

The Role of Native Informers in Representation of 9/11: A Critical Study of Khaled Hosseini's Selected Novels

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article History</p> <p>Received: November 26, 2020</p> <p>Accepted: January 04, 2021</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords : Native informer, Representation, Good vs Bad Muslims, Orientalism</p> <p>DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.5079841</p>	<p><i>The event of 9/11 has changed not only the political scenario of Afghanistan but also the mode of literature written about Afghanistan, its people and culture. The attack on Afghanistan is portrayed in English novels and their writers are acclaimed for their knowledge production especially after 9/11. This kind of knowledge production mainly represents the Third World countries and legitimises domination of the U.S. The paramount concern of this paper is to analyse the role of native informers in representation of the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan. Native informers rely on the imperium of the U.S. for their knowledge production. It ensures promotion of their career and also the interest-based agenda of the U.S. empire. Khaled Hosseini is a native informer who paves ground for the invasion in the form of 'knowledge production' in order to serve interests of the U.S. In his novels, <i>The Kite Runner</i> and <i>A Thousand Splendid Suns</i>, he represents American forces as inevitable to help Afghan people. For him, the presence of American forces is inevitable because without them Afghanistan will not prosper. He is of the view that good Muslims must be liberated from victimization of bad Muslims in Afghanistan. In his novels, he portrays military intervention of the U.S. as successful. However, the Taliban-US talks in Doha in 2019, which should have been the first option in 2001, shows failure of the U.S. in Afghanistan. The representation of 9/11 and post 9/11 needs to be questioned in the manner of 'counter-knowledge production'.</i></p>

Introduction

Representation of the colonised is based on discursive identity. The British colonisers of India represented the Indians as inferior and savages who needed to be civilised. The colonisers, in fact, wanted to justify their commercial project of colonisation in the name of divine mission. For instance, Orientalism was the lens which the British colonisers used to look at the Orient. Edward W. Said (1978) exposes the hidden agenda of the colonisers who exploited the colonised in the name of White Man's Burden. The aim of the colonisers was to build up a formidable and authoritative academic institution which nobody could challenge. They stripped the colonised of their own colors and painted them with new ones.

Said (1978) unearths the fact that representation is constructed through power. Orientalism is based on unequal power relationship of East and West. West is projected as superior by giving inferior status to East, "The Orient suddenly appeared lamentably under-humanised, antidemocratic, backward, barbaric, and so forth" (Said, 1978, p. 150). Through Orientalism identity of the Orient was constructed and propagated on the basis of negative traits. The academic discipline of Orientalism was developed and established in order to be acknowledged as authoritative and professional (p. 157).

The age of colonisation is over now. However, imperial powers still claim their supremacy to colonise the third world countries since the politics of representation has changed. The imperial powers exploit native intellectuals of the third world countries in order to serve interests of the imperial masters. Hamid Dabashi (2011) labels them with "native informers". The native informers valorise cultural practices of the imperial powers in order to justify their superior status. They prepare their own native people for interference of the imperial powers. They propagate their inhuman activities in the name of human rights, democracy and liberalism.

Native informers are inspired with the West or the U.S. to ensure their contribution in knowledge production after 9/11 in order to justify presence of the U.S. in the third world countries, "The Americans turn to expatriate intellectuals to tell populations targeted for liberation (Afghans, Iraqis, Somalis, Palestinians, Iranians) that they intend to invade, bomb, and occupy their homelands for those populations' own good" (Dabashi, 2011, p. 18). These native informers pave ground for the barbaric activities in the Third World countries. They propagate and legalise plundering project of the U.S. in the name of women's rights or liberal democracies. They pretend to be supporters of women's rights in their native countries and, therefore, portray women as miserable and wretched who must be liberated from the brutal bondage in the Third World countries

such as Afghanistan and Iraq (Dabashi, 2011, p. 18). These native informers use English language as the vehicle of their philanthropic mission. They help in knowledge production about the miserable condition of Muslims, especially women. They show more inclination toward Western culture and represent it as a peaceful culture which can give protection to Muslim women. In case of classical European Orientalism, the imperialists constructed the ideology, history and discourse in order to secure their domination. The native informers, however, after 9/11 serve to prove domination of the U.S. They shape opinions of their own people about the need of bombing their land. They are rewarded for their services of justifying the U.S. carnage in the Muslim countries such as Afghanistan.

The native informers like Azar Nafisi and Hirsi Ali degenerate their own culture in order to show the West as the only source of inspiration in terms of cultural values. They aim to convince their readers that Muslims are backward. The concept of good and bad Muslims has been projected especially after 9/11:

President Bush moved to distinguish between “good Muslims” and “bad Muslims.” From this point of view, “bad Muslims” were clearly responsible for terrorism. At the same time, the president seemed to assure Americans that “good Muslims” were anxious to clear their names and consciences of this horrible crime and would undoubtedly support “us” [The US] in a war against “them.” (Mamdani, 2004, p. 16)

The native informers also serve the imperial powers in maintaining hegemonic impact of the West as an interlocutor. They attempt to convince the Euro-Americans about their wretchedness. This creates division between the East and the West. This division is constructed through “European ideological hegemony” (Dabashi, 2009, p. 150) in order to assign a peripheral position to the East while a central position to the West. Therefore, in order to be good, people (especially The Muslims) have to support the U.S. in war against the terror.

Khaled Hosseini also follows the footsteps of the native informers such as Azar Nafisi. The principal aim of his novels, *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, is to valorize Western and American cultural values. He attempts to justify intrusion of the U.S. into Afghanistan for bringing peace and prosperity in the country. However, the imperial power, after massive bloodshed in the country, failed in its claim and initiated dialogue with the Taliban. His novel *The Kite Runner* portrays the ethnic marginalisation, interference of foreign political forces and attack of the U.S on Afghanistan.

Representation of Americans and Afghans

The novel *The Kite Runner* was published soon after 9/11. The novel is about oppression of the ethnic Hazara group in Afghanistan. Baba is a rich and influential Pashtun whose wife has passed away. Amir is his son and protagonist of the novel. They are Sunni Muslims. Ali and his son, Hassan, are Hazara and Shi'a Muslims. Hazara characters in the novel are portrayed as oppressed people who suffer at the hands of rich Pashtun People. Thus Ali, his wife, Sanaubar, and their son, Hassan, live an agonised life in the country. They are treated badly by a Pashtun racist, Assef. The novel depicts Hazara characters as the most loyal and true Muslims. The protagonist, Amir, belongs to an elite family. He treats his friend and servant, Hassan, badly and realises his injustices done with Hassan. In the end of the novel, he adopts Hassan's son, Sohrab, and takes him to the U.S.

Hosseini (2003) depicts Pashtuns as racist and ethnocentric people who exploit Hazara ethnic group in the country, “Afghanistan is the land of Pashtuns. It always has been, always will be. We are the true Afghans, the pure Afghans, not this Flat-Nose here. His people pollute our homeland, our watan. They dirty our blood” (p. 38). Pashtun characters such as Assef do not tolerate Hazara ethnic group in the country. Hosseini (2003) depicts Afghanistan as the land of savages who oppress other ethnic groups such as Hazara. He disregards ethnic differences and leading position of Pashtun ethnic group in Afghanistan. Depiction of Assef as a racist character is to show to the West that Afghanistan needs to be purified from such racist ethnic groups. Depiction of Pashtun characters such as Assef is based on Orientalist stereotypes:

This stereotypical combination of Assef's character traits makes him an easily accessible and compatible figure with American audiences, since he fits quite neatly into the reassuring Orientalised model of characterization that celebrates Western ideologies over Eastern ones. (Hunt, 2009, p. 14)

Assef has been portrayed as a villainous character for the American readers since Hosseini's main aim is to convince the Americans. For him, Pashtun characters such as Assef are bad Muslims (bad Pashtuns) because they oppose the U.S. and its war on terror. Amir in the end of the novel becomes a good Muslim (good Pashtun) because he shifts to the U.S. and is inspired with its civilizing mission especially in war-ridden countries such as Afghanistan.

Assef is portrayed as a savage and a bad Muslim (bad Pashtun) who makes fun of Hazara people, “His well-earned reputation for savagery preceded him on the streets” (Hosseini, 2003, p.35). He does not believe in morality and thus rapes Hassan for violating his order. The tragic incident of rape makes Hassan very silent and gloomy; he loses his passion for life. He later on joins Taliban who control the country after 1990.

The U.S. after 9/11 attacks Taliban. Hosseini (2003) portrays the invasion of the U.S. on Afghanistan positively. He portrays American army like angels in Afghanistan. Rahim Khan tells Amir about American people:

I know an American pair in Peshawar, a husband and wife named Thomas and Betty Caldwell. They are Christians and they run a small charity organization that they manage with private donations. Mostly they house and feed Afghan children who have lost their parents...Mr. and Mrs. Caldwell are kind people. (p. 204)

The imperial power, the U.S., is depicted as a savior who wants to protect Afghan people from the so called "bad" Muslims or terrorists. The impression is created worldwide that without presence of the U.S., Afghanistan will not materialise dream of peace and prosperity. This is the reason that Baba appreciates the U.S., "There are only three real men in this world, Amir.... America the brash savior, Britain, and Israel. The rest of them...they are like gossiping old women" (p. 116). He does not depict the scenario of the Cold War in which "al-Qaeda (and the Taliban) in Afghanistan were American allies" (Mamdani, 2004, p. 14).

After the collapse of the Twin Towers, the U.S. without considering dialogue with the Taliban decided to invade Afghanistan in 2001. The intrusion of the U.S. into Afghanistan is shown as inevitable in the novel, "Soon after the attacks, America bombed Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance moved in, and Taliban scurried like rats into the caves" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 332). However, the situation is very different. The U.S. after fighting for seventeen years in Afghanistan, could not defeat the Taliban. The war on terror initiated in 2001 has not given a victory to the U.S. The U.S. realised futility of the war after 17 years and started dialogue with the Taliban in Doha in 2019. Hosseini does not highlight failure of the U.S. in Afghanistan. Dabashi (2009) comments on it:

Militarily, consider Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, and Lebanon. The so-called greatest military power on earth is now caught in a quagmire, fighting Taliban bandits in Afghanistan and facing a national liberation movement in Iraq, which the U.S. army has failed to control or even contain. (p. 191)

Hosseini (2003) portrays the U.S. as victorious which protects the Third World countries from terrorism. However, he does not expose failures of the American army in Afghanistan. He protects barbarism of the U.S. with the slogans of peace, democracy and women's rights. Like a native informer, he supports attack of the U.S. on Afghanistan in "the civilising mission of the white man" (Dabashi, 2011, p. 55).

Hosseini (2003) does not mention brutality of the U.S. in the whole novel. Thousands of innocent Afghan people are killed but the novel does not say anything about them, "it tortures, assassinates, dispossesses, demolishes homes, and livelihoods...." (Dabashi, 2011, p. 55) The novel paves ground for the brutality in the country because this is the task given to native informers like Hosseini, "They are there to convince the public that invading and bombing and occupying the homelands of others is a good and moral thing" (p. 20). Hosseini (2003) conveys the same message of justifying the brutal act of bombing Afghan people through his novel. He does not represent the victimised Afghan people.

Hosseini (2003) depicts miserable and war-stricken Afghanistan without referring to the involvement of the U.S. in supporting Mujahideen against the USSR. After disintegration of the USSR, Afghanistan was left at the mercy of the warlords. The U.S. did not try to rehabilitate Afghanistan and restore peace in the country. The major ethnic group of Pashtuns united as Taliban who were opposed by the Northern Alliance. When the Taliban got control over majority parts of the country, the U.S. made intervention after 9/11. However, Hosseini (2003) does not say anything about the U.S. support of Mujahideen against the USSR. He portrays oppression of women in the reign of Taliban in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

Good vs Bad Muslims

The novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is about oppression of women in Afghanistan. Mariam is an illegitimate child of Nana and Jamil. Nana and Mariam both suffer due to their insecure status in the patriarchal society. They are not allowed to be part of the family. Mariam is married to a Pashtun man named Rasheed who treats her with iron hand. She meets a tragic death in the end of the story. Laila is another major character who is educated and modern. She is in love with a Pashtun named Tariq. They violate Afghan moral values in their love affair. Due to sudden death of her parents, she lives in the house of Rasheed who finally marries her. Rasheed deceives her by fabricating a story of Tariq's death. She gets reunited with Tariq and both marry in the end of the story.

The novel portrays marginalisation of women and atrocities of Taliban. Hosseini (2008) attempts to justify invasion of the U.S. on the ground of highly politicised slogan about women's rights and Taliban as threat to world peace. Lindsay B. Shapiro (2010) comments on the problems of women in the Middle East, "Female value in Afghan culture ... is determined by the ability of women to produce males" (p. 33). He analyses the marginalised status of women in Afghanistan and the Middle East. He is of the view that women in these regions face problems of oppression, restrictions to their homes and denial of their right to education.

Laila loves liberal lifestyle and does not care about Afghan cultural values. She wanders with Tariq in the streets. People gossip about their relationship, "Laila suspected that some ... of the neighbors were already gossiping about her and Tariq. Laila had noticed the sly grins, was aware of the whispers in the neighborhood

that the two of them were a couple” (Hosseini, 2008, p. 163). Their romantic relationship becomes frank and thus they transgress Afghan cultural values by developing illicit sexual relationship, “The terror that they would be discovered. The disbelief at their own boldness, their courage” (Hosseini, 2008, p. 182).

Hosseini (2008) legitimises their illicit sexual relationship by ignoring Afghan cultural values. He valorises Western cultural values in order to promote peace and prosperity in Afghanistan:

In the midst of all this killing and looting, all this ugliness, it was a harmless thing to sit here beneath a tree and kiss Tariq. A small thing. An easily forgivable indulgence. So, she let him kiss her, and when he pulled back, she leaned in and kissed him, heart pounding in her throat, her face tingling, a fire burning in the pit of her belly. (p. 176)

Tariq and Laila are portrayed as good Muslims due to their inclination toward Westernisation, “good Muslims are modern, secular, and Westernised...” (Mamdani, 2004, p. 21) Their relationship is not in line with Afghan cultural values. Liberal lifestyle of the educated female characters such as Laila is appreciated due to Westernised education, “Because of the education she received, Laila believes that females are able to live out their dreams if they are educated” (Andrews, 2016, p. 86). Andrews (2016) compares Western culture with Afghan culture and is of the view that Afghanistan needs Westernisation which can make people of the country flexible. Being good Muslims, they also resist the Taliban who are considered as anti-modern.

Hosseini’s obsession with Westernisation is part of the propaganda after 9/11 to convince Afghan people that bombing Afghanistan is inevitable as killing of Taliban was necessary in order to clean Afghanistan of these so called terrorists (bad Muslims) who previously as *Mujahideens* served interests of the U.S. in war against Russia. After attack on World Trade Center, American president, Bush, declared war against Taliban. He demanded Osama bin Laden from the Taliban who turned down the president’s order:

The Taliban have announced that they will not relinquish Bin Laden because he is a *mehman*, a guest, who has found sanctuary in Afghanistan and it is against the *Pashtunwali* code of ethics to turn over a guest.” (Hosseini, 2008, p. 384)

The American President, Bush, attacked Afghanistan without considering dialogue with the Taliban. He had no evidence of Bin Laden’s involvement in the attack on WTC. After the war against USSR, another war was imposed on Afghan people who had enough experience of living in the war-ridden country. The history of Afghanistan reveals the fact that the country has become a graveyard for most of the assailants.

Hosseini (2008) represents attack on Afghanistan as essential for establishing peace in the country. Like the native informers, he has written books in order to justify brutality of the U.S. in the name of humanitarian acts, ““The Americans turn to expatriate intellectuals to tell populations targeted for liberation (Afghans, Iraqis, Somalis, Palestinians, Iranians) that they intend to invade, bomb, and occupy their homelands for those populations’ own good (Dabashi, 2011, p. 18).” Hosseini (2008) mentions in his novel that Afghan political leaders such as Ahmad Shah Massoud (good Muslim) had warned the West and the U.S. to eliminate the Taliban:

Ahmad Shah Massoud had gone to France and spoken to the European Parliament. Massoud was now in his native North, and leading the Northern Alliance, the sole opposition group still fighting the Taliban. In Europe, Massoud had warned the West about terrorist camps in Afghanistan, and pleaded with the U.S. to help him fight the Taliban. (p. 312)

Hosseini (2008) depicts Ahmad Shah Massoud and the Northern Alliance positively. They are represented as good Muslims since they support the U.S. against the Taliban. Ahmad Shah Massoud belonged to Tajik ethnic group. He led the Northern Alliance (good Muslims). Massoud was hostile to the Pashtun ethnic group. Therefore, Massoud’s request for support against the Taliban was a strategic need for the Northern Alliance. It was not longing of Afghan people. However, Hosseini (2008) represents the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan as the deeply rooted desire of Afghan people.

Hosseini (2008) depicts Taliban as a threat to the peace of the West. It is more propagated after 9/11 in order to authorise war in Afghanistan. Ahmad Shah Massoud in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* tries to convince the American President, Bush, for invasion of Afghanistan, “If President Bush does not help us, these terrorists will damage the U.S. and Europe very soon” (Hosseini, 2008, p. 313). He is appreciated for fighting against the bad Muslims who are, “doctrinal, antimodern, and virulent” (Mamdani, 2004, p. 21). This kind of knowledge production paves ground for the imperial projects of the U.S:

The more the United States spreads its imperial wings, just like the emblem of the bald eagle it so celebrates, the more myopic, self-delusional, mendacious, and even banal becomes its predatory claims to a worldly knowledge befitting that imperialism. Paramount in the state of knowledge that friends and foes of this empire share is a narrow lexicography of brute force and illegitimate domination—all marked by a parochialism that sees the world in ever more limited moral and normative terms. (Dabashi, 2009, pp. 210-211)

The native informers are of paramount importance in the U.S. illegitimate domination of countries such as Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq. They write books for shaping views of the people about the role of the U.S. in dominating the world. They hide brutalities of the imperial power in their knowledge production which serves

the imperial projects. Hosseini (2008) fulfills all these conditions. He represents the U.S. led invasion of Afghanistan as imminent for the peace and prosperity of the country. He depicts the U.S. led army as angels who give protection to Afghan people.

Hosseini (2008) represents the Americans' attack on Afghanistan as successful. The novel depicts the country as a secure place, "The coalition forces have driven the Taliban out of every major city, pushed them across the border to Pakistan and to the mountains in the south and east of Afghanistan" (pp. 388-389). He misrepresents the real situation in the country. In the novel, he portrays a peaceful country after the attack of the U.S. He portrays the American soldiers as paragon of unrivalled bravery. His claims of America as the champion of peace and invincible power are met with utter failure since the U.S. has finally surrendered by urging the need of dialogue with the major ethnic group, Taliban in Afghanistan. The fact is that the country still faces war in most cities of the country. The U.S. has fought war against the Taliban for almost seventeen years and does not see any ray of hope for claiming victory over the Taliban. The U.S. requested the government of Pakistan to help the U.S. in initiating dialogue with the Taliban in 2019. Hosseini's depiction of the U.S. as victorious is not in harmony with the real situation in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

Hosseini like other native informers develops his career out of the miseries of his own people. He does not represent real picture of the anguish and savagery legitimised in the name of war on terror by the U.S. Euro-centric representation of 9/11 has traumatised the Muslims for constructing and propagating their identity as the contemporary other (terrorists). A division between good and bad Muslims has been made. Good Muslims support the U.S. in war against terror in Afghanistan while bad Muslims oppose them. Anguish of Afghan people due to the war is not shown to the world. Hosseini addresses the West and the U.S as interlocutors in order to convince them about oppression in Afghanistan which needs to be liberated by the U.S. He, therefore, glorifies the U.S. led invasion on the country. He as a native informer serves the imperial powers. He contributes in the knowledge production after 9/11 to justify brutality of the U.S. in Afghanistan. He develops status of the imperial powers as the interlocutor to pave the way for dominating the world.

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