



Discarding Pakistani Women's Stereotypes in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*

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*Marginalizing and depriving Pakistani women in socio-political structure pose decadence in society. Whereas, leveraging them significantly accelerates innovations and transformation in micro- and macro-structures of state. Modernity demands women's liberty and empowerment of women. Pakistani women need deviation from conservative notions and political perceptions limiting their acts in society. Tunnel-channel views and stereotypes construct hindrances for women in society and politics. This paper examines Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*, scrutinizing women's eccentricity and resistance against stereotypical generalizations and religious restrictions during the last crucial decades of 2010s, and 2020s, in Pakistan. Contending that women are progressive during the above-mentioned decades; have reacted against the socio-politically imposed stereotypes through male-chauvinistic dominance and oppressive patriarchal structures. The paper attempts how *Home Fire* highlights women's digression, and depicting the role of modern Pakistani women whose actions contradict with the typical representation of them. The paper further explores how Shamsie's female characters lead their promiscuous associations, confronting the weaponization of religious groups, gender and racial stereotypes. Thereby, epitomizing the revolutionary characters of modern Pakistani women breaking with all precedents of marginalization and deprivation in the novel.*

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INTRODUCTION

Making independent and self-reliant Pakistani women ensures posterity's prosperities through breaking perceived "stereotypical generalizations" (Charlesworth & Banaji, 2022), and demanding for "political rights". (Abdul, 2022). Pakistani women socially, politically and religiously flaunt their desires of breaking the "fixed idea or perception: related to their marginalization. (Hamilton & Sherman, 2014). The conflicts of interest between the privileged men and the deprived women have caused social regression in social structures in Pakistan. However, Pakistani men's interests have always over-prioritized on the name masculinity and women's custodianship, the latter's deprived from freedom of acts and socio-political engagements on the name of religious restrictions and patriarchal dominance in society. Also, Pakistani women continue their journeys for freedom of speech and freedom of act. Presently, she experiences emerging trends of modernity and influences of globalization both of which incite her to discard stereotypes. Implicit stereotypes indicate prejudice against female agency affecting her performance in society. (Blair, 2013) and confine "women's political participation". (Carothers, 2016). "Generalization" is defined as "to infer and draw inferences or general conclusions from many particulars". (Murphy, 2001). Stereotypes are defined as "over-simplified conceptions, opinions, or beliefs about a person, group or gender considered to be archetypal and confirm to unvarying patterns and lacking individuality" (ibid). Depicting progressive and deviant women's characters in a fictional counter-narrative, Kamila Shamsie, the third generation contemporary Pakistani novelist in English, attempts to accentuate the traits of modernity influencing Pakistani women to abandon cultural and religious stereotypes.

Reflecting "empowered women" poses their social potentialities and political capabilities making them equal to men. (Alexander, 2012). Pakistani English novelists (PENs) depict Pakistani women as influenced by modernism. Seemingly, Kamila Shamsie also focuses on the deviant role of socio-politically motivated Pakistani women, struggling against social marginalization and political victimization. Of Shamsie's entire fictional work, *Home Fire* (henceforth called *Fire*) brings to the front women's discarding of social and cultural stereotypes through involvement in promiscuity and progression of political associations.

Pakistani women's march side by side with the revolutionary changes to adapt contemporary attributes of life.

Recounting the social discrimination, political persecution, rapid global politics and activism of Western women's struggles for empowerment and independence during the last two decisive decades of 2010s, and 2020s in Pakistan, *Fire* portrays Pakistani modern women's dumping conservative stereotypes and refuting religious codes for them. The protagonist encounters illegitimate relationships with diplomats for political empowerment in the novel, though there is "clear projection of women's "stereotypes" based on prejudices that cause depression and dejection in them. (Cox, Abramson, Devine, & Hollon, 2012). At contemporary circumstances women in Pakistan could be remained in isolation and deprivation due to the speedy influences of glocalization and loose women's generations whose priorities are independence from stereotypical generalizations and patriarchal supremacy.

Pakistani women desire for unchaining herself from social stigmatization and religiously conservative doctrines. She does not want to be bounded by codes of culture and religion. The women who use her brain loses their "mammary function first and had little hope to be other than a moral and medical freak." (Hall, 1905). Presently, women demand for womanized legislation for in Pakistan's legislation that makes her more independent and gives her essential support to exercise her free-will rather than being victimized and faces confined life. Indeed, Pakistan engulfs in cultural antediluvian ideas and women's typical representation in its social and political environment. Cultural stereotypes impact negatively upon women's performance in intercultural communication. (Lehtonen, 994). In the required time, reforms are urgently needed to bring Pakistani women mainstream of socio-political institutions for national progress. No doubt, Pakistan is known as an Islamic county on the world's map but its legislation system requires an Islamic law for smooth deliverance of justice and balanced society. Similarly, No doubt, Pakistan is known as an Islamic county on the world's map but its legislation system requires an Islamic law for smooth deliverance of justice and balanced society. Eradicating or [c]hanging social stereotypes (Johnston, & C. Neil 1994) regarding women balance social structure and ensure national development. The Government should induce new reforms liberating Pakistani women from imposed stereotypical depiction in society that has been Islamized and imposed undue restriction on

her.

Aims and objectives:

- To explore Pakistani women’s counter approach to the contemporary stereotypical generalizations *Home Fire* of Kamila Shamsie.
- To analyse the moderate traits of Pakistani women and their inclined tendencies towards modernity.

CONTEXT

Subsequent the analogous above-mentioned stereotypical depiction and social structures, political environment and religious patterns of Pakistani society. Pakistani women’s life revolves around getting independence and dominance through discarding socio-cultural, -political and –religious stereotypically established stereotypes of marginalization and discrimination in society. Women’s deviating behavior and rejection of stereotypical generalizations become imminent in contemporary feminist fiction. Arguably, in line with Pakistani women’s writings depicting Pakistani females have surpassed stereotypes of cultural and society. Considering as an attempt to break women’s stereotypes due to impacts of glocalization and Westernized thoughts. Pakistani women’s illegitimate relations with diplomats and non-subservient attitude towards culture and religion, it has contended in present study. It has been divulged a considerable predilection towards resisting the erroneously imposed stereotypes on women representing their as indolent and incapable of managing unfordable socio-political adversities in society.

Research Question

Grounding on the above-stated context, this paper is an attempt to answer the following question:

- How and to what extent *Home Fire* attempts to depict Pakistani women’s deviation from perceived and imposed stereotypes by discarding and centralizing promiscuous relations and discourse from the standpoint of an independent women?

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Liberal feminism and major concepts have used for textual analysis of the selected novel of Kamila Shamsie. Liberal feminism theorizes a doctrine emphasizing of the values of individual's freedom and ensures freedom for individuals by state. Liberal feminist theory embraces these values of personal autonomy and political autonomy, personal relation and equity insisting on women's freedom in society. (Baehr, 2007).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Accessing to political power and social independence augments enormously in Pakistani women, however female agency has not been considered inferior to male agency. Men influence over women by means exercising and establishing stereotypes in society to marginalize and victimize them. Presently, they reject her political and social cornering in society by means adapting strategies of political voice for empowerment and recognizing factors of equality in Pakistan in recent two decades stressing socio-political activism and social mobilization. Quratulain Shirazi's (2018) highlighted political impacts and global influences on Pakistani females in Shamsie's novel. Not only political participation but also globalization accelerate women's refuting of stereotypical representation of her in Pakistan. Herbert (2011) argues regarding independent activities and images of women indulging herself in political dispensation in Shamsie's novel. Gender stereotypes have recently changed in educational ambience depicting women's eradication of discrimination in society. (Islam, & Asadullah, 2018).

Also, Bruce King (2011) argues about the multifaceted themes in Shamsie's novels comprising of non-conformities of female characters with cultural norms, politicized attitude and eccentricity towards religion in Pakistan. Also, Sadia Hassan has reiterated that Pakistani women become intellectually mature and exposes to global environment in Shamsie's fiction portraying her political alacrity and unconventional insolence to socio-cultural stereotypes (2013: pp.1-3). Accordingly, Shamsie's novel describes women's social intimacy and illicit relationship through managing political calamities and racial stigmatization. The layers of modernity influence Pakistani females to deviate from traditional stereotypical behavior to withstand against their political victimization.

This is an eruption of deviance and emergence of empowered contemporary women whose dissent with conventions of Pakistani mentality and discernment of inferiority against her. Indeed, Jopi Nyman (2011) has studied women's identity and political activism causing her abstaining from cultural views and religious confinement in terms of social intimacies or extra-marital relations. Daniela Vitolo (2016) has identified a number of political dispensations that shape women's liberal psyche and influence their licentious attitude to throwaway stereotypes. Claire Gail Chambers (2018) has written that Shamsie's novels include women's politicization and female dynamics of modernity presenting their liberal nature. Then, Paul Veyret in (2018) revealed political involvement and facts about Pakistani novelists empowering female agency to act in more westernized way to change her subservient role in terms of social associations. Moreover, Stern (2001) has highlighted the impact of "democracy and dictatorship" surging intricate political crisis in Pakistan inciting women's intention for breaking imposed implicit and explicit stereotypes. More categorically, Reicher, Hopkins, and Condor (1997) argue that "stereotypes are weapons in cultural wars." However, Shamsie's female characters discard women's stereotypes by being as progressive and liberal. These researches have identified that *Home Fire* has facets of discarding Pakistani women's social, cultural and religious stereotypes.

METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative in nature and Liberal Feministic approach is used to do content analysis to analyze *Home Fire* text. Content Analysis is a systematic approach to interpret the novel text. It is used to make the text open for interpretation in accordance the theoretical lens of the study. The text is rich and full of words, phrases, and structures which have the potentialities and suitability with the above-mentioned theoretical framework.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Considering liberal feminism and its major concepts, Shamsie's female characters incline towards breaking the contemporary social and political constraints for self-autonomy. Adapting the modern traits of globalization, *Fire* mirrors discarding of social and cultural stereotypes of women. The

novel reflects the challenging political narrative and women's discourses in international politics of religion and radicalization of Islam. The novel presents the polarization of siblings in which women become deviate from stereotypes and religious restrictions from social intimacy, but man joins ISIS by becoming more radical. Women's independence and promiscuous relations during politicized religion enforces her to dissent with preoccupied perceptions regarding Pakistani women in society. Aneeka Pasha (female protagonist in the novel) challenges the imposed stereotypical assumption of society inevitably leading to her deviation and socio-political maturity of her. Aneeka Pasha, a principal character in the novel, revolves around repatriation of her brother from ISIS and involves herself in extra-marital affairs with diplomat's son, Eamonn, (who continues her sexual relations till the end of the narrative and idealizes how his girlfriend Aneeka Pasha has defied the stereotypical depiction of Pakistani females. (Quratulain, 2018)

Depicting Aneeka's eccentricity is due to resisting established stereotypes mobilizes her against socio-cultural norms and religious beliefs of committing sexes illegitimately. Aneeka disapproves the enforced stereotypical categorization and deprivation of women perusing their moderate thoughts. She refers to such women's discrimination and irritation in society that keeps Pakistani women suppress through attaching erroneous stereotypes. Modern women resist against these typecasts by violating the cultural conventions and limitations in society as "Aneeka wants to know he's (boyfriend) different with her; She kept kissing him as she spoke, light kisses on his mouth, his neck, his jaw, slightly Frantic." (*Home Fire*, p.79). Correspondingly, she mentions situational factors providing her opportunity to quit behind the antediluvian opinions regarding females in Pakistani society. Her resistance in her acts indicates western society influences on dominant behavior. She remains in intimacy with Eamonn despite her brother staunch follower of religious codes. She criticizes religion as "cancer or Islam _ which is the greatest affliction?" (ibid, p.14). The novel also projects the insights an indigenous female to become diplomatically dynamic and withstands against weaponization of religion in society. (Claire, 2018). Especially, during the epoch of political troubles, ISIS regimes (Islamized Dictatorship) recruited innocent youth of Muslims to fulfill their political agenda and defame Islam through their militarized activities. Here, She intentionally defies the religious limitations for women and craves for continuation of sexual life with male counter-part by expressing her opinions as "...[K]illing civilians is sinful _ that's equally true if the manner of killing is a *suicide bombing* [italic mine] or aerial bombardments or

drone strikes.” (ibid, p.5). This veracity of Aneeka’s character incites not only Eamonn but also her sister (Isma Pasha) to pursue lavish and independent relations that are depicted in the novel. The un-conventional relation with man (Eamonn) deviates from her from normal relations of women in Pakistan.

The novel might be a consideration of true deviation of Pakistani females because reader/s find/s out female character’s involvement in transition political choose leading her to commitment of voluptuous attachment with man. (Islam, & Asadullah, 2018). She instrumentalizes her body as a tool for making salient political opponents criticizing her on the bases of racial stereotypes who is the “daughter and sister of Muslim terrorists, with history of secret sex life _ the exclusive story of “Knickers” Pasha (Aneeka Pasha). (ibid, p.204). If an individual diverges from socially constructed laws victimizing on the bases of gender, then an individual voices against their illegitimate marginalization in society. She abandons not only cultural conventions but also disparage religion drawing attention towards such westernization and its stimuli on her character. This tendency modernizes her thinking and encourages her face, without public intimidation, public denigration. (Herbert, 2011). The protagonist break the beliefs that enchain women from establishing social intimacies and continuing sexual intercourse without being in legal association with man. (Jopi, 2011). The writer influences her female character by becoming more resilient towards traits of oriental society in which religion and norms are considered ultimate structures for female “who has endured terrible trials, whose country, whose government and whose fiancé turned away from her at a moment of profound personal loss.” (ibid, p.245).

In the same way, *Fire* comprises of personal power of Pakistani women’s sentimentalities that lead to depiction of their dynamic political participations and social activism in society. It also becomes certain that female are perceived generally with emotional intensity magnetizing Aneeka’s resistance against men’s dominance that imposes stereotypes as “Muslim women need to be saved from Muslim men. Muslim men need to be detained, harassed, pressed against the ground with a heel on their throats.” (ibid, p.132). In Pakistani society, history witnesses that women become prey due to misconceived portrayal of them becoming victims because of generally stereotypical beliefs. However, Aneeka’s struggles and act oppose enforced stereotypes of women who immensely to be believed a never-ending deprivation and political marginalization. Shamsie’s social engagements and intimacy comprise of major themes of women’s discarding socio-political limitations and autonomy in public spheres and political arena. In point of fact, author’s constant

projection of female protagonists has considered as a manifestation of true democratic and autocratic women who potentially discard gender discrimination highlighting salubriousness for empowerment of females or desires for socio-political ascendancy and liberation. Indeed, political pundits and religious community inculcate frequently women's freedom of acts related utterance in society constructing detrimental impediments and radical quagmire. These misconceptions of unprecedented dramatization against women to divert multitudes' attention from female's capacity and abilities in mainstream politics as "British country will let you achieve if you're Muslim is fortune, rendition, detention without trial, airport interrogations, spies in your mosques, teachers reporting your children to the authorities for wanting a world without British injustice? (ibid, pp.90-91). The identical situation puts Aneeka drives to counter the restricted status quo of women in Pakistan. Her narrative of sole deviance from the perceived description of female. Politicization of women in Shamsie's novel indicates personal and political autonomy of them in the state in broader socio-political perspectives.

She involves in dumping anti-women's utterances that democratically impacts women. She appears as an opponent to tunnel-channel perceptions regarding females' persecution in Pakistan. She further continues to break the notions and expectations of Pakistani women by means of withstanding against instrumentalization of religion for political influences; she executes official hindrances that have limit her freedom of speech in England. Islam in the novel has projected as a construction of weaponized and politicized religion by means depicting political chemistry to defame its humanitarian aspects and proliferation of peace in the world. Aneeka's brother entraps in extremists ideology of weaponization of religion or Islamic radicalization that also augment her agony in xeno-environment. However, she acts autonomously to vouchsafe her brother and faces racial discrimination in England. She voices herself as a dissenter and emphasizes on "the Mutiny." (ibid, p.106). Personal and political autonomy lead to liberation of women from conservative chain in society. In third world countries like Pakistan, majority of women cannot stand against the rooted unjustifiable views of their persecutions owing to male chauvinism and –dominance. Pakistani society believe in inferiority of women and it promotes the concept of "might is right" that vanishes women's essences and endeavors in air. Also, Aneeka insists upon familial affection and realizes society's racial stigmatizations against Muslims in Europe. She further experiences hostile establishment reaction that victimizes and marginalizes her despite her valor of brother's expatriation and resistance against fundamentalism; which is believed to be as revolution in

modern world. (Rowbotham, 2014).

Revisiting descriptive and prescriptive beliefs and in/accuracy of stereotypes, Todd D. Nelson (2009) has concluded that if stereotypes are accurate then there is construction of offence and violation of social norms; if stereotypes are inaccurate, then there is the creation of psychological violence and offense affecting a particular community or group in a society. Pakistan's last two decades richly flourish women's independence and breaking of social and traditional stereotypes. Pakistani Female *Home Fire* reimagines herself internationally due to attachment with politically influential diplomats. Aneeka does not let herself be influenced by social and religious restrictions by having 'always offered him (boyfriend) the most unconditional of loves?' (ibid, p.108) or "The secrecy had lived inside her house (place illegitimate intimacy)." (ibid, p126). The previous phases of literary depiction, political spirits and social limitations of women become devoured in the dust due to factors of globalization and moderate concepts of Pakistani female. The novel also explores the unconventional relationships and inclination of protagonist towards modernity. She raises her political concerns against intelligence agency in England and its roles in silencing democratic voices of her by racial stratification. Women could not be depressed and deprived from expressing her independent perceptions of modernism wing to creation of global village influencing her performance and psyche; the world further turns into inclusive community where marginalization of females or her adherence to stereotypical beliefs remains a dream. Aneeka sagaciously decides leaving out traditionalities of Pakistanis society. Arguably, she voices powerfully which inculcates her modern views and mentality of contemporary women. Deeply, these are the signs of rebellion and rejection of stereotypical prosecution of female. The protagonist profoundly prioritizes deviation from social constraints. Due to the impacts of globalization and emergence of commercialization, female agency desires for adapting pragmatic approach to get rid of traditional conventions of society as she becomes "Shameless!" to continue her social intimacy with male counter-part. (ibid, p.14).

Analyzing the title of "*Home Fire*" signifies that Pakistani society is in dire of eradicating women's segregating notions and considering inferior to man. *Home*, Pakistani society, requires the increase of socio-political spaces for its women to who flourish their self-confidence and morale by delimitating their cupidity for accessing the realities behind their social desperation and political victimization at larger scale. Aneeka under-values the imposed conflicting notions constraining her freedom of speech and freedom of act autonomously. Her activism in politics and sense of

dominance in broader perspectives by realizing that “It must be difficult to be Muslim in the world these days.” (ibid, p.21) because the politics of religion (Islam) and its militarized form have caused irrevocable loss to its essence and humanitarian aspects. However, the consequence of perusing the case of expatriation of her sibling from ISIS causes dramatic adaption for western lifestyle. Certainly, politicization of religion minimizes its influence on its followers. The inexplicable illegitimate intercourse and trans-national traveling label her such an individual with anti-stereotypes in society. She further depicts the plights of condition of Pakistani women who cannot address her political persecution and social isolation emerging psychological and sociological impacts on Pakistani women in society. Equally, younger female generation’s resistance to established religious and traditional stereotypes has appeared as an emerging trend in Pakistan in Shamsie’s novel. (Ranasinha, 2012). Conclusively, the female protagonist realizes to become politically active due to spurring the socio-political and -cultural constraints. Social reforms are mandatory for motivate women to adhere to their traditional and social norms in Pakistani society or else they would deviate from the perceived stereotypical beliefs revolving in socio-political spheres. The writer emphasizes upon women personal autonomy leading to political autonomy for unchaining them from conservative women’s stereotypes being established in society to restricted their performance and freedom of expression.

CONCLUSION

Home Fire depicts unprecedentedly Pakistani women’s deviation from conventional conformities and social norms, cultural values and religious constraints by discarding all women’s stereotypes. Aneeka, female protagonist, who negates stereotypical assumptions and limitations that marginalize and deprive Pakistani women from the traits of modernity. The novel presents the deviant attitude of women whose characters revolve around social intimacy and illegitimate relationships with diplomat. The writer focuses on the adaption of westernized behavior of Pakistani females disproving cultural and religious parameters of female. Furthermore, it recapitulates that Pakistani female presently desires for rebellious ambitions, modern traits and prefers extra-marital affairs in the narrative. Aneeka’s different acts and debates project deviation from stereotypical generalizations and perceptions in Pakistan. More to the point, Shamsie divulges her female protagonist as deviated and diverged character who has influenced by contemporary modern unconventionalities by disavowing socio-traditional stereotypes.

Challenging patriarchal structure of society and stereotypes, Pakistani women adore acclimatizing herself with political evolution, moderate thoughts, changes in perceptions, and struggles for discarding established stereotypical beliefs, causing her social marginalization and political discrimination in society. Pakistani females need to break implicit and explicit stereotypes pertinent to women's social and cultural restrictions in order to progressive and productive. The action-oriented role of women in Pakistan mobilizes the voices against traditional notions so as to season the society with change and eccentricity. The study concludes that Pakistani women incline toward moderate traits and discard the established stereotypes in society.

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