

THEORIES OF 'NATION' AND THE AFGHAN CONTEXT: 'RE-MEMBERING' AND  
'REPRESENTATION' IN THE NOVELS OF ATIQ RAHIMI AND KHALED HOSSEINI

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the theories of 'nation' and 'nationalism' and the associated terms like sub-nationalism, post-nationalism and the diaspora. In order to contextualise these concepts in respect to Afghanistan as re-membered and represented by Atiq Rahimi and Khaled Hosseini in their novels, the researcher has explained also the two necessary terms 're-membering' and 'representation.' The researcher attempted to relate these terms and contexts by delving into the history of the evolution of the Afghan nation as well as by illustrating exemplary textual references to show how the land and the peoples of Afghanistan have been presented in the novels of Atiq Rahimi and Khaled Hosseini.

**Key words:** 'Nation,' 'Nationalism,' 'Diaspora,' 'Re-membering,' 'Representation,' 'Afghanistan.'

Man's attachment to place is at once physical and psychological, because they inhabit the place in and through their body as well as inhere it through association and memory. An atmosphere of danger and crisis binds man to the place of residence and an absence from the place makes man remember it in detail and yearning. The concept and the sense of a nation is similarly multidimensional, relying, as it does, on the memory and adherence of its population. What is more, when the nation is remembered from afar, it causes both remembering (memory) and re-membering (scrutiny). Atiq Rahimi and Khaled Hosseini, two of the most celebrated writers, to have come from Afghanistan in the recent years, have dwelt upon the troubled homeland from their diasporic positions in France and the United States respectively. As a matter of fact their works of fiction construct a simulated Afghanistan that is at once factual and stylised, regional and global, idyllic and troubled.

The present study shall seek to analyse how Rahimi and Hosseini in their unique, yet related ways, present a "post-real" version of Afghanistan by and through their choice of themes, characters, symbols, and descriptions that ground their novels in the soil and culture of Afghanistan despite their diasporic status.

Here the main objective is to conceptualise the "Nation" as well as to contextualise it within the milieu of Afghanistan. As a matter of fact, nation, in the novels under review, gets remembered and re-membered through the authors's "diasporic gaze" under the influence of such determinants as History and Memory, Nature

and Man, and Culture and Identity. The terms like “re-membering,” “(re)presentation,” “nation,” “nation-state,” “post-nation,” “diaspora” etc. relevant to the present dissertation will be defined first. Thereafter, the scope of the critical inquiry will be identified, highlighting in the process the many ways in which the land and the peoples of Afghanistan have been presented in these novels under pressure from supremacist discourses like “patriarchy,” “classism,” “ethnocentrism,” “ageism,” “neo-colonialism,” and “speciesism.”

It may be helpful to commence this study by defining the critical terms “re-membering” and “representation.” *Re-membering* may be taken as a constructive substitute of *dis-membering* (tearing / breaking apart). As a concept, it presupposes that the *whole* is composed of *parts*. Within a whole, the *parts* exist and operate in a specific arrangement and specific relationship with one another, at a given time. With the change of *time, place, or condition*, those *parts* of the *whole* change their mutual *position* and *relationship*, getting *dismembered* in the process. Again, in a newer or later contingency, those *parts* change their *positions* and *relationships* against and with one another to give birth to a changed *whole* that exists and operates in a newer arrangement that leads to *re-membering*. All *thoughts, concepts* and *ideas*, therefore, are, in a sense, products of re-membering.

Memory, as the re-membering of the past events and ideas from their original spatiotemporal order, is the *re-call* and *re-collection* of those past events and ideas from a dis-membered and chaotic state within the psychological process. *Re-membering* as *commemoration/memory* is the *reconstruction* of the *past*, and its pre-speech *representation* is what we call *thought*; and when these reminiscences/remembrances are represented in speech/writing, it may be called *narrative*. Historical and literary texts, therefore, are the products of a creative/narrative process in which the phenomenal and noumenal data are *remembered* and/or *re-membered* (*rearranged /restructured*). Philosophically, the idea of narrating memory can be traced back to the discourses of W. H. F. Hegel:

The goal, Absolute Knowing, or Spirit that knows itself as Spirit, has for its path the recollection of the Spirits as they are in themselves and as they accomplish the organization of their realm. Their preservation, regarded from the side of their free existence appearing in the form of contingency, is History; but regarded from the side of their comprehended organization, it is the Science of Knowing in the sphere of appearance ... (Hegel, *Phenomenology* 493)

*Re-membering* as *representation* needs to be preceded, accompanied as well as succeeded by *re-membering* as *interpretation*. In this connection, we may do well to recall what Paul Ricoeur, in *Freud and Philosophy*, says about interpretation as “exercise of suspicion” and “recollection of meaning” as well. While grouping the post-Hegelian scholars Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud as “school” of scepticism/suspicion, Ricoeur deciphers that *suspicion* and *reminiscence* are two broad means towards “interpretation” (28-35). The reader, through *suspicion* or *destructive critique* dismembers the constituent parts of the whole text or narrating memory; and through *reminiscence*, they try to reorganise the parts, to “remember” how the “past events or apparently stray details emerge as significant in relation to a present act of interpretation,” as Kent Puckett remarks in *Narrative Theory: A Critical Introduction* (78).

Since the present researcher seeks to dwell upon the presentation of the Afghan milieu in the novels of two diasporic writers, and so how their re-membering of a nation left behind partakes of some of the features of re-membering, we should now pass on to the definition of as “nation,” and such allied terms and concepts as “nation-state,” “post-nation,” “sub-nation,” “diaspora,” etc.

It is useful to know the history of the word “Nation.” How its present meaning is different, yet derived, from its past connotations, may enlighten us about man’s socio-cultural evolution into “homo politicus” – the political animal. The word *nation* derived in the 13<sup>th</sup> century from Old French *nacion* meaning “birth, rank; descendants, relatives; country, homeland” which in turn originated in the 12<sup>th</sup> century directly from Latin *nationem* meaning “birth, origin; breed, stock, kind, species; race of people, tribe.” In Latin *Nationem* is nominative of *natio* meaning “something born” from *natus*, past participle of *nasci* “be born” (Old Latin *gnasci* Proto-Indo-European root *gene* “to produce, give birth, beget” < Latin *genus* “race, stock, kind; family, birth, descent, origin”) (“Nation”).

According to Guido Zernatto, the Romans did mean by “nation” a group of men “born in the same city or the same tract of land.” It was used in old Rome with a derogatory undertone to dishonour a group of men such as “native community of foreigners.” For instance, Cicero calls the Jews and Syrians as *nationes* born to servitude (*De Or* 2, 4, 18). Such “nations” with their own language, food habits and customs lived as intimate groups in the busy ports, large cities and the colonial settlements of the Roman empire. Shedding its derogatory sense since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the word “nation”/“nations” began to designate a student group (with common native land, dialect, food and customs) in a medieval Christian university. However, these “student nations” had no separate existence as “culture” groups as all these groups had one common Christen culture preserved through the single Latin tongue (Zernatto 354).

Besides, “nations” also meant the inter-ecclesiastical groups as well as the various “intra-ecclesiastical groups of thought” including of secular princes and potentates who assembled from different lands of the Christendom to address the councils of the “ecclesiastical republic” headed by the Pope. This term had a diasporic undertone as the delegate groups were strangers in the towns selected as venues for the great ecclesiastical meetings. The word “nation” through the council nations gained an extended sense of a representative body, a select elite group. The word entered into the French tongue since the 13<sup>th</sup> century in the sense of a representative assembly of the aristocrats/estates called by the King. Gradually the “country or provincial estates” began to be called also by the term “nation” in the sense of their meeting or the aristocrats collectively in contrast to the folk (plebs) and “people” (mass). The French Revolutionary Parliament (1789), christened as “*assemblée nationale*,” was constituted not only of the aristocrats (the clergy and the nobility) but also of the newly privileged group. Thus the word entered the political domain (Zernatto 357-365).

The neo-classicist French scholar Ernest Renan (1823-1892) is the first one to define nation in the modern sense in his famous 1882 lecture “*Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?*” (“What is a Nation?”). He defines “nation” as a “grand solidarity” or “aggregation of men” with a “healthy spirit and warmth of heart” having a moral conscience that proves its strength by sacrifices of the individuals for the benefit of community – having the common sufferings and hopes that overcome the differences of race and language. He analyses two constituents of “nation”: the one is the historical consciousness, i.e., the “past” of a “rich legacy of remembrances” or a “common heritage of glory” of the great ancestors’s heroic sacrifices; the other constituent is the “present” everyday “plebiscite” or the actual “consent” or expressed “approval” to continue the “communal life” or “to live together” and “value that common heritage.” Renan affirms that a “nation never has a real interest” in being annexed to a country despite itself, that nations are necessary at present, that nations as historical phenomena have their beginnings and endings, and he hopes that they (i.e. European nations) will be replaced by a “European confederation” in future. (Renan 17-18)

Unlike Renan, Joseph Stalin (1878-1953) in his essay “The Nation” in *Marxism and the National Question* (1913) considers “common language,” “common territory” and “common economic life” as essential components of the “nation” (Stalin 2: 303-312).

Max Weber (1864-1920) rejects the idea of equating nation with the “people of a state,” and the idea of affiliating nation with “economic origin” or “common blood” or specific “anthropological type” or even “common language,” or “common religion” – though any one or more of these factors may be linked with the “national solidarity” in different degrees in different cases all over the world. According to Weber, a nation is a “prestige community” with a “specific sentiment of solidarity” in the face of other groups, unified by a “notion of common descent” and linked with a “common political destiny.” He clarifies that the idea of nation belongs in the “sphere of values,” thought of “only as a specific culture mission,” preserved and developed by the intellectuals, just as the “idea of the state” is inflamed by the powerful leaders in the polity. He defines nation, in a nutshell, as “a community of sentiment” that, in order to manifest itself adequately, “tends to produce a state of its own” (Weber 171-79).

In contrast to defining nation in terms of its basic elements, Karl W. Deutsch (1912-1992) offers a functional definition of it. A nation is formed through an effective and efficient socio-cultural communication by means of a “standardized system of symbols” like a language and other “auxiliary codes” like alphabets, systems

of writing, painting, calculating, libraries, statues, signposts etc. (Deutsch 96). All these “add up to an integrated pattern or configuration of communicating, remembering and acting” (Deutsch 97). He adds that when a successful nation puts the state into their service, then at last “the nation has become sovereign” and “a nation-state has come into being” (Deutsch 105).

Clifford Geertz discusses nation as consisting of ethnic and civic components which are competing and complimentary. While the ethnic dimension comes from the individuals’s primordial desire for an identity, the civic dimension is the result of a desire for “citizenship in a modern state” (Geertz 29-34). Anthony Giddens believes that the existence of a “nation” depends on a state’s sovereignty i.e. its administrative reach over its territory and hence he speaks of a “nation-state” as a “bordered power-container” (Giddens 34-35).

Such tendency to equate nation with state has been rejected by Walker Connor, since “state” is a tangible concept as a territorial political unit on the globe, and “nation” is an intangible concept as its essence is a “psychological bond” that differentiates it in the “subconscious conviction of its members” from all other peoples in a most vital way. Like Weber, Connor too considers nation as a community that believes in a common descent, but segregates it from other ethnic communities (Connor 36-37).

At this point, we should consider the “invented-nation” theory of Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm, and— that define “nationalism” and “national identities” in terms of construction / invention / imagination from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Ernest Gellner links the invention of nation to mass literacy / education that enables its members to “claim and exercise” their rights. It is in turn linked to the development of a vernacular as the medium of this nation-wise education system converting an uneven vernacular/folk culture into a homogenous elite culture that creates nationalism (Gellner, *Thoughts* 158-69).

Eric Hobsbawm in *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1990) analyses the nationalists’s or political nation-builders’s role of the invention and appropriation of national traditions, such as uniforms, flags, ceremonies, and anthems to develop a popular national consciousness, as well as their role to engineer collective remembering to institutionalize an acceptable past.

Meanwhile, unlike Gellner beforehand and Hobsbawm afterwards, Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983, rev. in 2006), defines “nation” not as an invented, but as an “imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign (5).” He calls it *imagined* because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (6).” Anderson finds that capitalism and print technology are engaged in propagating this imagined community (46). He refers to the role of “increasing speed capitalism” through the audio-visual means of communications (e.g. radio and television) to “bypass print in propagating the imagined community, not merely to illiterate masses, but even to literate masses *reading* different languages” (140).

Anderson’s model of “nation” as “imagined community” based on “print-capitalism” has been criticised by some other scholars including Anthony D. Smith. As Smith asserts in *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986), the “nation” has both the primordial and the modern elements — with its dual orientation to a “cultural past” and a “political future” (152). Nation, as a “mobilising force” with its “common civic outlook and ideology,” must take its energies from “the attributes of pre-existing ethnic and assimilate many of their myths, memories and symbols, or invent ones of its own” (Smith, *Ethnic* 152). The “ethnic-civic” dichotomy is applied to distinguish the notion of nationality/nationhood and citizenship. Thus, despite the diverse definitions of “nation,” we may associate it with both “ethnic” and “civic” notions of “belonging.”

We may now focus on the relationship of “nation” with such other allied concepts to “nationalism,” “post-nationalism,” “trans-nationalism” and “diaspora.” As a matter of fact, nationalism is an important ideology and movement with clear political and cultural dimensions. As Ernest Gellner asserts, “nations can be defined only in terms of the age of nationalism” (*Nations* 54). The French political philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 - 1778) introduced the ideas of liberal and civic nationalism in his works *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1754) and *On the Social Contract* (1762). However, the term “nationalisme” was first used in print

by the anti-Jacobin French Priest Augustin Barruel in 1798 in his “Memorias para server a la historia del Jacobinismo” and he used this term as an expression of “collective egotism” or in the sense of “love of nation” (Kramer 209). The German historian Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744 -1803) first used “nationalismus” as a concept of political theory at about the same time (Cosgrove, et al. 159; Kramer 209). In *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784-91), Herder analysed the human history as the interaction of “ethno-linguistically or -religiously defined cultures” or nations, and his discourse influenced the rise of nationalism in Germany. Subsequently Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), in combination of the ideas of patriotism and anti-Semitism, proclaimed the German ethnic nationalism in his *Addresses to the German Nation* (1808). Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872) was the champion of Italian nationalism and unity known as “Risorgimento” (“Giuseppe Mazzini”). Similarly Adamantios Korais (1748-1833) is the Greek nationalist whose writings and activities were the foundations of the modern Greek language and literature as well as the Greek Independence movement (“Adamantios Korais”).

These theorists of Nationalism saw it as “a doctrine of popular freedom and sovereignty” based in “a single historic territory” called homeland of a people with “legal equality” and a single cultural heritage as an “expression of their authentic identity” (Hutchinson and Smith 4). Since then, nationalism as an ideological movement took different forms in different places. Civic and rational/liberal “western” versions are present in France, England, and the United States. But the state-based nationalism turned into imperialism and colonialism in Britain, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal etcetera. Ethnic nationalism like the German language-based romantic nationalism as appropriated by Bismarck in 1848 turned into the racist pan-German expansionism and the Nazi movement later on. Civic nationalism transformed Japan into a strong nation-state after 1868 by promoting a mass public education and by synthesising the virtues of a “specifically Japanese culture” with the adoption of western arts and technology. The multi-ethnic Ottoman Turkish reformation effort known as Tanzimat failed until Kamal Ataturk’s strong leadership transformed Turkey into a modern nation-state (Hutchinson and Smith 8-9).

The birth of Nationalism greatly facilitated the anti-colonial movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the then colonial territories. These nationalist movements sought to free the respective motherlands from the imperial rulers and to set up independent national own governments in their stead. India and Africa witnessed such a civic, territorial and anti-colonial nationalism apart from the ethnic pan-cultural movements like Hindu nationalism, Muslim nationalism and pan-Africanism (Hutchinson and Smith 9). The ethno-religious nationalisms based on the two-nation theory gave birth to Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. Later on, the ethno-linguistic nationalism created Bangladesh out of Pakistan.

Arab nationalisms as anti-colonial movements in North Africa and the Middle East adopted “western civic concepts of the nation (*watan*)” in the “imperialist territorial units.” Arab nationalisms shared the “myths of Arab origin and the Islamic golden age,” and a “pan-Jewish ethno-religious nationalism of the diaspora” resulted into the creation of the Zionist nation-state of Israel on the basis of their claim to a golden past linked to this territory (Hutchinson and Smith 8-9). However, as Indian Hindu nationalism had a romantic longing for the revival of an “idealized ethnic and religious past,” Muslim nationalism highlighted the goal of being religiously “pure (*pak*)” in the idealistically conceived domain of Pakistan meaning the “Holy place.” Similarly, the evolution of the Afghan nation and formation of “Afghanistan” as a nation-state have been modern phenomena that need to be dwelt upon in some details, for the sake of the present study.

While the concepts of “nation,” “nationalism” and the “nation-state” evolved in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as noted in the foregoing discussion, the postmodern/ postcolonial scrutiny of these socio-political constructs has given rise to the question of what remains within and/or beyond the “nation” and the “nation-state.” We all know that the birth of the nation is brought about by building either a willing or manufactured consensus of a group of persons to remain under the jurisdiction of a socio-political community spirit. However, this provisional popular opinion remains genus-faced. If one the one hand, this consensus, in its expansionist avatar brings into being such constructs as nationalism, postnationalism, internationalism and transnationalism, and the condition of diasporicity, then, in its contractionist manifestation, it may bring forth contradictory constructs like subnationalism and regionalism.

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The societal formations within the “nation” and/or national territory, as observed, are called subnational entities. These narrower constructions (subnations) are based on the differences of region, language, ethnicity, indigeneity, religion, caste, class etc. In fact, subnationalism and regionalism foment and critique such subnational constructions which are quite common in the nation-states across the world.

From the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, newer constructs and phenomena like “post-nation,” “sub-nation” and “globalisation” have gained in currency. According to Jurgen Habermas, after two hundred years of the revolutionary birth of nation-states forming the “historical constellation” of units with “the territorial state, the nation, and a popular economy,” these “societies constituted as nation-states” are facing now the “pressure of de-nationalization” in the process of globalisation towards “an economically driven world society” (Habermas 60-62). The super-national or supranational entities like the European Union, United Nations, the World Trade Organisation, the IMF, the World Bank etc. exemplify the post-national reality. Thus, ‘nationalism’ has now shed its sceptical approach towards colonialism and imperialism, and secured a partnership in the global system of late capitalism and multinationalism. According to Saskia Sassen, the global cities of service industries – like London, New York, Tokyo etc. – partly assume the denationalised spaces for the immigrants away from their respective nation-states to reinvent citizenship (Sassen 43). Linda Bosniak (2006) also highlights “citizenship as a core political idea,” in the global economic context, that has begun “to take transnational or non-national or extranational form or direction” (Bosniak 27). Because of the openness and inclusiveness of Canada as an immigrant nation, it has been proclaimed as the “first postnational state” by its Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who negates the presence of any “core identity” or “mainstream” in Canada (Foran).

An example of the trend towards “postnational constellation” is the formation of the “European Union” and the successful use of a common currency i.e. “Euro.” A number of nation-states with common identities or problems form the *supranational* organisations and/or environments like Latin America, North America, OPEC, SAARC, ASEAN etc.

Two other supranational terms which require attention are internationalism and trans-nationalism. Internationalism, as a political principle, transcends and contradicts nationalism. It speaks for the international unity of the mankind by transcending the sub-national and national boundaries. In order to resolve global and long-term issues and conflicts, nations and peoples across the world have to come together for a meaningful political or economic cooperation. Liberal internationalism was embodied in the political thoughts of Richard Cobden and John Bright in 1843 in England based on the idea of interdependence and free trade discussed by Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*. The first internationalist organisation established was the League of Nations, the precursor of the United Nations. However, the socialists were against the liberal internationalism taking it as an ally of capitalism and imperialism. Socialist idea of internationalism is based on the concept of international comradeship and unity of the working-classes of the countries across the world so that capitalism can be overthrown. However, in general usage of the term in the present time, internationalism is considered as important to bridge diverse cultures and to maintain world peace by inculcating the universal identity of “world citizen” based on human rights and duties. Jacques Derrida, in his 1993 work *Specters of Marx, the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, has proposed the idea of the “New International ... of a kind of counter-conjuration, in the (theoretical and practical) critique of the state of international law, the concepts of State and nation, and so forth...” (107). In the global backdrop of the present-day crises, Derrida envisions this New International as “a link of affinity, suffering, and hope” – an untimely link without status, title, name, coordination, party, country, national community, co-citizenship, or even class (*Spectre* 106-107).

The term “Transnational” was made popular by Randolph Bourne in his 1916 article “Trans-National America” published in the *Atlantic Monthly* to characterise the new approach to intercultural relationships (Bourne 86–97). However, the research agenda and social phenomena now known as trans-nationalism, is an outcome of some important factors and drives of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. William I. Robinson, in his 1998 article “Beyond Nation-State Paradigms: Globalization, Sociology, and the Challenge of Transnational Studies,” rightly states that, just as “social structure is becoming transnationalized; an epistemic shift is required in concurrence with this ontological shift” (Robinson, “Beyond” 561). Major factors and drives behind this are

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decolonisation, the collapse of communism, international assertion of human rights, the growing interconnectivity of peoples across the globe (through the international highways and airways, internet and wireless communication), the recession of global economy, and the decreasing social significance of national boundaries (Robinson, *Theory*).

From the 1970s onwards, an economic process popularly known as globalisation has been identified as economic transnationalism that promotes the processing of productions in different countries, and the low-cost transnational transportation of labour, raw materials and processed products. The functioning of the multinational corporations beyond the geo-political boundaries can be identified as a type of transnationalism. While transnationalist capitalism facilitates the trans-border flows of money, information, goods, and people, critics of transnational capitalism have inveighed against its drawbacks of monopolisation of global economy by the dominant corporations and power blocs. Joseph E. Stiglitz, for instance, has analysed this in his 2002 book *Globalization and its Discontents*. Such critics looked for an alternative form of transnationalism from the bottom – the workers/employees, co-operatives and socio-political movements. In fact, transnationalism, as theory and practice, has created a new global space fostering the trans-bordered relations and interactions of the individuals, institutions, and states on both egalitarian and hegemonic models.

Transnational activism has been dealt with in the realm of transnationalism studies. At the same time, a number of researchers and writers link transnationalism with cross-border networks of criminal activities.

Transborder immigration is one of the major issues of transnationalism. Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Christina Blanc-Szanton conceptualise the experiences and consciousness of the new migrant population in the light of transnationalism. They call these population “transmigrants” and define transnationalism “as the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement” (Schiller, et al. 1). Asale Angel-Ajani foresees “the possibility within diaspora studies to move away from the politically sanitized discourse that surrounds transnational studies” to the study of the “transnational processes and globalization” (Angel-Anjani 296). Needless to say, Since the African Diaspora Studies critiques the white racial formations, the Diaspora studies, at large, can add a sundry political perspective to the theory of transnationalism.

The concept of “Diaspora” connects the “nation” with the supra-national formations like the “post-nation” and the “trans-nation.” Derived from the Greek words *dia speiro* (to sow over), and meaning dispersion or scattering, “Diaspora” as a term was originally used to refer to the Jewish people expelled from their homeland to Babylonia with the destruction of “Jerusalem and its Temple” in the early 6th century BC. It was also used for the Greek colonies in the Hellenic empire between 6<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. It entered into the postcolonial discourses since 1960s with reference to the African diaspora. Stereotypes of Diasporas have been constructed by the postcolonial scholars on the basis of the Jewish experience of loss and the Greek experience of gain. Various “typologies” of diasporas include “victim, imperial/colonial, trade, or labour diasporas” on the basis of the main “motives for original migration” like expulsion, expansion, commercial endeavours, or pursuit of employment’ respectively. (“Diaspora”)

World-wide multiple diasporas or “expatriate communities” became visible with the “massive population movements” since the middle of the 19th century. We find in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century that around 10 percent of the world populations live in a diasporic situation. Diasporas as “ethno-national” groups may create some problems concerning their divided loyalties to their home and host countries. The natives may feel xenophobia in a “crisis situation” about the possible participation of diasporic networks in terrorist or delinquent activities. However, diasporic peoples, for the most part, attach positive value to their dual loyalties and can mix “easily in their daily life in a nonexclusive and productive manner.” Because of globalisation and the revolution in information and communication technologies, individuals and communities now can keep in touch with relatives and members. Maintaining contacts at home and abroad, they are enabled to remain abreast of “cultural, cognitive, and symbolic values of remote places.” On the other hand, host countries find it crucial for an “evolution from homogeneous conceptions of citizenship toward more pluralistic, multiethnic approaches” as

“political and socioeconomic integration” becomes prominent than “cultural and relational assimilation” in the present day globalised scenario (“Diaspora”).

In short, with the development of the Postcolonialist theory, the term is used to refer to a dispersal of a populace of common national origin, belief, and/or culture. Diaspora now means a “culturally identifiable and creative community” “having some sense of exile from a place or state of origin and belonging” (Hawthorn 78). The diaspora issue has thrown new light on the concepts of “nation” and “nationalism.” “Diaspora” typifies “exile polities” that entails struggle for independence of, political change in, or return to the home land. At a further remove, it may refer to “any national group away from the homeland” wanting to remain a part of a broader manifestation of the nation (Dufoix 1366). Thus, according to Stéphane Dufoix, the issue of diaspora redefines “nation that is no longer confined to territorial limits” (Dufoix 1366).

The terms and concepts already discussed will be relevant to Afghanistan and the Afghan people as presented by Rahimi and Hosseini. I shall see and show how the Afghan people evolved as a nation, how Afghanistan turned into a nation-state through the workings of history and memory, and how Rahimi and Hosseini have simulated their experiences about their homeland in their fictions under the influence of their post-/trans-national and diasporic subject positions.

It is useful to focus on the predominantly ethnic character of the Afghan society. The name “Afghan” in different forms (Apakan, Apagan, Abgan, Avgan and Awgan) is chronicled since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. A. H. Habibi notes in the article “Afghan and Afghanistan” that the name of “Vindaparn Abgan” (the Afghan chieftain of the war) among the distinguished men of Shapur empire was inscribed in the Zardusht temple between the years 260 and 273 by the second Sassanid king (Shapur the First), and the title of “Apakan” was given to Shapur the Third (who ruled for 70 Years from 309-379 A.D.). Habibi infers that it was a word of praise, chivalry and nobility for the noble men of Sassanid courts. Firdausi in his epic *Shahnama* mentioned the word “Awagan”:

The mighty soldiers had gathered around the castle,  
Armed with golden cudgels and golden helmets,  
Their commander was Qaran Kawgaan,  
Led by the valiant general, Awgaan.  
(Shah-Nama 1-116 qtd. in Habibi 3)

Considering the fact that “*Awa* and *Awagan* were used in ancient Aryan narrations” and taking their origin in Avesta, Habibi opines that “they probably mean kind and patron, for the heroes of that era were worthy of such titles” and “subsequently the words became the names of tribes or nations.” (Habibi 1-6)

The sixth century Indian astrologer-cum-astronomer Varahamihira in his *Brihat Samhita* refers to the “Avgan” people (145, 182) as different from the people of Gandhara or Kandahar (41, 68, 165, 190, and 574). It indicates to a geographical region as different from other provinces of present day Afghanistan. In the medieval period, the description of the “Afghans” is first found in the geography *Hudud al-Alam* or *The Regions of the World* (982 A.D.) written by the anonymous geographer from province of Guzgan (North Afghanistan). This book refers to the Afghans twice: the first in the description of *Saul* which is a “pleasant village on a mountain” and where “live Afghans,” and the second in the description of *Ninhar* where the king “has many wives, (namely) over thirty Muslim, Afghan, and Hindu (wives)” (*Hudud al-Alam* 91). Alberuni (973-1048), the famous historian in the court of Gaznavi King Mahmud, in his *Tarikh-al-Hind* or *India* (around 1020 A.D.), locates the presence of “Afghan” tribes: “In the western frontier mountains of India there live various tribes of the Afghans, and extend up to the neighbourhood of the Sindh Valley (1: 208).” In the memoir *Baburnama*, Emperor Babur (1483-1530) limits the name “Afghanistan” (in the sense of the land of Afghans) to the countries inhabited by “Afghan” tribes, located to the south of Kabul country (1: 200), though he notes also the scattered presence of Afghan tribes along with many other tribes like Turks, Hazaras, Mughuls etc. in the countries of Kabul, Ghazni, Khurasan, Samarkand etc. (1: 218, 221).



From the above analysis, we find that previously the word “Afghan” meant only an ethnic community and it did not bear any civic notion of nation. At this point it is useful to note that a large section of the Afghan people is ethnically known as Pashtuns, Pakhtuns and Pathans who used to call their homeland “Pashtunkhwa” or “Pakhtunkhwa” as well. This community includes the world’s largest group of tribesmen namely Shinwaris, Mohmands, Afridis, Khattaks, Orakzais, Banuchis, Waziris, Achakzais, Bangash, Yusufzais etc. bound by the tribal code known as pashtunwali/ Pakhtunwali and using Pashtu/Pakhtu language. In the *History of Herodotus* the word “Pakhtunkhwa” is stated as “Pactyike” and “pakhtuns” as “Pactyans” (Herodotus 1:260-308; 2:175-161). In the *Rigveda*, the Pashto/Pakhto is referred to as “Paktha” (Griffith, *Hymns* 1:7:18). In the medieval Pashtu literature, this homeland is remembered as “Pashtunkhwa.” For example, Skarandoi, a poet in the court of Sultan Mazuddin Mohammad Saam, eulogises his expedition (1123 A.D.) to India: “When the youth of Pashtoonkhwa march to India/ Young and pretty maidens dance joyously” (Hotek 154). Khushal Khan Khattak who is considered the father of Pashto literature, says: “Whatever good is from Pashtoonkhwa, this is its state” (Hotek 154). Ahmad Shah Durrani who is considered the father of the state of Afghanistan, remembers his Afghan homeland as “Pashtoonkhwa” in his poem while he was in the throne of Delhi: “I am oblivious of the throne of Delhi/ While pondering my beautiful Pashtoonkhwa’s towering peaks” (Hotek 154).

Thus “Pashtun/Pakhtun” and “Afghan” were synonymously used to denote the ethnic identity of a particular people, as the first nationalist Pashtu-Afghan warrior poet Khushal Khan Khattak (1613-1689) who fought against the Mughul dominance with his pen and sword till death, encapsulates in his poem “Passion of the Afghan”:

Pull out your sword and slay any one  
That says Pashtun and Afghan are not one!  
Arabs know this and so do Romans:  
Afghans are Pashtuns, Pashtuns are Afghans!

(Qtd. in Burrough 32, Butt 162)

In the same way, the name “Pakhtunkhwa” and “Afghanistan” were also used synonymously. This Pashtun/Afghan watan which remained dismembered under different empires in the post-Aurangzeb era was once again re-membered and absorbed as the central part of the empire of Ahmad Shah Durrani, the first Afghan King elected by the *loya jirga* in 1747 after the assassination of the Persian king Nadir Shah. The name “Afghanistan” became politically recognised with the establishment of the Emirate of Afghanistan or “Da Afghanistan Amarat” in 1837 that came out of the Durrani empire after losing much of the former territories to Persia in the west, Russia in the north and the British in the east and south. On May 26, 1879 with the Treaty of Gandamak, Afghanistan became a “half-autonomous protectorate” of British India (Herb and Kaplan 1683). The Afghan homeland remained almost intact in this emirate until Sir Mortimer Durand, the Foreign Secretary of British India, demarcated in 1893 over sixteen hundred miles border-line called the “Durand Line” separating a part of the Afghan homeland (along with its Afghan population) into the British territory (Butt in Salim 160-162), known as the North West Frontier Province of British India. Significantly it was never later on reintegrated into Afghanistan. Afghanistan became a buffer state comprising the Pashtun and non-Pashtun tribal territories with its present-day boundary fixed on the Durand line in 1893 during the reign (1880- 1901) of “Iron Amir” Abdur Rahman as a result of the Great Game (as between British India and Russia). During his reign, the process of transformation of Afghanistan from the feudal system into a modern state proved successful to a major extent though it was a British-protected state. During the reign (1919-1929) of his third son King Amanullah, Afghanistan became an Independent nation-state on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of August 1920 with the Rawalpindi British-Afghan Treaty. In 1934, Afghanistan became a member of the League of Nations.

The North West Frontier Province of British India is at present Pakistan’s “Khyber Pakhtukhwa” province. It retains the Afghan ethnic identity associated with the Pashtu origin of the population and their Afghan homeland known as “Pakhtunkhwa” or “Pashtunkhwa.” This remained a bone of contention in the Pak-Afghan relationship between 1948 and 1975 (Herb and Kaplan 1683).

After its independence, the first Constitution of Afghanistan enacted on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of April 1923, re-defined the “Afghan nation” and “Afghanistan” as a nation-state. This constitution declares the “independence of the Afghan nation” (Article 4), Afghanistan as a “completely free and independent” country – a “single unit without discrimination between different parts of the country” (Article 1), all the residents in Afghanistan irrespective of “religious and sectarian differences” being the citizens/subjects (Article 8) with “equal rights and duties” (Article 16) etc. Thus the “Afghan nation,” which previously meant only the Pashtun tribes, now includes other ethno-linguistic groups also like Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkmen etc. living within its territory.

Irrespective of the constitutional mandate, regarding the strict maintenance and promotion of ethnic equality, the domination of the Pashtu tribes and the consequent discrimination against the other ethnic communities have remained rampant in Afghanistan. This issue of ethnic conflict is dwelt upon extensively in the novels of Atiq Rahimi and Khaled Hosseini (especially Rahimi’s *A Curse on Dostoevsky*, and Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*). For instance, Commandant Parwaiz and Rassoul in *A Curse on Dostoevsky* express their concerns of the confused Afghan nationality and advocate for the reconstruction of the “watan” or civic nation of Afghanistan by transcending the post-soviet ethnic strife, while Moharamullah (father of Rassoul’s beloved Sophia) remembers the communist compradors called Khalqs (made up mainly of Pashtuns) that were responsible for selling Afghanistan to Russia (Rahimi, *Curse* 29). Assef, the antagonist in *The Kite Runner*, an advocate of Pashtun nationalism, insults the Hazara boy Hassan: “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.” (Hosseini, *Kite* 38). Assef is proud of Daud Khan (*Kite* 37), the Pro-Soviet first President of Afghanistan and an advocate of Pashtun irredentism for the creation of a greater “Pashtunistan” comprising the predominantly Pashtun areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan (“Mohammad Daud Khan”). Assef later on becomes a member of the Pashtun-dominated Taliban who formed a theocratic regime in Afghanistan and who did not press the irredentist Pashtun issue in their agenda. However, in their bid to establish the Taliban rule all over Afghanistan, they had to fight against the political factions that formed the Northern Alliance.

Thus the emergence of the Afghan free nation since its independence in 1920 was thwarted and reversed with the soviet imperialist invasion in 1979 followed by the Mujahedeen civil war (1989- 96), the Taliban rule (1996-2001) and finally the post-9/11 American war on terror. This defilement of Afghanistan has been represented by Rahimi in its symbolic essence in the brief compass of his first novel *Earth and Ashes*. The soviet demolition of the Afghan village of Abqul – with its peaceful population (especially women and children) along with its flora and fauna – represents Afghanistan in turmoil in and beyond the soviet era. Here, the “earth” is the Afghan “watan” including its land and people, its nature and environment – that was turned into ruinous “ashes” during the soviet era and its aftermath. The post-Taliban reconstruction of Afghanistan, though a herculean task for its leaders, is a new challenge for the Afghan nation. A number of fiction writers of Afghan origin writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have dwelt upon this period of the recent Afghan history. Whereas Atiq Rahimi concentrated on the Afghan trauma and resilience, crisis and resistance, history and memory etc. associated with the periods of soviet and mujahedeen rule, Khaled Hosseini has tried to capture, on his large canvas, the Afghan landscape and its people, their joys and woes, their suffering and resistance, within and outside Afghanistan of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond.

Both Rahimi and Hosseini who witnessed the Soviet horrors in Afghanistan and had to escape with their families into foreign lands; one settled in France and another in the United States, having a diasporic communication between themselves and with their homeland. For instance, Hosseini has written the introduction of the English version to Rahimi’s novel *The Patience Stone* (Rahimi, *Patience* 271-275) that fictionalises the women’s struggle in a war-torn Afghan androcentric society.

A number of Afghan diasporic characters are found in the novels of these two authors. For instance, Rassoul in Rahimi’s *A Curse on Dostoevsky* had to stay in Leningrad (Saint Petersburg) in the Soviet Union to study law for a few years (1986-89) (*Curse* 44). Similarly, Amir, the central character of Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner*, leads a diasporic life along with his family in the United States and comes to Afghanistan in the Taliban era to rescue his nephew. Major Afghan characters in Hosseini’s *And the Mountains Echoed* live in France and

the United States, and the action of the novel mirrors a comprehensive picture of the Afghan diaspora of the last decades of the twentieth century and beyond. All these characters remember their homeland in which their life is rooted and that routes their course of action.

A diasporic writer lives in a foreign land, partakes of two cultures, gets gradually hybridised, and writes “from a kind of double perspective” of both the insider and the outsider. They construct their homeland, negotiating spatiotemporal distance from the homeland and necessary ubiety of the host land from their hybridised status. Thus the homeland that is drawn in a diasporic text becomes “imaginary homeland” constituted of some broken images, like fragmented pieces of a broken mirror, some pieces being permanently lost or mutilated (Salman Rushdie 9-21). The word “re-membering” has been used in this thesis both in the sense of ‘remembering’ (memory/recall) and ‘re-membering’ (scrutiny and reconstitution) of the dismembered or broken images of the *watan* or home-nation as imagined and reconstructed by the authors from their diasporic gaze.

Rahimi and Hosseini, as *homo symbolicum* or “representational man” represent Afghanistan in their fictions not only in the aesthetic and semiotic senses of these terms, but also in the sense of “political representation” as activists in the reconstruction of the post-9/11 Afghanistan. As W. J. T. Mitchell writes, since Plato and Aristotle (the first exponents of literary theory), “all the arts – verbal, visual and musical” – are regarded as modes of representation of life (Mitchel 11). Man, being instinctively more imitative and creative than other animals, creates and manipulates “signs” or symbols that represent something else. Apart from the “aesthetic” and/or “semiotic” representation, “representation” may refer to the concept of “political representation” where persons act for others (Mitchel 12). How an author (even a diasporic one) becomes a representative of a nation and how a fiction can represent a nation is found, for instance, when Hosseini is astonished at the reception of his fictions by the readers worldwide many of whom want to send money for the rebuilding of the war-torn Afghanistan as he informs in the “Foreword to the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition” of *The Kite Runner*:

As an Afghan, I am honoured when readers tell me that this book has helped make Afghanistan a real place for them. That it isn’t just the caves of Tora Bora and poppy fields and Bin Laden for them anymore. It’s quite an honor when readers tell me that this novel helped put a personal face on Afghanistan for them, and that they now see my homeland as more than just another unhappy, chronically troubled, afflicted land.

In fact, both types of representation (i.e. fictional and factual), representation is a means of communication between the “maker” (i.e. author/performer) and the “beholder” (i.e. reader/ audience) about something/ someone with/ by something (e.g. work/book/sign/symbol) or someone (e.g. characters). In fact, representation is a complex process that includes from “atomistic” lairs of representation through multitude of images, symbols, events, characters etc. to a larger or macro-level of representation with the help of a larger narrative/performance (Mitchel 12-13). Representation as a means of communication in a fictional narrative embodies a dialogic process that includes interactions between different agents, elements and aspects within its thematic matrix. The power of the novels of Rahimi and Hosseini to represent Afghanistan and its people, is located in their authorial voice/intention that exploits various interfaces where binary systems, subjects, organisations etc. meet and interact. Accordingly, ‘History and Memory,’ ‘Nature and Man,’ and ‘Culture and Identity’ are the three major aspects of the Afghan nation and its homeland which have been discussed as separate articles forming the parts of the whole dissertation.

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