



Research Paper

## Going beyond the Nation: The Trans-/Post-National Perspectives in the Novels of Atiq Rahimi and Khaled Hosseini

Dr. Md. Abdul Wahab

Associate Professor, Department of English  
Samsi College, Malda, West Bengal, India

**Abstract:** This dissertation discusses the diasporic perspectives of the question of “nation” and “nationalism” in the Afghan context as re-membered and represented in the novels of Atiq Rahimi and Khaled Hosseini. This research work attempts to delve into the trans/post-national as well as transcultural issues in those novels, keeping in view the ‘imaginary homeland’ of the expatriate authors, their characters and their post-real vision of ‘nation.’

**Key-Words:** Nation, nationalism, post-nationalism, transnationalism, diaspora, transculturalism etc.

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Globalization has made national boundaries more porous but not irrelevant. Nor does globalization mean the creation of a universal community.

– Joseph S. Nye Jr.  
(Nye Jr. 82)

Social structure is becoming transnationalized; an epistemological shift is required in concurrence with this ontological change.

– William I. Robinson  
(Robinson, “Beyond” 573)

In the nation-centred narratives of Atiq Rahimi and Khaled Hosseini, Afghanistan is presented in and through the mindscape of the individual characters. Most of these characters represent the Afghan populace, and in so doing conceive of themselves as the Afghan nation. Needless to say, they express their national identities, not ignoring their subnational and postnational affiliations. The diasporicity of the authors in focus and their attachment to their re-membered homeland has cast a lingering shadow over their fictionalisation of the historio-mnemonic, ecocultural and socio-cultural specificities of Afghanistan. Therefore, the present dissertation has attempted to explore the fictional world of Atiq Rahimi and Khaled Hosseini in terms of their remembering as well as re-membering of their homeland against the backdrop of a trans-/post-national reality.

Atiq Rahimi’s first novel *Earth and Ashes* delineates how the foreign forces trespassed onto and plundered the Afghan land. The contemporary past of this trespassing is evoked in the narrative by the description of movement of the army truck marked with a red star that reminds us of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The truck passes over the bridge through the road that connects Northern Afghanistan and the Kabul passes (*Earth* 10). It disturbs the earth and raises dust that dirties the body, dress and food of the protagonist (Dastaguir) and his grandson Yasin (*Earth* 11). While the indifferent army trucker represents the Soviet occupation of the land, Mirza Qadir’s younger son represent the native agent of the Soviets; because, he went to Russia and was trained there to act as an army officer (*Earth* 48). The Foreman in the Karkar coalmine acts as the native agent of the Soviets in plundering the natural resources of Afghanistan and he sponsors local youths like Murad who are sent for training so that they remain committed to the “revolution” (*Earth* 68-69). Thus, movement across and beyond the national territory is one of the motifs in Rahimi’s scheme of narrative.

In *A Thousand Rooms of Dream and Fear*, we see the dislocation of the peoples in search of safety and peace against the backdrop of internal strife and turmoil. It is a story of Farhad's trouble-some flight from the post-monarchist Afghanistan. What is more, he painfully recalls how his friend Enayat has bidden farewell to Kabul to escape the wrath of the communist administration, choosing, instead, the lot of an exile (*Thousand Rooms* 162). Farhad further remembers how, immediately after the coup, his father fled with his second wife to Pakistan leaving Farhad's mother and her three children to fend for themselves (*Thousand Rooms* 185). While remembering these cross-border escapes of his friends and relatives, Farhad proposes to Mahnaz (a widow living with her little son and her crippled brother) that they should go to Iran; but, she refuses this proposal and intends to stay back at her dead husband's home (*Thousand Rooms* 219). Mahnaz refuses to go to Pakistan with her husband's family so as to evade the customary marriage with his brother-in-law (*Thousand Rooms* 203). Besides, her paternal family members have gone to Germany via Pakistan leaving her crippled brother Moheb at her house (*Thousand Rooms* 217-18). Anyway, it is Mahnaz and Farhad's mother who manage for him to leave Kabul and escape to Pakistan with the help of a trafficker (*Thousand Rooms* 211). In fact, Iran and Pakistan as neighbouring countries functions as transits for the Afghan nationals before going to other countries like Germany and the United States in those critical years. This novel, thus, introduces the role of the traffickers in the cross-border movements and reveals the conditions that compelled a large number of Afghans to go beyond the borders in search of a safer place. Needless to say, this exodus of the Afghan people from their embattled homeland subtly hints at the establishment of transnational Afghan communities at once rooted in and estranged from their beloved watan.

*A Curse on Dostoevsky* is a representation of Afghanistan as an ideological battleground, the ideologies being both internal and external. Nonetheless, the physical movements of some persons beyond the national territory remain at the background of the narrative. Rassoul had been once to Russia. He went to Leningrad (St Petersburg) to study law and stayed there for three years (*Curse* 44). His return to Afghanistan is set against the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan after a disastrous occupation of ten years. The focus on the period becomes significant in view of Rassoul's crime of killing a wicked woman and his subsequent trial in a post-Soviet Afghanistan in the grip of chaos, because, the changes in the perception of crime as also the quantum of punishment are wrought by Time. The presence of the foreign journalists and humanitarian organisations in this context adds a transnational flavour to the narrative. Rahimi, in this novel, describes the foreign journalists at the Hotel Metropole, moving among the hotel employees and armed bearded men. While a hotel employee was busy transporting a wounded foreign journalist, Rassoul's cousin Razmodin was involved with "all the foreign journalists and UN officials" as regards Commander Parwaiz's self-hanging to save Rassoul (*Curse* 249-50). The scattered snippets help us re-member, as they do their exiled author, an Afghanistan in turmoil where civil war, foreign aid, diplomacy and espionage – all play their parts at once to aggravate and explain the situation.

*A Curse on Dostoevsky* is a critique of the extremist ideologies of alien roots –communist totalitarianism and religious fundamentalism that had disastrous subversive effects on the national life of Afghanistan. Rahimi takes pains to highlight how the Afghan polity under the influences of these ideologies, during the wars of 1980s and '90s respectively, badly affected the society and culture of Afghanistan. In the context of the rapid disintegration of Afghan life, Rassoul, the protagonist of this novel, imports, from Leningrad, the spiritualist ideology of Dostoevsky as an antidote to those contending extremisms. Rassoul and Commander Parwaiz find Dostoevsky's ideology compatible with the Afghan Sufi tradition. It is important to note that Rassoul counterpoises Soviet communism and Dostoevsky's ideology both rooted at the same foreign land namely Russia. The transnational dissemination of ideologies that Arjun Appadurai calls "ideoscapes" are, thus, paralleled by the cross-border travel of the individuals and communities that Appadurai terms (Appadurai 33-34).

In *A Curse on Dostoevsky*, Rahimi's inter-/post-national vision of life encompasses three inclusive spiritual ideologies taken from three different cultures – Sufi Islam of Afghan tradition, Dostoevsky's (predominantly Christian) spiritualism and the Vedantic spiritualism of Hindu tradition. The third one is found, for instance, in the reference to the buzzing sound of the fly, that Rassoul listens to and that appears as "tat ... tvam, tvam ... asi ..." (*Curse* 239). This sound echoes the proverbial Sanskrit mahavakya (pronouncement) "Tat Tvam Asi." It is one of the four prominent Vedanta pronouncements. Taken from Chandogya Upanishad of Sam Veda, "Tat Tvam Asi" means "That thou art" and it expresses "the relationship between the individual and the Absolute" ("Tat tvam asi"). "Tat tvam asi" becomes a recurrent motif in the last part of the narrative. Rassoul has heard it as a song of an Indian film and now the flies and the birds sing this for him (*Curse* 239-245). Rassoul is absorbed so much with this song that he hears it even in his dream and later on discusses it with the clerk of the court (*Curse* 248). The clerk interprets its meaning as "you too are this" (*Curse* 249) – suggesting that all the creatures are the manifestations of the Absolute God. Such a spiritualistic philosophy of life leads one to love all human beings and all other creatures of God, which is why Rassoul and

some other characters like him consider such kind of ecocultural spiritualism to be required for the regeneration of Afghanistan, and the globe as well.

In fact, whereas the civil war of the mujahedin phase and the subsequent fundamentalism of the Taliban rule choked the Afghan life, *A Curse on Dostoevsky* proclaims a transcending love for man and Nature that may help Afghans overcome all the boundaries of the tribes and nations, cultures and creeds. Commenting on the importance of sacrifice or renunciation of a party to stop war and its accompanying culture of vengeance, Commander Parwaiz, Rahimi's mouthpiece in the novel, quotes Gandhi during his conversation with Rassoul, "An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind" (*Curse* 210). Parwaiz's commitment to this Gandhian philosophy of ahimsa is revealed in his suicide note that reads, "Mourn me, don't avenge me!" (*Curse* 250). Rahimi's internationalism, here, has points of affinity with that of Rabindranath Tagore as expressed in Tagore's critique of *Nationalism* and in the novel *The Home and the World*. According to Tagore, the "fierce self idolatry of nation-worship" is not the "goal of human history" (*Nationalism* 14). Rahimi describes his postnational subjectivity in an interview with JK Fowler (Rahimi, "Literary"). Besides, Rahimi highlights his diasporic sensibility in this interview, "When I am in France, I am an Afghan. When I am in Afghanistan, I am French. Now I say that I don't live within a country. I live within the world" (Rahimi, "Literary"). Needless to say, his creative credo is forged out of this urge to connect cultures and fashion a collective ethos.

In fact, going beyond the national borders is a part of Rahimi's real life. The first experiment he made was in 1979 at the age of sixteen during his first flight to Pakistan and thereafter to India to join his exiled father in Bombay. In this context, Gerry Feehily mentions in *The Independent* (December 7, 2002) that his father was formerly a provincial governor under King Zahir Shah; but with the coup of 1973 by the King's cousin, he was jailed by the new republic regime for his support to the constitutional monarchy. Thereafter, his father exiled himself in India. As Rahimi revealed to the interviewer JK Fowler, he travelled alone throughout India at the age of 16 without any visa, and this voyage afforded him a discovery of his own self and identity (Rahimi, "Literary"). In that interview, Rahimi asserts that he met himself at that time and that voyage surely changed him in terms of religion and ideology. But as he was without visa, he had to spend a night in jail and to leave India after one and a half years. He had not enough money to go to any other country, he had to come back to Afghanistan. Significantly, this first unconventional foreign visit occurred between his school education and university education in Kabul. Rahimi's second exile happened in the summer of 1984 when he and 23 other young students (including his future wife) travelled on foot passing nine days and nine nights before they arrived in Pakistan. Rahimi applied for asylum at the French embassy in Pakistan, and forty days later he reached France in March of 1985 (Rahimi, "Literary").

A similar displacement from home to abroad affected the family of Khaled Hosseini. Needless to say, it has had a shaping influence on Hosseini's works of fiction. His father was a diplomat attached to the Foreign Ministry of Afghanistan in Kabul at a time of political tranquility. According to the online biography entitled "Khaled Hosseini, M.D." published by the Academy of Achievement, Hosseini had his first experience of moving abroad with his family when he was only five. It was the early 1970s when his father was posted in the Afghan embassy in Tehran (Iran) and Hosseini had to stay there with the family. At this time, the young Hosseini avidly read Farsi fiction and wrote short-stories much like the young Amir in his first novel *The Kite Runner*. In fact, Amir reflects many other elements of the author's early childhood. For instance, when Amir was a mere child, his father too made a trip to Tehran (Iran) in 1970, however, to watch the World Cup games on television, as there was no television yet in Afghanistan at that time (*Kite* 19). The question of Iran of 1970s ruled by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi is significantly suggested, as it was a time of friendly relationship between the United States and Iran. Amir's father criticises the Afghans for their jealousy of Iran, as, according to him, it was "a rising power in Asia" whereas Afghanistan could not be traced on a world map by most people throughout the world (*Kite* 54). The Afghan jealousy of Iran has ethno-religious reasons. For example, while Amir's teacher (a Sunni Muslim) characterises the Iranians as pickpockets, Hassan (a Shia Hazara) applauds them because Iran has a predominantly Shia population (*Kite* 58). Amir remembers the Iranian support of Afghan Hazaras and opines that Iran was a sanctuary for the Hazara community. (*Kite* 58). Thus, it is seen how Hosseini scrutinises quite a number of issues and factors that affect the attitude of the people of a nation towards that of other nations. While staying in Tehran, young Hosseini befriended their family cook who belonged to the Hazara ethnic group and taught him how to read and write. According to the Academy of Achievement (an online organisation), it was Hosseini's first awareness of social exclusion and discrimination of the minority Hazaras meted out by the Pashtun majority in his native land ("Khaled Hosseini, M.D."). Ali and Hassan represent this ethnic aspect of the question of sub-nationalism in *The Kite Runner*. The Mongoloid features and Chinese appearance of the Hazaras like Hassan (*Kite* 8) have been described to show how the ethnocentric discourse links ethnic identity of these minority people beyond their nation in the similar way as the majority

Pashtuns like Assef (*Kite* 35-39) are linked to the Aryans of Indo-Iranian and Indo-European root beyond their national identity.

Hosseini's childhood literacy activism is paralleled by that of Amir's wife Soraya and this too has an Iranian connection. When Soraya was a child in Kabul, she too taught an illiterate woman namely Ziba (their housekeeper) who had to read and write letters to communicate with her sister living in Mashad in Iran (*Kite* 151). Again, after settling down life in the United States, Amir's father prefers to be treated by the Iranian doctor namely Dr Amani, discarding in the process, Dr Schneider whose Russian roots he positively abhors (*Kite* 145). This not-too-rational hatred of Amir's father for an American citizen of Russian origin is rooted in his past – in the recent history of the Russian occupation of his native land (Afghanistan) that caused miseries to and dislocation of many an Afghan like him. Thus, the “melting pot” model of an assimilationist culture where individuals of diverse origin can intermingle, fails to appeal to victims of ethno-nationalist upheaval that Agha Sahib represents. He is still unable to erase the memories of his homeland and its relation with other nations, and therefore it still affects his social behaviour in a country where his anti-Russian attitude seems a nuisance. Such a psycho-social scrutiny of the interrelationship among peoples of diverse origins, shows Hosseini's concern with the internationalism and his handling of its diverse issues and tissues in his narrative.

The theme of internationalism has been broadened in *The Kite Runner* by the stories of the travels of Amir's Father to Russia (*Kite* 80) certainly at a time when Afghanistan had a friendly relation with the latter country, and his travels to India (*Kite* 80) where once he caught malaria (*Kite* 141). We find a number of other references to human movements across national borders – for instance, the story of Amir's paternal uncle Kaka Homayoun's stay in France for his study of engineering ten years back (*Kite* 77, 79). How language and literature bind two nations is shown by the character of Dr Rasul who was once a colleague of Amir's mother Sofia Akrami in the University and who taught Farsi classical literature from 1958 to 1996 there (*Kite* 230). Though he has been reduced to a street beggar now because of the Taliban ban on teaching such subjects, he remembers his happy days when he once travelled to Tehran (Iran) in 1971 as a guest lecturer to deliver his invited lecture on the classical Farsi Sufi Literature (*Kite* 230). Dr Kumar, a plastic surgeon, who comes from New Delhi to Kabul at the summons of Amir's father to operate on the hare-lipped Hassan (*Kite* 42-43), represents such another cross-border traveller. Dr Kumar's ability to speak Farsi, though with a thick Hindi accent, is notable here, and shows how language functions in communication between peoples of different nations and also how peoples of different nations learn to use one another's languages as they travel to and fro across borders and boundaries.

Both Atiq Rahimi and Khaled Hosseini are conscious about the role of cultural artefacts, especially literature, films and songs, in binding different nations. Therefore, their novels give prominence to this cultural exchange while re-membering the nation as well as transnations. In *A Curse on Dostoevsky*, for instance, Rassoul's allusion to the song of an Indian film, having the words “Tat tvam asi,” has already been discussed. In *The Patience Stone*, the unnamed female protagonist too refers to the Indian film in which the heroine kisses her lover. Going a step further, the present protagonist also desires to kiss her husband passionately after his return from the war (*Patience* 345). In *The Kite Runner*, Hindi movies that the young Amir and Hassan watch together (*Kite* 101), Indian gazal and raga that Khala Jamila sings and the tapes of Hindi singers from General Taheri's collection (*Kite* 173), the song from the Hindi movie *Pakeeza* that Amir remembers while listening to the radio music in Islamabad with his nephew Sohrab before going back to the United States (*Kite* 294), the posters of Hindi films in glass displays in Jalil's cinema hall in Herat in *A Thousands Splendid Suns* (6), the Hindi romantic films that Tariq and Laila saw together (*Thousands* 274), the reference in *And the Mountains Echoed* to an Indian film which the young Abdullah noticed in a big-size poster of a beautiful Indian female actor in sari in a tulip field (34) – all these instances stress the closeness of the cultural bond between Afghanistan and India.

Hosseini refers to Pakistan's Lollywood movies also. While visiting Afghan refugee area in Peshawar, Amir notices “Lollywood movie posters displayed sultry actresses dancing with handsome, brown-skinned in fields of marigolds” (207). Again, while staying in a hospital there after rescuing Sohrab from Kabul, the nurse Aisha consoles him that he would be all right similarly as her handsome son-in-law recovered his asphalt-burnt face: “Now he is beautiful again like a Lollywood movie star” (278).

Because of the linguistic and cultural affinity, Iranian films also were popular in cinema halls in Afghanistan. For instance, Amir remembers his childhood experience with Hassan of visiting “Cinema Zainab for a new Iranian movie” (*Kite* 6). Hosseini recognises another Iranian contribution to this cultural sector is presenting the Western films dubbed in Farsi. For instance, the first western film in Farsi dubbing which Amir and Hassan saw together at the Cinema Park was *Rio Bravo* (1959 Hollywood film) starring John Wayne. Though the young Amir thought John Wayne and other actors as Iranians, his father removed his wrong idea by

explaining the ‘concept of voice dubbing’ and by citing the examples of “friendly, long-haired men and women” they would see around Kabul of that time (*Kite* 25). Another significant American film dubbed in Farsi that Amir saw thirteen times was the thriller action film *The Magnificent Seven* (1960). It is significant to note the description of Amir’s crying with each viewing of the scene of the “Mexican kids burying Charles Bronson” and his confirmation that Bronson was not an Iranian either (*Kite* 25). These films instantiate Hosseini’s art of intertextuality to convey his idea of transnationalism by describing common human experiences which are universally true to all the national communities. The friendly diplomatic relationship between the United States and Iran in the 1970s, and the accompanying cultural bond between the United States and Iran that young Amir and his creator Hosseini witnessed that time may be contrasted with the diplomatic rift between these two nations when the adult Amir and his author Hosseini recounts those memories in a post 9/11 era. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Mariam’s little step-sister Niloufar played the gramophone music of the song “You are the Sultan of my heart” which she listened to in an Iranian film played in her father’s (Jalil’s) cinema hall (41). Hosseini, though an Afghan American himself, does not present Iran as an enemy of the United States, perhaps because Iran was a friendly neighbour of Afghanistan with a strong Afghan-Iranian cultural bond. The free Russian movies that young Amir saw at Cinema Park on Tuesday mornings (*Kite* 45) is also significantly described. Even in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Tariq and Laila saw the Soviet romantic film dubbed in Farsi in the same Cinema Park (153-54). These reminiscences in connection with Iran and Russia of 1970s is very significant as the Iranian Revolution and Russian occupation of Afghanistan took place in the same year i.e. 1979 turning Afghanistan as an important country of diplomatic attention of the United States.

It is significant to note how Amir’s childhood memories of the American films help him compare his present life in the United States with his past life in Afghanistan. The cultural bond between Afghanistan and the United States is remembered by Amir with reference to the Hollywood action thriller film *Bullit* (1968) that “played” in one theatre for six months in Kabul of his childhood (*Kite* 26). How the cultural imagination of young Amir was coloured by the western films is described in another context: “The previous year, Baba had surprised Hassan with a leather cowboy hat just like the one Clint Eastwood wore in *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*—which had unseated *The Magnificent Seven* as our favorite Western” (*Kite* 41-42). Amir also fondly recalls the 1961 historical film *El Cid* starring Charlton Heston that was played at Cinema Aryana (*Kite* 76). In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Jalil informs his daughter Mariam of the American Walt Disney’s cartoon film *Pinocchio* with the story of a childless toymaker and his adventure to the magical Treasure Island (25). Hosseini, in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, has shown how, in spite of the prohibition of showing movies during the period of Taliban rule, the “Titanic fever gripped Kabul” as the Afghans smuggled pirated copies of the 1997 American film *Titanic* from Pakistan and watched the film in low volume by locking their doors and by shedding “tears for Jack and Rose the passengers of the doomed ship” (96). It is also noted that Mariam and Laila along with the children watched this movie dozen times by unearthing the TV late at night and by closing their doors and windows (*Thousands* 96).

Hosseini fictionalises also the post-Taliban attempts of cultural restoration especially cinema. Along with decoration of the Kabul city with plants and flowers, the music that the Taliban once banned, now once again is played. For instance Tariq and Laila listens to the music at Kabul’s street corners – old Ahmad Zahir songs, tabla and rubab, tamboura and dootar and harmonium (*Thousands* 398). Similarly, the cinema halls like Cinema Park begins to openly screen movies like *Titanic* for the people of Kabul (397). This revival of films is found in *And the Mountains Echoed* wherein Idris shows Roshni films the tapes of which he purchases from the nearby store *E.T., Babe, Toy Story* and *The Iron Gate* (153). In the same novel, Adel and his father’s security guard Kabir watch such films like *Resident Evil, Call of Duty, Lawrence of Arabia* (*Mountains* 250). Kabir’s collection of movies include Iranian, French, American and Bollywood (*Mountains* 249).

The afore-mentioned instances are counted in the novels to highlight the culturally liberal past of Afghanistan and the present attempts to revive the same as a contrast to the Taliban-prompted shutdown of the cinema halls and other cultural artefacts. For instance, in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Tariq and Laila remember how the Taliban banned music and painting, ransacked the projection rooms of the halls like Cinema Park, Ariana, Aryub etc. and set the reels of films to fire (274). Both Rahimi and Hosseini utilise such contrasts as a useful narrative device to scrutinise the Islamist fundamentalism that ruthlessly attempted to transform such a liberal culture of Afghanistan into homogenous and claustrophobic dullness. Needless to say, the idea of the nation that Rahimi and Hosseini tries to explore re-membering their homeland, has a significant cultural dimension to it. During this act of re-membering the works of Rumi and Firdausi, the oral narratives of and from a bygone mythical past, cultural artefacts from neighbouring and/or domineering countries, and the Islamic cultural tradition of nearly thirteen centuries – all these diverse elements collide and coalesce to construct a cultural nationalism that binds the Afghan peoples and inspires the authors in question. In this connection, we may clinch the point by referring to what Atiq Rahimi had to say on Afghanistan’s cultural identity: “The

identity which was born between the east and west civilizations, and grew up through the amalgamation of Indian, Greek, Persian, Arabic and Chinese art, centuries ago. All the noteworthy efforts of the artists today, is a quest to achieve this lost identity” (Rahimi, “We have art”).

Connection between the populations of Afghanistan and Pakistan also has been alluded to in the narratives of Rahimi and Hosseini. We have already noted it in connection with Farhad’s intended journey to Pakistan in *A Thousand Rooms of Dream and Fear*. We have noted also in this novel the role of the human traffickers. In Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner*, we find Karim as a trafficker smuggling people out of the Soviet-occupied Kabul to Pakistan for safety (*Kite* 103). Amir remembers in details how he and his father along with other refugees travelled by a truck across the border of Afghanistan via the Khyber Pass into Peshawar (*Kite* 103). From Pakistan they finally reached the United States in 1981. *The Kite Runner* is, thus, a narrative of Amir’s reminiscences from a far-off place about his childhood spent in his homeland Afghanistan, his return twenty years later to meet his family friend Rahim Khan in Peshawar and to rescue his nephew Sohrab from Kabul, and finally his return to his host land the United States. Pakistan functions as a veritable sanctuary for many Afghan refugees and also as a transit point for them before fleeing to other countries. The mutual relationship between the Afghans and the Pakistanis has been highlighted by Gholam, Amir’s driver in Pakistan, who opines that the Pakistanis and the Afghans are like brothers (*Kite* 180). Amir notices that a section of the Afghan migrants have settled near Peshawar University. It is an area which Gholam refers to as a little ‘Afghan Town’ with small business establishments (*Kite* 181). It is, therefore, not unnatural to find that Amir’s family friend Rahim Khan resides there (*Kite* 181). The Afghans have painted the maps of Afghanistan on their windows (*Kite* 180), which display their love of homeland and the way they remember their nation from afar.

Hosseini’s fourth book *Sea Prayer*, a short and illustrated montage of only 537 words in the form of a monologue of a father who is waiting with his son and his wife along with many other homeless persons of diverse origins to board a ship and to travel across the Mediterranean sea ‘in search of home’ in Europe. The speaker in *Sea Prayer* belongs to the war-affected Syrian city of Homs, remembers the past happy days of his family and his nation, mulls over the night-like darkness of their present crises, and jumps into an uncertain transnational future. He seeks hope through prayers to God while facing the sea of dangers. This book testifies to Hosseini’s awareness of as well as concern for the refugee crisis as a global tragedy of which the Afghans have become a part:

Your mother is here tonight, Marwan, with us, on this cold and moonlit beach, among the crying babies and the women worrying in tongues we don’t speak. Afghans and Somalis and Iraqis and Eritreans and Syrians. All of us impatient for sunrise, all of us in dread of it. All of us in search of home. (*Sea Prayer*)

In the “Afterword” to *The Kite Runner*, Hosseini counts that the war compelled as many as eight million Afghans to live as refugees abroad including the neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Iran (*Kite* 342). Dispersal of the Afghan refugees in different parts of the globe is noted in all four works of Khaled Hosseini. Apart from Pakistan, Iran and the United States, we find the Afghans like the parents of Assef (the antagonist in *The Kite Runner*) who fled to Australia where they own an Afghan Restaurant and two jewellery shops (*Kite* 259). While in *The Kite Runner*, Peshawar is described as an Afghan refugee hub in Pakistan, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* locates Muree in the Rawalpindi District where Laila and Tariq take refuge (*Thousand* 365). After the Karzai Government took power in Afghanistan, Laila and Tariq return to Kabul through the shortest route, crossing the Iranian town Mashad and see the Afghan refugee camps on the way (*Thousand* 381). Returning to their home in Kabul, they contribute to the reconstruction of Afghanistan in their own humble way by rebuilding Zaman’s orphanage and its classrooms (*Thousand* 399-401). Amir and his wife Soraya in *The Kite Runner* become social activists and set up a hospital in Rawalpindi for the treatment of the Afghan refugees (*Kite* 335-36). Hosseini notes in the “Afterword” to *The Kite Runner* that while around five million refugees returned home after 2002 with the assistance of the UNHRC and UNRA, still three million live in different parts of the world including two million living in Pakistan (*Kite* 342). In fact, refugee crisis often becomes an obvious consequence of a land in turmoil and its transnational dimensions get revealed in and through poverty, squalor and strife that the refugees are forced to endure in foreign lands. The role of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and United Nations Refugee Agency (UNRA) in circumventing the prickly concept of territorial boundaries can be seen in such human crises. Khaled Hosseini as an envoy of United Nations Refugee Agency observed the severe conditions of the life of the returnees in Northern Afghanistan in 2007 and established the Khaled Hosseini Foundation that collaborates with United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in resettling the Afghan returnees in Afghanistan, as Hosseini describes in the aforementioned “Afterword” (*Kite* 342).

*The Kite Runner* is an autobiographical novel, for, Amir's life mirrors that of his creator. Hosseini acknowledges it in the "Foreword to the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition" of the novel. In this "Foreword," Hosseini points out that though a sizable portion of the novel is based on his own family experiences in Afghanistan and California respectively, his personal trip to his Afghan homeland occurred after the novel had been written. Nevertheless, the author's homecoming experience was not much different from Amir's. This fact bears out the extent and intensity of Hosseini's place-attachment to Afghanistan even while living abroad. Hosseini's remembering, thus, is centred not only in the past of his homeland, but it prophesies her future in the form of presentiment based on probability and expectation which creates a certain kind of "hallucination of memory," a psychological phenomenon as analysed by William James (James, *Principles* 1:374).

Global network of terrorism is another element that had much to do with the ruination of Afghanistan and in the worsening of its relation with the world. How the foreign terrorist organisations got involved in the affairs of the Afghan nation during the Taliban seize of power, is referred to in the novels of Khaled Hosseini. For instance, in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, when Rashid persuades the doorman of the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul to allow Mariam to use his supervisor's satellite phone for a calling her father Jalil, they hear the individuals speaking Pashto and Farsi, but Urdu and Arabic too (*Thousand* 300). Rasheed clarifies the matter to Mariam that these Pakistani and Arab Islamists are the "real masters" controlling the Taliban as puppets and these big players have made Afghanistan their playground (*Thousand* 300). Rashid hints at the Al-Qaida whom the Taliban allowed to set up secret camps throughout the country to train young men to become "suicide bombers and jihadi fighters" (*Thousand* 300). Consequently, the 9/11 terror attack on the United States and the subsequent war on terror with incessant bombardment of the bases of the Taliban and Al-Qaida greatly affected Afghanistan (*Thousand* 371-75). As a consequence, the international Security Assistance Force (ISAF) arrived in Afghanistan to assist the coalition forces. They helped the interim government under President Hamid Karzai by ousting the Al-Qaida and Taliban elements (*Thousand* 377). Hosseini has given a broader perspective to the question of the Afghan nation by dealing with the phenomenon of global terrorism as a threat to the nations, its effect on Afghanistan, and the peace process under the aegis of the United Nations.

Khaled Hosseini's re-remembering of the Afghan nation includes his criticism of the constrictive nature of the so-called Pan-Islamism which, like other world religions, transcends the national borders. For instance, in *The Kite Runner*, the Pakistani driver Gholam opines that Pakistanis and Afghans are like brothers because of their religious affinity and that "Muslims have to help Muslims so" (*Kite* 180). To counter this parochial attitude, a broader view of humanism is introduced in the persons of the protagonist Amir and his father (Baba), who though strongly attached to their religion, may love and understand humanity with all its differences and imperfections. As such, Baba can stand up to the brutality of his drunken Soviet soldier, but bows before the latter's civil and considerate superior officer, and, though a mere lad, Amir can instinctively understand his father and feel proud of him. While visiting Kabul, Amir's driver-cum-guide Farid criticises the foreign Muslims's support for the Taliban, "The real brains of this government, if you can call it that: Arabs, Chechens, Pakistanis ... they call them here, guests. I think someday these guests are going to pee all over the carpet" (*Kite* 239). Hassan in his letter to Amir mentions the ruling Islamist Taliban as the "savages" with no kindness and no care for "human decency." An irate Hassan further points out how their (the Taliban) Ministry of Vice and Virtue breeds inhumanity and ruthlessness (*Kite* 200). In fact, both Rahimi and Hosseini denounce this kind of political Islam sans the palliatives of humanism and spiritualism. Needless to say, they favour the spiritual Islam that promotes universal love and brotherhood.

*And the Mountains Echoed* represents the great effort to establish peace and prosperity in Afghanistan, as part of which men and women from different nations assist in the reconstruction the war-ravaged country. As Nabi remembers in his letter to the aid worker Markos Varvaris, thousands of aid workers flocked to Kabul from different corners of the world to set up clinics and schools, to rebuild roads and irrigation waterways, and to provide food, shelter and jobs (*Mountains* 128). Markos, a renowned plastic surgeon, is working in a non-profit organization with an office at Wazir Akbar Khan Hospital in Kabul. He has been staying in Kabul for a decade after coming from his homeland Greece in 2002 (*Mountains* 234). He has learnt Farsi (*Mountains* 234) for better communication with the Afghans so that he can provide them with better service. It is Markos who helps Pari to find out her Afghan roots by calling her to claim her Property inherited by her uncle Nabi from her adoptive father Suleiman Wahdati (*Mountains* 235). Another aid worker of the kind is the brave Bosnian nurse Ms Amra Ademovic whom Nabi praises, for her compassion and kindness to the Afghans in Kabul (*Mountains* 72). Amra works with a small NGO at the hospital and, on Mondays, runs a mobile clinic (*Mountains* 133, 148). She nurses the seriously wounded Afghan girl Roshi/Roshana (*Mountains* 134) whose family members have been killed by her paternal uncle (*Mountains* 149-50) and whom she adopts later on. In fact, Afghanistan has been seen from many angles in *And the Mountains Echoed*, and the service of a woman like Amra to the suffering

peoples of different countries including Afghanistan (*Mountains* 148) is an instance of the “milk of human kindness” that denies and defies all borders.

After the death of Suleiman Wahdati, his house near Wazir Akbar Khan Hospital is transformed into a microcosm of the post-national condition where aid-workers from different nations reside free of rent and many others assemble intermingling and intercommunicating in different languages – not only in English and Farsi, but also in German, French, Greek, Dutch etc. (*Mountains* 144-45). Both Markos and Amra reside in the house of Suleiman Wahdati who bequeathed it to Nabi. The Afghan-Americans like Timur and Idrish individually participate in the humanitarian effort and in tandem with the foreign aid workers. Both of them attend the party hosted by Markos in that house in 2003 (*Mountains* 121). The discussion that takes place in that party gives a running commentary on the contemporary Afghan situation (*Mountains* 141-155). For instance, after listening to the tragedy of Roshi and the ruthless killing of her family members by her uncle, Idris thinks over her tragedy vis-a-vis that of Afghanistan. He remarks that in Roshi’s case, one cannot blame the Taliban and Mullah Omar, or al-Qaeda and Bin Laden, or a megalomaniac Mujahedin commander like Hekmatyar, or Bush and his War on Terror (*Mountains* 150). Idris further holds that this familial tragedy represents what is called a senseless act of violence and murder. According to him, the carnage, perpetrated on Afghanistan by those bigger powers, both local and foreign, should not be termed as their “sensible” act (*Mountains* 150).

Khaled Hosseini admits, in an interview with team of Goodreads in 2012, that, the young doctor (Idris) of *And the Mountains Echoed* reflects Hosseini’s own experience, and both of them have a remarkable “sense of homecoming” when the aeroplane approaches Kabul and they can see their city spreading out underneath (Hosseini, “Interview” by Goodreads). For Hosseini, writing fiction is akin to mental journey back to his homeland. In the same interview, Hosseini makes it clear that the perspective of his writing is that of the “Afghani exile” –the perspective of the Afghan diaspora including many others like him. In this, his third novel, Idris meets Roshi, a victim of violence, and give her gifts in the hospital in Kabul; years after in the United States, Idris meets a new Roshi, now a successful writer of a fast-selling memoir (*Mountains* 171). Her dedication of the book to Amra and Timur as her angels and saviours is indirectly Hosseini’s dedication of his books to the saviours of Afghans in distress both at home and abroad. As a matter of fact, Roshi represents all Afghan writers settled inside or outside the Afghan borders. These writers raise the real issues affecting Afghanistan today as opposed to the sensation-mongering exoticisation of their homeland by a T.R.P.-crazy western media coverage.

Like other novels of Hosseini, *And the Mountains Echoed* is a diasporic reconstruction of the Afghan national imaginary that is circumscribed by both time and place. For instance, the introductory story of Baba Ayub and the *Div* is apparently a folk myth, but allegorically it represents the only-too-humane story of Saboor and his family; for the painful sacrifice of one for the many is a common denominator of both the stories. Still on a macro level, it reflects the Afghan condition with all its unglossed squalor. While Baba Ayub of the story is the common Afghan since time immemorial, the *Div* is the outside force that has assailed Afghanistan time and again including the Greeks, the Mughals, the British, the Soviet, the worldwide terrorist network, and finally the United States. The only difference wrought in by the melioristic vision of Hosseini is that, unlike the sinister foreign forces, the mythical *Div* transforms both the land of Maidan Sabz and the lad Qais for the better. While Ayub has to surrender his best son Qais to *Div*, Saboor has to surrender his daughter Pari. Saboor tells this supernatural story to his son and daughter, but surrealistically reveals his own vision of the fate of his daughter. As Ayub decides not to bring back Qais from *Div*’s magic garden after he has found that Qais was growing healthy, playing with other mates, and learning arts, philosophy and science there. Similarly, Saboor might have thought of Pari’s better upbringing by the Wahdatis. As the story develops, the little Pari is taken away to France where she adopts a new culture and becomes a mathematician of international repute after completion of higher education. On the other hand, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan compels her forgotten sibling (Abdullah) to leave Afghanistan, to stay as a refugee with his step-brother Iqbal in Pakistan, and finally to take asylum in the United States. Thus, France and the United States get prominence as two locations of the Afghan diaspora in the narrative of *And the Mountains Echoed*.

In presenting the diasporic experience as regards France, Rahimi and Hosseini differs a lot. While Hosseini presents France through the characters like Nila Wahdati and Pari, Rahimi instils his French influence in his narrative style and into the mind of his Afghan characters. Before we return to *And the Mountains Echoed*, it is better to clarify Rahimi’s instance in this respect. As Rahimi informs in his interview with Tobias Grey, when he was a student of literature in the University of Kabul, he was greatly influenced by the French philosophers and writers like Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, André Malraux; and the dominant communist youth committee censored him for his talk on Albert Camus at that time. He was neither a communist like many other youths in the university nor a royalist like his father. He was so much influenced by those afore-mentioned



French authors (who are often associated with the philosophies of absurdism, existentialism and anarchism) that he unhesitatingly claimed himself as an anarchist in that conversation with Sophia Stein:

I am part of a very unique family: my father was a monarchist, my brother was a communist, and my mother and sister were mystics, so I had no other choice than to be an anarchist. I created a lot of distance from the family, so I could make my own life. (Rahimi, "Interview ..." by Sophia Stein)

After Rahimi had immigrated to France, he completed his higher studies at the Sorbonne (University of Paris) and took the career of a creative writer and film director. His fictional characters imbibed his anarchist spirit to rebuild the world into an order. Farhad of *A Thousand Rooms of Dream and Fear*, the female protagonist of *The Patience Stone* to some extent, and Rassoul of *A Curse on Dostoevsky* show their author's anarchist reaction to the societal patterns and political misrules of the time in his native country. The presentation of the stories bear Rahimi's imbuelement of the influence of the afore-mentioned French authors. This French-Afghan cross-cultural amalgamation in Rahimi's novels shows a reflection of his diasporicity.

On the other hand, Hosseini's narrative in *And the Mountains Echoed* imbibed many such French elements that he saw during his stay with his father in Paris. The online organisation *Academy of Achievement* records, in "Khaled Hosseini, M.D.," that on being posted in the Afghan Embassy in Paris, Hosseini's father and his family left Kabul in 1976 and lived in Paris from 1976 to 1980. With the communist coup in Afghanistan in 1978 and subsequent repression of the royalists, they could not return to Afghanistan. As a consequence, on his father's appeal, the United States granted them political asylum and finally they arrived in San Jose, California in 1980 when Hosseini was 15.

Thus, Hosseini's own journey to Paris from the 1970s' muddle of Afghanistan follows Nila and Pari's flee from that of 1960s' Afghanistan in *And the Mountains Echoed*. Nila and Pari draw on Hosseini's time in Paris. Nila as a poet and Pari as a renowned mathematician focus on the women's life when they embrace the French culture, as Zoë Bradley remarked in the book-review entitled "Khaled Hosseini inspired by French capital for third novel." Zoë Bradley noted that, *And the Mountains Echoed* narrates the "romantic escapades and cigarette smoke that one expects from Parisian-set tales" and navigates into "many equally interesting settings such as Greece where the tale of love, betrayal and family is played out." The unmatched narrative of Hosseini about Nila's and Pari's explorations of Paris after their arrival from Afghanistan, reveals his own diasporic observation of the French capital while staying in France.

It was a tough time for Hosseini and his family when they arrived empty-handed in San Jose (California). Hardly able to speak in English, Hosseini struggled in his initial years of school education in this new environment. Their family subsisted on welfare initially, but gradually father and son began to work attending a "flea market stall alongside fellow Afghan refugees," and later on, his father got a job as a driving instructor ("Khaled Hosseini, MD"). The "little Afghanistan" that the Afghan refugees created in San Jose, and their life surrounding the flea market are described in details through Amir and his father in *The Kite Runner* (116-174). In *And the Mountains Echoed*, Dr Idris and his patient Abullah (Pari's brother) and their family represent the immigrant Afghan life in San Jose. Abdullah's family restaurant named Abe's Kabob House near the old Berryessa Flea Market in San Jose (*Mountains* 160), is Hosseini's projection of the Afghan cuisine which Laila's father, in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, dreamed to present to the Americans by opening a little Afghan restaurant, but could not realise because of a fatal consequence of civil war in Afghanistan (148). This instantiates Hosseini's handling of transculturalism from an Afghan perspective.

The homeland and the nation are remembered from afar by the major characters of Khaled Hosseini – by Amir and his father in *The Kite Runner*, by Laila and Tariq in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and by Pari, Abdullah and Idris in *And the Mountains Echoed*. Their homecoming trips to Afghanistan intensify and refresh this remembering. Their coming back to their host countries in *The Kite Runner* and *And the Mountains Echoed*, adds fresh insights into their remembering as well as re-remembering of 'nation.' For instance, coming back to the United States, Idris replies on queries by his neighbours about his trip to Afghanistan, that there are "a thousand tragedies per square mile" (*Mountains* 163). Idris now feels embarrassed at his previous plan of setting up a home-theatre in his apartment and expresses to his wife that a school could have been built in Afghanistan for the price of that home-theatre (*Mountains* 162-64).

According to William I. Robinson, an expert in Transnationalism Studies, the modern world is globally interconnected so much that the webs of relations are gradually breaking down "local, national, and regional autonomies" (Robinson, "Beyond" 564). International airlines, the telecommunication (telephones and cell-phones), and the internet worldwide are the fast-growing 21<sup>st</sup> century phenomena that have made the members

of the imagined community closely and transnationally connected. It is the magic of internet by which Markos Varvaris sitting in a Kabul house is able to locate Pari in Paris (*Mountains* 236). By receiving Markos's long-distance phone-call and by his reading out of uncle Nabi's letter, Pari can discover her personal history connected with her birthplace, her homeland (*Mountains* 232-36). Again, it is another miracle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century reality that Pari, the niece, finds out Pari, the aunt, with the help of the internet; and finally the latter travels by plane from France to the United States to meet her brother Abdullah and her niece (*Mountains* 353-56). In spite of such global connectedness of persons and virtually porous borders of the 21<sup>st</sup> century nations, how fervently an expatriate clings to one's national root is expressed in Pari's first meeting with her niece:

But it is important to know this, to know your roots. To know where you started as a person. If not, your own life seems unreal to you. Like a puzzle. *Vous comprenez?* Like you have missed the beginning of a story and now you are in the middle of it, trying to understand. (*Mountains* 356)

Furthermore, how the belongingness to one's birthplace (as etymologically "nation" suggests) haunts the mind of a person who grows and settles in another part of the world, is shown through the character of Pari, in Hosseini's *And the Mountains Echoed*, who, after growing in Paris, retains no cultural affinity with her original nation. In Rahimi's *The Patience Stone*, the unnamed female protagonist raises serious questions regarding Afghan cultural taboos that highly stipulate the premarital virginity of women and proscribe the extramarital liaisons of every kind, whereas Nila and Pari represent the liberation of female sexuality in the French context in *And the Mountains Echoed*. Rahimi, in *The Patience Stone*, exposes social taboos associated with the 'virtuous veil' (332, 360), virginal blood (308), and menstrual blood (310) of women in the traditional Afghan culture that lose their heft and hold in the French culture.

Yet, in spite of Nila's adoption of a foreign culture, Afghanistan has a place in her mind as she remembers it and explains its socio-political developments in her metafictional interview entitled "Afghan Songbird" (*Mountains* 175-83, 193-97). So is the character of her adopted daughter Pari as we have already noted. On the other hand, Pari's elder brother Abdullah, a major part of whose life passed in Afghanistan, and who has internalised Afghan culture as an essential part of his identity, remembers his homeland while staying cut-off in San Jose (United States) and clings to its language (Farsi) and religion (Islam), with all the attendant Afghan customs and practices. He inspires her daughter Pari whom he has named after his apparently lost sister, to learn these two cultural elements associated with his homeland, so that her Afghan identity remains intact. According to Abdullah, Farsi is the language that is a key to the house of Afghan culture and heritage, a key to all the rooms of its treasure inside; because, without the key of a particular language, one's journey ends up wayward without "a proper home or a legitimate identity" (*Mountains* 362).

Pari, the younger, embodies a characteristically diasporic struggle to overcome a cultural split in her identity. Grown under the loving care of a true Afghan father conscious of their *Afghaniyat*, she attends the Farsi lessons in Campbell and the Quran classes in the mosque in Hayward (*Mountains* 362). The lady teacher in the said mosque would admonish the Afghan girls that as virtuous young Muslim girls they should not get "corrupted by Western culture" and they should avoid at any cost the approach of boys, shorts, dancing, rap music, cheerleading, swimming in public, alcohol, pepperoni, bacon, non-halal burgers etc. (*Mountains* 362). Nevertheless, such temptations exist – and exist for Pari as well, which is why she has to negotiate with and negate one part of her inclinations in order to cling to her Afghan culture. The family restaurant that Abdullah opens at San Jose is a way to remember their homeland. The names in the laminated menus of the Afghan cuisine that they serve to the customers are, for example, *Khyber Pass Pilaf*, *Caravan Kabob*, *Silk Route Chicken* (*Mountains* 364) and these food items (both gustatorily and nominally) bear the memory of their homeland. The "framed poster of the Afghan girl from *National Geographic*" and the oil painting of the "big minarets in Herat" that Abdullah's daughter Pari has painted are mounted on the wall, and the diasporan's longings for their Afghan homeland are conveyed through these portraits.

Two cousins named Timur and Idris in *And the Mountains Echoed* also represent the Afghan diaspora in the United States, like Amir of *The Kite Runner* and their author i.e. Khaled Hosseini. Timur is the owner of a real-estate mortgage company in the United States (*Mountains* 134). He uses his short name 'Tim' in the United States after witnessing the post-9/11 Islamophobia, and this has helped him double his business; but when he is in Kabul, he introduces himself as Timur (*Mountains* 135). He is a good-hearted, sociable, friendly, and humorous fellow, and the innocently childlike manner of his behaviour endears him to the persons whom he meets and talks (*Mountains* 134). Having over three hundred contact numbers with names on his cell-phone and having connections with local Afghan TV stations, he is well-acquainted in the Afghan community in the United States (*Mountains* 138). His fellow-feeling for other Afghans is found in his lending money to Abdullah to open the restaurant (*Mountains* 162), his hosting of all the persons who attended the funeral of Idris's father

(*Mountains* 138), and his financial aids to his cousin Idris for the latter's medical studies and wedding ceremony (*Mountains* 140). Though it appears insincere to Idris, Timur expresses before the foreign aid-worker Amra that they are visiting Kabul, twenty years after they had left for California, to relink and teach themselves as well as to witness the "aftermath of all these years of war and destruction" (*Mountains* 136). He further explains the reason of their visit to Afghanistan that, after going back to the United States, they will raise awareness and funds to help the Afghans (*Mountains* 136). True to his word, Timur gives financial assistance to the hapless Afghan girl Roshana for her life-saving and complicated surgical operation that she acknowledges in her fast-selling book in California (*Mountains* 171). All these activities of Timur prove his connectedness with his homeland and social communication with the Afghan diasporans in California.

How much Afghanness is deep-rooted in the Afghan-American character Idris can be traced when his Afghan ego gets offended at the cheerful mocking of the foreign aid workers about the "inconveniences and idiosyncrasies of Afghan culture" (*Mountains* 133-34). Back to California, when his invited neighbours meet him, he shares his experiences of witnessing the sufferings of the people in the war-ravaged Afghanistan, and one of his neighbour expresses an apprehension of culture shock that the Afghan people may have been undergoing there. Idris's nodding reaction to his neighbour conceals his thought of the real culture shock that he has felt after his return to California (*Mountains* 163). Comparing to the well-mannered and humble behaviour of Roshana whom he has met in a Kabul hospital, he feels guilty thinking of his little sons "back in San Jose." His sons, Zabi and Lemar, "have long professed their dislike of their Afghan names, who are fast turning into little tyrants, into the imperious American children he and Nahil had vowed they would never raise" (*Mountains* 156). Idris feels culture shock because of his awareness about the tendency of the new Afghan-American generation to assimilate into the American culture by effacement of their Afghanness. Nonetheless, Idris and his cousin Timur who have passed their childhood in Afghanistan, find themselves now partly assimilated into the American culture. For instance, though the Afghan society normally follows the Islamic prohibition of drinking alcohol, both the cousins are found to drink beer and wine in the party hosted by Markos in Kabul (*Mountains* 142- 48). Furthermore, Christianity being the majority religion in the United States, its affectation is traced Idris's and Timur's conversations. They have acculturated to such exclamations as "Jesus" (*Mountains* 158) and "God bless you" (*Mountains* 142). In fact, their characters throw much light on how they live as Afghan Americans in the United States. Abdullah, Timur and Idris of *And the Mountains Echoed* and Amir and Soraya as well as their parents in *The Kite Runner*, exemplify different experiences of the Afghan-American diaspora and their connectedness to their Afghan homeland through their psychological and/or physical trips.

However, this re-membling of the Afghan nation needs to be studied in a 21<sup>st</sup> century globalised context wherein 'interconnectedness' has made the peoples closer irrespective of their nationality and ethnicity. Khaled Hosseini, for example, in 2006, agreed to extend his service as a special envoy for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and has been helping displaced persons in war zones across the world. In the capacity of the UNHCR envoy, he has visited Chad and met the refugees from Darfur, and then revisited Afghanistan to see the refugees retreating from Iran and Pakistan ("Khaled Hosseini, MD"). His personal experiences in the eastern part of Chad is represented by Pari's son Thierry who too works in the eastern part of Chad in Africa for the refugees from Darfur in *And the Mountains Echoed* (233). E-mail and cell-phone communications among Pari's children namely Isabelle, Alain and Thierry, between Pari and Markos, and between Pari (the aunt) and Pari (the niece) etc. – all these telecommunications as well as air travel to their homes (including Afghanistan) explain the transnational context of remembering the nation by the members of the netizen community. In *The Kite Runner*, Soraya who is Amir's wife and co-manager of a hospital project for the Afghan refugees, also assists Amir in "e-mailing people around the world, applying for grants, organizing fund-raising events" (333) which, in a way, fictionalises the management of Khaled Hosseini Foundation.

Atiq Rahimi's novels deal with the pre-9/11 hard times of Afghanistan. Yet, what Rassoul and Parwaiz of *A Curse on Dostoevsky* think and do for the sake of their nation, represents Rahimi's thrust of nation-building. In his imaginary homeland, Rahimi hopes for the rise of such brave and good-hearted women as Mahnaz of *A Thousand Rooms of Dream and Fear* and the unnamed protagonist of *The Patience Stone*. Hosseini projects this female participation through not only Soraya of *The Kite Runner*, but also Mariam and Laila of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. As an Afghan refugee in Pakistan, Laila says: "This isn't home. Kabul is, and back there so much is happening, a lot of it good. I want to be a part of it all. I want to do something. I want to contribute. Do you understand?" (*Thousand* 379). These words mirror the authorial desire for travel back to home. In real life, both Atiq Rahimi and Khaled Hosseini frequent post-9/11 Afghanistan and their host countries. They do this to take part in the reconstruction of their nation culturally as well as philanthropically. As already noted, they are, thus, not merely the citizen of Afghanistan, they are the global citizens of the world.

This global perspective of reviewing the concepts of the “home” and the “nation” has been foregrounded in Rahimi’s *Le Retour imaginaire* (2005), written in a poetic prose (interspersed with photographs), which reveals the author’s “*Imaginary Return*” to “find himself at night, among the ruins of his city, and in the shadow of his images taken in the darkness of hours” (Boutisane, translation mine). It reveals an exile’s nostalgia for his homeland ravaged by war that has killed his brother and many of his compatriots. Similarly, Hosseini’s latest fiction *Sea Prayer* (2018) is the passionate and poetic briefing of the world-wide refugee crisis and it draws the global peoples’ attention to the plights of the dislocated and homeless communities coming from different nations. In such many ways, the global and the national are intermixed and permeated in all these novels.

That the fictional works of Atiq Rahimi and Khaled Hosseini are amenable to critical pluralism testifies to the extra ordinary depth and range of the authors’s creative imagination and their sustained keenness of observation. Aware of the march of history and the consequent stream of memory, alive to the ceaseless transactions between nature and man, and curious about the interaction between culture and identity – both Rahimi and Hosseini re-member their home-nation with remarkable aplomb. They and their works are products of a particular time and place, mediated by distance, at once spatial and temporal. If, on the one hand, this fact accounts for the remarkable objectivity of their outlook, then, on the other hand it explains the inexhaustible variety and veracity of their outputs that transcend the mere parochial limits and raise their fiction to the status of contemporary classics beyond a national boundary and culture.

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