

# A Study Of Identity And History In Kamila Shamsie's Home Fire And Burnt Shadows: A Postcolonial Analysis

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## Abstract-

When discussing delicate themes such as nationalism, an author sparks debate. But this study focuses on the various forms of identities woven within Kamila Shamsie's characters in Home Fire and Burnt Shadows. This research aims to see if the fictitious characters of both these novels have a postcolonial perspective. Sometimes, Kamila Shamsie fits more as a traveller than a writer as her characters travel from one location to the next, establishing cross-cultural identities. The paper will look at various topics relating to identity and adjustment in foreign lands, regions, societies, and politics, both in the motherland and abroad.

**Keywords:** Identity crisis, Politics, Postcolonial, Assimilation, Hybridity etc.

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## Introduction

Kamila Shamsie depicts the journey of individuals who are compelled to leave the location where they previously resided with little a happiness in Home Fire and Burnt Shadows. Although the novels are set in disparate eras, they can be grouped under the banner of postcolonialism. When it comes to environmental stewardship, the female characters outperform male characters.

According to the author, Home Fire is a literary, mythological, and political interplay based on Sophocles' Antigone. It chronicles the struggles and anguish of a British-Muslim family dealing with their father's legacy of terrorism in modern-day England. The plot revolves around Isma Pasha and her two twin sisters, Aneeka and Parvaiz Pasha. Parvaiz is believed to have departed to follow in their father's footsteps. Aneeka, the twin sister, devises a scheme to reunite her brother with his family with the assistance of Eamonn, the son of Britain's Home Secretary, with whom she falls in love later. Parvaiz realises his error and attempts to return London, but is assassinated

in front of the British Consulate in Istanbul. Karamat Lone, the newly elected Home Secretary and father of Eamonn, introduces legislation authorising the withdrawal of citizenship from British citizens who join terrorist organisations and hold dual citizenship. Thus, this adds to Aneeka's grief when her brother Parvaiz's body is denied burial in England due to the new laws. Parvaiz's body is transported to Pakistan, his second nationality, where he has no family and no one who will become a member of his family was present. Aneeka returns to Pakistan in search of justice for her brother, but both she and Eamonn are killed in an explosion caused by a bomb strapped to Eamonn's waist. Isma's life has been shattered by the deaths of her brother and sister, as the lovers embrace their terrible fate in each other's arms.

In Burnt Shadows, Hiroko Tanaka travels around the world with the author's mind, acquiring cross-cultural differences that creates barriers to cultural understanding. The story follows her character from Japan to India, then Pakistan, and finally the United States. She was exposed to the bombing of Nagasaki

in 1945, which killed her family members; the partition of India in 1947, political turmoil in Pakistan; and the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in the United States as a representation of war ordeal. Hiroko's identity as a Japanese lady changes as she travels the world. Through her protagonist, Shamsie conveys an enthralling perspective on the sensation of belonging. Shamsie discusses the impact of violence on a person's personality and identity.

Hiroka Tanaka's backs have been marked. They have not seen it, but the markings are permanent reminders of the cruelty in their lives. Tanaka's back is covered in "three charcoal-colored bird-shaped burns, the first just below her shoulder, the second halfway down her spine, intersected by her bra, and the third just above her waist." (*Burnt Shadows*, p. 90-91). When Tanaka's husband, Sajjad, first noticed the marks, he dubbed them as birdblack. Tanaka in the novel bears a scar on her back that serves as a reminder of her destroyed life. Her previous life is not forgotten; rather, it is tattooed onto her, providing her with a distinct identity. She was referred to as Hibakusha in the areas where she lived, which translates as bombing victim and foreigner. She is a symbol for colonial peoples who have become desolate as a result of global politics and concord.

In *Burnt Shadows*, Shamsie portrays the dreadful replacement of innocent people affected by global power dynamics through Hiroko Tanaka, a Japanese diaspora character. Hiroko is a term that refers to those who spend their lives relocating from one location to another in search of identity and a peaceful environment. Kamila Shamsie's characters' lives are inextricably linked to international identities, making her a postcolonial writer. Tanaka's 'bird' on her back may be a metaphor for her life, in which she is expected to fly around like a bird.

Regardless of how far Hiroko Tanaka attempts to flee, the horror of the war remains inextricably linked to her body. She chose to leave Japan on her own, but was unable to do so due to circumstances, as she despised being labelled a "Hibakusha". She was compelled to migrate to Pakistan following India's partition

in 1947. She declines Burton-Weiss' invitation to visit England in favour of marrying Sajjad, the colonised Indian's representative. Tanaka's decision to leave Japan was not influenced by any dictator or autocratic force. Her inner self recognised this. It was an unintended consequence of the nations' political starvation.

She hoped the war would end soon enough for her to marry her fiancée, but the bomb dashed those hopes. Numerous innocent people's lives have been harmed as a result of state-to-state power politics. It was truly horrific to emerge from that state of mind. Tanaka is shown relocating from one location to another, not because she wishes to, but because circumstances require it and she has made the decision accordingly. And it is not only the colonised who become Diasporas during this process, but also the colonisers. They flee their homeland and establish a new life in an environment that is markedly different from their previous one. The Burton family, for instance, and other English families established themselves in India. Elizabeth did not wish to return to London and live with her mother-in-law after the British left India permanently, and so she relocated to New York. When she returns to her homeland, she will face severe restrictions on her independence. She had lived her life as a coloniser, and returning to England would imply colonisation by her in-and law's society's rules and regulations. The colonisers colonised India for an extended period of time and desired that the colonised people dance to their tune. When the time comes for them to return, they are averse to doing so because they will be under someone's command.

The colonised people desire freedom and the ability to live their lives without interference from others. They want their rights to an unrestricted way of life. According to Homi K. Bhabha's theory, "ambivalence undermines the colonizer's unambiguous authority by undermining the straightforward relationship between colonisers and colonised." (*Principles of Post-Colonial Studies*, p. 12). It signifies that colonial relationships are perpetually ambiguous and that they sow the seeds of their own demise. Parvaiz develops an ambiguous personality in this scene, as he is both a Muslim

and a Pakistani by blood, as well as a British citizen. He was on the prowl for information about his origins. Hybridity is also a point of emphasis in this case. He recognised his error and attempted to return, but the colonisers, in the person of the British Home Secretary, prevented him and transported his body to Pakistan. When Parvaiz attempts to return to the centre, he is labelled a traitor, and the centre wishes to avoid any disruption caused by the colonised people. The characters are experiencing an identity crisis. The Home Secretary considered himself to be British, but as Rudyard Kipling wrote, "Oh, East is East, and West is West, and they shall never meet." (The Ballad of East and West). He attempted to integrate himself into the Occident, but he will always be an orient to the Occident.

Hiroko Tanaka is brought in by Kamila Shamsie in a situation in which she is unable to free herself from the burden of the nuclear explosion that has left her body scarred. She becomes an intriguing medical case for researchers looking into the effects of the atomic bomb on survivors. Her miscarriage was believed to be a result of her exposure to nuclear radiation, and it was also suspected that her only son might be deformed in some way.

Hiroko Tanaka uses her body to rebel against an external force in order to free herself from the scheme that has framed her body. Throughout the narrative, readers encounter her with a short haircut and trousers; she is an East Asian with a modern westernised appearance in India, a barelegged lady during Pakistan's Islamization drive, and a Japanese with a Pakistani passport in the United States. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 'hybridity' comes in a variety of forms: linguistic, cultural, political, and racial. (Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies p. 18). Tanaka, in this case, exhibits a range of hybridity, speaking Urdu, Japanese, English, and German. She is subjected to a variety of political scenarios and is constantly relocated. Although the Nagasaki incident left a physical scar on her body, it also provided her with an opportunity to begin a process of self-definition in which she enters the world of diasporas who relocate or leave their native land.

Tanaka's journey begins when her body is marked by burns. She didn't want to conceal these burns on her back, but she also didn't want people to judge her as Hibakusha based on them. She says, "That is a word I despise. It relegates you to the status of a bomb." (Burnt Shadows, p. 100-101.) When she is identified as a 'Hibakusha', she realises that people are exerting a power over her, reducing her subjectivity to a specific set of social conventions. At the novel's conclusion, she is seen in America, a country in which she was uninterested at the start of the novel, and she is indirectly unhappy about the novel's destruction of her life.

In Home Fire, Shamsie's characters are immersed in a multicultural environment. They are British-Muslims who reside in London, and Isma is currently enrolled in a university in the United States. As with the author's imagination, the setting is varied, including London, Massachusetts, a small portion of Syria, and Karachi. Parveez becomes disillusioned with ISIS and flees to join the Jihadi cause. Multiculturalism is now being introduced to a broader audience through literature as a component of postcolonial studies. Immigration is a problem that affects everyone, not just elected officials. On the other hand, promoting diversity can result in the protection of cultural identity as well as a person's universal right. The novel is set in the United Kingdom, which is home to Europe's largest Pakistani-British community. Assimilation can be observed in how immigrant characters behave in a foreign land. Isma's interrogation sequence exemplifies the plight of many British-Muslims who live in European countries and are monitored.

The Characters' identities become muddled and fluid, resulting in internal alienation. When a writer discusses historical events, he or she frequently injures the reader's feelings by eliciting a painful memory. Kamila Shamsie recounts the world's most heinous history without inflicting any harm on the readers. Shamsie does not take sides, but serves as an intermediary, explaining the situation to the audience.

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