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Ethnicity in Khaled Hosseini's Fiction -Khalid Hosseini

ABSTRACT

This study is about ethnicity in Khaled Hosseini's novels entitled *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *And The Mountain Echoed*. The novels are analyzed by using Sociological approach. The objectives of this study are to find out the ethnic identity in ethnicity, the types of ethnic, and the researcher concerns about ethnicity in society especially in Afghanistan. This research belongs to qualitative research. The primary data of this study are *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And The Mountain Echoed* by Khaled Hosseini novels. The secondary data of this study are taken from literary books, virtual sources and other sources that related to the issue of ethnicity. This study comes to conclusions as follows; first, four indicators indicate ethnic identity, the language, the religion, the physical traits and the fashion style. Second, the types of ethnicity is described in four types, primary and secondary ethnic group, the folk-community and nationality-community ethnic group, the majority and minority group, also the young and old ethnic group. Third, Khaled Hosseini has a concern for the suffering of Afghan people. He concerns about the oppression based on ethnicity, race or gender. Hosseini shows his hand to the minority ethnic group in Afghanistan, he gives the critique of the war that never ended, poverty and famine because of war caused death. He wants to promote gender and ethnic equality in Afghanistan.

INTRODUCTION

In this study, the researcher analyzes Khaled Hosseini's novels at once, entitled *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *And The Mountain Echoed*. In analyzing Khaled Hosseini's novels, the researcher focuses in ethnicity aspects. Many people have done study literatures in Khaled Hosseini's novels. The result of the research is grouped into three, namely; social issue, feminist issue, and psychological issue. The study which emphasizes on social issues is social and moral responsibility (Kurilah, 2009), analysis of moral value (Kholifah, 2012), cultural identity (Farlina, 2008), and impact of Afghan conflict (Wardana, 2011) . The study which emphasizes on feminists issue is oppression against women in Afghanistan (Wulandari, 2012), feminism v/s gender equity (Namita Singh, 2013), against patriarchy (Agustina, 2011), discrimination of women (Maharani, 2013), and child bride (Pramesti, 2013). The study which emphasizes on psychological issues is Amir's anxiety and motive in the novel *The Kite Runner* (Ajeng, 2013), Amir's redemption (Muhsin, 2010), the search for personal

identity (Kurniawati, 2014), and aggression in domestic violence based on frustration-aggression (Indriany, 2014).

In the previous studies, the researchers only focused on the social problems that occur in the community. They only analyze the common problem that happened in the society. Whereas the feminist issues that already analyzed mostly focused on women, who are become the victims of all the existing problems.

When reading Khaled Hosseini's novels in fact there is a fundamental issue and source of conflict depicted in the novels that is ethnic identity. In Khaled Hosseini's novels, it is clearly illustrated that the plot of the story is more describing the ethnic identity between the minority and majority groups or the ruling groups and the controlled groups. Thus, a cultural issue is feasible to get an attention from the researchers.

That is why the researcher in this study more focused in the cultural issues against the ethnic identities. In this study, the researcher will explain about the ethnic identities that portrayed in these novels, the ethnic types, and the reasons why Khaled Hosseini address ethnicity in his novels.

The ethnic Identity

In this chapter there are four ethnic identities delivered by Khaled Hosseini in his novels, namely; language, religion, physical traits, and fashion style.

Language

Pashto

Pashto is the official language of Afghanistan. The biggest ethnic group in Afghanistan Pashtuns uses this language.

Farsi

Farsi is the second language that Afghanistan people mostly used. Farsi is used by ethnic *Tajiks*; the second largest ethnic group in Afghanistan.

The narrator gives some explanation about Afghanistan in the war condition. The narrator displays that in Afghanistan was overrun by trucks. By direct utterance "*From each truck, a loudspeaker blared announcements*", based on the statement it can be known that all of the truck that pass the loudspeaker of the truck blared an announcements. The announcement that they say was in Farsi and then in Pashto. *From each truck, a loudspeaker blared announcements, first in Farsi, then Pashto. (A Thousand Splendid Suns: 144)*

Religion

Sunni Muslims

Sunni Muslim is the majority in Afghan and embraced by ethnic Pashtuns. *Hazaras* as ethnic minority in Afghan embraced Shi'a. Sunni applied to Muslims who are part of the main branch of Islam and Sunni belongs to one of the four schools of jurisprudence, Hanafi, Hanbali,

Maliki, and Shafi'i. Sunni Muslims pray five times a day. Sunni Muslims touch their head directly to the floor when they pray.

In this part, the author Khaled Hosseini describes about the religion in Afghanistan. According to direct utterance by the researcher, "*that Pashtuns were Sunni Muslims*", it is very clear that Khaled Hosseini describes that people ethnic Pashtuns was a Sunni Muslim. *The book said part of the reason Pashtuns had oppressed the Hazaras was that Pashtuns were Sunni Muslims, while Hazaras were Shi'a. (The Kite Runner: 8)*

Shi'a Muslims

Shi'a Muslims embraced by *Hazaras* the ethnic minority in Afghanistan. Shi'a Muslims pray three times a day as they joint two prayers such as *Maghrib* and *Isha*. At this plot, the author Khaled Hosseini shows some utterance about religion. Amir says directly "*Never mind any of those things*", we don't need to be worry about anything. "*Because history isn't easy to overcome*", history on the past it was like a destiny that cannot change. "*Neither is religion*", for example, when he mentioned a religion. "*I was a Pashtun and he was a Hazaras*", "*I*" in this utterance it pointed to Ali as a Pashtuns and "*he*" belongs to Hassan a *Hazaras*. Amir tells his history and fact reinforcement by "*nothing was ever going to change that. Nothing*", Amir mentioned nothing in this utterance and then he said word "*nothing*" one more time in the end of the sentence.

Never mind any of those things. Because history isn't easy to overcome. Neither is religion. In the end, I was a Pashtun and he was a Hazaras, I was Sunni and he was Shi'a, and nothing was ever going to change that. Nothing. (The Kite Runner: 22)

Types of ethnicity

Khaled Hosseini displays few types of ethnicity that he describes directly by the character. There are four types of ethnicity that described by Isajiw, namely; primary and secondary ethnic group, folk-community and nationality-community ethnic group, majority and minority ethnic group, young and old ethnic group.

Primary Ethnic group:

In his novels Khaled Hosseini describes Pashtuns ethnic is the primary group in Afghanistan. It is describes that Pashtuns as the primary ethnic group has their own rule in society. Their traditional culture and their social structure named Pashtunwali. Primary ethnic group is ethnic group which exist in the same place in which historically the ethnic have been formed. Primary ethnic group is the indigenous group.

In this part the character describes about Pashtuns.

"Pashtuns, who were the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan", according to this statement it was explain that Pashtuns is the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan. *Pashtuns, who were the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan. (A Thousand Splendid Suns: 72)*

Secondary ethnic group

In Afghanistan, there is a lot of ethnic group. In Khaled Hosseini novels it is describes ethnic *Tajiks* is the second largest ethnic group that life in Afghanistan. *Tajiks* is more minority than the Pashtuns, Pashtuns is the largest ethnic group in Afghan.

In this part, Khaled Hosseini describes about ethnic *Tajiks*. According the direct utterance

“Babi said that there were tensions between their people-the Tajiks”, it means that the character Babi or it can be known as Liala father explain that ethnic Tajik were tension between the ethnic Pashtuns. “Tajiks, who were a minority”, it was explained that ethnic Tajiks is minority. According to the explanation it can be describes Tajiks as the primary secondary ethnic group. Babi said that there were tensions between their people-the Tajiks, who were a minority... (A Thousand Splendid Suns; Page: 72)

Folk-community ethnic group

Folk-community is an ethnic group that little differentiated in social status. The character of social relationship among the member of the community is determined by skin ship and close family friendship. In this novel *Hazaras* it is describes as the part of folk-community. They are the ethnic minority in Afghanistan.

In this part, the author Khaled Hosseini describes the character named Nabi that works in Wahdati’s family. According the direct utterance by Nabi *“I was not the only servant”,* he describes that he is not only servant in the house. There is a *Hazaras* woman who come twice a week to wash the laundry in the Wahdati’s house. *I was not the only servant, after all; I have already mentioned that unscrupulous toad Zahid, and there was a jowly-faced Hazaras woman who came twice a week to wash laundry. (And The Mountain Echoed: 55)*

Minority ethnic group

The word “minority” is used to refer to categories of person who hold fewer position of the social power. It can be said that the minority group is groups who does not have a lot of right or authority in the social power. In this novel *Tajiks* is describes as the minority ethnic group, because Pashtuns as the largest group in Afghan more powerful than *Tajiks*.

In this paragraph, the author Khaled Hosseini describes the reason if there were tension between their people a *Tajiks*, who were a minority ethnic and Tariq people a Pashtuns, the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan. It was explained that *Tajiks* the minority was always felt slighted by Pashtuns the largest ethnic group. This statement was supported by the utterance *“Pashtun kings ruled this country for almost two hundred and fifty years, Laila, and Tajiks for all of nine months, back in 1929”,* it explain that *Tajiks* was leads Afghan only for nine month and Pashtuns leads Afghan almost two hundred and fifty years.

Babi said that there were tensions between their people-the Tajiks, who were a minority, and Tariq's people, the Pashtuns, who were the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan. Tajiks have always felt slighted, Babi had said. Pashtun kings ruled this country for almost two hundred and

'fifty years, Laila, and Tajiks for all of nine months, back in 1929. (A Thousand Splendid Suns: 72)

Young and old ethnic group

Ethnicity often is erroneously identified with immigrants, but immigrants make up only one type of ethnic groups. In Afghanistan there is a lot of ethnic group, for example there is Pashtuns, *Tajiks*, *Hazaras*, *Uzbeks* and many more. Most of them are immigrants. However, there is the oldest immigrant that every people know in Afghan that is Pashtuns. Pashtuns is the largest and the oldest ethnic group in Afghan.

In this part the character Assef a Pashtuns was declare by saying direct utterance “*Afghanistan is the land of Pashtuns*”, that means Afghanistan belongs to Pashtuns ethnic group. “*It always has been, always will be*”, this is explain about the time that Afghan belongs to Pashtuns from the first time until the end. “*We are the true Afghans, the pure Afghans*”, “*we are*” means Pashtuns ethnic group who claims as the pure of Afghan ethnic. “*not this Flat-Nose here*”, this word “*flat-nose*” was pointed to *Hazaras* who has flat-nose as the physical features.

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. (The Kite Runner: 35)

In this part, the character Babi or it can be known Hakim, Laila fathers. Saying directly “*Pashtuns kings ruled this country for almost two hundred and' fifty years*”, this utterance describes that Pashtuns as the largest ethnic group was lead Afghan almost two hundred and fifty years. “*Tajiks for all of nine months*”, the *Tajiks* as minority were leading Afghan only for nine months *Babi had said. Pashtuns kings ruled this country for almost two hundred and' fifty years, Laila, and Tajiks for all of nine months, back in 1929. (A Thousand Splendid Suns: 72)*

Discussion

In this discussion, the writer attends to discuss the ethnicity in Khaled Hosseini novels. The discussion focuses on ethnicity especially in Afghanistan as the setting of the Hosseini novels. The novels entitled *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And The Mountain Echoed* is a novels that published in 2003 until 2013. Khaled Hossini novels is a reflection of human life in Afghanistan, it was telling story about the picture how people in Afghanistan life before the Soviet invasion, when the soviet invasion, after the Soviet invasion and war against Taliban. In his novel Khaled Hosseini describes about Afghan culture, languages, Afghan authentic fashion, religion, tribe and many more. Hosseini address ethnicity in his novel to show how the real picture in Afghanistan about the people who live there. Hosseini describes the physical features of each ethnic very clearly. He tell the shape of nose, the physical look, eyes color, the religion of the each ethnic, language that usually used in the society, the authentic fashion and the types of ethnicity. According to the analysis in chapter four, it can be known that there are three shape of nose that Hosseini describes in his novels; flat nose, hooked nose, and slender nose.

Fashion or clothes that Afghan people use is very important. The clothes that Afghan wear it is show who are they. Before the Taliban women in Afghan wearing modern style, for

example they are wearing dress and scarf of hijab to cover their head. However, after the Taliban the women must wearing *burqa*.

Afghanistan recognizes 14 ethnic groups in the country: Pashtuns, *Tajiks*, *Hazaras*, Uzbeks, Balochis, Turkmens, Nooristanis, Pamiris, Arabs, Gujars, Brahuis, Qizilbash, Aimaq and Pashai (Abubakar Siddique, 2). Pashtuns is the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan. Ethnic Pashtuns are primarily Sunni Muslims and speak Pashto. Pashtuns social structure based on the Pashtunwali code of honor and behavior.

The second largest ethnic group in Afghanistan is *Tajiks*. *Tajiks* is known as the educated and skilled society in Afghan. In *Tajiks* speak Dari, which is very similar to Tajik (spoken in Tajikistan), and Farsi (Spoken mainly in Iran). *Tajiks* have no specific social structure and their loyalties tend to revolve around the village and family.

The third largest ethnic group in Afghan is *Hazaras*. The majority of *Hazaras* lives in Hazarasjat. Hazras are Shi'a Muslim and they speak *Hazarasgi* a dialect of Persian. Ethnic *Hazaras* it seen as the traditional underclass of Afghan society. *Hazaras* are the poorest and the most marginalized ethnic community of the country (Rais, 2008: 32). *Hazaras* have been marginalized, politically and economically, and have normally undertaken the most menial tasks within the economy. In Khaled Hosseini is novels *Hazaras* works as a servant. In Khaled Hosseini's novel entitled *The Kite Runner* the character Hassan and his father Ali are *Hazaras*, they works in Amir house more than forty years as a servant.

In these novels, it describes the types of ethnicity. There is Pashtuns as the ethnic primary in this novel. *Tajiks* is the secondary ethnic group in Afghan. Folk community is an ethnic group, which is the group members are little differentiated in social status

Pashtuns is the majority and the oldest ethnic group in Afghan, compared with Pashtuns

Tajiks is the minority. Khaled Hosseini addresses ethnicity in this novel because he wants to show the social phenomenon that happens in society. Ethnicity is a basic phenomenon in the society. Story in every Khaled Hosseini's novel is describes about his personal life. He makes all those character in his novel started from *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And The Mountain Echoed* based on his memories about his past.

Story of this novel is a picture of the memories and experience of the researcher itself. The character Amir in *The Kite Runner* novel it is reflection of the researcher when he was child. He loves to read and writing especially in literature. The little short story that Amir writes in the novel *The Kite Runner* for Hassan is something that Khaled had written in 1974. Novel *The Kite Runner* is a picture or pieces of experience of the researcher in the past, about his family, his father, his movement to France and America before the invasion of Uni Soviet.

This novel is a picture of the concern from the researcher towards relation of the ethnic in Afghanistan. According his novel, Khaled Hosseini shows his hand to the minority ethnic group in Afghan. Khaled Hosseini sided with the ethnic *Hazaras* minority, he suppo rting the ethnic equality. Khaled Hosseini supports the importance of education for women and men. Social critique of the war that never ended, poverty and famine because of war caused death, domestic violence and oppression against women.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis in the previous chapter, this study comes to conclusions as follows. Firstly, the ethnic identities described in the novels include language, religion, physical traits, and fashion style. In this novel the researcher describes two main languages that mostly Afghan people used for communication. The language is Pashto and Farsi. Pashto is used by ethnic Pashtuns; Pashto is the first main language in Afghan and Farsi is the second main language that used by Afghan people to communicate. Farsi is the mother tongue of ethnic *Tajiks*. Most of Afghan people are Muslims. Muslims in Afghanistan divided in two faith; Sunni Muslims and Shi'a Muslims. Sunni Muslim is the majority in Afghan and embraced by ethnic *Pashtuns* whereas ethnic minority *Hazaras* embraces Shi'a. Conflict that happens in Afghanistan is caused by the differences in trust between the majority and minority ethnic group. This conflict began with rebellion by the Shi'a minority to Sunni Muslims majority government whose leads Afghanistan for many years. In his novel Khaled Hosseini delivers the physical traits of Afghan people includes of the shape of nose, the physical look, eye color and bread. In his novels the most striking physical traits belongs to *Hazaras*. It is explained that *Hazaras* are descendants of Mongolian people. *Hazaras* described like a Chinese doll that have characteristic flat-nosed, slanted eyes, and low-seat ears. Most of Afghan men have bread that become their trademark, but after the war with Taliban bread become necessity for Afghan men. In these novels depicted several traditional clothes of Afghan people namely; *caracul hat*, *pakol hat*, *chapan*, *turban*, *pirhan-tumban*, for men and *burqa* for the women.

Secondly, types of ethnicity depicted in the novels can be categorized into four types that is; primary and secondary ethnic group, folk-community and nationality-community ethnic group, majority and minority ethnic group, young and old ethnic group. According to analysis on the previous chapter Pashtuns is describes as the primary ethnic group in Afghanistan. Pashtuns is the largest and the oldest ethnic group in Afghanistan. Pashtuns leads Afghan almost two hundred and fifty years. Most of Pashtuns are important people in society. Many of them become the leaders in government. The Pashtuns have social structure called Pashtunwali. Pashtunwali is traditional lifestyle, which Pashtuns people follow. The Pashtunwali have understanding of honor and pride. The *Tajiks* is the second largest ethnic group in Afghanistan. The *Tajiks*, they are known as the educated and skilled society in Afghanistan. They do not have social structure like Pashtuns. *Tajiks* have more modern way of thinking. Ethnic *Hazaras* is a part of the folk-community ethnic group. *Hazaras* as the minority group in Afghan and have normally undertaken the most menial tasks in society. In this novel it describes *Hazaras* work as a servant in Pashtuns family almost forty years.

Thirdly, Khaled Hosseini has a concern for the suffering of Afghan people. He is concerned about the oppression based on ethnicity, race or gender that happen in Afghanistan. Hosseini shows his hand to the minority ethnic group in Afghanistan, he gives the critique of the war that never ended, poverty and famine because of war caused death. He wants to promote

gender and ethnic equality. Khaled Hosseini also supports the improvement of education especially for women. Every woman has their right to get a proper education and right to be success.

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