

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

It is common for a community to disperse to look for a better environment in other countries. This leads to a scatter of ethnicities around the world. This action of migration may be called a Diaspora. Diaspora refers to a diverse set of groups, may it be settlers, colonizers, banished enslaved people, victims, or tradespeople who are in search of a better situation in which they still have a deep connection and longing for their previous country through language, religion, and tradition (David & Muñoz-Basols, 2011:12). To highlight, the core of diaspora is the sense of belongingness of their home-country even though there is no guarantee on the chance of returning home. Diaspora as a theory evolves from focusing only on violence-based migration to a much broader scope.

There have been many occasions of diaspora from different groups. However, this research thesis will focus on the Afghan diaspora. Having a long history of political and military conflict, these are the main reasons for the Afghan diaspora: wars, maltreatment on account of political faith and ethnicity, economic adversity, and political uncertainty (Mohamed, 2023:7). The Soviet-Afghan war has become a critical moment that changes the directory of Afghan history and is the event that provokes the Afghan Diaspora (Mohamed, 2023:20). The event following is the rise of the Taliban which also supported the dispersion. The Afghan refugees have reached approximately 4.8 million, with a distribution of 3 million in

Pakistan, 1.6 million located in Iran, and the remaining 200,000 dispersed in the United States and Europe (Ferozh, 2014:6). The journey of Afghan immigrants is marked by the pursuit for safety and a better life, including to those who went to the United States. However, despite being part of prosperous societies, Afghans who have successfully migrated to the United States often face numerous challenges. They are forced to leave behind their possessions in Afghanistan and incur high costs to flee, often with the help of smugglers. Additionally, they encounter difficulties due to language barriers, educational disparities, and professional qualifications that are not recognized in the United States (Baden, 2017:16-17). Hence, many Afghans tend to have laborious work, which is a different situation from their condition in Afghanistan. The situation of the Afghan diaspora and immigrants finds its reflection in the literary work titled *The Kite Runner*.

The Kite Runner was a novel written by Khaled Hosseini, an Afghan-born American writer, in 2003. The story revolved around two best friends, Amir and Hassan, and explored the theme of the Afghan diaspora. Amir, a Pashtun, came from a wealthy family with a powerful father, while Hassan, a Hazara, was the son of a long-time household servant working for Amir's family. The narrative unfolded against the backdrop of the military coup and the USSR invasion. As privileged individuals in Afghanistan, Amir and his father, Baba, had the opportunity to flee to the United States, while Hassan stayed behind. Consequently, Amir and Baba, now refugees, became part of the Afghan diaspora in American society.

The Afghan diaspora phenomenon in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* is an interesting topic to research. The writer considers the topic of diaspora interesting as it is a recurrent phenomenon experienced by many cultures, especially the Afghan diaspora, one of the biggest diaspora communities by number. Diaspora has also become a constantly progressing field as recent discussions have emerged. Furthermore, *The Kite Runner* has received critical and widespread acclaim, where it has sold millions of copies in the United States and has won several awards. This research thesis will focus on the characteristics of the Afghan Diaspora shown in the story of Amir and Baba, the challenges, and the Afghans' habits and culture preserved during their diaspora experience.

1.2. Research Problems

1. What are the characteristics of diaspora shown in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*?
2. What challenges do Amir and Baba face due to the diaspora experience in American society in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*?
3. What cultural tradition do Amir and Baba maintain in their diaspora experience in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the diaspora characteristics that Amir and Baba show in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*.

2. To analyze the challenges that Amir and Baba face in their diaspora experience in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*.
3. To analyze the Afghan culture maintained by Amir and Baba as reflected in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*.

1.4. Previous Study

To develop the study, the writer has reviewed previous studies discussing Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. The first previous study is an undergraduate thesis entitled "*Amir's Anxiety and Motive in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner*," written by Ajeng Pancar Tamara. This thesis discusses the main character, Amir, anxiety and motive using a psychological approach.

The second previous study is an undergraduate thesis titled "*Child Abuse in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner*," written by Fatimatuz Zahro Khoirun Nisa. This thesis discusses four kinds of child abuse by using a social psychology approach.

The third previous study is a journal article that focuses on linguistics. The article entitled "*Deixis in the Novel Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini*" is written by Waladdin Panggabean and Khusnul Khatimah. This article discusses about four types of deixis that are found in the novel.

The fourth previous study is a journal article entitled "*A Journey of Self-Actualization of Amir in The Kite Runner*," written by Juan Du. This article discusses the self-actualization of the main character by using a psychological approach.

The the fifth previous study is a journal article entitled “*Orientalism in The Kite Runner Novel by Khaled Hosseini,*” written by Tommy Pungkaswani, Merry Rulyanti, and Dhanu Ario Putri. This article uses a postcolonial approach to discuss the West and East roles in the novel as a representation of Edward Said’s orientalism theory.

The Kite Runner has been an inspiration and object for much research. However, this research thesis differs from other previous studies. Three differences are worth mentioning in this research thesis, namely, the object of the research and the theories being used. The first point is that this research will focus on two main characters instead of one those are Amir and Baba. The second one is that it uses Robin Cohen’s theory of diaspora characteristics, which has not been used in previous studies. The last difference is that it also incorporates the theory of cultural resilience to examine the Afghan diaspora phenomenon in Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner*.

1.5. Scope of the Study

The writer of this research will focus on two topics. The first is the intrinsic aspects, which include the characters and characterization, the conflicts of the story, and the settings of the story’s time, place, and social conditions. The second is the extrinsic aspects, covering Afghan diaspora characteristics, the challenges that Amir and Baba face, and the cultural behavior that Amir and Baba maintain in Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner*.

1.6. Organization of the Writing

The following are the writing organization of this thesis:

1. Chapter one

This chapter contains the background of the study, research problems, objectives of the study, previous studies, scope of the study, and the organization of the writing.

2. Chapter two

This chapter contains the theories, concepts, and terms used in analyzing the intrinsic elements of a novel, which include: character and characterization, conflict, and settings. The extrinsic aspects cover the theories of diaspora, challenges of diaspora, and cultural resilience that correlates with the discussion of the thesis.

3. Chapter three

This chapter contains the analysis of the thesis, including intrinsic and extrinsic elements. The intrinsic analysis are Amir and Baba's characterization, the internal and external conflict, and the settings of time, place, and social condition. Meanwhile, the first extrinsic analysis covers the diaspora characteristics, which include: dispersal, expansion, retention, return, distinctiveness, apprehension, creativity, and community. The second extrinsic analysis covers the challenges faced by Amir and Baba on their diaspora experience, which contains: Baba's refusal to learn English, Baba's adjustment to new culture, and Amir and Baba's economic hardships and loss of social status. The third extrinsic analysis covers the cultural tradition maintained by Amir and Baba on their diaspora experience, which

contains: the usage of Dari language, Khastegari and wedding traditions, and Afghan traditional food.

4. Chapter four

This chapter contains the conclusion of the previous chapters.