

Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*: Unveiling the Trauma of Adolescent Boys Trapped in Afghanistan's Culturally Legitimised Paedophilia- 'Bacha Bazi'

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Abstract

Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* is a powerful narrative on 'Bacha Bazi', "same-sex pedophilia restricted to adult men and adolescent boys" (Powell, 2018, p.1), prevalent in Afghanistan. When marginalisation of Afghan women became the nucleus of major studies, especially during the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Hosseini unveiled in *The Kite Runner*, the gruesome Afghan culture of 'Bacha Bazi' that disintegrates a boy's social and sexual identity. 'Bacha Bazi' is not consensual rather coercion hence is equivalent to rape and reflects the grotesque violation of Afghan male children's human rights. While the world viewed Afghanistan as a land of incessant wars, tribal conflicts, violence and female exploitation, Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* provided a startling insight into 'Bacha Bazi' and its implications on Afghan boys. The novel reveals the socio-culture domain of Afghanistan and ethnic rivalry playing an instrumental role in the existence of Bacha Bazi. In the light of the above discussions, the present paper examines the deleterious effects of Bacha Bazi on Afghan male children. It elucidates the psychological trauma of adolescent Afghan boys that evolves out of the sexual abuse and new androgynous identity imposed on them.

Keywords: Bacha Bazi, Sexual slavery, ethnicity, conflicts, androgyny, poverty, rape

Human rights of Afghan children are circumscribed by conflicts and culture. Afghanistan, with a religious, ethnic and conventional ensemble, exhibits its natives' unflinching loyalties towards their ethnic composition that renders the task of nation building formidable (Zain, 2006, p.80; Shahrani, 2002, p. 715, Veit, 2002, p.7). Conflicts and ethnic rivalries often have emerged as a cataclysm on the Afghans, especially children and its "impact is profound" (D. Kenneth and Bush Diana Saltarelli, 2000, p, viii) - persistence of hunger, loss of family, lack of healthcare facilities, dearth of employment and collapse of security systems- that pushes them to the greater crisis of survival and "often their only resort is to turn into combatants" (Kona, 2007, p.1). Violence against children (VAC) became a complex problem "given the country has suffered armed conflict and extreme poverty for more than 30 years" (Cameron, 2018, p.1). With rape being used as a weapon of war against males (Ashford and Huet-Vaughn 2000. p.190), boys became more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Unaccompanied children in Afghanistan were abducted and trafficked. As pointed out by Thorson, "Perpetrators were very strategic, taking time to hunt for boys who fit the following criteria:

- Those unaccompanied

- Those from unstable family backgrounds” (2013, p. 8).

It has also been noticed that besides the exploitative nature of war, culture of a country can also set margins around its natives. According to Juan D. Delius culture is, “the ensemble of traditional behaviours that is characteristic of a population” (1991, p.76). As Kimbal Young states, “The cultural world is the creation of man himself as he has learned how to manage nature and himself throughout his entire exist” (1931, p.19). So as man is the creator of culture, it might be rife with some self-centric idiosyncrasies that might affect him socially, politically and economically. “What man does to culture appears to be as important and as compulsive as what culture does to man” (Wallis, 1950, p.44). Hence a culture can be progressive or regressive in nature. Margarita Azevedo in *The evaluation of the social impacts of culture: culture, arts and development* explores the role of culture in the development of an individual, society and nation. According to her ‘cultural-based local dynamics’ plays a crucial role in “economic and social development, urban regeneration and the quality of life” (2018, p.ix). However she also exemplifies that, “Beyond this positive interpretation of culture as a difference maker for economic behaviour, it is also true that culture can also act as a barrier when values and beliefs become obstacles to development of a society” (ibid.,p.12). According to Albert, I. and G. Trommsdorff, “human development takes place in a given cultural context; it is affected by culture and it affects culture” (2014, p. 3). On the basis of the above discussions it can be concluded that a culture can affect a society in two ways: either it plays an instrumental role in its development or it restricts mental capabilities and empowerment of communities and can decelerate or stagnate its progress. Such restrictive and exploitative affect of culture on Afghan society are perceptible in *Bacha Bazi* that deals with sexual slavery of children in Afghanistan (Noman, 2016, p.501, 504).

“According to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), although there is no clear Afghan legal definition of bacha bazi, it generally refers to local powerful individuals keeping one or more boys, typically between 10 to 18 years of age, for use as body guards, servants, dancers, and for sexual exploitation and other forms of harassment”(Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), 2018, p.1).

End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT) International mentions *bacha bazi* as a cultural practice in Afghanistan where men use young boys for social and sexual entertainment (2014, p.13, p.47). According to Simone Borlie, it is culturally acceptable (2019, p.502) and thrives as a communal practice in the country. *Bacha bazi* is rightly described by many commentators as Afghanistan’s “open secret”, demonstrating a way in which power is exercised and prestige paraded as a cultural ideal for adult men, hiding the more sinister social reality of sexual slavery and paedophilia (Powell, 2018, pp. 4-5). It involves a young boy who is either abducted or bought from his family by an adult Afghan male. The boy is kept as a physical and sexual entertainer for the caretaker and his adult male acquaintances. Also known as ‘Dancing Boys’, they also perform as dancers at parties and weddings. (Thorson, 2013, p. 40; Kapur, Roshni, 2014; Mustafa Sarwar, 2016). Zadzi quotes a *Bacha Baaz* for whom the public ostentation of *bacha bazi* is a sign of prestige:

“I am not really rich, but I am just as good as the wealthy. I want as many *bacha bereesh* as possible, so that when I go to parties I am no worse than anybody else” (2007).

As “the boy is a status symbol” for men (Schut, Michelle and Eva Van Baarle, 2017, p.80) they are ready to pay a hefty amount to the child’s parents in exchange of his “services” (Noman 2016; 2016, Schut, Michelle and Baarle, Eva, 2017). Families which refuse to budge, before their clout, are threatened. *Bacha Baz* selects those boys who are attractive and come from a poor family as this helps in getting the boy under his “apprenticeship” and “ownership” (Oot, 2016). By the time the

boys reach the age of 18, the *bacha baaz* becomes disinterested in them and sets them free" (Oot 2016; Borlie 2019). A lot of "contention exists regarding the legitimacy of *bacha bazi* under Islamic law" (Jones, 2015, p. 69). Many Afghans exhibit a strong opposition to *Bacha Bazi* as homosexuality is not permissible in Islam (Jones, 2015, p.69). "Some traditions of the Prophet display tolerance of homoerotic desires, others report the Prophet to have said that both the active and the passive partner must be killed" (Schmidkte, 1999, p.260). Difference in opinion is also seen regarding the existence of *Bacha Bazi* during the Taliban rule in Afghanistan. Some researchers are of the opinion that *Bacha Bazi* was prohibited as it was considered against the preachings of Islam and the perpetrators were stringently punished (McNally, Lauren and David Adesnik, 2015, p. 2) but after the collapse of the Taliban it revived and reinstated "with a violent expression of Paedophilia" under the Mujahideens (Borile, 2019, p. 503). However some researchers conclude that Taliban carried out *Bacha Bazi* secretly. As reported by the South Asian Channel, Taliban, "once came to power, *bacha bazi* became taboo, and the men who still engaged in the practice did so in secret (Mondloch, 2013). Through the above discussions it can be concluded that conflicts and regressive culture dismantle the security systems of a society and as a result devastate the life of the indigenous. Its atrocious effects on children are explicitly visible in the case of Afghanistan.

Effects of *Bacha Bazi* on Adolescent Afghan Boys

An extreme form of repressive Afghan patriarchy, drenched in sexual perversity, reflects in *Bacha Bazi*. This pernicious culture decimates the mental capabilities of the victim and appropriates the sexual and gender identities of boys. Afghan society perceives the outwardly metamorphosis of boys, into feminine attire and aping feminine gestures, as androgynous. This act of gender transformation is done by adult males to silence any accusation of perpetrating homosexual violence as "the sexual act is consummated with persons whose sexual identity is no longer masculine but is a new one, culturally perceived as androgynous" (Borile, 2019, p.502). Society's repugnancy, towards their being sexually exploited and developing feminine traits, adds to their isolation. The victims belonging to minority ethnic groups face double marginalization: first for being a boy and secondly for being born in a rival ethnic community. With lack of the psychosocial support, the victims are unable to vanquish the horrors of their past. "And once branded as men who danced as women, there is no turning back" (Abawi, 2009). Due to social isolation, the victims have low level of self-esteem and self-respect (Stephen, 2015). In some cases, the victims were murdered by their families for tarnishing the honour whereas some committed suicide because of the shame, insult and humiliation associated with their past (Schut, Michelle and Eva Van Baarle, 2017, p.94). A few victims of *Bacha Bazi*, after experiencing the sexual perversity of male adults, get a new understanding of male sexual appetite which becomes an inherent trait of their personality and makes them vindictive as an adult. Hence their psychological trauma is pacified only when they revisit their pain on another victim and the cycle of abuse perpetuates (Stephen, 2015). In some cases it has been reported that *Bacha Baaz* inflicted physical injuries on the boys:

most cases result in some form of grievous physical injury due to rape trauma including internal/anal haemorrhaging, rectal prolapse, protrusion of intestines, displaced pelvis bones, throat injuries, heavy internal bleeding, rectal wall tearing, as well as injuries that stem from the pure force of coercion. These include broken limbs, broken fingers, fractures, broken teeth, savage beatings, strangulation, asphyxiation, and in some cases death." (Stephen 2015).

Concerning Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, the paper examines how Afghan boys suffer in the vicious vortex of *Bacha Bazi* because of the persisting patriarchy and ethnic rivalry between Pashtuns and Hazaras. The novel underscores Pashtuns indulging in *Bacha Bazi* with a dual purpose: to avenge the losses incurred on their race by Hazaras and to fulfil their thirst for sexual gratification. Barat Ali Jafar writes in *Afghan Child Labourers Exposed to Abuse* about the concern of Esmatullah Nasari, who runs Empowerment Centre for Women, on *Bacha Bazi*. He states, "The abuse of children by those in position of power appears to have become an unpleasant aspect of Afghan culture" (2017). He further reiterates, "If this issue of sexual assault is not stopped in its tracks it could spread and can have very dangerous consequences on our country" (Ibid.)

Khalid Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*: Unveiling *Bacha Bazi* as Social, Cultural and Psychological Decadence

The Kite Runner encompasses Afghanistan's history in a nutshell. It is a window to the social complexities, political upheavals, and racial discrimination emerging out of the chaotic conditions prevailing during Taliban regime. Afghanistan, with multi-ethnic fabric, has always been struggling with the crisis of racism and creating the ideology of a nation. The growing affinity and pride towards the ethnicity, aggravated intolerance amongst the ethnic groups in the Afghan society. According to Omar Farooq Zain in *Afghanistan: From Conflict to Conflict* "ethnic affinities and identities remain high even after the unpleasant development of the last two and a half decades in Afghanistan" (2006, p. 82). Khalid Hosseini made a groundbreaking attempt in *The Kite Runner* by unveiling the plight of Hazaras, a minority ethnic group in Afghanistan, due to the existing racism. It presents the victimisation of the Hazara children who are drawn into *Bacha Bazi* by the Pashtun warlords to satiate their bitterness against the rival ethnic group. The novel intricately weaves the traumatized lives of Hazaras in the Pashtun dominated Afghan society and exposes the Pashtun warlords using *Bacha Bazi* to fulfill their dual objectives: to satiate the sexual urges and to accomplish the task of ethnic cleansing.

The story revolves around Hassan (a Hazara) who being an inquisitive child has a natural inclination towards inquiry and learning. Raised in Amir's family (a Pashtun), the latter was surprised the way Hassan understood the people he was around with and the situation he was placed in. Amir's father, Baba, was an affluent, renowned Sunni Pashtun who "was used to winning, winning at everything he set his mind to" (Hosseini, *A Kite Runner*, p.52). As the children grew together, Amir was shocked to learn about the atrocities and discrimination inflicted on Hazaras in Afghanistan. His curiosity to know about Hazaras grew when he watched Ali (Hassan's father) being chased and mocked by the children on the streets of Kabul. They chided him and called him, "flat-nosed" because of Ali and Hassan's peculiar Hazara Mongoloid features" (Ibid, p.8). As a child he was oblivious to the revulsion the Pashtuns had against Hazaras. He failed to understand his superiority as a Pashtun and Hassan's inferiority as a Hazara. Baba and Amir always treated Ali and Hassan as family members and they were never discriminated on the basis of their race. However the society's restrictions on the Hazaras denied Hassan admission in a school. Amir's queries related to the persisting hatred for Hazaras amongst the Pashtuns were not resolved. The only idea he had about Hazaras was that "they were Mogul descendants and that they looked a little like Chinese people" (Ibid, p.8). His quest for Hazaras and Pashtuns' animosity ended when he found one of his mother's history books in the library of his Baba. His world of innocence got replaced by the abysmal world of barbarity and oppression. Amir expounds after reading an entire chapter on Hazaras' history:

"I read that my people, the Pashtuns, had persecuted and oppressed the Hazaras. It said the Hazaras had tried to rise against the Pashtuns in the nineteenth century, but the Pashtuns had "quelled them with unspeakable violence." The book said that my people had killed the Hazaras, driven them from their lands, burned their homes, and sold their women. The book said part of the reason Pashtuns had oppressed the Hazaras was that the Pashtuns were Sunni Muslims, while Hazaras were Shi'a" (Ibid, pp.8-9).

Hassan, as a Hazara, faces the brunt of being born in a minority group. The world of discrimination, hatred, marginalization and trauma opens up to him after his encounter with Aseef. The latter was intolerant to Hazaras hence often addressed Hassan as a "donkey". Aseef's hatred against the Hazaras is explicitly visible when he claims Afghanistan as a land of Pashtuns. Presence of Hazaras was quite repugnant to him so he proposes to meet the president and make Afghanistan bereft of the "dirty, *Kassef Hazaras*". Amir is severely castigated by Aseef for taking in Hassan as a family. He reprimands 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" (Ibid, p. 39). He expresses his vision:

"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 home-land, our *watani*. They dirty our blood." He made a sweeping, grandiose gesture with his hands. "Afghanistan for Pashtuns, I say. That's my vision" (Ibid, p. 38).

Hassan could never fathom the repercussion of his attempt to save Amir. His act of protecting Amir from the invincible leader, Aseef, undesirably challenged the latter. The wounded Aseef warns Amir and Hassan, "Your Hazara made a big mistake today, Amir" (KR 40). His squashed ego craved to take vengeance. Aseef's idiosyncratic and perverted ideologies for the Hazaras made him sexually abuse Hassan. His act of sexual violence against the subaltern child is a testimony to his sadistic nature and intense desire to cleanse Afghanistan of the minorities who, he believed, are corrupting Afghanistan's valuable culture, tradition and ethnicity. Amir remembers the winter of 1975 when he "saw Hassan run a kite for the last time" (Ibid, p. 51). Amir won the kite tournament but the last kite had to be produced as a symbol of victory and was also considered as a prized possession. Hassan, the greatest kite runner runs to grab the kite for his ardent master and friend, Amir. As soon as he reached for the kite, he found himself trapped by Aseef and his friends in an alley. Desperate Aseef was eagerly waiting for the opportunity. After a brief confrontation between the two, Aseef sexually abuses him:

Aseef knelt behind Hassan, put his hands on Hassan's hips and lifted his bare buttocks. He kept one hand on Hassan's back and undid his own belt buckle with his free hand. He unzipped his jeans. Dropped his underwear. He positioned himself behind Hassan. Hassan didn't struggle. Didn't even whimper. He moved his head slightly and I caught a glimpse of his face. Saw the resignation in it. It was a look I had seen before. It was the look of the lamb (Ibid, p. 71).

Amir watched the episode as a naïve spectator and didn't barge in to save Hassan as he was scared of what he could do to him. He expatiates on his act of running away from the alley,

"I ran because I was a coward. I was afraid of Aseef and what he would do to me. I was afraid of getting hurt" (Ibid, p. 72). To console and comfort his guilt he justifies his cowardice act as, "He was just a Hazara, wasn't he?" (Ibid, p. 73)

Here, Amir appears to consider Hassan as a mere Hazara servant who is bound to serve the

superiors. The novel expounds the effect of racism on children's psyche which turns them into a monstrous aggressor. The beginning of the novel, *The Kite Runner*, describing the sexual assault on a Hazara boy, divulges the extent of abhorrence and detestation thriving in Afghanistan against the minorities, especially for the Hazaras. It also lays bare the fact that children were raped and sexually exploited by the men in power and their community. Even Amir clearly understood the chasm between Pashtuns and Hazaras:

The curious thing was, I never thought of Hassan and me as friends either. Not in the usual sense anyhow. Never mind that we taught each other to ride a bicycle with no hands, or to build a fully functional homemade camera out of a cardboard-box...Never mind any of those things. Because history isn't easy to overcome. Neither is religion. In the need, I was a Pashtun and he was a Hazara, I was Sunni and he was Shi'a, and nothing was ever going to change that. Nothing (Ibid, p. 24).

As the story proceeds, the readers find to their dismay, Hassan's son, Shorab, trapped in Bacha Bazi under the Bacha Baz, Aseef. Amir, who moved to America due to the growing insecurities in Afghanistan, returns to his native land on the call of Rahim Khan, his father's friend. On meeting him, Amir finds that Hassan and his wife have been killed by the Talib's and his son, Shorab, lives in "an orphanage somewhere in Karteh-She" (Ibid, p. 203). Amir who has been heavily laden with guilt since his childhood for not protecting Hassan from Aseef, decides to provide Shorab with a decent life. On reaching the orphanage, the owner of the orphanage, Zaman, informs Amir that Shorab has been taken away by a Talib official who, "visits once every month or two. He brings cash with him, not a lot, but better than nothing at all" (Ibid, p.235). Zaman also expresses his inability to protect the children of the orphanage from the powerful warlord,

"If I deny him one child, he takes ten. So I let him take one and leave the judging on Allah" (Ibid, p. 237). The novel reveals the reticent submission of the Afghans before the Talibs. He also informs that "Usually he will take a girl, but not always" (Ibid, p.235).

This reflects the Talibs extreme indulgence in satisfying his sexual gratification through children. Zaman expresses his helplessness when he says,

I swallow my pride and take his goddam filthy... dirty money. Then I go to the bazar and buy food for the children" (Ibid, p.237).

The novel exhibits powerlessness and poverty responsible for the spread of Bacha Bazi in Afghanistan. Beleaguered Afghans watched children being treated as commodities; mistreated and abused.

Amir finds Shorab turned into a dancing boy by the Taliban warlord, who was no one else but Aseef. Aseef's immense hatred which he carried against the Hazaras didn't diminish a bit and an adult. Kenneth D. Bush Diana Saltarelli in *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict comment on the research undertaken by Padilla, Ruiz and Brand (1974)* that ethnic attitudes with positive or negative prejudices, develop in human beings in the early years of their life which increases with time (2000, p.3). Shorab clad as a woman, was brought before the Talib. He was "dressed in loose, sapphire blue *pirhan-tumban*" (Hosseini, 2013, p.256).

"His head was shaved, his eyes darkened with mascara, and his cheeks glowed with an unnatural red. When he stopped in the middle of the room, the bells strapped around his anklets stopped jingling" (Ibid,

p. 257). The description highlights the restructuring of a male child's sexual identity in Bacha Bazi. It also exhibits Pashtuns revelling in Bacha Bazi who were known for savagely punishing

homosexuality. According to Mondloch "Pashtun social norms dictate that *bacha bazi* is not unIslamic or homosexual at all" (2013). Shaista Gohir, in her article *The hypocrisy of child abuse in many Muslim countries* comments on the culture of Bacha Bazi that is prevalent in many Muslim countries of the world,

"The moral hypocrisy is outrageous in a country where homosexuality is not only strictly forbidden but savagely punished, even between two consenting adults. However, men who sodomize young boys are not considered homosexuals or paedophiles" (2010).

Amir comments, "I guessed the music wasn't sinful as long as it played to Taliban ears" (Hosseini, 2013, p.257). Amir watched Hassan dance in front of the Talibs:

Sohrab raised his arms and turned slowly. He stood on tip-toes, spun gracefully, dipped to his knees, straightened, and spun again. His little hands swivelled at the wrists, his fingers snapped, and his head swung side to side like a pendulum. His feet pounded the floor, the bells jingling in perfect harmony with the beat of the table. He kept his eyes closed (Ibid, p. 257).

Sohrab seems to be enveloped by humiliation and fear in such an abysmal condition. As a child, he is not only harmed physically but also psychologically. The presence of the Talib scares him and instills him with the horrors of sexual assault. Shorab represents the plight of Hazara boys who are poor orphans and hence are easily accessible to the warlords. Amir could explicitly see the sensual advances made by the Talib towards Sohrab. The puny child standing head down expresses his silent acquiescence to the indecent advances of the Warlord. His reference to Shorab as 'my Hazara boy' affirms his treatment of the child as his possession.

"*Bia, bia, my boy,*" the Talib said, calling Sohrab to him. Sohrab went to him, head down, stood between his thighs. The Talib wrapped his arms around the boy. "How talented he is, nay, my Hazara boy!" he said. His hands slid down the child's back, then up, felt under his armpits. One of the guards elbowed the other and snickered" (Ibid, pp. 257-58).

Talib's fondling of Shorab's body displays his sexual perversity. Hosseini has presented the Hazara children being trapped in Bacha Bazi and sexually exploited due to the existing rivalry between the two ethnic groups. The novel uncovers the unflinching desire of the Pashtuns to remove every speck of Hazaras' existence from Afghanistan. Aseef, the Talib, expounds the reason behind the decision of Pashtuns to cleanse Afghanistan, "Like pride in your people, your customs, your language. Afghanistan is like a beautiful mansion littered with garbage, and someone has to take out the garbage" (Ibid, p.261). The statement explicitly reflects the unbending hatred of Pashtuns for Hazaras and other ethnic groups that led to blood-baths, massacres, savagery and ruthlessness in Afghanistan. According to Muhammad Hussain Nusrat, "The act of 'ethnic cleansing, land confiscation, slavery and persecution' has been carried out against Hazaras "since 1891" (2019, p.1). Ethnic hatred subjected children to sexual assault and violence. Amir questions Aseef's for his obdurate determination:

"What mission is that?" I heard myself say. "Stoning adulterers? Raping children? Flogging women for wearing high heels? Massacring Hazaras? All in the name of Islam? (Hosseini, 2013, p. 261).

The novel depicts ethnic rivalry as one of the reasons for the existence of Bacha Bazi. According to Kenneth D. Bush and Diana Saltarelli the ethnic group in majority employs various strategies to dominate the ethnic groups in minority, "Their strategies include scorched earth tactics to starve populations and destroy infrastructures, sexual torture and mass rape, ethnic and social cleansing,

and even genocide” (2000, p.4). Besides highlighting the impact of ethnic rivalry on Hazara male children, the novel also underscores the psychological impact of Bacha Bazi on Shorab who tries to commit suicide being fearful of the notion that he would be sent back to the orphanage and perhaps he would again be placed in the vicious cycle of sexual slavery. Amir recalls Shorab’s body floating in the bath tub of the hotel room, “the water drops dripping from the faucet and dangling over the side of the tub, the blood-soaked razor sitting on the toilet tank...and his eyes, still half open but lightless” (Hosseini, 2013, p.318). Though Amir succeeds in taking Shorab along with him to USA, the latter continues to live a life of recluse. Amir sums up his silence as, “It was the silence of one who has taken cover in a dark place, curled up all the edges and tucked them under” (Ibid, p.331). Amir and Soraya (Amir’s wife) make myriad efforts to bring Shorab back to his normal life but failed miserably. The novel ends on a positive note when Amir finally gets a success in lighting a spark in the eyes of Shorab through the kite flying activity organised at a gathering of Afghans at Fremont. Though initially Shorab hesitated to join the activity but soon Amir found him participating in the event. The repetition of ‘kite flying competition’ at the end of the novel reminds the readers of the incident when Amir saw Hassan, the eponymous Kite runner, “run a kite for the last time” (Ibid, p.51). The novel in the end depicts Amir taking over the role Hassan played in his life. Now Amir was the ‘Kite Runner’ who was trying to win back the lost life of Shorab. “For you, a thousand times over,” I heard myself say” (Ibid, p. 340). The end lends a powerful hope that Shorab will gradually recuperate from his despicable state. Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner* voices the plight of thousands of Afghan male children who are trapped in the deep-rooted culture of Bacha Bazi. The novel also suggests that people need to act against the authoritative and intimidating power structures that try to dominate the society through their oppressive norms. Any culture that is exploitative in nature and denies people of their human rights shouldn’t be cradled rather discarded. Bacha Bazi is affecting Afghanistan in two ways: restricting the healthy development of male Afghan children who are the future of the state and hampering the peace and progress of the country. Robin Burns suggests that if peace and development of a country are interlinked, then “peace is defined not as the absence of war, but the achievement of positive social and cultural goals (Burns 1982, p.62). This can lead to the establishment of equality among the ethnic groups and would mitigate the bitterness and rivalries in the Afghan society. Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner* suggests to move beyond the cultural, psychological and ethnic deadlocks and grant the right to dignity to the Afghan male children as well as the freedom to make choices for their betterment.

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