

RE-UNDERSTANDING THE POLITICS OF VOICING THE MARGINAL VOICES: A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO KHALED HOSSEINI'S "THE KITE RUNNER"

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Abstract- The word 'subaltern' has entered into the circumference of intellectual debates, researches and talks. Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak had already raised an intellectual question that, 'Can the Subaltern speak'? or do they need someone to speak for them. The paper aims at highlighting the fact that in a society, the marginalized section is always exploited by one means or the other, but, when it is up to giving the voice to the silenced, is it completely partial from the speaker's side to justifiably present the current scenario of the victimized section? Thus, the act of giving voice to the marginalized community is in itself 'saviour' or 'big brother' attitude that the colonizers had. Therefore, it can be analyzed that the relationship between subalternity and its representation is always intertwined and complicated. The text that has been taken under study is *The Kite Runner* written by Khaled Hosseini. In the novel, *The Kite Runner*, the readers can see the after effects of the conflict between the two communities, i.e., Pashtuns and Hazaras, where the Pashtuns have the 'upper-hand'. The two boys, Amir is a Pashtun and Hassan is a Hazara. The narrator is Amir and the whole story is given through Amir's point of view. It is also have to be understood that regarding providing voice to the marginalized, there's always the powerful that plays an active role, and, here, Amir has the power.

Key words: Subaltern, Marginal Voices, The Politics of Voicing, Saviour attitude, Power.

I. Introduction

-----Because history isn't easy to overcome. Neither religion. In the end, 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. ,
The Kite Runner (Hosseini, 2013, p.5)

Someone rightly said, "Do not let others to create your world, because whenever they do, they would make it too small". The paper aims at responding to the fact that when the people in power takes up the pen to write about the one who are marginalized or the weaker sections of the society, then, they may sometimes, lose the real essence of the underlying scene. Thus, to give voice to the silenced is not an easy task as it may be completely partial from the speaker's side to

justifiably present the current scenario of the victimized section. Thus, the act of giving voice to the marginalised community is in itself ‘saviour’ or ‘big brother’ attitude that the colonizers had. Therefore, it can be analyzed that the relationship between subalternity and its representation is always intertwined and complicated. The society is divided into two sections, i.e, the Bourgeoisie and Proletariats, the ‘have’ and the ‘have-nots’ so, therefore, the question is whether the ‘have-nots’ receive their due position when it comes to their depiction by the section ‘have-s’. It is to be analyzed whether the depiction of the marginalised is still stained by the colour of colonization, suppression and exploitation. To see in reality, is it the ‘big brother’ or ‘saviour’ attitude of the group having power to provide before the world, the fact that the marginalized or dominated group has always been guided by the colonizers. Literature is a powerful medium which freezes ideology, opinions, discourse and social movements. Thus, literature can be seen as that influential medium through which discourse and ideology can be passed on. People in power may use literature for the representation of the colonized but as literature is the preservation of history, it may sometimes preserve what ought not to be preserved. It can be said that colonization can also be possible through literature.

II. Methodology

For the study, primary source is the fictional book *The Kite Runner* written by Khaled Hosseini has been taken. Moreover, secondary sources, Peter Barry’s *Beginning Theory*, and other useful and valid information have been considered for the research.

Hypothesis

- The paper will show how through history, literature gets influenced.
- Through literature how history becomes discourse.
- The representation of voicing the marginalized section by the people in power may be influenced with colonization.
- Colonisation can also be done through literature.
- Literature preserves the racial comments, subalternity and discrimination.

The whole story is shown through Amir’s eye who was a Pashtun. In Afghanistan, after the defeat of the Hazaras before the Pashtuns, the Hazaras became the weaker section. The Pashtuns had persecuted and oppressed the Hazaras. It is said that the Hazaras had tried to rise against the Pashtuns in the nineteenth century, but the Pashtuns had killed the Hazaras, driven them from their lands, burned their homes, and sold their women. Pashtuns had oppressed the Hazaras because Pashtuns were Sunni Muslims, while Hazaras were Shi’a.

Amir, like the whole generation was influenced by the fact that Hazaras were inferior to Pashtuns:

“...because history isn't easy to overcome. Neither is religion. In the end, I was a Pashtun and he was a Hazara, I was a Sunni and he was Shi'a, and nothing was going to change that. Nothing.” (Hosseini, 2013, p. 24)

History has always influenced literature in some way or the other and for this the representation of anything, be it of civilization or be it of marginality and the, history has always did the needful. The term 'ideology' was discovered by Destutt de Tracy in the end of the eighteenth century. Ideologies are “fixed ideas” which are difficult to change, it develops with time, changes and even disappears with time. Ideology and discourse are intertwined to each other where each feeds the other for the one's growth. Following Marx and Engels, ideologies were at first defined as the prevailing ideas of an age. Fiction or non-fiction in the form of text has a huge range of readers who are influenced. Neither a text is received with neutral reaction nor is a text innocent in its ways. A text always carries ideologies with it. Ideology initiates discourse. Social cognition ignites socio cultural knowledge which is equivalent to group ideology, group attitude and group knowledge and this creates discourse. Thus, history becomes a discourse with the help of literature.

Assef commented:

“Afghanistan is the land of Pashtuns. It always has been, always will be. We are the true Afghans, the pure Afghans, not this Flat- Nose here. His people pollute our homeland, our watan. They dirty our blood.” (Hosseini, 2013, p.38)

Here, it can be seen that Assef who is a Pashtun, comments, “Afghanistan is the land of Pashtuns...” which directly clears that there is no space for the Hazaras. They are just the smaller groups and devoid of power to act or speak for themselves. There is a question of who is the real 'Afghani' and the answer is the suppressed has always been the suppressed. The history which had captured the strife that happened between the two sections, Pashtuns and Hazaras, continued to capture the difficult environment for the Hazaras in the post struggle period.

Literature can also depict that the narrator has been influenced by the colonial colours. Amir is in a way, torn apart between his friendship with Hassan and the age old marginalization of the Hazaras by the Pashtuns. So, sometimes he narrates the story as a loyal friend of Hassan and sometimes he too gives into that age-old tradition of marginalizing the Hazaras, being a Pashtun. Through literature, the readers can smell the 'non possibility' of intermingling of the marginalized with the well-to-do section.

Once Amir said:

“I treated Hassan well, just like a friend, better even, more like a brother. But if so, then why, when Baba's friends came to visit with their kids, didn't I ever include Hassan in our games? Why did I play with Hassan only when no one else was around?” (Hosseini, 2013,p. 38)

The Hazaras has always been dominated, underestimated and marginalized by the Pashtuns. In the book, *Kite runner*, we can see the reality of a Hazara's condition in Afghanistan. Thus, through literature too colonization can be done as well as preserved. It can be also noted that, Amir, the narrator could have represented Hassan as the way he deserved but the narrator narrates in the way that is found discriminating Hassan in some parts. The narrator puts poor light on Hassan's athletic as well as studious ability before the readers. Moreover, he sometimes, could not digest the fact that even though as the whole world knows Hazaras are meant to be servant, he and his family treated Ali and Hassan well. Amir's father not only approved Hassan in each and every case but also praised his honesty and true nature. Although Amir sometimes agrees of his jealousy for Hassan's capability but he tried his level best not to lose Hassan and his friendship in any way.

The real depiction of Hassan is not clear before the readers as the readers are viewing it through Amir's eyes. Hassan was illiterate but he had the potential to study and to acquire knowledge. But his brilliancy is overshadowed by Amir. Although Amir treated Hassan as his friend, as his brother but at deep he couldn't adjust the fact that Hassan, though uneducated, had more potential than him.

"I read him poems and stories, sometimes riddles--- though I stopped reading those when I saw he was far better at solving them than I was. So, I read him unchallenging at solving them than I was. So I (read him unchallenging things, like the misadventures of the bumbling Mullah Nasruddin, and his donkey... My favourite part of reading to Hassan was when we came across a big word that he didn't know. I'd tease him, expose his ignorance." (Hosseini, 2013, p. 27)

Literature also preserves racial comments and thus, cannot free completely itself from being partial. As the narrator has the 'saviour' nature, so he/ she sometimes judge himself/ herself what is better and what is not for the marginalized section. Thus, because of narrators, speakers, writers and commentators, literature, sometimes, manages to preserve the darkest of colonial comments ever. Western gaze has always looked down the Oriental territories with a negative and colonial attitude. Sir George Trevelyan once wrote about Calcutta:

'Find, if you can a more uninviting spot than Calcutta...The place is so bad by nature that human efforts could do little to make it worse, but that little has been done faithfully and assiduously'

Here, in the novel, Assef, 'the bad-boy' of the story had always discriminated the Hazara boy, Hassan and he is the one who had later on sexually abused Hassan too. For Assef, Hassan was no more than a commodity to be played with.

Assef commented:

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Once, Hassan was captured by Assef's gang, Amir could not find him and was trying hard to find him. Amir came across a shopkeeper, enquired about Hassan but what the shopkeeper had said is:

“Lucky Hazara , having such a concerned master. His father should get on his knees, sweep, the dust at your feet with his eye lashes” (Hosseini, 2013,p. 66)

Thus, light should also be given on the fact that giving voice to the marginalized section is not an easy task. In the novel, Amir, the narrator, accepts that, at times, he had been jealous of Hassan. Amir had been jealous of Hassan because although he was not educated enough, he could sometimes surpass him in sports and education. Moreover, Amir had always the notion that in the eyes of Amir's father, Hassan was the ideal child who never ever lied and he was just the son. When it comes to personal jealousy, many strong bonds have shattered. Thus, personal jealousy may have affected the narrator's mind while depicting the true character of Hassan.

Amir spoke once:

“Baba would buy it for me--- but then he'd buy it for Hassan too. Sometimes I wished he wouldn't do that. Wished he'd let me be the favourite.” (Hosseini, 2013, p. 48)

Amir's dream may have some strong significance in the story. It has given some mass to the storyline because Amir's dream can be interpreted as perhaps Amir too wants for Hassan a similar respected space like he enjoys in Afghanistan. ‘Sultans of Kabul’ may resemble the status, the desired position in Kabul which Amir wants to be achieved by both the groups, Hazaras and the Pashtuns. Moreover, it is to be observed that no matter there is a difference between Amir and Hassan in terms of class, status and ethnicity but Amir always creates a space, a position for Hassan which he, perhaps, would not find if he would have worked under other person.

“We make it way out to the middle of the lake and we stop swimming. We turn toward the shore and the wave to the people. They look small like ants, but we can hear them clapping. They see now. There is no monster, just water. They change the name of the lake after that, and call it the ‘Lake of Amir and Hassan, Sultans of Kabul’
(Hosseini: 57)

Finally, Amir accepts the fact that Hassan was no more than a commodity which was to be sacrificed when needed. When Amir saw Assef brutally assaulted Hassan sexually from at a distance, he just observed, accepted and had let Hassan be the victim of the conflict and grudges between the Hazaras and the Pashtuns. He accepted that Hassan was no more than a lamb laid for slaying. This could be cited as the vivid example of the weaker sections being destroyed by the stronger when needed.

“May be Hassan was the price I had to pay, the lamb I had to slay, to win Baba. Was it a fair price? The answer floated to my conscious mind before I could thwart it: He was just a Hazara, wasn't he? (Hosseini, 2013, p.73)

III. Conclusion

In the paper, Amir, the narrator, is seen to be torn apart between his brotherhood cum friendship with Hassan who was just a Hazara and the age old history and discourse of dominating the Hazaras by the Pashtuns and these acts in the subconscious of Amir's mind. As Hassan was little learned, Amir, therefore, naturally has the 'big brotherly' feeling, so, he creates a world for Hassan. In that world, Hassan is just a clay and Amir moulds it to his wish. Hassan has no say as he was 'illiterate' for Amir, therefore, Amir speaks for him and in this act of speaking, Amir suppresses Hassan's real feelings.

In a nutshell, voicing the marginal voices is a difficult task to accomplish. There may be 'saviour' attitude behind representing the weaker sections of the society. However, if the narrator is unbiased, then a proper depiction of the discriminated section may perhaps be able to be done. The paper is a humble effort which discusses the politics and problems underlying the true representation of the marginalized. The writer's /narrator's language may come up with colonial traces or literature may come up with historical discourses influencing the representation.

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