



Exploring the Dramatic Social Change in Post-War Afghan Society in Hosseini's Novels

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Abstract

Afghanistan has undergone significant changes in a limited time period due to wars. These wars have caused swift paced developments and long-lasting impacts on the Afghan society. Hosseini has portrayed these impacts of war on Afghan society in his fictional works. His novels *The Kite Runner* (2003), *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) & *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013) represent the post-war social change in Afghanistan. The researcher tends to explore the Dramatic Social Change in his novels. This is a qualitative study employing the theory of Dramatic Social Change by Sablonniere (2017) as theoretical framework.

Keywords: War, Social change, Afghan society, Dramatic Social Change

1. Introduction

Social changes are linked with changes in different realms of human life. Wimmer (2009) and Min's (2006) claim that war is the most significant cause of social change. Considering the past of Afghanistan, one finds out that there has been no political or socioeconomic stability in the state due to wars and conflicts. International powers and local armed groups like The Taliban and the Northern Alliance have waged wars in Afghanistan, in order to get access to power, create hegemony in the region and to disseminate their religious, social and political ideologies. This struggle has left horrible and lasting effects on the Afghan society, both on individual and community level. Afghanistan has experienced significant social and political changes in the recent few decades. Hosseini has portrayed the social conditions of Afghan society before and after the war in his works.

1.2. Research objectives

The main objective of this research is:

- To investigate post-war Dramatic Social Changes in Afghan society in Hosseini's novels.

1.3. Research question

Q. No. 1: What post-war Dramatic Social Changes have taken place in Afghan society in Hosseini's novels?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Some Definitions of the Social Change

- Ritzer et al. (1987) define social change as the term used to describe changes, through time, in how people relate to one another in groups, organizations, cultures, and societies.
- Sztompka (2003) explains social change as the difference between various phases of a given system that develop through time.
- According to Kingsley Davis (1969) "Social change means such changes only, which take place in organization of the society i.e., the structural and functional aspects of the society".

2.2. Factors of Social Change

Following have been identified as the major factors of social change:

a. Technology

Technological advancement has been a major source of social change. It has revolutionized the industrialization and social life. (Tomory, 2016; Filippeti and Peyrache, 2015; Giddens, 2013, David, 2003 and Harris, 1978)

b. Ideology

Shifts in ideology, mostly, act in the backdrop of economic and sociopolitical changes. (Shatz et al., 2002; Bradat, 1999; Friere & Macedo, 1998; Funderburk & Thobaben, 1994)

c. Conflict

Conflicts play a decisive role in generation of social change within a system. (Carty and Singer, 1993; Amason, 1993; Sandole-Stratoste, 2002; Wejnert, 2002; Kriesberg, 2002 and Coser, 1974)

d. Economy

Economic systems have a wide range of additional economic effects and are crucial for social development (Lobao & Rulli, 1996; Lenski, 1966, and Marx, 1867).

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2.3. Definition of War

For this research study the Clausewitzian concept of war has been considered. Clausewitz (1984) defines war "as an act of violence intended to compel the opponents to fulfill one's will. It is a continuation of political intercourse, with a blend of other means."

2.3.1. Major Causal Factors of War

The major causal factors of war are given below:-

a. Politics

The behavior of the state is the key player in onset of a war. The war is often a consequence of a state's policy. Some states adopt war as a political means to settle conflicts. (Singer & Small, 1972; Sullivan, 1976, and Maoz, 2004).

b. The Contest For Natural Resources

Andregg (2007), Vanhanen (1992) and Wright (1965), claim struggle for resources as the major factor for wars in the world. Most of the wars are being fought for the acquiring of natural resources.

c. Psychological Factors

These factors include the personality traits like authoritarianism, dogmatism, dominance, and introvert and extrovert personalities. The individuals having personality complexes like paranoid personalities and narcissism have also been known to wage wars (Cashman 2014; Winter, 2005; Baumeister et al., 1996; Post, 1993 Etheredge, 1978).

d. Religion

Religion is mostly considered to be a key driver of the conflict, both at domestic and global level (Silvestri et al., 2015; Waseem, 2010; Srinivasan, 2009; Talbot, 2007; Bhatt, 2001; Hunington 1993 & 1997 and Lewis, 1990)

2.3.2. Impacts of War

War has deleterious effects on various segments of society including education, human health, building infrastructure, and cultural heritage. The impacts of war on the afore-mentioned segments of society have been discussed in the following sections.

a. Impact of War on Education

Wars have a negative and direct effect on education and its quality due to the prevalence and risk of violence, fear, and safety concerns. It destroys schools; causes schools to be used for military purposes or as shelters for displaced families; puts teachers and students at risk of being killed, wounded, or kidnapped; and causes psychological trauma. (Dar, 2020; Sharifian, 2019; Poirier 2012; Parlow, 2011 and Sommers, 2002).

b. Impact of War on Health

War has profound deleterious impact on human health. In addition to direct consequences, war has several indirect consequences, including physical debilitation, mental retardation and PTSD. (Lafta and Al-Nuaimi, 2019; Lindskog, 2016; Bogic et al., 2015; Levy and Sedil, 2009 and Pedersen, 2002).

c. Impact of War on Cultural Heritage

The ruination and confiscation of cultural assets have been used to overpower the vanquished nation. The forfeiture of their cultural, political and religious liberty has been used as a strategy to emphasize the victor's will and cultural domination. (Miles, 2008; Sandholtz, 2007; Stone, 2001; Dawson, 1996; Alfoldy, 1995 and Bagnal, 1990)

3. Research Methodology

This research is a qualitative study. The data are gathered from Hosseini's novels, *The Kite Runner* (TKR, henceforth), *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (ATSS, henceforth), and *And The Mountains Echoed* (ATME, henceforth).

In this dissertation, several characters from various nationalities, cultures, and socioeconomic strata have been analyzed in the light of the proposed framework given below. This study reveals the social traits of distinct individuals and the cultural norms that influence their way of life. The narratives, behaviors, ideologies, and actions of the individuals serve as the data of this study. This study highlights crucial characteristics of indigenous cultures. The changes induced in the Afghan society due to war, have been the main focus of this research. In order to meet this end, following theoretical framework has been adopted for this study.

3.1. Theoretical Framework

The DSC theory (Sablonniere, 2017) has been utilized as theoretical framework for this research.

3.2. Dramatic Social Change

According to Sablonniere (2017), DSC is defined as "deep societal alteration that induces a full rupture in the equilibrium of social systems, when their adaptive capacities are exceeded." It is proposed that DSC be specifically defined as an instance where a sudden occurrence causes a significant social shift, disrupts the equilibrium of social and normative institutions, and modifies or jeopardizes group members' cultural identities (Sablonniere, 2017). He, further, proposes that the Dramatic Social Change is a distinct phenomenon which has four salient features i.e., pace of change, rupture in social structure of society, rupture in normative structure of the society and threat to cultural identity. All these characteristic features of DSC have been discussed below: -

i. Pace of Change

The first feature that emerged is pace, which is referred as the rate at which an event has an influence on a collectivity and can either be gradual or quick.

ii. Rupture in Social Structure

According to Sablonniere (2017), a rupture in the social structure is the second hallmark of DSC; a break in the social fabric of a social unit or a group. Social structure is thus defined in this context as a system of socioeconomic stratification, social institutions, organizations, and national policies and laws that aid in structuring the norms, roles, behaviors, and values of community members.

iii. Rupture in Society's Normative Structure

The breakdown of society's normative structure is the third hallmark of DSC. The normative structure is linked to micro processes since they primarily discuss the customary behaviors and norms of the society. The normative structure is described here as the actions of most community members with the objective of accomplishing shared goals (Taylor and Sablonniere, 2013).

iv. Threats to The Cultural Identity

Threat to a group's cultural identity is the fourth feature of social change. To qualify as DSC, the cultural identity through its existing form must be threatened, questioned, or diminished in some way. Values and beliefs themselves are questioned, and the person may feel as though his or her basic group identity, moral framework, or beliefs are in danger.

3.2 Technique of Data Analysis

The researcher has used qualitative textual analysis as a technique for the analysis of the relevant data.

4. Data Analysis

i. The Rapid Pace of Change

According to Hosseini (2003, 2007 and 2013) the Soviet invasion takes place in December, 1979. The local Mujahedeen groups of Northern Alliance fight a decade long war against them. The withdrawal of the Soviet forces takes place in 1989 after their defeat. The crumbling of the Soviet union into various republics happens in 1990. After the Soviet withdrawal the political developments in Afghanistan take place in quick succession; The fall of Najibullah's Soviet backed regime (1992), the civil war between the local Mujahedeen groups of Northern Alliance (1992-1994), the meteoric rise and ascent of the Taliban (1994), their victory against the mujahedeen groups of Masoud and Rabbani (1996) the terrorist attacks of 9/ 11 (September, 2001), the American war against terror (2001) and the induction of Karzai regime (2003) have expedited the DSC in Afghanistan.

The Soviet invasion and the successive civil wars have ruined the Afghan society in almost all aspects in a short time period. There has been a swift paced destruction of social institutions like family, religion, education and healthcare, in an unanticipated manner. Natural resources, building infrastructures, have also been the receptacle of massive destruction.

The changes in the social structures of the society, in turn, have triggered changes in the normative structures of the society. These corresponding changes in the normative structures of the society also have been equally high paced. Various characters in TKR like Amir, Baba, Hassan and Rahim Khan face sudden changes in their lives. Mariam, Tariq and Laila (ATSS) also have to face unanticipated and sudden changes in their normative lives. Similarly, characters like Abdullah, Iqbal, and Nabi (ATME) experience swift changes in their everyday life due to the sudden changes in the social structures of the state.

The unanticipated and sudden changes in the social and normative structures have caused changes in the cultural identity of the individuals of the Afghan society. The Communist regime in Afghanistan has been a potential threat to the cultural and historical identity of the Afghans, as they have cultural, religious and ideological differences with the Afghan community. The ethnic minorities, like the Hazaras in Afghanistan, also have threats to their cultural identity, as a consequence of their ethnic cleansing by the Taliban, as shown in TKR by Hosseini.

ii. The Rupture in The Social Structures of The Society

The wars have caused a rupture in the major social structures like political regimes, economy, family structure, education, religion and health.

Hosseini (2003, 2007 and 2013) has shown there has been no political stability in Afghanistan. The Soviets have occupied Kabul, after killing Daoud Khan in 1979. The Soviet invasion has been the beginning of an endless deterioration of Afghanistan's political even after the Soviet withdrawal. The Soviet withdrawal (1989) has been succeeded by the regime of Northern Alliance's Mujahedeen, which topples in 1992. There has been complete anarchy in the years of civil war between the local armed groups of the Mujahedeen. The Taliban have overpowered the Northern Alliance in 1996. They have declared Afghanistan as an Islamic Emirate. The 9/11 terrorist attacks and the

America's war against terror put an end to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Karzai administration has taken control in 2002. All these developments have been quick and sudden indication the occurrence of DSC.

Different characters like Amir, Rahim Khan (TKR), Rasheed, Laila and Tariq (ATSS) and Nabi (ATME) have given their accounts on the destruction of the building infrastructure and the economy of the state. They narrate that the residential areas of Kabul have been ravaged. Most of the buildings have been demolished and the ones which have survived the turmoil of war are also inhabitable. The buildings of hotels, restaurants, pharmacies and hospitals in *JadehMaywand* and *Kartehsey* have been indiscriminately bombed. The orphanage built by Baba has also been demolished in a rocket attack. The electric supply lines, sewerage, and the roads have also been ravaged during the wars. As a result of this ramshackle of infrastructure, the people have been subjected to live distressfully. They have become homeless and insecure. Rahim Khan has called it a literal hell on earth.

Amir narrates that the destruction of Soviet war has led the people to abandon the splendid tournaments like kite flying and *Buzkashi*, which have been catering the attraction of tourists, hence, tourism industry has collapsed as a result. Most of the local population has been residing in the villages and has been dependent on Agriculture. The bombing and air raids during the wars have ravaged the agriculture in the state leading to widespread starvation and poverty. Amir has seen a person selling his prosthetic leg for money. Rasheed has to sell his chattel to meet ends. The orphanages have been the last resort for the most of the Afghan children which also have been in a very dilapidated condition.

The disintegration of the family has been another consequence of wars. Sohrab, Laila, Tariq and Hassan have lost their parents in the war. Jalil, Hakim and Fariba have lost their sons in the Soviet wars. Kamal and his father have also been killed in the wake of Soviet war. Abdullah and Iqbal also suffer separation as a result of war. The disintegration of the family has long lasting impact on the life of the surviving ones. Laila and Sohrab have to endure turbulence in the absence of their parents.

Rahim Khan has narrated the brutal conduct of the Taliban towards the people. Amir has also noticed that the Taliban have used the religious punishments to engender fear in the society. There has been no proper judiciary and the judgments have been passed on the basis of intuition. Laila also has to face vehement torture on the streets in her endeavors to meet Aziza at the orphanage. Nabi has also described the terror of the Taliban. Taliban like Assef have been found to be brutal, mean and hostile. They have been killing and tormenting people for the sake of pleasure. They have also been involved in child abuse and other illegal activities. According to Hosseini (2003, 2007 & 2013), the Taliban have manipulated the religion to meet their vested interests.

The education sector has also experienced a major setback in the wartime. Amir and Idris narrate that the schools and colleges have been demolished in war. The Kabul University has also been damaged. Laila indicates that the Soviets have been using the education institutes for the propagation of Communism through teachers like Shanzai. The Taliban despise modern education and have specially been averse to women's education. Laila informs that they have banned all the girls schools and have also put a ban on writing and reading books other than Quran. Aziza narrates that they have to conceal their science and mathematics books at the orphanage in the fear of the Taliban inspection teams. They have also burnt the historical manuscripts of the famous poets like Hafez, Saadi, Sherazi, Khalili, Nizami, Jami and Pajwak.

Along other segments of society, the healthcare facilities have also experienced destruction. Rasheed has informed his wives that the militant groups have impeded the medicine supply and the patients have been dying on the operation tables in the absence of medicine and blood. Laila also has to go through the horrible caesarian section without anesthesia. Roshana has to wait for years for her brain surgery as the local healthcare system has been unable to treat her in Afghanistan. Amra has also complaints about the fickle electricity and scarcity of facilities in hospitals of Kabul. The Taliban have banned male staffed hospitals to attend female patients. They have also closed the *Rabia Balkhi* hospital. It indicates their narrow mindedness and callous behavior.

iii. Rupture in the Normative Structure of the Society

The wars have caused rupture in the normative structures of the society. Amir narrates that during the Soviet regime the people have started to spy on others. No one has been safe as there have been Soviet informers called *rafiques* everywhere. Some people have been doing this for rewards and others for the dread of the Soviets. Rahim Khan informs Amir that during the civil war's period, people have made underground channels and tunnels for movement to avoid exposure to the snipers, who have been killing people indiscriminately. Laila also informs that people have started that people have started painting their cars in yellow color, as for some unknown reasons, the snipers of the armed groups have been sparing cabs from targeting. Laila has started to layer up to avoid pain during beating by the Taliban patrols, when she travels alone to the orphanage to meet Aziza. Nabi states that he has also grown beard, in order to avoid inconvenience from the Taliban.

The people have become mentally sick due to their protracted exposure to the war. Laila expresses that her nights pass in counting the lines of rockets and light tracers followed by explosions. Nabi has also expressed that there have been explosions of the RPG. He has also mentioned the littering of the streets with unclaimed corpses of the people. Amir has also sensed that people have become immune to the scenes of killing and bloodshed and pay no attention to the corpses hanging with poles and laid alongside the roads. It purports that Hosseini has portrayed a rupture in the normative structure of the Afghan society due to wars.

iv. Threats to the Group's Cultural Identity

The Soviet war has posed threats to the cultural identity of the Afghan society. It has been a widespread belief in Afghanistan that the Communists are infidels. This claim is further reinforced by the announcement made by Taliban on the occasion of exhibition of Communist leader Najibullah's corpse "He was a communist and a *kafir*. This is what we do with infidels who commit crimes against Islam!" (Hosseini 2007 p.165). The Afghanistan has been a Muslim state, so they consider it a threat to their religious ideology. Hosseini has highlighted in his novels that the Soviets have been emancipating women, which has been in conflict with the traditional patriarchal family system in the state. There have also been linguistic and cultural differences between the Soviets and the Afghans. So, they consider Soviets a threat to their cultural identity in all aspects.

The Taliban regime has been detrimental for the minority ethnic group of the Hazaras. Amir's servants Hassan and Ali have been Hazaras. They have been Shi'a Muslims, while, the majority of the Afghans have been Pashtun Sunni Muslims. Their appearance and culture have also been distinct. Pashtuns like Assef have a strong hatred for them. He calls them, *kasseef* Hazaras' (Hosseini 2003, p. 40). The Taliban have attacked the *Hazarajat* in 1998 and 'massacred Hazaras in Mizar-e- sharif (Hosseini 2003, p. 213). They subject the Hazaras to ethnic cleansing. Their killing on massive scale has threatened their cultural identity. The children like Sohrab have been least mindful about their cultural heritage and their cultural identity as a consequence of this carnage, which kills their parents.

The Taliban have also demolished the giant Buddha sculptures in the Bamiyan valley. They consider it as a monument of idolatry. They have stern and fanatic religious ideology and they want to obliterate everything, which they consider against their religious ideology. The Bamiyan statues have been a cultural heritage of the state. They also have been an emblem of interfaith harmony in the state. It has been an indication of the multicultural state. The demolition of these historical monuments of cultural importance, has also posed a potential threat to the cultural identity of the state on international level.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of data collected from Hosseini's novels reveals the rapid pace of events, the rupture in the social and normative structures of the society and the threats to the cultural identity. The swift collapse of the social structures like family, economy, education and political regimes has engendered the DSC. The changes in the normative structures of the society, corresponding to the rupture in the social structures of the society, also have been rapid. People have been shown to adopt different methods to cop up with the undesired circumstances of war. The genocide of the Hazaras and the demolition of the Buddha's sculptures in the Bamiyan valley depict a potential threat to the cultural identity of the Afghan community. In the light of analysis of the above pieces of evidence, it can be concluded that DSC has occurred in the post-war Afghan society.

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