

**Cultural Hegemony and The Patriarchal Society: Historic Understanding  
and Analytical Insight in Khaled Hosseini's *And The Mountains Echoed***

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**Abstract**

Human beings are unique among all other creatures in this world, they have the highest ability to promote and dispense their responsibility towards their family and society according to their religion and culture. Therefore, religion and culture are the most prominent elements from which they get the inspiration. This research paper is a study of culture with reference to 'And the Mountains Echoed' by Khalid Hosseini. The aim of this research is to understand and analyze the cultural environment of Afghanistan which exhibits hegemony, as the rich dominate the poor, man dominates a woman, one religious sect overpowers the other. And also to understand the reason of cultural hegemony and the patriarchal society by studying the social and political set up. The study aims to study the people of Afghanistan, who constitute different race and ethnicity. Moreover, there are many conflicts and contradictions within the family, relationships, and politics in the society of Afghanistan. Consequently, Khalid Hussein beautifully portrays the present situation of Afghanistan in his novel 'And the Mountains Echoed'. There are many characters from different countries in the novel.

**Key words:** *culture, hegemony, ethnic, patriarchal society, religious dominance.*

**Introduction**

The culture of Afghanistan has never been considered as one which was strongly unified. The proposed of this study will explore the culture of Afghanistan where the rich dominate the poor, one religious sect over the other and a man over woman. Also how the culture played a major role in each of the characters depicted in the novel. It will also explain the reasons behind the cultural hegemony and analyse and propose some solutions to it. In *And the Mountains Echoed* the author presents the different perspectives of characters in different stories. He shows in his novel that even though Afghanistan is a war-torn country and approximately three decades of military warfare have been passed and still battle has surrounded provinces, people are threatened physically, nationally, regionally and culturally, they are insecure and unstable. Yet they have maintained hopes and dreams of a bright future. He elaborates the voice of Afghans, on what they think, feel and need in the present condition of Afghanistan. Besides, he also condemns the idea of war from the point of view of those people who have suffered because of it. Consequently he presents with great ability, his wisdom and eloquence of discourse to his readers around the world that Afghans are not always terrorists; and he portrays the friendly relationship and humanity of English men who collaborate with native of Afghanistan.

Shaheen Tarentum's review on the '*A Thousand Splendid Suns*':

Tarentum argues that the novel is overloaded with political implications. It is obvious that Afghanistan is a small country, the Super-powers make it a playground and they compete as to who would be winner of the game. He explained that the people who have Power flax and wield it over the 'lesser ones'. Saraswat Niraja's Review on '*The Kite Runner*': Saraswat viewed that '*The Kite Runner*' is a popular novel which describes the truthful of the identification, disloyalty and expiation that its destructs. He mentioned that the novel shows the journey of a boy who he is very remorseful because of some haunting memories of his childhood. The most important point which plays is the concept of identity and redemption that makes the relationship of characters stronger. Also he says that in '*The Kite Runner*' on a journey towards a more attractive and prosperousness life. Likewise, it also mentions the terrible disloyalty exhibited by some of the characters and some others who could not avail better opportunities for themselves.

Alexis Burling review on '*And the Mountains Echoed*': Alexis Burling elaborated that in *And the Mountains Echoed* the author presents the different perspectives of characters in different stories. He believes that remorse is an emotion that runs deep throughout in the novel. He added that Khalid Hosseini's novel gives a sense not only of the interconnectedness of individuals but also of a country fighting for its honor and struggling to come into its own.

Sruthi. P explains, that Khalid Hossieni in his novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* has described the deplorable status of women who living in Afghanistan. He also depicted the present scenario which has ruled Afghanistan. So, when the reader reads this novel they would completely comprehend the policy and complicated ideology of Taliban which has ruled Afghanistan. During the regime of Taliban the women do not have the right to go outside without Mahram, this mahram have to be from close member of their family. On the other hand, Taliban force them to cover their face when they want to go out of private home. According to the novel of Hossieni, all women characters are overwhelmed and repressed their feelings. This novel became very popular around the world especially with those who have read the book and have become aware of the patriarchal ruled in Afghan society, and the novel has created an impact on the world's notion. In his novel Hossieni explains from the third person's view and obviously the real face of Afghan society.

Nina Farlina elaborates, this novel is more focused on prejudice honesty and personality of Afghan people. And also emphasized about their behavior, treatment, realism and identification of Afghan people and their society. She says that Khalid Hossieni in his novel, clarified the position and personality of two ethnic of Pashtun and Hazara. The Pashtuns have high social position, positive personality, celebrities, high position in the hierarchy of society. On the contrary the Hazara have a low position in the hierarchy of Afghan community. They are the impoverished members of Afghan society. They have menial duties in the hierarchy of government. Mostly, they work as a footman, maid and even beggar. On the other hand these two different ethnic they have also different culture identities. So both ethnics are extremely serious for saving their culture and identities, if they go out of Afghanistan.

Ayesha Ashraf Point out that, when Khalid Hossieni begins to write his novel "*And The Mountains Echoed*" he gives importance to the geographical, cultural, social and national

boundaries and he has introduced from Afghanistan than to Kabul, Paris and California. He shows in his novel that Even though Afghanistan is a war-torn country and approximately three decades have been passed and still battle has surrounded provinces, people are threatened physically, nationally, regionally and culturally, they are insecure and unstable, yet they have maintained hope and dream of a bright future. Ayesha Ashraf says that, Khalid Hossieni in the *And The Mountains Echoed* elaborates the voice of Afghans, on what they think, feel and need in the present condition of Afghanistan. Besides, he also condemns the idea of war from those people who have suffered because of it. Consequently he presents with great ability, his wisdom and eloquence of discourse to his reader who exists around the world that Afghans are not always terrorists; and he portrays the friendly relationship and humanity of English men who collaborate with native of Afghanistan. And he tries to ignore cognation of people from division of the world by name of eastern and western (i.e. Afghanistan and America).

Approach to this research work is qualitative. Subjective review of existing literature on the topic of culture and the cultural hegemony will be taken as the main source of information. So the data collection will entail library browsing, supplemented with information from the net. The method which is required for this paper is based on the theory of Cultural hegemony.

A cultural study is, in fact, the study of the ways in which culture is constructed and organized and the ways in which it evolves and changes over time". It has never been considered as one which was strongly unified. The culture in the rural areas is different to those of the urban areas as their thinking differs. In the urban, people have more rights than those of rural areas; it is very much evident in the novel. The rich dominate the poor people in many areas, the rich are given jobs first despite of the latter having the better qualification. The majority of the people share the same religion, so there is no religious conflict between them. Men dominate the women and all the important decisions are taken by them. Within the study of cultural hegemony of the novel, it would be possible to provide the basic reasons as reference to the social and political hegemony. It will also provide some solutions for the betterment of the social evil in the society. The general objectives of the paper are as follows:

- a) To understand and analyze the cultural milieu of Afghanistan where in exists a cultural hegemony, as the rich dominate the poor, one religious sect over the other, a man over woman or vice-versa.
- b) -To understand and present the reasons for cultural hegemony by studying the social and political set up.
- c) To propose some solutions to this social evil.

Afghanistan has many different ethnic groups. Primarily it is a poor country but people living in rural areas are the poorest among all. They have less access to the basic requirements such as water, electricity, professional schools, universities, medical clinics with specialist doctors . According to the Hosseini, the culture of poverty governs all part of clan warfare which is mostly located in the rural area of Afghanistan. The poor and rural people are always the victims of the harshness of the society. They are unable to rescue their lives and the life of their family members. The present situation of Afghanistan reflects the character of Saboor in the novel of “*And The Mountains Echoed* ”. In the unendurable harsh winter, when the brutal cold took away the life of Saboor’s new born baby, he was dreadful to lose other member of his family. He takes decision to give away Pari , who was only three years old daughter for the Wahdati’s wealthy family. The another thing that that rural people are suffering from is insecurity of their areas The history of Afghanistan is a history of war and conflict; the civil war and lack of security continues up to the present day. . They are witnessing hundreds of murders and conflict between government and Taliban. Most of the villages have become a battle ground for military troops. These conflicts have its impact on the culture of Afghanistan Presently people who live in the cities are losing hope of coming back home in the evening once they go out, because of lack of security.

In most of the Afghan families the members of the family include three or four generations where the elderly male is the head of family. All these generations support and cooperate each other. Although , the male has control over the female ,it does not mean that the Afghan women are marginalized and reclusive class of Afghanistan community and society. In Afghanistan ,among all ethnics and tribes, one thing is very significant and that is taking care of their family and friends. They are very cautious in preserving their relationship for long period of time. When we look at the novel “ *And The Mountains Echoed* ” we know about the characters of Saboor and his children , Abdullah and his little

sister Pari sent to Kabul, for adoption to a wealthy family of Wahdatis' Suleman and Nila Wahdati. Both were separated from their father for many years but this long separation couldn't break off their strong relation,

Afghan society is largely a patriarchal society. They expect women to follow certain rules set by their male counterparts even if it is the dress they wear. It has been beautifully portrayed through the character of Nila, in *And The Mountains Echoed*. Just because she loves to wear dresses with short sleeves and dislikes pajamas, people in the conventional society talk ill about her and go to the extent of calling her a prostitute. We can see the effect of culture on a character in the novel who is a gifted, stylish, condemned French- Afghan housewife who writes impassioned poetry about love, sex, desire, and loss in 1950's Kabul which was not liked by the society.

Being a woman she was expected to behave in a graceful manner and be modest but instead she wrote openly about everything in her book which was considered as Taboo in the society. The women in the society according to the culture of Afghanistan were expected to abide by the rules that were laid on them. They were asked to live in a religious manner and not to go against them. People did not honor Nila because of the way she conducted herself in the society because it was the opposite of how people wanted women to behave. Being a patriarchal society, all the important decisions are taken by the male in the family, decisions, including the household, child education and everything that involves the family matter. The male plays an important role in the family and everyone in the family was expected to obey the decisions that was made by him without any complain. Women were not given enough rights as that of man in the society and they were expected to remain according to how the society or the culture expected them to be.

In Afghanistan, the culture of hegemony has a great role among the majority of tribes and races. Like one tribe over another tribe, one race over other race, some family upon the other family, even certain member of the family over other members of the family, but most of this superiority appear among those families and races which are overbearing due to their wealth and high position in the hierarchy of state. Furthermore, the tribes who have governmental occupation and authority, are the creators of domination and discrimination among all tribes

and they exploit their authority and only support the tribe who belong to their race. If these authorities announce some governmental job, the first candidate of success would be their relatives and the next one would be their race.

They show no interest in the employment of the people who don't belong to their race. "*And The Mountains Echoed*" is a novel that gracefully places fidelity, infidelity, morality and corruption, affection and oppression, wish and disappointment.

Afghanistan is an Islamic country. Islam is the official religion of Afghan people. In Afghanistan, 99% of population, follows the mainstream of Islam religion. Though there are certain group of people who are influenced by western thoughts but this issue is debatable among the religious leaders and people of Afghanistan who only think about preserving all the principles and roles which were alluded in Holy Quran. Since Afghanistan is a war-torn country and the nascent democracy is still not institutionalized there is still insurgency\corruption, injustice, land and properties grabbing, race and gender intolerance and discrimination in governmental and nongovernmental organizations and associations. As mentioned, one of the main challenge nowadays is land-grabbing by influenced people and militants which is reflected very clearly in '*And the Mountain Echoed*' by Khalid Hossini when Gholam, the grandson of Saboor returns to his homeland after a war hoping that he will live rest of his life peacefully as a farmer but all his hopes shatter when he comes to know that all his property including the home and garden has been grabbed by those involved in land grabbing.

Hosseni has skillfully described in his novel the interconnection of different cultures, ethnics and countries. He mentioned how small actions have tremendous consequences. For example, when Saboor sells his small daughter, Pari to Wahdatis this decision first effect their own members of family and then the couple who adopts her. Hossini demonstrates, that how a small decision concludes by bringing so many changes to the lives of future generations. The book, compares present situation and culture of Afghanistan with that of past. The culture of Afghanistan is not strongly integrated. It consists of multiple cultures with different ethnic and languages. Also, the way of living of each group is different from each other. One group dominates and exploits the other. The

poor people are dominated by rich people. The main reason of domination is insecurity, war and instability situation of Afghanistan. Hence the solution lies in bringing peace and normal situations in the rural and urban Afghanistan. There should be no domination and interference from the neighboring countries. Once peace is restored, the condition of women will improve too. Also, there has to be no gender discrimination between a man and a woman. Government and the people have to co-operate with each other in order to improve the political, economical, social and psychological conditions of the people.

## Conclusion

“*And the Mountains Echoed*” explains the situation of pain and anarchy in Afghanistan. Khalid Hosseini’s novel gives a sense not only of the interconnectedness of individuals but also of a country fighting for its honor and struggling to come into its own. Afghanistan is majorly a tribal community. If we review the history of the last four decades of Afghanistan, we can say that the tensions between Pashtun and Tajik, Hazara and Pashtun, Uzbeks and Tajiks, and the same among these ethnicities, are due to social gaps. They assume each other alien and are in contradictions and conflict with each other. So a dire need is to have a broad vision, where there is no hatred for each other. The government and the people will have to rise above their petty differences in order to improve the economic, political, and social conditions of their country. The people of Afghanistan, after years of bloody warfare, have come to believe that political and national agreement is vital for a democratic and national government. As long as the political climate is not mutually supportive and tolerant, the formation of a firm and nationalist political system will not be possible and achievable.

We can solve the domestic problems while we cultivate a national feeling and sense of tolerance among the people, and support the government to eradicate poverty and illiteracy. The different factors that hamper the growth of Afghanistan as a nation have been mentioned above. We need to develop strategic long term plans to work upon them.

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