



RESEARCH PAPER

Multiculturalism in the Novel *Burnt shadows* by Kamila Shamsie

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ABSTRACT

Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* delves deeply into the complexities of multiculturalism, hybridity, and identity in a post-colonial context. This study explores how the novel highlights the profound emotional and psychological consequences of displacement caused by significant historical events, particularly the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as the 9/11 attacks. These tragedies serve as a backdrop for the characters' struggles with identity and cultural survival, shedding light on the trauma experienced by innocent people in the wake of political and military actions. Through a detailed literary analysis, this research examines how Shamsie portrays the intricacies of cultural interactions, revealing how multiculturalism both challenges and enhances personal identity. The novel's characters embody the tension between preserving one's cultural roots and adapting to new environments, offering insight into the psychological burdens of displacement. This study concludes that the novel's portrayal of hybridity and identity offers a significant contribution to understanding the effects of globalization and cultural exchange on individuals in conflict-ridden times. Further research could expand on the intersection of trauma, migration, and identity within post-colonial literary works, focusing on the broader impacts of cross-cultural experiences in a globalized world.

KEYWORDS Multiculturalism, Hybridity, Identity, Displacement, Trauma

Introduction

Multiculturalism is a vast term that covers how people live differently in a different part of the world and elaborated on the living style of the people as well. Multiculturalism is a mixture of different people, different identities, different lifestyle, different customs, and different identities. There is a term named Hybridity which also falls under this category: The imagination of different cultures gives birth to the term Hybridity. Moreover, Multiculturalism is an ideology and belief of people that ensures that all the cultural values and ideologies are worthy of study. Moving towards the novel *burnt shadows* by Kamila Shamsie, there is a detailed depiction of multiculturalism in the novel. The novels fall in the time of World War II and the post-colonial world. The war was for supremacy and about the various kind of discrimination like religious racial and national. These are some important reasons behind imperialism, decolonization, and colonialism. The effects of this war were devastating. Traumatic displacement took place. Numerous people were affected. The humanistic displacement is itself a trauma and that lies in the heart of the novel *burnt shadows* by Kamila Shamsie. Jumping into the context of the novel it begins with the main character Hiroko Tanaka who is from Nagasaki Japan. She has to go through a lot of hardship during her traveling from one place to another. Her act of crossing borders is not just a physical act but also emotional cultural and psychological. She, the protagonist of the novel meets many people that belong to different cultures, and hear this kind of assimilation clearly shows her way of interacting with people and also reveals her profession as a language translator. First of all, she takes a flight to India then moves to Turkey then covers her journey to Pakistan, and roaming from there she finally reaches. The United States. During her journey, she meets multiple identities and diverse cultures. The writer Kamila Shamsie emphasizes the thing that assimilation of the migrants is important concerning different cultures raced and identities and it's above all the racial and gender discrimination.

This discussion also highlights the notions of discrimination like cultural purity and fanaticism about cultural specific values. Moreover, textual analysis is also given which shows the fluidity and mainly cosmopolitan aspect in the novel. Hiroko Tanaka is a Japanese school teacher and she is the victim of the atomic explosion in World War II. The consequences were worst for her. She almost lost all her family. She lost two important people like her Father and her Finance in the major blast. The main reason given to the victim (Hiroko) was that the bomb was necessary to explode because it was important to save the lives of Americans. So after that, she left the world behind (America). She was also given the name "Hibuksha" which means "The atomic explosion survivor". After this sad incident, she moved to India where the sister of her late Fiance lived. There she met Sajjad who was an Indian Muslim. After some time their level of understanding increased and they decided to get married. So they did it and because of the partition they moved to Pakistan and got settled in Karachi. Raza was their son and he was a normal child and had more inherited features of her mother and had a love of all the language as her mother was a language translator. Raza was a brilliant child and his parents were assured of his successful upcoming life. His father dreamed that Raza would do Law. But all their dream fail when one day he told his mother that he couldn't attempt the paper and got failed in the paper Islamic studies. Her mother consoled him but what could be done? Nothing!. with time a. A boy named Harry came into the life of Raza. They were on the beach where Raza accidentally met with an Afghan boy Abdullah and he told Raza that he would meet him at Sohrab. Often, when Abdullah asked him about his identity he confidently replied as "Hazara".

Raza liked the idea of being at an American University and she liked a girl who asked her to get married to him. The girl's answers were negative. She replied that I can't marry. When Raza asked about the reason she replied that everybody knows about your mother Nagasaki! The bomb. You could be deformed! Raza protested a lot by saying that he wasn't. Salma the girl his father was Raza's doctor and he knew that there is no physical disability in Raza. Raza gave the justification by saying that he was never been to Nagasaki and he was born 20 years after the attack but it resulted in nothing. they said Goodbye to each other with a heavy heart. This displacement is also trauma in itself. The idea of going to America was still in Raza's mind and he knew so well that uncle Harry would help him. Hiroko didn't know what Raza's activities were. Raza told his mother that he was living a quietly happy life. Raza was living two lives and he just wanted to escape so he chose another world for himself.

The exposure to other world was very strange and thrilling at the same time. He thought one thing who chooses borrowed dreams over the dreams he has grown up with. But he was more affectionate towards Abdullah as he gave him confidence. Abdullah told Raza about all his life experiences and their friendship got more closer to each other. He told Abdullah that we shall go to Peshawar tomorrow. At this Abdullah replied! you have come here for training camps with me Soviets don't wait for chances and don't waste time with the CIA. Raza the Hazara learned so many things like how to live without the luxuries and in the absence of Abdullah and his friendship. This thought of leaving Abdullah made him sad. While talking to each other Raza said to Abdullah that he wanted to visit refugee camps. At this Abdullah said what do u want to see. people are living like animals. Abdullah said to Raza that camps are not good without guns.

In Karachi, Hiroko found a letter written in Japanese that Raza has gone to Pakistan. Hiroko got worried and told Sajjad about this but after all the efforts they found no clue but Salma who told them that he has gone to Peshawar with an Afghan boy Abdullah.

There was a hustle in Peshawar. Abdullah and Raza were in the camps and accidentally they got caught by the Taliban. But they freed Raza and, caught Abdullah. Raza flew away gone straight to America. Kim was the one with whom he reached there and completed his journey with. Hiroko was not believing in that Raza was involved in the death of Harry. In the twenty years, Harry gave marshmallows to him and asked about his

girlfriend and the imagination as well. After some time the. Taliban also freed Abdullah and Taza came to know somehow that he was in New York and got settled there. Raza was. arrested by the police as he. was involved in the death of Harry. Kim and Hiroki were in a quiet conversation and were sitting on the same sofa waiting for the phone to ring and finally wait got over and the policeman said it was me who broke the law there is nothing wrong done by Raza. policeman said! Miss your father would be very proud of you. Hiroko whose while life was a trauma stood up and walked slowly through the Windows she has lost everything, But outside the world went on!

Literature review

Multiculturalism is mainly the "mixture of more than one culture "It is the fusion of various identities and cultures. As Sanders (2009) states that multiculturalism is a basic part of literature that revolves around all the literary genres but its main focus is on the characters of those groups whose cultural religious or ethnic identity is deformed/marginalized because of the dominant culture. Evens(2010)says that knowledge about multicultural literature helps students to understand and make them aware and tolerant of the diversity in between the cultures of the Society. Moving forward, Kucer(2009), Gee(1989), and free body and Luke(1990) have searched on this term and defined it in several ways. Firstly Kucer(2009) states that literature is a vast domain and culture is the most important part of it like Literature is a tree and culture works as roots of that tree. and so on...Multicultural literature works as a mirror that serves students to read and the situations and make them able to identify the similarities and differences and to respect those differences as well. According to Marken and Lee(2011), the educators themselves know how their own cultural identities influence the instructions about multicultural literature.

Material and Methads

The method used for this particular piece of paper is the Qualitative research method and it is based on the Analytical framework. Kamila Shamsie is a great epic write that brings diversity in her writing and writes epic fiction novels. The novel burnt shadows is self-explanatory to much extend and gives a detailed description of cultural hybridity in the novel. This novel shows the effects of culturalism on one's identity. Shamsie wrote at the post-colonial time so the element of colonialism is also there as it brings different cultures closer to each other. postcolonialism is the evident aspect that justifies the existence of different cultures. My analysis on this thing is that no culture is complete until other cultures get mixed with them and none of the cultures is impure if it is in the form of imagination or hybridization. Burnt shadows state a hybrid cultural world where the various culture of this world content with each other to influence their characters. Everyone can be American in America. This way west is tryna engulf postcolonial cultures into Multiculturalism.

Results and Discussion

Burnt shadows clearly show a world based on multiculturalism through specific event happened in the play. For example, If we talk about the protagonist of the novel Hiroko she moves from one place to another she moves from Japan to India, then she travels from India to Turkey, from Turkey to Pakistan, and lastly from Pakistan to the United States. During her journey, she gets into different identities. She comes to India being a Japanese woman then she moves to Turkey as an. Indian subject then moves to Pakistan and finally from Pakistan to America as a Pakistani American. So this thing makes our interaction with different cultures. Though there is the amalgamation of different cultures, the dominance of the powerful culture is also shown in the novel. Hiroko may shifts from one identity to another but the traces of former cultures cannot be removed from her identity. In the novel, Nagasaki is the place where the cultural mindedness is highly elaborated or clearly shown. This statement can be justified by adding a reference from the novel where Nagaksai is

represented as a central area for cultural activities, Konnars who is an enthusiastic young man sees some walled pictures and the element of culture mixedness is clearly seen in those pictures. He sees the uncomplicated mindedness of Japanese and European cultures. He sees Nagasaki as a world full of cultural creativity, a world where culture contends, meets, unites but do not overlap.

Moving forward, there is also another element of multiculturalism found in the novel, The event is as follows. After the atomic attack, Konnars got died and Hiroko survived and moved to her sister-in-law's house where she met Sajjad and Indian Muslims. He draws her attention toward Urdu culture and tells her about the historical conquerors of that era. This way another culture is embedded in Hiroko's mind and she herself becomes a multicultural person. Another important character from the novel is Raza who plays an immense role in highlighting cultural hybridity and is the best example of Multiculturalism His full name is Raza Konrad Ashraf, which itself is the mixture of more than one culture. Raza from Pakistan, Conrad from Germany (her Japanese mother's fiancé), and Ashraf from India. Apart from inheriting characteristics Raza also moved from one place to another and surly from one culture to another. So he himself doesn't belong to one specific culture and shows the clear element of Multiculturalism. Not only this he was also a Raza Hazara who doesn't speak his language or he can speak just the language of his family or until he drives the last Soviet out of Afghanistan. So multiculturalism is the most important aspect that we found throughout the novel, and it covers most of the content of the *Kovel Burnt shadows* by Kamila Shamsie.

Conclusion

Burnt shadows is the novel written in the postcolonial time with the rest of world war II. So the element of colonialism is also found somewhere in the novel. But our main focus is on the aspects of cultural hybridity and the most importantly Multiculturalism. This tale unfolds itself with multinational families and identities and shows a clear picture of cultural harmony without any racial or ethnic discrimination and an uncomplicated mixture of different cultures. While concluding the discussion it is worth noted here, that cultures do not lose their identities when they meet with other cultures or different traits. We can clearly see in the novel that all the characters move from one culture to another but this thing shouldn't be confused with the new cultural forms. Every culture has its own traits and identity that is irreplaceable no matter how many cultures are amalgamated with each other.

Recommendations

To deepen the understanding of how displacement and cultural interaction shape personal and collective identities, it is recommended that future research explore the nuanced relationship between trauma, migration, and identity within post-colonial literature. Scholars should focus on examining how characters in novels like *Burnt Shadows* navigate their complex emotional and psychological landscapes as they confront the challenges of cultural assimilation and preservation. A further investigation into the intersectionality of identity in these works could shed light on how various social, historical, and political forces intersect to influence individual and group identities. Additionally, examining other literary works that address migration, cultural hybridity, and identity struggles in a globalized context would provide a broader framework for understanding how these themes play out in contemporary post-colonial narratives. This approach could contribute to a more comprehensive view of multiculturalism, offering valuable insights into the broader implications of cultural exchange and displacement on human experience.

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