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## **An Analytical Exploration of Diaspora in Kamila Shamsie's Novels**

**Kirti Soni**

Guest Faculty of English,  
Government Kasturba Girls' College, Guna, M.P.

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### **Abstract:**

This study attempts to examine how Shamsie presents Diaspora and diasporic experience in her novels and attempts to highlight how she portrays the intricacies of identity, belongingness and displacement, which are mostly encapsulated in an individual of the Diaspora. Close analysis of *Burnt Shadows*, *In the City by the Sea* and *Home Fire* helps to show how Shamsie's characters attempt to cope with the issues arising as a common consequence of living in-between cultures, occupying in between ancestral heritage and alienation from the norms dictated by the new environment. The importance of the historical and political settings of post 9/11 Islamophobia and legacies of colonialism is stressed to bring about the manifestation of the formation of diasporic identity. The use of narrative techniques such as multi-layer character development and non-linear storytelling is also examined to show displacement's emotional and psychological struggles on Shamsie's work. Lastly, this research would add to the general discourse on Diaspora literature by bringing out Shamsie's own strategies of dealing with diasporic memories of the subsequent generations who experienced the diasporic existence in the context of the contemporary World, where globalisation has rendered a swift and traumatic movement of people not unusual or exceptional.

**Keywords: Diaspora, Identity, Displacement, Kamila Shamsie, Postcolonial Literature.**

## **Introduction**

Therefore, as a contemporary author, Kamila Shamsie is an important source who has been able to share Diaspora in her novels by mixing up the stresses of identity, migration, and displacement in the weave of social and political realities of the crosscutting World. Shamsie's works as a powerful narrative include *Burnt Shadows* and *Home Fire*, and *In the City by the sea*, all of which are compelling and unsentimental in the exploration of the emotional, cultural and political consequences of being between many Worlds. By writing about moving the diasporic characters between fragmented identities, Shamsie writes about the eternal tension between people who live neither here nor there. A place where one belongs and a place where one is alien. Thus, these cultural conflict characters derive from their placement between the forces of migration, war and globalisation, and thus represent the larger experience of the society caught amid such forces of tension and within this dialectic of belonging, framed in the terms of Shamsie's examination of the Diaspora, given that the question of belonging, i.e. how a cultural heritage withstands the pressure of new milieux of her characters, and what race and religion or geopolitics in these new milieux mean? It is observed through this study that the techniques used by Shamsie, like non-linear storytelling and depiction of character development, thereby giving the notion of multiple character perspectives proves to be effective in dramatizing diasporic experience. These novels also use the impact that displacement has on the individual emotionally, psychologically, as well as utilising histories – historical and political – that foster the creation of diasporic identities, particularly colonial history and feminism within a conflicted society faced with the challenges of Islam at the 9/11 pinnacle. Consequently, the premise of our study is to rebut deeper into how Shamsie's novels are considered as a piece of the theories of Diaspora in later writing and bandy

particular ways by which the migration is understood as a gauzy phenomenon and as such, needs to be managed with the compassion of identity that should be navigated by the diasporic subjects as a result of the globalization (Bhattacharya 57). The research also places Shamsie's work among South Asian diasporic literature as she can shift effectively the writing of migration and belonging in literature while speaking as a singular narrative voice.

### **Scope of the Study**

This study aims to study a number of ways in which Diaspora is represented as emotional, cultural and political exchanges among diasporic identities in Kamila Shamsie's novels. While *Burnt Shadows*, *In the City by the sea*, and *Home Fire* are specifically determined explicitly for research. Shamsie's depiction of characters who are described trapped between two or more cultural Worlds is fully explored. In its historical and geopolitical forces and complex dynamics, this paper considers identity formation, belonging and displacement in diasporic people's lives. Second, the research also explores how Shamsie negotiates migration and exile by using non-linear storytelling and construction of intersecting identities. The general aim of Shamsie's contribution to Diaspora literature is the South Asian Diaspora; however, themes of global migration, race, religion and the impact of colonization, have a level of generality.

### **Brief Biography of Kamila Shamsie and Her Literary Journey**

Kamila Shamsie was born on August 13, 1973, in Karachi, Pakistan. Since she grew up in a Pakistani city, she was used to the energetic and politically unstable location of Pakistan. A lot of her later life literature is about her early years in Karachi and about how she still looks into the state of affairs in her country. Then Shamsie went for higher studies at University of Massachusetts Amherst, where she came to realize that University of Sussex in Britain seemed to be a perfect

match to bring her to the place where she had to take her craft in literary arts forward. Regarding the content, her writing looks at global issues of migration, identity and sense of belonging themes that she writes about, and her education overseas helped to shape the way she writes. Shamsie's first novel is the story of Karachi; its political and social unrest of late 20th century told in poetic detail: *In the City by the Sea* (1998). First, she was – that South Asian writer, that one whose novella she penned and who bestowed so much defining stature onto her as one of the upcoming South Asian writers, dealing in the intricacies of city life and the interweaved political and personal life. Her second novel *Salt and Saffron* (2000) was set in more contemporary story of family, tradition and the diversity of being in Pakistan postcolonial and had a lighter narrative. Such a change in the tone was that it assured her versatility as a writer and kept her humor and introspection with her as she nudged her to peek into individual histories.



*Burnt Shadows* (2009) was the novel that created Kamila Shamsie's name in the international circuit for writing intertwined historical stories of Japan, Pakistan and the United States. The book tells the characters' story but with each of them being observed with a special eye to how the war, the bombings in Hiroshima and the trauma left upon each of them generation to generation. I liked

the sweep of *Burnt Shadows*, how it put private and public chronicles together to show how war, empire and migration change things anywhere. *Home Fire* had become an international success, and Shamsie's profile soared. It was a novel ready to take the challenge to write a contemporary Muslim family in Britain and look like the questions of radicalization, loyalty and the family. Shamsie's beautiful and elegant novel *Home Fire* (long-listed for the Booker Prize (UK and Ireland) and winner of the US Women's Prize for Fiction 2018) is famous in contemporary global literature for its story of the challenges facing nations and families during a global crisis. Throughout Shamsie's works, elements such as dialectic discussion of the South Asian Diaspora, heritage of colonial history, and complexity of identity in the global World, without fail, call attention to the settlement. However what particularly stands out about her is that she can combine a fusion of personal and political, of historical context, and in such a way as to feed into, and create, the lives and experiences of the displaced in the fiction of the present. Indeed, Kamila Shamsie is a significant and influential figure in the literary World, largely because her fictional journey in the novel reflected standard challenges pertaining to identity, belonging, and migration.

### **Diaspora as a Central Theme in Shamsie's Works**

This theme, which the Diaspora refers to, is handled adroitly in a clear way in a transparent fashion in Kamila Shamsie's entire body of works where she addresses the experiences that people who are disqualified from their original locality and who seek self-actualization elsewhere, in the personal, the cultural and the political. Shamsie's Diaspora also includes a trans mundane dimension that is beyond the physical displacement that takes the shape of a displacement from another World or a displacement from another World psychologically of being in between two Worlds and belonging to neither or of working in the past and the present being in exile and home. In her late works, *In the City by the Sea*, *Burnt Shadows* and *Home Fire*, she is central in the theme

of Diaspora as she explores how people in Diaspora are formed by and react to global historical events and explores how migration forms personal, familial and cultural fate.

In *In the City by the Sea* (1998) thus uses Karachi as the setting, and Shamsie begins, then, to set the scene, and to pave the way for her more specific investigation into Diaspora. Political upheavals in Pakistan are the central theme of the novel, with the explanation of themes of displacement and alienation because of political upheavals without any delay. Shamsie's estrangement of the protagonist is a small part of an already young coming of age story. A hint at the issues she would one day elaborate later on in her work, in 'The Wasted Vigil', she talks about her grandmother coming from a village in India to settle down in England (67–70). This first part of my work is situated in a particular place. It explores what could essentially be the place in relevant political and social landscape that has an effect of producing a sense of personality and living in a place notwithstanding in physical terms.

Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* (2009) is the one of the most ambitious novels in the geographic tracing of connected characters in a span of several decades and countries, purporting to be a novel of the Diaspora. *Burnt Shadows* follows how war, colonialism and nationalism have wounded those who travel and what kinds of emotional wounds afflict its victims in the aftermath of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, the changing political currents of Pakistan and the United States. This character description, particularly the Hiroko Japanese woman who had survived the Hiroshima bombing, and then had her later generations displaced in South Asia and the West as a result of wars and political tensions, also becomes the subject matter of the story of the novel. Therefore, the diasporic experience in Shamsie's characters is a continual struggle to secure a selfhood and a belonging, as well as the historical legacies of war and violence in them. Hiroko's migration is an

ambiguity and fragmentation of diasporic existence and the related fragmented sense of identity as an individual who is a survivor of war and always in the displacement of an external force.

The novel *Home Fire* (2017) by Shamsie is a contemporary reimagining of Diaspora, in which the story of the family is reimagined as a Muslim family in the UK along with their national identity, their loyalty and the radicalization society. This is the tale of the Pasha family and their complete dependency on the leftovers of the politics of Islamic extremism and terrorism. The fight between the characters to inherit their cultural heritage or to adapt to their host society is clearly exemplified by Parvaiz. The son, Parvaiz is marked as a dim character of cultural and political alienation and frustration to the desire of belonging and the diasporic individual will readily recognize him. In the thorny issue of the World after 9/11 and how such diasporic characters especially when Muslim in the West are seeking a locus for their sense of self and their choices amid the external perception of these characters Shamsie deals within the tension between diasporic identity and the political identity, mediated by the Diaspora and by body in the form of the body of a Muslim. Kamila Shamsie's body of work spends much time on the Diaspora as profoundly political and powerfully emotional. Both of her characters are implied to be stuck, brought down by the intractabilities of cultural belonging, worn down by history and of course trauma of displacement. Shamsie is can bring us close to character sketches which pave the way along the convoluted path of global political events through her nuanced plotting of the Diaspora: Diaspora as a place of conflict and resilience, as a space of transformation.

### **Literature Review**

**Zahoor, A. (2015).** In terms of literature, Diaspora serves as a source of impetus for the robust interrogation of Diaspora in Kamila Shamsie's fiction: that is the emotional, cultural and political aspects of displacement and identity. Her focus in her novels like *Burnt shadows*, *Home Fire* and

In the City by the Sea is on the Diaspora life and how individuals in the Diaspora live with their reality to belong, to be alienated and to live in multiple identities. Shamsie's characters are torn between their heritage and the demands of assimilation into the new environment, revealing the personal and psychological price paid during migration.

**Kharal, Q. A. & Ashraf S. (2021).** Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* (2009) is a postcolonial novel. It offers a reading of Diaspora and its evolving process where the old identities are lost and new ones begin through it. The characters do not get to come back to normality, the bomb on Hiroshima or the partition of India, the novel stretches across many generations and through continents. Shamsie considers identity reformation through the eyes of a Japanese survivor Hiroko and through her descendant.

**Rivaldy P. M. R. et al (2019).** Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* (2017) challenges the complexities of being Muslim in the diasporic context of contemporary Britain. The novel revolves around the Pasha family's emotional and political problems and our lives which depend on the Muslim faith, and cultural inheritance in addition to migration. Shamsie creates a culture that intensifies the tensions between the identity of being Islamic and a confusion of assimilating into a society that indeed accepts them, but also one that continuously approves of the prejudiced view of Muslims and therefore their link to terrorism. The eldest sister, Isma, is trying to find her own balance in her duty to the immigrant World she is a part of, but is also looking for some personal freedom; and her younger sister Aneeka attempts to be a second kind like her, trying to uphold cultural expectations in the wrong way, becoming radicalised.

**Ranasinha, R. (2016).** South Asian women's fiction in the Diaspora today is an intricate amalgam of gender, identity, and globalization, a theme that traverses the various interlinkages between these elements in the diasporic women's experience. It is a literature that focuses on the complex

Worlds and emotional and psychological Worlds of women who pass between different cultures, who have different identities, and those women, again, who go beyond the illusions about society.

### **Intersection of Gender, Religion, and Diaspora in Shamsie's Novels**

Except for her novel, *Burnt Shadows*, all but one of Kamila Shamsie's novels illustrate intersectionality on, in, around gender, religious and cultural identity as that intersectionality shapes the lived experiences—on the three grounds—of experiences of exiled people in diasporic spaces. Shamsie illustrates how women, especially within the Diaspora, negotiate the turbulence of identity and belonging amidst the clash of conflicting expectations, beliefs, and cultural and religious norms, which often leads to poignant identity crises. However, besides the challenges of resilience the women characters within Shamsie's texts have to withstand in the roles they are obliged to assume within their inherited cultural tradition, the woman characters in Shamsie's texts also have further challenges and resilience in playing games in the traditional society where pressure, both externally and internally, is brought to bear on the cultural tradition they are her to preserve and practise differently. According to her 2009 novel *Burnt Shadows*, Shamsie follows the steps of the displaced Japanese woman, Hiroko, who was traumatised by being forced to see Hiroshima was burned out of existence; she carried these shadows in her sole survivor, a boy, to protect him throughout her life. Because of this, her gender is integral to how she enacts her war experience and to her trauma of having been put into such a state and then cast out of her military as a fugitive, becoming, to many of those left behind, passive and cowardly, contrary to the womanhood she has expected to live up to. She is a woman who has lost her family and her sense of home as well as another woman who has to adopt to the cultural circumstances of a new place. However, like Shamsie, in *Home Fire* (2017), she too deals with the lives of British Muslim family in the be music to the emotional consequences of being Muslims, women, and in Diaspora. Isma,

or the eldest sister, can be seen as a logical representation of one who represents cultural responsibility and lives between their Muslim identity and the view of British society. By the way her experiences are laid down in the novel in terms of the tension between the values of her cultural background and those of the claim in her host culture, her experience reflects that of women in the Diaspora experiencing the most radical kind of identity conflict. Aneeka, the younger of the girls, is the stronger and more devoutly religious one. She lives by the dictates of her faith, establishing an existence independent of male agency in ways that do not endanger Isma. Through silencing or radicalizing the Diaspora women's voice in emancipating themselves in a foreign context can be the way that the women's voice in Diaspora can be silenced or radicalized as Aneeka's defiant voice against the constraints of being a Muslim woman in the west. Shamsie explores these political dimensions of Diaspora by intersecting the concept of gender and religion. Nadia, the shop owner, who lives in Pakistan and the US, is subjected to both cultural and religious impositions. Nadia's narrative as one of the Muslim women who refuses to take on conventional gendered roles is helpful because she highlights the gendered norms in politicising the religion and Muslim women's religious identities are shaped by 9/11. Through the portrayal of these figures, Shamsie illustrates how gender and religion work together to amplify the suffering of diasporic women, who are simultaneously bound by cultural traditions and thrust into the process of assimilation. For last, religion, as a touchstone, grants character resistance to or adherence to or adaptation of the relationships to religion, principally for women since their personality assert is continually being undermined through the community and the societies. In her novel *The Wasted Vigil*, Shamsie contributes to the gender, religion, and aspects of cultural identity in the Diaspora; the narration reveals her character's private life, her political identity, agency, and being in the World today. Shamsie does not deny the multi secular issues immigrant women have to navigate

through and these issues intersected. Shamsie goes on to graph the death and rebirth of Diaspora spaces and in parallel, demonstrates how such intersecting forces become a part of the cultural, emotional and political terrain that are a part of female immigrants.

### **Narrative Techniques in Shamsie's Exploration of Diaspora**

Her own narrative experiences mold her approach to the exploration of Diaspora in her novels such as the use of non-linear storytelling, multiple points of view and highly complex character development. Not only does emotional depth enrich and make her works thematically richer but also allows a subtle diasporic experience analysis. Shamsie's use of the non-linear narrative structure is an advantage, as it enables her to combine personal and historical timelines in the same sentence, thereby giving a broader understanding of the characters' experiences of displacement and an identity crisis. For example, in *Burnt Shadows* (2009), the story spans multiple countries and generations, encompassing events from the bombing of Nagasaki to the partition of India, and the later geopolitical changes after 9/11. While it eschews this non-linear approach in its emphasis on long-lasting global events in diasporic communities and the demonstration of the effects of historical trauma on the lives of individuals, it does so. Shamsie shows how history is borne out of the past and into the present by travelling across specific times and spaces to explain how history can never be prevented by those who have been swept by the forces of Diaspora. The multiple perspective is one more crucial device in Shamsie's Diaspora approach that enables one to understand the idea of Diaspora and its representation in Diasporas. Shamsie wrote *Home Fire* (2017) in the form of narration by its protagonists Junel of Khamissp, Paadiraand Rahima Chetard, and Isma, Aneeka, and Eamonn.

## **Conclusion**

The work of a diasporic subject as a theoretical concept is finally achieved by Kamila Shamsie, both a complex and simple work of the diasporic subject, therefore allowing the dissections of identity, belonging and disenfranchisement to be witnessed through a diasporic subject. This sense of honoring the significance of world events is what enables Shamsie's characters to reflect, at least to some extent, on the psychological, sociocultural, and geopolitical consequences of being in the Diaspora. *Burnt Shadows* and *Home Fire* present a look backwards through multiple generations about historical past traumas and migrations that in some way contribute to diasporic identity between the past and the present and between the West and east. To explore the complexities of diasporic identity further for readers to use, Shamsie goes on to push her exploration into dealing with diasporic identity with non-linear storytelling, multiple perspectives, and rich character development. Moreover, duress is applied to her characters and specifically women in contrast to the society in which they live in, and a pressure of their assimilations. Shamsie's fiction also hopes that it will help you find better, more empathetic ways of reconciling the term Diaspora. These are beneficial additions to your understanding of the forces of globalisation and migration and the World that is created and destroyed, built and destroyed together and apart all at once – a World that is always in flux.

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