

Kite Runner, (2007)

Commentary by Marc Forster, Khaled Hosseini & David Benioff

Rated PG-13

127 minutes

Director: Marc Forster

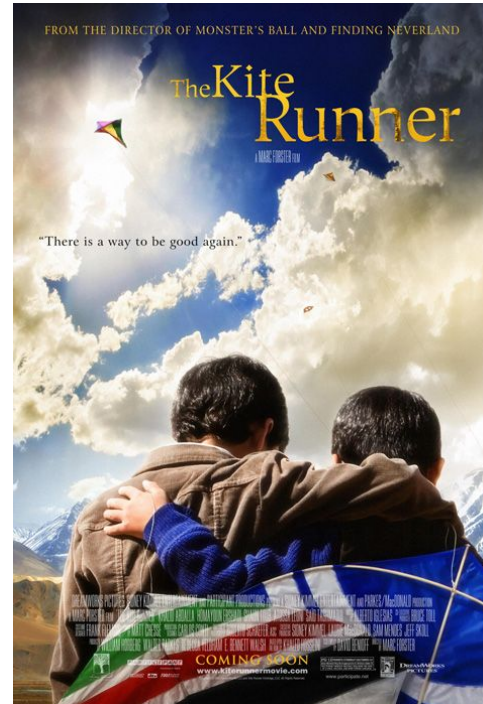
Screenwriter: David Benioff

Novel: Khaled Hosseini

Dreamworks Pictures

Cast

Sard Taghmaoui	Farid
Shaun Toub	Rahim Khan
Homayoun Ershadi	Baba
Khalid Abdalla	Amir
Zekiria Ebrahimi	Young Amir
Ahmad Khan Mahmoodzada	Young Hassan
Ali Danish Bakhty Ari	Sohrab
Nabi Tanha	Ali
Atossa Leoni	Soraya
Abdul Qadir Farookh	General Taher
Maimoona Ghizal	Jamila
Abdul Salam Yusoufzai	Assef
Elham Ehsas	Young Assef
Peg McKibbin	Flea Market Customer
Chris Verrill	Dr. Starobin
Amar Kureishi	Dr. Amani
Mohammad Eshan Aman	Wedding Singer
Yunus Osman	Cemetery Mullah
Mehboob Ali	Pakistan taxi driver
Aziz Raxidi	Assef guards
Khalil Ahmad Nooryan	Assef guards
Hameeda Hamraz	Rahim Khan's neighbor
Kaiser Doulat-Beek	Man at mosque
Ahmad Shah Alam	Man in the park
Habib Zargi	Park Kite seller
Houshmand Habib	Kite Flyer Kid
Lukas Ferreira	Kite Spooler Kid
Sayed Jafar	Omar
Masihullah Gharibzada	Omar
Mir Mahmood Shah Hashimi	Businessman in Baba's Study
Bahram Ehsas	Wali
Tamim Nawabi	Kamal
Mohamad Nabi Attai	Uncle Saifo the Kite Seller
Mohamad Nadir Sarwari	Spice Merchant
Mustafa Haidari	Party Worker
Ahmad Yasar Shir Agha	Birthday Singer
Mohammad Aman Joya	Mahmood
Abdul Azim Wahabzada	Karim
Vsevolod Sevanchos	Soviet Union Soldier
Igor Radchenko	Soviet Union Officer
Jesse Robertson	Man at bar
Josh Chamberlain	Pool Player
Marco Mazariegos	Pool Player



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Shaan Price	Pool Player
Saeed Meeran Farhad	Burly Man in Truck
Larry Brown	Gas Station Customer
L. Peter Callender	Dean of Students
Igbal Theba	Additional voice
Nasser Memarzia	Zaman the orphanage director

Crew

Producer:	E. Bennett Walsh
First Assistant Director:	Michael Lerman
Executive Producer:	Sam Mendes
Director:	Marc Forster
Executive Producer:	Sidney Kimmel
Screenwriter:	David Benioff
Art Director:	Karen Murphy
Producer:	Rebecca Yeldham
Second Unit Director:	Rebecca Yeldham
Sound/Sound Designer:	Chris Munro
Set Decorator:	Maria Nay
Composer (Music Score):	Alberto Iglesias
Executive Producer:	Laurie MacDonald
Editor:	Matt Chess
Cinematographer:	Roberto Schaefer
Associate Producer:	Kwame Parker, Leslie McMinn
Production Designer:	Carlos Conti, Bruce Toll
Co-Executive Producer:	Bruce Toll
Costume Designer:	Bruce Toll
Set Decorator:	Caroline Smith
Producer:	William Horberg
Book Author:	Khaled Hosseini
Executive Producer:	Walter Parkes
Producer:	Walter Parkes
Casting:	Karen Dowd
Executive Producer:	Jeff Skoll
First Assistant Director:	Zhang Jinzhen
Art Director:	Douglas Cumming, Oleh Sokolovsky
Casting:	Eriko Miyagawa
First Assistant Director:	Sharon Lam Suk-Ching
Casting:	Nina Henninger

Chapter 1: San Francisco, the phone call. “You can still be good.”

Chapter one notes can be given during the credit sequence at the beginning of the movie.

Budget \$20 million. Filming dates, September 20, 2006 to December 21, 2006

Afghan = the People, stan = The Land of. Afghanistan = The Land of Afghans, estimated population as of July, 2007, is close to 32 million.

Director: Marc Forster

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Khaled Hosseini (pronounced Hauleed) began writing this novel in March of 2001. Khaled met with David Benioff, before he began working on the project, and trusted his integrity and history as a writer to turn this project over to him as a screenwriter.

Filming locations in China, which substituted for the sites in Afghanistan: Beijing, Kashgar, Tashgarkan, Xinjiang, and Pamir Mountains.

Oakland and Piedmont, California, as the cemetery location.

Beginning you discover that Amir is a writer, living in San Francisco, CA, and that the story will be told through a flashback to Afghanistan, 1978.

Religions in Afghanistan:

Sunni Muslim 80%	Shi'a Muslim 19%
Other (Hindu, Christian) 1%	

Ethnic Groups:

Pashtun 42%	Aimak 4%,
Tajik 27%	Turkmen 3%
Hazara 9%	Baloch 2%
Uzbek 9%	Other 4%

Currency: Afghani (1 Afghani (AF) = 100 puls)

Independence: 19 August 1919 (from UK control over Afghan foreign affairs)

Environment - International Agreements:

party to: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Marine Dumping, Ozone Layer Protection

signed, but not ratified: Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Life Conservation

Gross Domestic Product: \$21.5 billion (2006 est.)

GDP - Composition: *Agriculture:* 38% *Industry:* 24%

Services: 38%

Note: data exclude opium production (2005 est.)

GDP per capita: \$800 (2000 estimate)

Geography Overview: Afghanistan does not have any links to any ocean or sea, it is a landlocked country. The northern and eastern part of the country has high terrain and the lower south and southwest is mostly semi-deserts and plain lands. Boundary: China 76 km, Iran 936 km, Pakistan 2430 km, Tajikistan 1206 km, Turkmenistan 744 km, Uzbekistan 137 km. Total Area: 647,500 sq km (250,000 sq. miles)

Climate: Arid to semiarid; cold winters and hot summers.

Terrain: Mostly rugged mountains; plains in north and southwest.

Environment: Earthquakes; soil degradation, desertification, overgrazing, deforestation, war pollution.

Extreme Elevations: lowest point: Amu Darya 258 m, highest point: Nowshak 7,485 m

Natural Resources: Natural Gas, Petroleum, Coal, Copper, Chromite, Talc, barites, Sulfur, Lead, Zinc, iron ore, salt, precious and semiprecious stones.

Environment Issues: Limited natural fresh water resources; inadequate supplies of potable water; soil degradation; overgrazing; deforestation (much of the remaining forests are being cut down for fuel and building materials); desertification; air and water pollution

0:06:00 This is the western part of China called Tashgarkan, where the kids are playing. It is close to the border of Pakistan and a pretty challenging place to shot, due to the high altitude.

0:06:49 This is an epic novel, as it takes place over two continents, and many years.

0:06:52 You notice that they have omitted the harelip on Hassan, a major deviation from the book. It came down to a technical difficulty; it would have been two hours of makeup daily for the child actor.

Khalid Abdalla, the actor playing Amir learned the language Dari (official languages of Afghanistan is Pashtu and Dari) for the film, he was fluent in Arabic, so that assisted him a little, but he went to Kabul to study the language.

Chapter 2: Meeting the Bullies

Rahim sees the picture of Soraya and puts it down on the table. In the next scene, the picture is not seen anymore.

0:11:34 Here Amir mentions the death of his mother in child birth; this is one fact about Afghanistan that has not changed. Nongovernmental organizations estimate:

- every 30 minutes a woman dies in Afghanistan from causes related to being pregnant
- Only 16 percent of pregnant women in Afghanistan receive prenatal care
- 60 out of every 1,000 Afghan newborns die
- one child in four dies before reaching the age of five.

Save the Children's senior health adviser, Regina Keith, tells RFE/RL that one of the main reasons for the high fatality rates among mothers and their newborns is that many women give birth at home without any professional help.

0:13:00 One of the choices they made for the movie was to have them speaking in their native language, and then when they come to America, it switches to English. The cast these kids from Kabul, and they did not speak any English. The American Afghanistan kids that they interviewed, all were too western. As a result, the cast is very authentic and real. There was a lot of resistance from the studio, due to cost to have the film shot in the language of the people.

0:14:18 A lot of the film is reminiscent of the authors own childhood, even though the main story line and conflict is fiction. Khaled Hosseini, grew up in Kabul in the 1970's and then moved to Paris on a diplomatic assignment, his father worked for the Afghan Foreign Ministry.

0:14:31 The movie correctly displays the influence of western culture, in the clothes the kids wear and in the selection of the car his father drives. The movies are also an experience that Khaled had as a boy, he also said *The Magnificent Seven*, twelve times, so he wanted to include it in the novel.

Chapter 3: Amir's first writing Experience

0:17:20 The story told here, is a story that Khaled wrote when he was ten years old.

Afghanistan History Overview: Afghanistan's crossroads position in Central Asia has subjected it to constant invasion and conquest throughout its long recorded history. The parade of conquerors in historic times includes DARIUS I of Persia in the 6th century BC; ALEXANDER THE GREAT in 328 BC; the Sakas, Parthians, and the Buddhist Kushans in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC; and White Huns, in the 5th and 6th centuries AD. The Arabs introduced Islam in the 7th century, and the Turks under Mahmud of Ghazni briefly made Afghanistan the center of Islamic power and civilization at the beginning of the 11th century. The MONGOLS invaded Afghanistan early in the 13th century, and Timur added it to his empire at the end of the 14th century. In the early 16th century, Timor's descendant Babur, first of the MOGULS, founded an empire in India from his base at Kabul. In 1747 the Pashtun, having thrown off the Persian yoke, established a dynasty of their own under Ahmad Shah Durrani, the leader of a tribal confederation. Pashtun strength was consolidated by Dost Muhammad Khan (reign 1826-63) who founded a second dynasty early in the 19th century.

Effective physical control over all of the country, however, was first achieved by Dost Muhammad's grandson, Abdur Rahman Khan (reign 1880-1901); Abdur Rahman's diplomacy also prevented either the British or the Russian empires from gaining internal control over Afghanistan. Frustrated by their failure to subdue the country in the Anglo-Afghan wars of 1839-42 and 1878-80, the British agreed to subsidize an Afghan ruler strong enough to serve as a buffer between the empires. Abdur Rahman Khan's grandson, Amanullah Shah (reign 1919-29), in 1921 ended British involvement in Afghan affairs. He also initiated a series of ambitious efforts at social and political modernization, but tribal opposition forced him to flee the country. Zahir Shah ruled Afghanistan from 1933 to 1973. In 1964 he sponsored a serious attempt at liberal, Islamic constitutionalism including free elections and partial parliamentary democracy. When the experiment foundered, the king's cousin Mohammad Daud Khan seized power in a nearly bloodless coup and ruled as a republican president from 1973 to 1978. Zahir Shah went into exile in Europe. Afghanistan was invaded by the Red Army in 1979 and the invasion ended in 1989 when the last troops withdrew from Afghanistan. Since then the country is stalled in a civil war which has cost more than half a million lives on top of the million and a half people who died during the Russian invasion. Afghanistan has been one of the most independent countries in the World. Afghanistan has never been a colony. The British had control of the Afghan foreign affairs until August 19, 1919. *Afghanistan, The facts*. Retrieved from: <http://www.afghan-network.net/Culture/facts.html>

0:18:42 The sling shot is a basic toy for boys in Afghan.

0:19:32 The tree is a real pomegranate tree, that was brought into China for the movie, and those are real pomegranates on the tree. Shot here for two or three days, and they were worried that the tree might die from the cold nights. Filmed in China.

0:20:33 The mustang was brought in from San Francisco for the movie.

0:21:13 Great shot of the people on the street, you can see many people in western wear, hippies, and then the traditional burkes of Afghan.

0:21:45 Some of the Afghan actors didn't stick to their lines in the script, but the captioning is correct to the script, so there is a bit of improvisation performed by the cast.

Chapter 4: Kite Contest

0:22:38 This is Tashgarkan, China, where they made the snow and the kite flying contest. It is located about nine hours from Beijing, and this is the first film to get filmed in this town.

0:22:53 In many of the kite flying shots, the children were pulling balloons and the kites were added in post-production. They also had cables across buildings and the kite ropes went over the cables and were attached to a water bottle, to add weight. There was no wind present when they filmed. So the kids are looking up at the cables with their ropes over them.

0:24:21 Three days to shoot this scene, closed down three hundred businesses and three hundred extras, only two pages in the novel. This town square is the central hub of their business district; as a result they had to shut down all of these shops.

0:25:00 They did have a technical advisor for the kite fight scene, and he choreographed the whole thing. You did get some helicopter shots included here.

0:26:06 In Afghanistan, winter is three months and the schools are closed, so the students are bored and the kite fighting contest is what sustains them. The Taliban banned kite flying. The title for the novel was first, and then he wrote a short story, which was not published. Through the encouragement of his parents and his wife, he completed the novel. The short story ended half way through, where Amir goes back to Pakistan.

Release prints were delivered to theaters with the fake title 'Playground Bully'.

Khaled Hosseini was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1965. His father was a diplomat with the Afghan Foreign Ministry and his mother taught Farsi and History at a large high school in Kabul. In 1976, the Afghan Foreign Ministry relocated the Hosseini family to Paris. They were ready to return to Kabul in 1980, but by then Afghanistan had already witnessed a bloody communist coup and the invasion of the Soviet army. The Hosseinis sought and were granted political asylum in the United States. In September of 1980, Hosseini's family moved to San Jose, California. Hosseini graduated from high school in 1984 and enrolled at Santa Clara University where he earned a bachelor's degree in Biology in 1988. The following year, he entered the

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University of California-San Diego's School of Medicine, where he earned a Medical Degree in 1993. He completed his residency at Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles. Hosseini was a practicing internist between 1996 and 2004.

While in medical practice, Hosseini began writing his first novel, *The Kite Runner*, in March of 2001. In 2003, *The Kite Runner*, was published and has since become an international bestseller, published in 48 countries. In 2006 he was named a goodwill envoy to UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency. His second novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* was published in May of 2007. Currently, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is published in 25 countries. He lives in northern California.

0:29:00 Everyone's favorite line, "For you a thousand times over."

Chapter 5: The Rape Scene

This is that pivotal moment in a person's life, where something happens some event that changes how they see the world. This event will alter everyone's life.

One of the common questions that high school student readers have about this incident is the notion of their own capability, would they step in and defend their friend against these three bullies. What actions would you take? What would be your response to this situation? There is a coward and a hero in all of us. One of the reasons we can relate to Amir as a character, is that we can see ourselves in him, and the man that he becomes.

0:33:57 Neither of these boys had acted previously. When they saw this film, it was the first movie that they had ever seen and their first time in a movie theatre.

The casting director went to two schools in Kabul that were for advanced students, and they casted these two main students from the kids. ARO, Afghanistan relief Organization school.

Due to Afghan mores concerning male rape, Paramount Vantage agreed to relocate the young actors out of the country to the United Arab Emirates and arrange visas, housing and schooling for the young actors and jobs for their guardians. Paramount Vantage accepts responsibility for the living expenses of Zekeria Ebrahimi, 'Ahmad Khan Mahmizada', 'Ali Danish Bakhty Ari' and Sayed Jafar Masihullah Gharibzada until they reach adulthood, a cost some estimated at up to \$500,000.

The family of 'Ahmad Khan Mahmizada' tried to get the rape scene removed from the film

Chapter 6: Getting Hassan Made

0:37:01 They made fake pomegranates here, as real ones would have hurt the child actor.

This is about the destructive force of guilt. The reason Amir reacts this way is due to his love for Hassan, but every time he looks at Hassan he realizes his own shortcomings and failures.

0:39:00 Metaphor of the butcher with the slaughter of the goat, it is the sacrificial lamb, Hassan will be the sacrificial lamb in this situation.

Afghanistan Television Stations: 7 (1 government-run central television station in Kabul and regional stations in 6 of the 34 provinces) (2006).

Afghanistan Telephones: Landline: 280,000 (2005), Mobile: 1.4 million (2005).

Afghanistan Number of Daily Newspapers: 10 publications; numerous publications in English including Kabul Times.

0:42:26 The fireworks were a little sparse and the director was not thrilled with it, he wanted it to be a little bit more grand, and since they were filming in China and fireworks come from China, he thought this was pitiful.

Chapter 7: The Theft of the Money and Watch

0:45:12 This is the scene in which we know that Hassan knows that Amir is aware of what happened to him in the alley, and Hassan is also aware of the guilt that Amir is feeling for not protecting him. Hassan is the one who takes the higher road here, and states that he stole the watch, in order to save face for his young master.

The audience wants Amir to step up here, and the fact that he remains passive is infuriating to the observer.

0:45:43 Baba has a little belly here, it is a face suit that he will lose when his health changes in America.

Chapter 8: Soviet Invasion and escape

0:46:48 When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan there was a mass exodus from the country as Afghan citizens attempted to escape.

This is the political and historical background to Afghanistan, and it is subtle, as it takes second place to the story.

0:48:10 This was filmed at 15,000 feet altitude, the cast had to be brought to this remote location for filming and it was cold. The Russian acts were located in Beijing, and then brought up to this spot for filming.

0:49:11 There is a scene that was filmed and supposed to place after this scene, where they are locked in a basement, it is the scene from the book, prior to getting in the tanker. This Baba is a little different than what you visualize in the reading of the book, remember in the book this is the man that has wrestled a bear and had huge hands. Here you see the power of this man, in his stature and not in his size.

0:52:06 Here in the tanker Amir recites Mevlana Rumi. In the novel Baba tells his son to think of Mevlana Rumi, the poem is from Mathnawi 1, 1510 - 1513. The name Mowlana Jalaluddin Rumi stands for Love and ecstatic flight into the infinite. Rumi is one of the great spiritual masters and poetical geniuses of mankind and was the founder of the Mawlawi Sufi order, a mystical brotherhood of Islam.



Who are we in this complicated world?

*If we come to sleep,
We are His drowsy ones.
And if we come to wake,
We are in His hands.
If we come to weeping,
We are His cloud full of raindrops.
And if we come to laughing,
We are His lightning in that moment.
If we come to anger and battle,
It is the reflection of his wrath.
And if we come to peace and pardon,
It is the reflection of His love.*

Who are we in this complicated world?

The following is the full poem.

Emptiness

*Consider the difference
in our actions and God's actions.*

*We often ask, "Why did you do that?"
or "Why did I act like that?"*

*We do act, and yet everything we do
is God's creative action.*

*We look back and analyse the events
of our lives, but there is another way
of seeing, a backward-and-forward-at-once
vision, that is not rationally understandable.*

*Only God can understand it.
Satan made the excuse, "You caused me to fall,
whereas Adam said to God, "We did this
to ourselves." After this repentance,
God asked Adam, "Since all is within
my foreknowledge, why didn't you
defend yourself with that reason?"*

*Adam answered, "I was afraid,
and I wanted to be reverent."*

Whoever acts with respect will get respect.

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*Whoever brings sweetness will be served almond cake.
Good women are drawn to be with good men.*

*Honour your friend.
Or treat him rudely,
and see what happens!*

*Love, tell an incident now
that will clarify this mystery
of how we act feely, and are yet
compelled. One handshakes with palsy.
Another shakes because because you slapped it away.*

*Both tremblings come from God,
but you feel guilty for the one,
and what about the other?*

*These are intellectual questions.
The spirit approaches the matter
differently. Omar once had a friend, a scientist,
Bu'l-Hakam, who was flawless at solving
empirical problems, but he could not follow Omar
into the area of illumination and wonder.*

*Now I return to the text, "And He is with you,
wherever you are," but when have I ever left it!*

*Ignorance is God's prison
Knowing is God's palace.*

*We sleep in God's unconsciousness.
We wake in God's open hand.*

*We weep God's rain.
We laugh God's lightning.*

*Fighting and peacefulness
both take place within God.*

*Who are we then
in this complicated world-tangle,
that is really just the single, straight
line down at the beginning of ALLAH?*

*Nothing.
We are*

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emptiness.

*When you are with everyone but me,
you're with no one.*

*When you are with no one but me,
you're with everyone.*

*Instead of being so bound up with everyone,
be everyone.*

*When you become that many, you're nothing.
Empty.*

Continuity error: Amir's father uses his Indigo watch light to comfort Amir while fleeing Afghanistan in the tanker truck. Indigo watch light feature wasn't available until 1992.

Chapter 9: Fremont, California 1988

Filming location for Fremont, California, was Newark and Hayward, California.

0:53:45 Here we depict Baba's fall from grace and the very different circumstances of his life, remember he used to own a Mustang, and now he sells gas at a gas station.

0:53:53 The graduation scene was filmed at Treasure Island, located in the San Francisco Bay, California. They had to come up with a last name for Amir in the movie; in the book he does not have a last name.

0:55:07 This bar was shot in China on a stage that they built. This shows that Baba still has that strength and charisma; in the book it states he was still the most popular man in the room.

0:56:32 General Iqbal Taheri, he is an architect. He does not speak any English, and when he came in to the auditioning Kabul, he said through an interpreter, I am only here to play the role of the general; I am not interested in any other part.

0:57:39 The author of the book, Khaled Hosseini, stated that he wrote long hand, he didn't use a typewriter.

The flea market in San Jose was a part of Khaled's experience. He stated that they would meet all types of Afghanistan residents at the flea market; there was one whole section for the Afghan community.

1:00:31 Khaled got married pretty quickly he meet his wife at a party. He stated that he had an awkward talk for about an hour with her, then called her up four or five days later and essentially proposed to her. But it is his family that proposes marriage, not him as an individual, and he is not present. So just as you see it here in the movie, is a copy of the exchange of proposals that took place in his real life.

Chapter 10: Cancer

1:02:32 The doctor checking him out is a real doctor, the first guy was an actor, and if you watched closely he doesn't even stick the ear probe into Baba's ear when he examines him. They did have a medical advisor and Khaled is a medical doctor, and he was present.

1:02:55 The sign on the office of the doctor states that his name is Dr. A. Amani, which is homage to Khaled's roommate in medical school.

1:04:26 It is nice for the intimate moments that they switch back to Darien, we would have lost that if the whole movie was done in English, and it is natural for native speakers to slip back in their comfortable tongue for an exchange like that. Khaled states that his happens in his own home, where they don't even recognize that they have shifted back.

1:06:19 Notice in this exchange here that they respect their cultures, so there is restraint. In a normal American movie, there would be a touch or a hug here, holding of a hand, kiss or something. But this is culturally consistent.

David Benioff, the screenwriter, was able to give the screenplay to the Khaled to make sure that the cultural elements were correct.

Chapter 11: Engagement and Wedding

1:09:02 this would be the custom, they were not allowed to be alone, so you have the mother following them on their date, making sure that they follow proper etiquette. They are not formerly engaged, until they have the engagement party, known as eating of the sweets. After the engagement party they can go to dinner together or on dates, such as a movie. This is also his opportunity to come clean about his past, but he does not.

1:11:49 Some wedding traditions happening here, the 1) walking under the Koran, the Muslim holy book. Then the 2) kissing of the Koran as they sit down. 3) Here the mirror comes from a tradition in the old days, where the arrangement happened with the families and the bride and groom never even saw each other until the wedding day. As they sat on the wedding chair, a mirror would be given to them so that they could look at a reflection of their future partner, but they were not allowed to look at them directly until the ceremony was complete. Things have changed, but the tradition of the mirror is still kept.

1:12:39 The uncle's dance comes from the home movies of Khaled. This wedding was shot in Beijing at a car warehouse or dealership. Singing in the background is one of the most popular Afghan musicians singing in the background.

“One of my greatest joys is to watch a composer spread his wings, and create the most affecting moments in film. Alberto Iglesias score for the *Kite Runner*, is a continuous movement within the story telling, never overlapping itself. Nothing is ever ended or dismissed, and nothing is ever begun and finished. His score is like a wheel created by senses, where the senses are set whirling into the infinity of space. It is timeless, space less and moving.” Director, Marc Forster

The original soundtrack was written by Spanish composer Alberto Iglesias - the multi-award winning composer has received rave acclaim particularly for his previous soundtracks, including the best-selling *Talk to Her*, and *The Constant Gardener* which received an Oscar nomination for best original score in 2005. Iglesias is particularly well known for his work on the movies of Pedro Almodóvar.

Besides the original orchestral music by Alberto Iglesias the soundtrack album contains original songs by Afghan-Arabian singers - these include songs by legendary 70ies Afghan singer Ahmad Zahir, the world renowned British singer of Iranian-Azerbaijani background Sami Yusuf and other well respected world music stars. With this unique insight into Afghan history and culture the novel obviously strikes the nerve of time - first published in 2003, it was hailed by critics as “haunting” (*The New York Times*), “extraordinary” (*People*), and “powerful” (*The Washington Post Book World*). It became a number-one *New York Times* bestseller and has already spent more than 105 weeks on the *New York Times* paperback fiction bestseller list, with more than 4 million copies in print in the US and 8 million worldwide. An international bestseller, it has been published in thirty-four countries.

1:14:14 Kissing the snuff box that he previously filled with the earth of Afghanistan. Another tradition at the wedding is that the women stand back away from the men.

Chapter 12: San Francisco 2000

1:15:00 We are back in the present now, remember the movie stated out with this phone call, just as the novel does in a flashback. The title of his new novel is “A Season for Ashes” and you get to see his last name that they made up for the movie, Amir Qadiri.

From here forward this is all present.

1:16:03 Peshawar, Pakistan, this is also China, decorated to look like Pakistan.

1:20:22 Rahim Kahn is an important person, as he is the first person that believed in Amir’s writing. This scene represents six pages of dialogue, which is always a scary thing for a director, he is afraid that he will bore his audience.

A real shift has started to happen in American movies. In the past it used to be common for American movies, regardless of where the story is set, it is filmed in English. But now we are getting more and more films that are done in their native language and we are not afraid to provide the captions.

1:23:49 Khaled stated that this surprise of Hassan being the half-brother to Amir came to him in his writing process. It was not something that he had outlined, when he thought about the structure of the story he was going to tell.

1:25:11 The pomegranates falling off of the cart in the background a nice insert shot to bring the past present as he reads the letter. Here is the symbolism of his past and foreshadowing of bloodshed in his future.

1:26:11 For the commotion in the background they brought in extras from Pakistan, and even the decorated buses are from Pakistan. Pakistan has these phones on the street corners, where people can make long distant phone calls. It was close to the border, so it was not that difficult to bring in the extras.

Chapter 13: Back to Kabul

The ambassador to Afghanistan had a showing of this film, and he thought the look of the film, clothes, sets, landscapes, looked exactly like Afghanistan.

1:29:38 This is the same square where the big kite fighting scene took place, it has been re-dressed and you hardly recognize it as the same place. Thirty years of war has changed this area a lot.

1:30:54 These are real orphans here that they allowed to be in the film. Iran and Afghanistan share a language, it is called farsi in Iran and dari in Afghanistan, they have different accents, but they are essentially the same language.

Throwing of the shoe represents contempt for a person or leader, reference to the George W. Bush incident that happened in December 14, 2008.

Chapter 14: Meeting with the Taliban

1:35:23 Khaled went back to visit his childhood home and as what happens here, he was shocked to see his family home destroyed.

1:36:14 In the scene at the stadium just before the Talib official gives his speech there is a soccer game going on and most of the players are wearing shorts. The Taliban did not allow shorts or revealing clothes of any kind to be worn, even at an athletic event. They imprisoned and persecuted members of visiting Pakistani teams for wearing shorts.

1:37:41 The announcer here is speaking is Pashtu, which is the other language of Afghanistan. The director watched some of the hidden videos of these Taliban executions, and stated how shocking they are to witness. You might recall that some were even shown on American nightly news channels.

1:42:21 Notice that our villain here doesn't blink. Characteristic trait for movie villains, think of *Silence of the Lambs*, the character of Hannibal Lecter.

1:45:49 No stunt doubles in the movie for the fight scene, and it is the actors going through these motions. It is rather tame, but it is also a PG-13 movie.

1:46:07 They made the table so that it would have the brass balls, crucial to the story. In the book they describe the type of liquid that is expelled from the eye socket, which is a reveal to Khaled's medical training.

Chapter 15: Back to Pakistan

Major cut here, were Amir recuperates at the driver's house.

In the book you have a much more extended story here, his recuperation in the hospital, his move out of the country, getting permission to take Sohrab home, the attempted suicide, etc...

1:51:07 In the book he prays in the hospital, not at the Mosque. The song here is Sami Yusuf.

Chapter 16: Return to America

1:56:23 This scene is from the novel, and shows Amir as a man now.

1:57:38 Here is the author of the book, Khaled Hosseini, playing the role of a doctor.

1:58:13 The last scene shows the kites flying in a strong wind, but there is none at ground level (note her hair), nor matching chop on the water, and the glimpse of a sailboat suggests a breeze from another direction. This is Berkeley, California, when you see the kite flying on the marina green.

“For you, a thousand times over.”

Special Features

Words from The Kite Runner (15 minutes)

Images from The Kite Runner (25 minutes)

Public Service Announcement with Khaled Hosseini (1 minute, introduces www.takepart.com)

Theatrical Trailer

May 10, 2006.

Afghanistan: Mortality Rates Remain High For Mothers, Newborns

by Golnaz Esfandiari

A study by the U.S.-based charity organization Save the Children says Afghanistan has the world's second-highest infant mortality rate -- behind only Liberia. Maternal mortality in Afghanistan is also among the world's highest and, according to the organization's report -- released on May 9 -- some 16 percent of Afghan women die while pregnant or during childbirth. Save the Children says that in countries such as Afghanistan where women have little or no access to basic prenatal and postnatal care, childbirth is often a death sentence for a mother and her baby.

PRAGUE, May 10, 2006 (RFE/RL) -- Golandam recently gave birth in her mud house in a village in the eastern province of Nangarhar.

There was no doctor or midwife to assist the young mother. Golandam and her newborn baby died of complications from the childbirth.

It is estimated that there is only one doctor per 50,000 inhabitants.

A neighbor spoke about her plight with RFE/RL's Afghan Service.

Tragic Deaths

"Most families are concerned about [the health of pregnant women and their babies during delivery]," she said. "My poor neighbor -- even though she had already given birth to three children -- she died while giving birth to the fourth one. When the time of delivery came we went there, she went through a difficult delivery, the placenta remained in the womb, she lost her life and left three children behind."

Golandam's case is not unusual.

Nongovernmental organizations estimate that every 30 minutes a woman dies in Afghanistan from causes related to being pregnant. Only 16 percent of pregnant women in Afghanistan receive prenatal care.

Sixty out of every 1,000 Afghan newborns die and one child in four dies before reaching the age of five.

Save the Children's senior health adviser, Regina Keith, tells RFE/RL that one of the main reasons for the high fatality rates among mothers and their newborns is that many women give birth at home without any professional help.

No Help With Childbirth

"One of the reasons is that so many of the births in Afghanistan occur at home," Keith said. "In other words, we know that if you have a skilled attendant delivering your baby, the likelihood of that child dying, for example, from not being able to breath or [from] infection is [lower]. So, one of the factors is the number of women accessing health [care] for delivery or within the first week of [the] life [of the baby]."

Nadereh Hayat Borhan, an official with Afghanistan's Health Ministry, says most infants die of diseases that can be prevented by simple immunizations and sanitary practices.

"Most of the children's deaths occur because of diarrhea and respiratory infections," Borhan said. "Unfortunately, more than 70 percent of our children die of preventable and treatable diseases." Illiteracy, poverty, and a crippled or even nonexistent health system are among the factors contributing to the high death rates of infants and mothers in Afghanistan.

Most hospitals and health facilities lack equipment and professional staff. It is estimated that there is only one doctor per 50,000 inhabitants.

Harmful Beliefs

Cultural practices in the deeply conservative and patriarchal Afghan society also contribute to the fact that Afghanistan remains one of the worst places for a woman to give birth.

Especially in rural areas, men often do not allow their female relatives to be treated by male doctors.

Keith says the situation can be improved through simple and affordable solutions including increasing awareness about the importance of proper hygiene and breastfeeding for infants.

"We need to invest more in ensuring that girls and women can have access to more effective education; that they are properly nourished, because we know that one of the biggest causes [of death] is low birth weight," Keith said. "So the health of the mother is really important. Access to health care, access to decision-making responsibilities so that they can do that."

She says such measures have led to better health indicators for mothers and children in northern Afghanistan. Other measures are also being taken.

Health workers are being trained -- including many women nurses and midwives -- to serve in remote areas.

New Hope

In April, a modern pediatric hospital, the French Medical Institute for Children (FMIC), was founded by two French charities (La Chaine de L'Espoir and Enfants Afghans) and was officially inaugurated.

Children from all over Afghanistan are being treated at the hospital, which has about 100 beds, four operating rooms, a laboratory, a pharmacy, and a radiology unit.

More than 120 children have already undergone operations at the hospital and in early April a team of French doctors performed the first open-heart operation, on a young Afghan girl aged 13.

Dr. Fatima Mohpatali is the director for professional support at the FMIC. She tells RFE/RL that the best way to tackle maternal and child mortality in Afghanistan is to develop local abilities.

"People are trying both the NGO community, [the government], the universities -- all are trying," Mohpatali said. "But to reach up to the international standards it requires time and it requires resources. The best way to reach that level would be to develop the capacities of [the] local community here and that is what many NGOs are trying."

She says Afghanistan still has a long way to go before the critical situation for mothers and children improves.

(RFE/RL Afghan Service correspondent Sultan Sarwar contributed to this report.) Retrieved from: Radio Free Europe, <http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/1068295.html>