantage of abuse. Abuse is also defined as improper treatment or employment, improper use or application, to do wrong to, injure, dishonour, violate, deceive, maltreating, defilement, impose on take undue advantage of abuse.

The term "power" is derived from the Spanish word "poder" and the French word "pouvoir," both of which mean "to be able," and this meaning is similar to that of the English word

"power," which indicates "greater potential or capacity." Power, according to sociologists, is the ability to force one's desires on others notwithstanding the fact that the other resists in some way (Power: Social and Political). Generally, power is defined as the ability to influence others. Within a social (connection), there is an opportunity that allows one to carry out one's activities even in the face of opposition and regardless of the foundation on which it is based. This chance is still available. According to Shakespeare, Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts even more. In this situation, those in positions of authority will exert control over others in order to survive and become more powerful. As a result, the powerful always take advantage of the weak.

Hence power is the ability, opportunity, and capacity to influence someone in a situation where other people rely on him or her. It indicates that those in positions of power have the capacity, opportunity, and influence to compel others, particularly those who rely on them for their livelihood. Powerful figures will have absolute influence in this situation.

Power abuse and disciplinary power are discussed by Paul Michel Foucault in his 1975 book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*. This book examines the theoretical and sociological mechanisms that have resulted in changes in Western prison systems in the modern era. Power is described as negative, disciplinary, and repressive in Foucault's concept of disciplinary power (1979). The target of disciplinary power is individuals and their bodies. Discipline, as practised in jails, was expanded to other social institutions such as factories, schools, hospitals, asylums, and military barracks, according to Foucault (Teimoori, 2018).

Various scholars employ Foucauldian approach of disciplinary power to study state and its different aspects. For instance, Teimoori (2018) explores the study of democracy and authoritarianism through Foucauldian viewpoint of disciplinary power. Similarly, Lilja and Vinthagen (2014) in their work, analyze Foucault's Disciplinary power and resistance in it. Having said that the main objectives of this

research are: to explore Foucauldian 'Disciplinary power' as represented in Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, and to investigate the practice and effects of power misuse in the novel through the major characters. Therefore, this study probes into the questions like: How the characters portray the manipulation of power in Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*? and what are the consequences of power misuse in and on the characters of the novel?

Literature Review

This study explores the practice of power abuse and its impacts on the characters in *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini (2005). The misuse of power by the characters like Assef and Baba is analysed keeping in view Foucault's theory of Disciplinary Power. Power abuse is used as a subject in numerous literary works. Many researchers have analyzed "Power Abuse" in different literary texts by using various approaches.

Khaled Hosseini through his novel, *The Kite Runner*, portrays the socio-political upheaval and ethnic dissimilarity in Afghanistan. Many critics and scholars have written about the novel and its various aspects like racism and ethnicity, religion, war, political events and Amir's search for redemption. For example, Dwivedi and Sharma (2018) argue that *The Kite Runner* reveals tyranny, disturbance and violence by Russian Military and Taliban in Afghanistan. Various external forces also attempted to establish their government and rule over the country, throughout the history, but they failed to invade the country. Therefore, this land has been known as "land of the warlords" (Dwivedi and Sharma, 2018, p. 11) and "the graveyard of empires". (Dwivedi and Sharma, 2018, p. 12) Many empires remained unsuccessful to establish their political regime. The reason behind this is the true spirit of Afghanistan which lies in the hearts of the people who belong to this land. They point out that Hosseini also portrays the situation in Afghanistan in his narrative, before the chaos of 1970s. It was between 1950s and 1960s when the country progressed as a liberal and advanced society. The construction of factories and hydropower stations were in progress. Women were educated from different educational

institutes of science and arts. They were free to get dressed up the way they desired. People attended social gatherings and enjoyed their life. But after the great catastrophe of 1970s, the dream of peace and liberty in Afghanistan became unattainable. The era before the Soviet attack was the brilliant era for the public of Afghanistan. (Dwivedi and Sharma 2018)

In the similar line of the argument, Ivanchikova (2020) analyzes and criticizes Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* from historical point of view. Ivanchikova (2020) explores Soviet military invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 through the novel's descriptions of these events by Hosseini. Ivanchikova claims that the novel attempts to justify US interventionism and neo-colonial objectives by avoiding them entirely. Ivanchikova also objects to Hosseini's portrayal of Afghanistan like a third-world country with no political heritage and history of its own. Afghanistan is regarded as an "instrument or a victim, with no agency" (Ivanchikova, 2020, p. 205). Likewise, Boucai (2013) claims that the novel accuses the Soviet Union for the destruction of Kabul and fails to mention how the United States backed Muslim fundamentalist militants to oppose the Soviet military. As a result of these circumstances, 9/11 occurred, and many innocent lives were lost (Boucai, 2013, p. 65).

On the other hand, Malik and Murtaza (2013) explore the levels of power relationship in Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and discuss the novel from a linguistics perspective. They have used Huckin's analytical tool of Critical Discourse Analysis to interpret the text on sentence level, as a whole and on word level. They think that Hosseini has made a subtle use of linguistic devices in his novel for the purpose to meet his objectives. The language used in the text is manipulated to support the West's mission in Afghanistan. They view Baba's love as a manifestation of power for which the protagonist, Amir, yearns and slanders Hassan in order to get Baba's attention. Hassan's rape by Assef represents his domination over Hassan which is another level of power relationship (Malik and Murtaza, 2013, p. 75).

As far as the idea of power is concerned, Power is described as negative,

disciplinary, and repressive in Foucault's concept of disciplinary power (1979). However, Foucault's broader examination of the term reveals that power may be both repressive and creative which means making things happen, building notions of pleasure and pain, and achieving results. Individuals' upbringing and training by masters, whose survival has become reliant on systems of discipline, is an element of what Foucault refers to as '[t]he organisation of geneses' (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014, p. 109).

In addition to work on power mistreatment, Isniati has used Marxist approach to explore Charles Dickens' novel *David Copperfield* in terms of power abuse. According to Isniati (2006), abuse is a practice to make other people suffer physically and mentally. Power abuses the weak in all facets of their lives, including the economic, social, and physical. This is caused by the weak people's reliance. As a result, those in positions of power have the ability to impose their will on others who are weak. It suggests that in order to abuse someone, they must have power. The ability to influence others who are reliant on you is known as power. It means that power is the ability to influence the conduct of others, with the target group being those who rely on them, and power can be exercised in different ways and in different institution.

Similarly, Bong-Toh (1990) demonstrates power issues in Bessie Heads' three novels, *Maru* (1971), *A Question of Power* (1974) and *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1969). His study covers the area of gender, politics and race. He is of the view that power is a relational notion. The level of authority possessed by the state, a group, or an individual is directly proportional to the degree of power possessed by the state, a group, or an individual. Each has the ability to exert control over those who are weaker in comparison to it. Inequality in social connections arises when a party with access to power takes advantage of its dominant position and utilizes it to exercise control over those who do not have the same advantages. As a result, interactions between figures of authority and those who lack power position are frequently marked by dominance and subordination (Bong-Toh, 1990, p. 37).

However, Niazi (2020) claims that Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* illustrates conflict between the hegemonic and subaltern classes of the society. Niazi (2020) analyze children's experiences in an environment where power is wielded and misused, and strong social hierarchies may exist. She argues that a person, who experiences subalternity within his own social circle, holds more grudges and is more biased towards other sects than the individual who is supported by his own social group which accepts and promotes ethnic rivalry. Hosseini's masculine character, on the other hand, appears to be burdened by societal rejection throughout the work. Amir has an uncritical conduct, as can be seen. He holds firm convictions about a group's superiority over another. He is influenced by Assef's beliefs. As Hassan is despised by Assef, so Amir denies any support for Hassan since doing so would threaten his Pukhtun identity. For the sake of the other, he must not quarrel with his own group (105). That's why he also contributes to the malice of Assef and tries to get rid of Hassan in order to meet his egoistic desires.

Similarly, Ehsan and Khalil (2016) discuss child abuse in Pak-Afghan culture according to the views of Finkelhor's Precondition Child Sexual Abuse model (1984) with particular reference to Hosseini's *Kite Runner* (2013) and Mansoor's Pakistani movie *Bol* (2011). They assert that Motivation to sexual assault, dominating the child and overcoming the internal and external restraints prompt the perpetrator to commit the act of sexual violence (34). Dominance of the offender, emasculation, submission and humiliation of the opponent can result into sexual exploitation (37). There are many culprits roaming around in Pakistan and Afghanistan like Assef in the *Kite Runner* who abducted Hassan and Sohrab, and the truck driver who abducted Saifi in Pakistani movie *Bol*. Power and barbarity of the assaulter determine the weakness and helplessness of the victim (Ehsan and Zohaib, 2016, p. 39).

Despite being an author of a remarkable novel, Hosseini has been criticized by the critics for being inauthentic and for not acquiring the complete and accurate information of various historical events of his native land. For instance,

Janette Edwards (2009) indicates that, as an expatriate who has spent much time outside of Afghanistan, Hosseini is perceived as an insincere voice of the Afghan people. Hosseini relies on the second hand information because he never actually lived in the country of his origin. He writes about the norms and practices of a society to which he has been a stranger for years. His work has also been criticized of portraying Afghan elites. They have a completely different perspective on life and the world than the great majority of Afghans. The idealization of homeland by Diaspora people demonstrates how the concept of a homeland is shaped in this scenario (Edwards, 2009, p/ 03).

All the critics and researchers discussed above have analyzed various aspects of Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* from different perspectives. Many studies that examine Hosseini's fiction focus on the protagonist, Amir, and the development his character throughout the plot. While some of these studies discussed above, highlight the violence and destruction brought to Afghanistan through Russian colonization and Taliban's governance. Assef's offence and unfair treatment towards Hassan and Sohrab is discussed by the researchers. Others have pointed out ethnic rivalry and racial discrimination between Pukhtuns and Hazaras in the novel. However, the current research analyzes the character of Baba from the perspective of Foucauldian theory of disciplinary power, introduced in his book *Discipline and Punish* (1979). Baba's relation with both of his sons; Amir and Hassan, is based on power. Several researchers see Baba's character as positive and unbiased towards Hassan but this study argues that it is actually his indifference towards and denial of Hassan as his begotten son which leads to the great catastrophe in Hassan's life. Baba's indifference and carelessness allow others to prey on Hassan. He is also responsible for Amir's insecurities which he had to face in his childhood. Similarly, Baba's pride and deceit have a negative impact on Hassan's life as well as Hassan's son Sohrab's. Baba abuses Sanauber with his authority and then manages to preserve his social standing, causing the three characters, Sanauber, Hassan, and Sohrab, to suffer horribly throughout their lives.

Theoretical Framework

This research explores Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* through Michel Foucault's *Disciplinary Power* 1979. He examines the theoretical and sociological mechanisms in the modern era. Comparing the concept of disciplinary power to that of governance is one approach to grasp its originality. Both discipline and governance seek to get people to perform certain things without forcing them to think critically about what they're doing. While the purpose of governance is to lead individuals' already existing capacities in one direction or another, the goal of discipline is to build certain capacities in individuals. To put it another way, in governance, individuals' previously existent capacities are directed, while disciplines, capacities, and dispositions are developed (Ransom, 1997, p. 39). Thus, individuals were able to develop new capacities as a result of being subjected to disciplinary strategies of power.

According to Foucault (1979), Discipline creates bodies that are both subjugated and practised called, 'docile' bodies. Individual bodies were made the target of disciplinary power practises. This authority approached the body as an object to be controlled and managed, rather than as a biological being. Disciplinary authority viewed bodies as texts on which it could engrave new ways of doing things. The purpose of this power was to create a submissive body. According to Foucault, a docile body is a receptive body that accepts the forces at work on it. "Something that can be built; out of a formless clay, an inapt body [from which] the machine required can be constructed," (Foucault, 1979, p. 221).

As we bend to discipline, disciplinary techniques subjugate and submit the modern subject to an order: 'Discipline 'makes' people; it is a specialised strategy of power that views people as both objects and instruments of its execution' (Foucault, 1979, p. 170). The concept is that deviating from the norm is penalised, and that being equal means being the same. Thus, it is inferior to be distinct (Foucault, 1979, p. 177–184). Furthermore, what Foucault refers to as "[t]he organisation of geneses" (Foucault, 1979, p. 156–169) is the rearing and training by masters of persons whose life has become

dependent on institutions of discipline. The goal of what Foucault refers to as "disciplinary power" is to make the most effective use of the body's abilities. As the body grows more useful, it must also become more submissive. The goal is to not just make use of the bodies' abilities, but also to keep them from being used to rebel against the power. Individuals are the object, target, and tool of disciplinary power. Individuality, according to Foucault, is a construct generated by disciplinary power. The procedures of the disciplinary power establish "rational self-control," which means that the disciplinary power is internalised and hence does not require constant external force (Foucault, 1979, p. 202-203)

Text Analysis

This section is based on the analysis of the selected fiction according to the theoretical approach of Michel Foucault's *Disciplinary Power*. It presents how power abuse in Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2005) affects and controls the lives of the major characters in the novel.

Power Relationship between Baba and Amir

In Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2005), the relationship between the father (Baba) and the son (Amir), which is founded on fear and respect for the father, is a clear example of a power relationship. Despite the fact that Amir is the primary character in the narrative, Baba receives majority of the attention. Amir fears and loves Baba, which is a common occurrence in patriarchal families. Amir describes his fear when he narrates: "What is it, Amir? Baba said... His glare made my throat feel dry. I cleared it and told him I'd written a story" (Hosseini, 2005, 27). Amir hates his father for not acknowledging him and not giving him the approval for which he yearned his whole childhood. Amir expresses his ambivalent feelings about his father and says that sometimes he "worshipped" (p.27) his father with "an intensity approaching the religious" (p. 27). But later on, he would wish to tear up his veins and draw off the "cursed blood" (p. 27) of his father from his body. Amir says, unfolding how he fears his father while also feeling love and hatred for him at the same time. Amir compares Baba with Rahim Khan, who is Baba's best friend and business partner and wishes if

Rahim Khan had been his father. Then he thinks of his Baba's "great big chest" (p. 28) and the pleasure he feels when his father holds him against it. Amir has not inherited his Baba's talents of sports and athletics but to please Baba and to seek his attention, Amir fakes interest in athletics and soccer. For Amir, the only way to get Baba's support and appreciation is to win the kite contest of the year in Kabul. Hence, Patricia Said states that the fear of disappointing the family's superiority is at the root of this power dynamic between the father and his son. Amir is continuously striving to make his father proud of him because if he fails and goes against his father's wishes, he loses his right to speak and becomes an insignificant person (p. 22). In order to win over his Baba's heart, Amir is ready to sacrifice everything, even his faithful friend, Hassan.

Hassan, according to Amir, has become a barrier between Baba and Amir. Amir gets envious when Baba calls Hassan as "Hassan Jan" and provides Hassan the same toys as he buys for Amir. Amir becomes surprised after he gets to know that Baba is going to treat Hassan's cleft lip as his birthday present. Amir reflects his jealousy towards Hassan when he says that he wishes to have "some kind of scar too that would beget Baba's sympathy" (p. 40). He thinks that Hassan is not worthy to earn "Baba's affection"; he is just born with that "stupid harelip" (p. 40). Because Amir is so narrow-minded, he must be Baba's primary focus. In order to get rid of Hassan, Amir suggests Baba to get "new servants" which makes Baba angry. He rebukes Amir and says that "Hassan is not going anywhere" (p. 78), and that he will live with them because they are "his family" (p. 79). Baba's reaction makes Amir more envious towards Hassan. Amir thinks that once he becomes able to make Baba proud of him, he would not need to live as a "ghost" (p. 49) in his house. Amir lives in Baba's house under Baba's supervision which signifies a prison for Amir where his father can control his movements and activities. According to Foucault, prison became the most common form of punishment because it provided the ideal conditions for exercising disciplinary power, a new type of authority directed at the body and its forces (Foucault, 1979, p. 138). In this regard, Amir says in the

novel: "Baba and I lived in the same house, but in different spheres of existence. Kites were the one paper-thin slice of intersection between those spheres" (p. 43). "Paper-thin" implies that the bond is not very strong between Amir and Baba, that it may tear, and that it is possibly ephemeral. Therefore, Amir thinks that if he wins the Kite Tournament in the town, Baba will be pleased. But Baba does not have a lot of faith in Amir to think that Amir will be able to defeat the opponents. Baba says that he thinks possibly Amir will "win the tournament this year" (p. 49). This image suggests that Amir believes that winning the competition will convince Baba to change his mind and open his heart to him. He appears to be completely disagreeable, and his heart is the lock. Amir's remark about the "blue kite" (p. 62), about which he says: "my key to Baba's heart" (p. 62), shows his extreme desire to win the tournament not for the tournament's sake, but to win his Baba's approval. The "key" here represents how Baba's heart has been bolted towards Amir, and the only way to open it is to win the Kite competition. When Amir says "Seeing Baba on that roof, proud of me at last" (p. 58), he thinks that Baba is finally satisfied with him. The phrase also suggests that how long Amir has been waiting for this moment.

Moreover, the relationship between Amir and Baba keeps changing like the weather changes, as he depicts that when "the trees froze and ice sheathed the roads, the chill between Baba and me thawed a little" (p. 43). Baba has little emotional attachment to his son. He doesn't make much of an effort to build a bond with Amir during his childhood. The gap between Amir and Baba prohibits Baba from being the fatherly figure which Amir so desperately needs. Baba appears to be a kind man with a good heart; however, he is unable to accept his son's interests and, as a result, neglects him due to the lack of connection with his son. Amir claims that his father has "molded the world around him to his liking" (p. 14) and that he sees the world in "black and white" (p. 14). This suggests the authoritative and reluctant nature of Baba. Baba is perplexed as to why Amir is not exactly like him. He talks to Rahim Khan about his bewilderment with Amir and says that there is "something missing in that boy" (p. 20). Baba is disappointed as he does not understand why his

son's preferences are not the same as his own. Thus, he is "frustrated" and "almost angry" (p. 19) with Amir. He encapsulates one of Amir's biggest character flaws that is his cowardice, and demonstrates how important it is to him to stand up for what is right. Baba is unwilling to compliment Amir, partly because he believes Amir lacks the confidence to speak out for himself. Consequently, leaves Amir yearning for Baba's acceptance.

Baba is insensitive to Amir's sentiments, therefore he is unaware of how much Amir needs and seeks his acceptance. Baba wants Amir to be just like him, but when things do not go as planned, he rejects and neglects him, making him into the complete opposite of what Baba desires. Baba wishes to raise a fearless kid, but because he is not an empathic father, Amir develops into a coward and a jealous child. While raising Amir, Baba, like Oedipus Rex, develops a self-fulfilling prophecy. Oedipus attempted to avoid his fate but his actions inevitably led to the fulfillment of the doom he was striving to avoid. In the similar manner, Baba does not want Amir to be a coward, but he neglects and ignores him, forcing Amir to become an envious and coward boy which Baba was trying to prevent. He ignores Amir's interest in writing and does not fully reciprocate the affection and rarely expresses pride in his son. As a result, it instills in Amir a sense of envy and cowardice, which prevents him from rescuing Hassan from being raped.

Niazi (2020) states that Amir's low self-esteem projects mostly from his inability to live up to his father's ideals. He says that he was a son who preferred burying his face in poetry books rather than to go for hunting which is exactly the opposite how Baba had "envisioned" his son (Hosseini, 2005, p. 105). Baba thinks that "real men" (p. 17) play "soccer" (p. 17) just like him. Baba waits for Amir to appreciate what he enjoys because he believes he won't be able to have a relationship with his son unless they share a similar interest, despite the fact that Baba himself never tries to meet Amir halfway or even put forth much effort to build a true relationship with him. As Foucault describes Disciplinary power, that is a kind of power which focuses on the body and its capabilities (Foucault, 1979, p. 138). Hence Amir's body can

be seen as a target to Baba's power and he exercises his power to change Amir's perspective about the world.

Hence, Baba is depicted as authority, not only of his surroundings, but also responsible of seeing his son grow into a man through discipline, so he takes control of his son's life. As very aptly said by Teimoori (2018), the disciplinary power makes individuals able to develop new capacities as a result of being subjected to disciplinary strategies of power (p. 91). Baba's dissatisfaction is the evidence, that's why he attempts to transform Amir into the person he wants. Discipline power sees bodies as texts that can be altered to reflect new ways of operating. This power's goal is to make a body that is obedient. As per Foucault's theory, a docile body is one that is receptive to the forces at work on it. It is "something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body [from which] the machine required can be constructed" (Foucault, 1979, p. 221). Amir's father, in his opinion, wanted Amir to grow up to be fearless and good at soccer, hence subjugating him to follow his commands. Therefore, Baba can be seen as dominating with both terror and admiration over his son Amir's social and psychological existence by disciplining him. Amir expresses Baba's detachment when he says, "Baba hated me a little" (Hosseini, 2005, p. 17) because Amir "hadn't turned out like him" (Hosseini, 2005, p. 17). Amir's development as a strong willed character is threatened by his rejection from his hierarchical social group. Because he feels like an outcast, Amir relies on upholding duality. Alienation and solitude have a significant impact on a person's personality and morality. Amir aspires to be more like the way his father wants him to be rather than himself (Niazi, 2020, p. 101). From Foucauldian perspective of Disciplinary Power, Amir and Baba represent how a father's relationship with his son should be, by subjecting Amir to his authority. Hence it highlights how they sustain superior and inferior institutions.

In addition, Baba has a negative influence on Amir. According to Juan Du, Amir's motivation for the childhood betrayal stems from his concerns over his father's relationship. Baba is a harsh and cold father. He does not actually care about Amir's feelings and

is irritated by Amir's behavior. He tries to infuse in Amir the value of honesty and tells him, "There is no act more wretched than stealing, Amir" (Hosseini, 2005, p. 16). Baba considers theft to be the most severe sin in the universe, despite the fact that he is a thief himself. And a thief of the worst kind, for instance, he stole Amir's and Hassan's right to know the truth about their identity_ their brotherhood. Similarly, he had a secret affair with Ali's wife. Thus, he robbed Ali's honor. At this point Amir's father can be considered as a toxic parent (p. 92). When Amir faces his father's reluctance and apathy, he struggles to trust him. When he wishes to sit with his father, he is not allowed by his father to enter the room and he is told that "This is grown-ups' time" (p. 04). Then he closes the door and leaves Amir alone. Then Amir sits for an hour or two outside the door, listening to their conversation and laughs. Amir's doubts about his own identity are fostered by his father's disinterest which makes him worried that his father would be taken away, and he believes that his father loves Hassan more than him. As a result, when his father wants to take Hassan along with Amir to the lake to play, Amir either tells him that Hassan has stuff to do or that he is a "mareez" (p. 71). Amir's insecurity is exposed when he wishes "it should have been just the two of us" (p. 72), which means only Amir and Baba. And there should be no third person to interfere, as Amir says, "I wanted Baba all to myself" (p. 12). His yearning for his father's love is reflected in everything he does. He wants to talk to his father more, but he has the impression that his father despised him. Amir expresses his father's detachment when he says that he thinks he has cancer "saratan" (p. 13).

Throughout the narrative, the relationship between Baba and Amir evolves. It began with an understanding of the son's desperate attempts to win his father's affection. However, once they arrive in America and the son grows up, he gradually realizes that his father's relationship with him is more of a power-relationship than a love-relationship.

Power Relationship between Amir and Hassan

The Kite Runner begins with the story of Amir and Hassan, two young boys who form a bond.

At first glance, it appears to be much like any other childhood friendship in which friends work together to win games. Between the narrations of these games, the disparity in power between the two companions can be seen. Because Amir is the son of a wealthy Pukhtun businessman and Hassan is the son of their servant, Amir is in a better position than Hassan. Even if their economic differences are ignored, Amir's ethnic identity places him in a stronger position and Hassan in a worse position. According to Chaudhary (2020) Amir and Hassan are never taught to be concerned about their friendship's differences. Amir's father, Baba, treated Hassan as if he were his own son. Hassan's father was always treated by Baba as if he were his own brother (Chaudhary, 2020, p. 03). However, the text suggests that Baba never referred to Ali as "his friend" (Hosseini, 2005, p. 22). Similarly, Amir never thought of him and Hassan as "friends either" (p. 22). But, when Amir observes Baba's growing passion for Hassan, he yearns for the same. As a 12-year-old boy who is frequently misunderstood by his own father, Amir finds it difficult to grasp the wider picture and long-term consequences of ethnic discrimination. Amir has always taken advantage of the strengths he has had as a result of his superior position in the society because he is the son of a wealthy businessman who lives in luxurious mansions. Amir has the privilege to attend school and develop his own potential through poetry and writing. Amir's upbringing ensures a safe and affluent existence for an Afghan youngster who is fortunate enough to be born a Pukhtun and into a prestigious family. Hassan, on the other hand, is a member of the Hazara community who is born into a servant's family and lives with his father in a "modest little mud hut" (Hosseini, 2005, p. 05). Hazaras have historically been the lowest strata in Afghan society, with a lengthy history of oppression and killings. Hassan, like his father before him, came from a servant's family.

With the recounting of their childhood activities, it appears that Amir exploited Hassan's devotion to him. Individuals' upbringing and training by masters, whose existence has become reliant on systems of discipline, is part of what Foucault refers to as "[t]he organization of geneses" (Foucault, 1979,

p. 156–169). Therefore, Amir consistently misuses Hassan's loyalty to him to persuade him to engage in ethically ridiculous behavior, such as bothering the neighbors etc. Despite being childhood friends, this begins to establish Amir's awareness of the differences in their upbringing. Amir is well aware of his superior status, and Hassan has always been his servant's son whom he plays with whenever he wants. The class division establishes a barrier in Amir's mindset, allowing him to behave differently toward Hassan and his family. He begins to mock Hassan's lack of knowledge. Amir makes fun of Hassan's naive tendencies instead of teaching him what he studies in school. Amir regards Hassan in this manner for a variety of reasons, which Hosseini also mentions. As a child, Amir is more perceptive, and he notices his father's indifference and negligence toward him. Even at the age of twelve, he sensed his father's dissatisfaction. This provides the basis for his envy towards Hassan, who appears to be receiving "Baba's affection" (Hosseini, 2005, p. 40). Amir notices Baba's concern for Hassan and believes he lacks this level of honesty and caring. He also observes how the outside world regards Hassan and adopts a similar behavior. Because of Baba's love for Hassan, Amir understands that he cannot exploit Hassan in his home. This could also be because he knows he'll be punished by his father, who never taught him to treat others unfairly based on their economic or ethnic status. Baba expects Amir to display the same bravery, honesty, and morality that he maintained throughout his life. Though, Amir will never be able to reach his full potential. Hence, Hassan possesses the attributes of bravery and honesty that Baba admires.

Moreover, Amir's attitude toward Hassan is influenced by the prejudice he witnesses in Afghan society toward Hazara. His jealousy, prejudiced thinking, and cowardice prevent him to save Hassan from being harassed by Assef. Hassan, a devoted friend, chooses Amir over his freedom, but Amir is powerless to defend Hassan from the horror of sexual abuse, which was the outcome of the same prejudiced culture that corrupted Amir. Even if Amir tries to explain himself by claiming that Hassan is "just a Hazara" (p. 68), his mind will never be able to erase the sorrow and shame he felt when he let

Hassan suffer. In comparison to his friend's innocence, his success in the kite running tournament felt insignificant. On the other hand, Hassan's life is basic. He fulfills his tasks, and treats Amir as if he is his own brother, which he assumes that Amir also does. He gracefully accepts Baba's love and considers himself fortunate to have received it. He is always happy in his modest hut with his father. He is also aware that his Hazara status is lower than that of other ethnic groups, but he never let that stop him. He is unconcerned about being the son of a servant. When it comes to defend Amir, Hassan is also brave. He is willing to go to any extreme for Amir since he loves his friendship beyond all else. He can understand Amir in a manner that Amir could never realize. He runs the kite for Amir because he knows how essential it is for Amir to win the competition. Because of his bravery, he confronts Assef, who sees Hassan as less than a human because he is a Hazara (Kabeer et al, 2022, p. 04). As Foucault says, being equal means being the same and being distinctive is a sign of inferiority (Foucault, 1979, p. 177–184). Assef is a representative of those who takes advantage of their privileged hierarchical position to torture others. He could not intimidate Hassan at first due to his fearlessness and slingshot threat, but he soon finds a chance during the competition. Assef recognizes that Hassan values Amir's friendship above everything else, so he takes advantage of it.

As Amir's father does not show Amir much affection. So Amir is perplexed, and he is so innocent that he believes that he can change things by trying to please his father all the time. As a result, he later makes a major mistake. Amir is confused at the time. He has to decide whether or not to save Hassan from Assef. Amir could "stand up for Hassan the way he'd stood up" for Amir each time. But Amir eventually runs. Despite his conflicting mental state, he chooses not to help Hassan. He is completely aware of his decision as he says that he ran because he was a "coward" and was afraid of Assef. The following is the basic principle of disciplinary power: "get a firm grip on the bodies of human beings and their forces, bend them to your will, and the minds will follow" (Ransom, 1997, p. 33). Similarly, to make matter worse, in attempt to relieve himself of his humiliation and guilt, Amir

hides his money and watch in Hassan's home, claiming that Hassan has stolen them. Hassan admits it because he is helpless and he knows his subordinate position in front of Amir. After this, he leaves Baba's home with his father. Amir does nothing to allow them to stay at his house. Amir in his subconscious knows that he could abandon Hassan at any time, no matter how loyal he is to him (Ransom, 1997, p. 91).

Ironically, though Hassan is treated badly and cruelly at times, but both Hassan and Amir are raised together in the same house and are nourished by the same nurse. Despite the fact that Amir and Hassan grew up together and shared practically everything, Amir's discriminatory mentality is evident when he says: "the curious thing was, I never thought of Hassan and me as friends either" (Hosseini, 2005, p. 22). Although they have been raised together, Amir remembers that the two had taught each other how to ride a bicycle and they used to spend the whole winters "flying kites" (Hosseini, 2005, 22). However, it comes as a very late revelation in the novel that Hassan, also, is a member of upper class, the Pashtuns, as he is Baba's illegitimate child from Sanouber. Therefore, Ahmad (2012) claims that as ethnicity is linked to an individual's birth, Hassan being a Pashtun by birth shatters the novel's ethnic hierarchy. Hassan is a hypo-gene since he was born into the high class but raised in the lowest. One thing becomes clear: in the narrative, a person's social rank is determined by their upbringing. Though fiction cannot always be interpreted as a representation of reality, the novel shows the Afghan social and political stratification in this case (Ahmad, 2012, p. 42).

Consequently, the Hazaras, who are represented by hare-lipped Hassan and his disabled father Ali in the novel, are the most oppressed ethnic group, as previously indicated. Their enslavement in the narrative is similar to what they face in real life. As Hayes (2007) writes, "While not technically slaves, they were not treated much better, earning low pay as servants laboring as attendants, cooks, housekeepers, drivers, midwives, clothes washers, and yard workers in many middle-class to high-ranking households" (Hayes, 2007. p. 29). That's why in the novel, Ali is constantly

teased by the kids anytime he leaves his hut. Due to their "Mongoloid features" (Hosseini, 2005, p. 8), Hazaras were called "flat-nosed" (p. 8). Amir remembers when some children in the street were calling Hassan mice-eating and load-carrying donkeys (p. 8). Belonging to Hazara ancestry, Ali is portrayed as crippled and injured in the novel. Thus, he is unable to express himself since he is helpless in all aspects of his life, including social, physical and educational (Ahmad, 2012, p. 46).

In addition to atrocities, Assef's conduct towards Hassan further supports the harsh treatment of the Hazaras. As says Foucault that non-conformity to the norm is a crime, thus, being equal means being the same. Being different is a sign of inferiority (Foucault, 1979, 177–p. 184). Assef represents the enmity against the Hazaras and believes, as a follower of Hitler's ideology: "Afghanistan is a land of Pashtuns" (Hosseini, 2005, p. 35). He believes that Hazaras have polluted "our homeland, our watan" and that "They dirty our blood" (Hosseini, 2005, p. 35). Foucault views discipline as a tactic that have enslaved and subordinated the modern subject to an order: Individuals are "made" by discipline; it is a special style of power that considers others as both objects and instruments of its use (Foucault, 1979, 170). It can be observed that Amir also has an Assef inside him, as he accepts to play with Hassan only when no one else is available. He almost blurts out in his address to Assef, when he says about Hassan: "But he's not my friend! . . . He's my servant!" (Hosseini, 2005, p. 36). Assef's words reveal Amir's true personality as he scolds Hassan and tells him to think about the reason why Amir does not prefer to play with him when his other friends are around. To Hassan, Assef says: "Because to him you are nothing but an ugly pet...Don't ever fool yourself and think you're something more" (p. 64). In this case, Hassan can be viewed as an object and instrument on which Amir can exercise his power. Amir's inner goals are evident in many instances throughout the novel, despite the fact that he never says it directly to Hassan. However, Amir cannot bear sole responsibility because Hosseini portrays him as a puppet in the strong hands of the hierarchical Afghan system. One distinctive aspect of

Hosseini's characters is that they appear to be puppets in society's strong hands. Though Amir could have stood up to society for his friend's sake, he appears to be too weak as a character to carry out such a brave move. Furthermore, his dictator father Baba has raised him in such a way that he has never considered coming out of his shell because Baba's attitude transformed Amir into a docile body on which he has no control. Baba, for his part, treats Ali in the same way that Amir treats Hassan. The fact is, Hosseini's novel depicts a generational racial conflict in which slaves (Hazaras) are treated ruthlessly (Ahmad, 2012, p. 46).

Hassan's faithfulness throughout his life is the most crucial aspect of this master-slave relationship. His unwavering loyalty to his master Amir, even after he is brutally raped by the "sociopath" (Hosseini, 2005, p. 34) Assef, annoys rather than pricks Amir's guilty conscience until the novel's conclusion, when he saves Sohrab from Assef's clutches. Amir sees his ultimate act as atonement for his sin of failing to save Hassan from being raped years before. Hassan is raped when he refuses to give Assef the "blue kite" (Hosseini, 2005, p. 62) that he is chasing for Amir. In truth, the kite represents his everlasting dedication, for which he pays a high price. Though he flees Kabul, he returns with his wife and son at Rahim Khan's request and is slain by the Taliban because he refuses to let them enter Amir's house.

While in their childhood, Amir becomes astonished when his father says that he would give Hassan a harelip surgery as a birthday present. Amir grows envious because he considers that it is unworthy to give such a gift to a servant. In fact, such a mood persists for a long time and grows stronger as Amir grows older. Years of yearning for love have made him sensitive in his own way. Even a small act of devotion from his father makes him ecstatic or envious. He had the opportunity to save Hassan when Assef raped him, but he chose not to. Because he believes that reuniting with his father would require some sacrifice, so he chose to be selfish and apathetic. This betrayal is motivated not only by his fear from Assef, but also by his envy towards Hassan. While on the other hand, Hassan seems to be willing to go to any extreme to please Amir. According to Foucault,

individual is a construct generated by disciplinary power. The procedures of the disciplinary power establish "rational self-control," which means that the disciplinary power is internalized and hence does not require constant external force. Rather than oppressing interests or desires, disciplinary power puts bodies to reconstructed behavioral patterns in order to reconstruct their ideas, desires, and interests. Hence, In the light of afore mentioned view, Hassan can be considered incredibly persistent, making it hard for him to do anything to harm Amir, so instead of flinging a pomegranate back at him, he pounds it against his own temple (Ehsan & Khalil, 2016, p. 38). This demonstrates his trustworthiness to his master, Amir.

Power Relationship of Assef with Hassan and Sohrab

In Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, power is characterized as negative, disciplinary, and repressive (1979). The text of *The Kite Runner* is examined in this study to see how levels of power, supremacy, injustice, and prejudiced sources were established, maintained, and replicated in the novel. Hassan's rape in the novel is one of the best examples of oppression, repression, and marginalization. The text establishes a power struggle on multiple levels. The dominance of Hassan by Assef is the most visible level. Hassan's facial expression is compared to that of a lamb by the author when Amir says, "It was a look I had seen before, it was the look of the lamb" (Hosseini, 2005, p. 66). Through Amir's memory, the identical symbol of lamb is later explained as a ceremonial sacrifice committed on "Eid Al-Adha" (p. 67). It represents that Hassan is completely powerless in front of Assef.

Comparing the concept of disciplinary power to that of governance is one approach to grasp its originality. Both discipline and governance seek to get people to perform certain things without forcing them to think critically about what they're doing. In this case, Assef depicts the superior and dominant components of any civilization who believed in maintaining their control by torturing those who are less powerful than them. Assef develops a biased culture that was not openly practiced throughout

those years in Afghan history. The social system was secure at the time, but those like Assef could not stand seeing happiness in the lives of those they considered to be beneath them. It is obvious that he is particularly irritated by Hassan's bravery and devotion to Amir, so he seeks to persuade Amir by emphasizing the differences between Amir and Hassan as a result of their origins. He gives Amir a biography of Adolf Hitler, the German dictator who was responsible for the massacre of innocent Jews. Assef wants Amir to understand that Hitler's actions were accurate, and that the Hazaras should be treated similarly. Assef is aware of the history of hostility between Pashtuns and Hazaras and holds the opinion that Pashtuns are of higher and purer status. In his opinion, this social structure is permanent and inflexible, which is why he can be so brutal to Hassan.

Moreover, by erasing every positive attribute of a human person, Hosseini has portrayed Assef as an incarnation of evil. He is the novel's principal antagonist. His father is Afghan, and his mother is German, hence he has been portrayed as a hybrid kid. It appears odd that a person of mixed ancestry has been depicted as a proponent of Pukhtun rule over the Hazara. Assef is a bully as a youth, and Amir views him as a "sociopath" (Hosseini, 2005, 34). The power mechanics that defines how one can exert control over other people's bodies, not just to make them do what one wants, but also to make them operate according to one's preferences in terms of tactics, speed, and efficiency (Foucault, 1979, p. 138). The same tactic Assef uses when he raps Hassan as a child and offers Amir a biography of Adolf Hitler as a birthday present. As an adult, he joins the Taliban and imitates Adolf Hitler, his hero. In the name of purity and dominance, he enjoys slaughtering innocent people. When Assef refers to Afghanistan as a "land of Pashtuns" (Hosseini, 2005, p. 35), his disdain for the Hazaras is clear. According to disciplinary power, the modern subject is one who is subjugated and subordinated to an order by disciplinary strategies: 'Discipline makes individuals; it is the special technique of power that considers individuals both as objects and as instruments of its execution'. The concept is that deviating from the standard is prohibited, and that being equal

means being the same. Being different is an indication of inferiority (Foucault, 1979, p. 170). Assef finds the presence of Hazaras revolting, therefore he recommends meeting with the president to rid Afghanistan of the "dirty, Kasseef Hazaras" (Hosseini, 2005, p. 36). Assef rebukes Amir for adopting Hassan as a family member. He says to Amir, "If idiots like you and your father didn't take these people in, we'd be rid of them by now. They'd all just go rot in Hazarajat where they belong. You're a disgrace to Afghanistan" (Hosseini, 2005, 36). Assef describes his vision as follows: "Afghanistan for Pashtuns, I say. That's my vision" (Hosseini, 2005, 35). Assef believes that his blood is purer than that of the Hazaras, who he believes "pollute" (Hosseini, 2005, p.35) Afghanistan. It disgusts him to watch another Pukhtun, like Amir, playing with a Hazara boy. Prejudices in Afghan society, as literary scholar Rebecca Stuhr (2009) argues, promote a structure of power that "makes it possible for Amir to treat Hassan as an inferior" and "allows Assef to rape Hassan without fear of reprisal" (Stuhr, 2009, p. 42).

Furthermore, Assef is depicted as a series of horrible crimes by the author. Hassan was raped as a child, and now Assef is abusing Hassan's son. After killing Hassan and his wife, Assef arrests Sohrab and imprisons him. When Amir first meets Sohrab, he elaborates that Sohrab was wearing a "sapphire blue pirhantumban" (Hosseini, 2005, p. 244). He had a "round moon face" (Hosseini, 2005, 244) just like his father (Hassan). His eyes were "darkened with mascara" and his cheeks "glowed with an unnatural red" (Hosseini, 2005, p. 244). Sohrab's appearance indicates that he is no longer considered a boy or a man, but rather a girl or a woman. According to Foucault, Individuals' bodies, become the target of disciplinary power activities. This authority approaches the body as an object to be controlled and managed, rather than as a biological being. Disciplinary authority views bodies as texts on which it can engrave new ways of doing things. The purpose of this power is to create a submissive body. In Foucault's view, a docile body is a receptive body that accepts the forces that work on it. It is "Something that can be built out of shapeless clay" (Foucault, 1979, p. 221). Similarly, Sohrab's body can be viewed as a

docile body, as it is controlled by Assef when he orders Sohrab to dance and he “danced until the music stopped” (Hosseini, 2005, p. 245). After the music stops, the Taliban, who is Assef, draws him closer to him and inappropriately caresses him, rubbing his hands all over Sohrab, and kissing him. Sohrab does not only look like Hassan, but he is also evolved into a girl, exactly like Hassan when he became a feminine man by getting harassed. Sohrab is forced to dance by the Taliban while wearing jingle bells around his ankles. This further highlights his image as a woman, a young girl, rather than a man (or at least as either a courtesan or dancer). As a result, the novel reveals that Assef subjects Sohrab to the same treatment that Hassan received, that is rape and sexual assault.

Conclusion

In Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner*, power is used and abused by the major characters, for instance, Baba, Assef and Amir. While Hassan and his son, Sohrab, are the victims of the power. On the other hand, the protagonist (Amir), exercises power and also is a victim of power. He in his childhood, experiences detachment from his father which makes him believe that his father does not like him. He expresses his father’s hatred towards him when he states, “didn’t all fathers in their secret hearts harbor a desire to kill their sons?” (Hosseini, 2005, p. 26). Baba appears dominating and controlling who wants to mould and discipline Amir. Hence, the present study supports the notion of Disciplinary power which is targeted to individuals and their bodies. As Foucault’s Disciplinary power is about subjugating others through the use of force, therefore Baba tries to inculcate his own skills and interests in Amir. Therefore, he continuously degrades and discourages Amir’s creativity and his love for literature since his childhood.

Consequently, Amir feels insecure and rejected by his father, Baba, who is also his favorite person and his ideal. Similarly, Amir inherits negative trait from his father and he also begins to exercise and abuse his power. Hassan is the one who falls prey to Amir’s power. The power dynamics between Amir and Hassan is based on their economical, religious and ethnic distinctions. Hassan is the son of the poor servant, Ali, while Amir is the son of the master,

Baba. Similarly, Malik and Murtaza (2013) state that Baba and Amir dwell in a spacious mansion, while Ali and Hassan live in a modest quarter on Baba’s property. Although Baba and Amir are both physically fit, Ali and Hassan both have physical deformities. In addition, Baba and Amir symbolize the Pukhtun community, and Ali and Hassan represent the Hazara minority in Afghanistan, who are victims of bigotry. Baba and Amir, like most Pashtuns, are Sunni Muslims, whereas Ali and Hassan, like most Hazaras, are Shia Muslims (Malik and Murtaza, 2013, p. 73). So, in the power relationship between Amir and Baba, Baba is dominant and Amir is subaltern. While in the relationship between Hassan and Amir which is also based on power, former is inferior while latter is powerful.

Thus the study reveals that Baba is a toxic parent. Due to his pride and stubbornness, both his sons, Amir and Hassan are adversely affected. However, some studies claim that Baba is a caring parent and he is just towards Hassan. But it can be observed that for the sake of his honor and reputation in the society, he never accepted Hassan as his begotten son. Although he always felt guilty and weighted down because of his hypocrisy but he managed to conceal the truth until his death. He knew the consequences that if he confesses his sin, it will cause him a bad reputation. So he let Hassan to suffer and struggle his whole life which on the other hand affected Sohrab’s life too. It demonstrates that Baba uses his power in a subtle and implicit manner which affects Amir directly and Hassan and Sohrab indirectly.

Another character who is the most cruel and inhumane is, Assef, who is the antagonist of the novel. He exploits Hassan and later on his son, Sohrab. Assef’s hateful attitude is displayed when he viciously raps Hassan after the kite contest, and kills him afterwards in the novel. He also molests Sohrab and humiliates him by putting make-up on his face and dressing him up in girl’s attire, hence targeting his body. In contrast to Amir and Baba, Assef hates Hassan openly and also exercises his power explicitly. He always reveals his enmity whenever he confronts Hassan.

Had Baba accepted Hassan as his son and treated him equally as Amir, no one would

have dared to bully and exploit Hassan. Baba is the only one who is solely responsible for the catastrophe that happened to Hassan and Sohrab. He can also be held responsible for Amir's cowardice and his insecurities.

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