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Ecology of the Aftermath: Dis/Placed identities in Shamsie's Burnt Shadows and Home Fire

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Abstract
The research aims to conduct a thorough textual study of Shamsie's novels Burnt Shadows (2009) and Home Fire (2017) to elaborate the notion that the concept of environment is not just limited to the bounds of Nature. The study is an attempt to explore the notion that environment in the ongoing era is a man-made entity, while keeping in view the concepts of environmental justice and its representations through the use of ecologically inspired narrative structures. The historical settings of the novels make it impossible to deny the fact that changes in the social environment do have an adverse effect on the characters, especially the women and the future generations who live through these experiences. The study asserts that human beings are playing an active role in creating the environment in such ways that it meets their desired goals, and often the global south ends up paying the price for the wars which originate outside their borders. The end goal of the paper is to show how a fictionalized story allows us to place what can be ostensibly a regional event into more global terms.
Keywords: Shamsie, South Asian Literature, Environmental Humanities, Displacement.

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Introduction:

Within environmental processes, the idea that an event that starts at the top and impacts every part of the life cycle is known as a trophic cascade; implying that the complete geography of an ecosystem can change if a single element is altered. In the human environment, a similar ripple effect can be produced; that is felt

across time and space in both intangible and material terms. The current events of the modern world or in analyzing any age of history, the concepts of justice, eco-justice and fair treatment seem to be an ideally utopian perception. 'Ideally utopian' because each age of history will present instances of violation of rights, unfair treatment, exploitation, discrimination, unfair distribution of resources, either no representation or misrepresentation, racism, etc. This paper aims to explain the notion that the environment is not limited to nature. Environment, due to the influence of human beings can also be taken as a man-made phenomenon. Environment is a complex term, often equated with the definition of ecology, but more often the term is used to refer to interactive social and ecological systems. According to Pablo Mukherjee, the environment is a "complex (and often conflict-ridden) web, field, or system—whatever we choose to call it –composed of the relations between human and non-human agents or actors" (Mukherjee, p. 5).

According to Mukherjee, war is one of the examples of human-on-human conflict that shows how the human and physical environment is impacted. He gives the example of West Bengal where the victims were not only humans but also the land in the conflict that occurred in 2007 (p. 4). Though he is speaking in the context of India and a postcolonial world, his idea has a more general application in terms of understanding how "environment [is] an integrated network" (p. 5) that is as much about social interaction as it is about ecological systems. In terms of the study of literature, the question to be asked now is how this idea of war and the environment can be represented thematically in terms of a novel, and secondly does it contribute to the development of the story (Mukherjee, p. 11-12).

By exploring the impact of political conflicts and displacement through the characters of Burnt Shadows and Home Fire by Kamila Shamsie in socio-ecological terms; meaning that the effects of displacement will be discussed not

on the political, military, or economic front (which is the usual primary focus) but rather on the personal one in terms of its short- and long-term impact on the main characters of the selected text. Shamsie's argument in both novels is that conflicts originating in the Global North had far reaching consequences for the Global South as well, as it laid the foundation of a crisis of identity caused by geographical displacement and long-term aftermaths that is still reverberating in the chaos of the world within which we reside - very much in the construct of a trophic cascade. This will also be addressed by delineating the text's narrative construct of using multi-generation stories to ascertain how far reaching such impacts can be.

Author and Selected Texts:

Shamsie may have spent a major part of her life in London and America but the nostalgia for home is reflected through her writings and the sensitivity towards the problems which has engulfed Pakistan and Pakistanis across the world is evident in her work. For her: "Fiction writers go where news reporters and historians dare not tread into characters' heads, into the dreams they lose at the moment of waking, into the memories forgotten, the fears never articulated even to themselves" (Shamsie, p. 2007).

This in turn meant that for her work to have an impact it needed to be rooted in fact, even while it was told through an imaginary set of people on a created stage. Burnt Shadows was a novel sparked by a similar stimulus. Shamsie recalls in an interview that she heard someone wonder that even if one can find a way to justify Hiroshima, how can Nagasaki be explained. This idea formed the fictionalized premise in her novel that covers five countries and sixty years and four major significant eras of history as its setting i.e., Nagasaki 1945, Delhi 1947, Pakistan 1982-3, and New York, Afghanistan 2001-2. The major characters in the story are a Japanese woman named Hiroko Tanaka, a victim of the American Nuclear

attacks on Nagasaki in August 1945; Sajjad Ashraf an Indian Muslim, victim of the Partition in 1947; Harry Burton, an American CIA agent killed by Taliban during the military operation in the aftermath of 9/11; Raza Ashraf, Hiroko and Sajjad's son, part Japanese, part Pakistani is allegedly involved in Harry Burton's murder and by the end a fugitive who ends up in Guantanamo prison; and Kim Burton, Harry's daughter who is terrorized by her father death and whose mind is tainted by the traumatic events of 9/11. All these characters appear in the novel in different time periods of history, in different settings.

Home Fire (HF), published in 2017, is a story of a common family bearing the consequences of the western policies of 9/11 and 7/7. Immigrants that had been settled in the west for generations were insecure and alienated even after becoming a part of the western community. Same is the story of the Pasha siblings who were home, yet they were cast away first because of their father joining the Jihadis and then Pervez, one of the 19-year-old twins, being manipulated and brainwashed into joining the Jihadis which led to his death after he escaped from the group. Though some changes can be observed, Shamsie admitted in an interview that she came up with Home Fire (2017) upon a theater director asking her to rewrite Antigone (441 BC) in a contemporary British setting.

Ecology of War's Aftermath in Burnt Shadows:

Judith Butler explained how the question of life is molded in different 'frames' ranging from media to politics to photography and in fiction all are shown as collective rather than individual forces. She writes in the end of her introduction to her book Frames of War that: "an obligation does emerge from the fact that we are, as it were, social beings from the start, dependent on what is outside ourselves, on others, on institutions, and on sustained and sustainable environments, and so are, in this sense, precarious" (p. 23). By placing the idea

of a life, an individual, as being materially located within a spatial and temporal context – not just political and nationalistic, Butler raises the question of what it means to be an individual within this world, and how the private impact of public events is not always the way it is historically portrayed. This is what makes this novel a vehicle for a discussion of the ecology of aftermath of war, and especially a suitable one for tracing out the "intergenerational aftermath" (Nixon, p. 13) – not just on terms of the land and its flora and fauna, but also in terms of the humans who abide there. The narrative structure of the novel and the intersectionality of the public with the private allows Shamsie to create a portrayal of war in modern times and how the question of war as slow violence can be raised.

Rob Nixon defines slow violence to be one that is "neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales" (p. 2). The radioactive aftermath of World War II is one example of this. According to him, it is not only the immediate impacts of war that need to be addressed but also the long term "hidden human and environmental costs" (p. 200) that resulted due to radiation poisoning and the impact of displacement caused by the land where the bomb exploded itself being uninhabitable on future generations. As Nixon eloquently states, "the highway of harm is broad and long, stretching beyond sight lines of the generals and beyond any single generation" (p. 231). This question of how and why these far-reaching impacts occur is one of the primaries focuses of the novel, which opens with a short preface where we see an unknown character being imprisoned and wondering, "How did it come to this" (BS, p. 1).

The story of 'this' begins in Nagasaki 1945 on the morning of 9th August with the devastation caused by the American nuclear bombings on Nagasaki during World War II. The central character Hiroko Tanaka, a strong headed Japanese

woman in her early twenties is shown standing on a balcony. She has fallen in love with a German Konrad Weiss and had accepted his proposal of marriage a few moments before the nuclear attack changed her world forever and turns her into an embodied example of the aftermath of the atomic bomb (BS, p. 26). The physical scars she is left with become symbolic of the impacts of war, as well as slow violence in terms of the very material consequences of radioactive poisoning for Hiroko and her family. On the other hand, Konrad does not survive. Additionally, the scars as indicators of violence are seen not only on Hiroko but also in the natural world around her. The opening pages of the novel provide a description of the world around Hiroko, and it creates a bright picture in the mind of the reader of the beauty of Nagasaki with its "perfect blueness of the sky" (BS, p. 5). But after the impact, everything is reduced to "fire and smoke and … land that looks the way her back feels where it has no feeling" (BS, p. 27). These physical embodiments of the atomic war are where the main image pattern as well as the title of the novel comes from [1].

The charred bird shaped scars that are on Hiroko's back therefore become symbolic of her fears and though in Japanese lore a crane is symbolic of longevity, in this novel the burnt "three black cranes" (BS, p. 22) imply loss and horror and are a constant reminder for her of the bomb that has marked her indelibly as is revealed by Hiroko's description of her nightmares (which is also one of the psychological impacts that war left on her) where the bird shadows on her skin "were inside her now, their beaks dripping venom into her bloodstream, their charred wings engulfing her organs" (BS, p. 222).

Hiroko becomes "Hibakusha" (BS, p. 100), which translates to 'explosion affected people' in Japanese [2]. Hiroko, desperately in need of escape from the trauma makes a spur of the moment decision to go to Delhi (BS, p. 49). Furthermore, Hiroko not only loses Konrad but also the faith that any man would

ever want to be with her as "the bomb marked me [Hiroko] for spinsterhood" (BS, p. 74) and is a symbol and a reminder of her being a Hibakusha (BS, p. 100). Through the conflict that Hiroko feels about her personal sense of self, Shamsie has not only shown how distressing the physical impacts of war are but how the long term emotional and psychological impacts of such events can influence a person's life. As Shamsie puts it, Hiroko's habit of leaving a place has more to do with her need for "history to leave her alone" [3].

The second part of the novel is set in Delhi 1947 during the last days of the British colonial rule, a few months before the Partition of India. Shamsie shifts the focus from WWII to the new context of colonialism, yet the two are still linked together by the idea of the "scars of displacement" (Nixon, p. 243). We are introduced to a new character Sajjad Ashraf who, like Hiroko, felt a sense of attachment with his birthplace, the City of Delhi. Hiroko, after leaving Japan goes to India where she meets Sajjad and eventually marries him. Now when both start feeling a sense of stability, Sajjad finds himself transplanted to a new country due to a political conflict. When he goes to the Indian consulate to have his and Hiroko's paperwork processed to return home, he returns defeated becoming one of the migrants who find themselves arbitrarily displaced due to the partition.

The novel thus highlights how people are forced to leave their homes because of the political and social circumstances of their country and cannot go back either because the past is too horrific to face or there are boundaries of nation and identity which creates barriers and hurdles between people and their home. In Hiroko's case as much as she desires to go back to Nagasaki she cannot because "nothing in the world could ever be more unfamiliar than my home that day. That unspeakable day. Literally unspeakable" (BS 99). This establishes a connection between Sajjad and Hiroko, as for Sajjad the riots before and after partition takes away the appeal Delhi had for him (BS, p. 113).

With both Hiroko and Sajjad carrying with them a nostalgia for lost homes, Shamsie takes a temporal leap from Delhi 1947 to Pakistan in 1982-3 in the third section of the novel. The spanning of time and space that the novel covers also correspond to the transnational aspect of environmental studies, especially through the character of Hiroko. The borders of the environment are always talked about in global terms, and its borders cannot be contained by politically determined national boundaries.

After thirty-six years of marriage, Hiroko and Sajjad are living in Karachi with their sixteen-year-old son named Raza Konrad Ashraf. Before the birth of her son, we are told that Hiroko had had a miscarriage in 1948, during which she "learnt fear in imagining what her radiation-exposed body would do to any children she tried to bear" (BS, p. 135). This furthers the idea of slow violence, where the casualties of it are temporally and specially so distant from the actual event that they face the danger of becoming "lightweight, disposable casualties, with dire consequences for the ways wars are remembered" (Nixon 13). Furthermore, by once again placing Hiroko in the position of embodying the hidden wounds of radiation poisoning, Shamsie further reinforces the connection between women and the environment as a "proto-biological rapport" (Guha, p. 107-8) that is not only a mystical but a very material one trough the "birds" on her back (BS, p. 222).

Shamsie highlights how the history of one generation can affect not only their immediate present lives but also the future lives of their children. Hiroko's past became a hindrance in Raza's adolescent years, Hiroko somewhat managed to escape the taboo of being a Hibakusha but her son is reminded by the society that he is nothing but a a "deformed" (BS, p. 189) person, "bomb-marked mongrel" (BS, p. 191), born from the womb of a Hibakusha who could infect his future

generations by passing on the effect of radiation that he might be carrying in his blood.

The feeling of being an outcast makes Raza take desperate steps to feel a little more in control of his life. Just as Hiroko to save herself from the "stigma of being defined by the bomb" (BS, p. 222) flew from Nagasaki to India. Raza's decision to associate with Afghan refugees in Sohrab Goth where his half Japanese looks fooled others into thinking he was an Afghan, his alliance with Abdullah who treated him like a brother and his decision to accompany him to the Mujahideen training camps in Peshawar, were all part of Raza's attempt to escape from life without thinking about the consequences.

This is further exacerbated by the ethnic clashes in a post partition Karachi (Cilano, p. 146) as a product of cultural, social and political forces. Raza thus becomes a victim of not only his mother's past life, his father's lost dreams, but also his present-day global conflicts through the Afghan war. War thus functions as slow violence for it can create conflicts between the public and private worlds of the characters via a history that repeats itself in different forms. Raza as a child of mixed heritage consequently also questions his own sense of identity and in a struggle to deal with "the abstractions of national identity" (Nixon, p. 242).

Consequently, Raza leaves behind his old world and his old identity of being Raza Konrad Ashraf and transforms himself into Raza Hazara by taking advantage of his half-Japanese looks and fooling Abdullah into believing that he was an Afghan who belonged to the Hazara province and his life's aim is to drive out every single Soviet from Afghanistan. This establishes an alliance between the two boys, the only difference was that Abdullah's antagonism and hostility towards Soviets was genuine, a hostility that stemmed from witnessing the hardships of war, of families driven out of their own land and having to live as an immigrant in refugee camps in impoverished conditions. In one of the passages,

as fourteen-year-old Abdullah looks upon the vast number of refugee camps in Peshawar he falls into the guilt of having a better life in Karachi than his Afghan brothers and sisters who were rotting in the camps and considers it a betrayal towards his ultimate purpose i.e., learning to fight the Soviets (BS, p. 216). Raza feels responsible for making Abdullah join the training camps and is intent upon rectifying his actions by finding Abdullah twenty years later when he is working for the US military as an interpreter.

The events of 9/11 followed by the war on terror determine the future of both Raza and Abdullah. US military operation in Afghanistan provided Raza with the opportunity to work in Afghanistan where he finds out that Abdullah is not with the mujahideen but an illegal cab driver in New York who jumped out of his room's window when the FBI came looking for him. To satisfy his conscience he makes one last attempt to save Abdullah by planning to smuggle him through the Canadian border so that he could be reunited with his family in Afghanistan.

In the last section of the novel where Shamsie portrays a character named Kim Burton who is struggling to deal with the post trauma of the September 11 attacks. Haunted by "dreams of collapsing buildings" (BS, p. 248) and suicide plane attacks she fears for her father whose profession of working as a CIA was not a matter of concern for her until the threat of suicide bombers and plane hijackers created havoc all over the US. Through the famous shoe bomber incident that took place a few days after September 11 in which an Al-Qaeda trained terrorist "tried to light a bomb inside his shoe on a flight" (BS, p. 264), Shamsie highlights Kim's insecurity for her father.

Kim shares her fears with her grandmother which shows how much people were terrorized in the aftermath of Al-Qaeda attacks on New York and how drastically the post 9/11 world was different. All her fears become reality when Harry is killed by the Taliban (BS 324), and it becomes a part of her subconscious

landscape. After the 9/11 attacks the Muslims were stigmatized all over the world as terrorists, especially in the US where any person with a beard is considered a threat and is subjected to scrutiny. Shamsie's novel "situates 9/11 as yet another marker in a long series of violent interactions between people and nations" (Cilano, p. 221) through the character of Kim Burton. Though her family had associated with Tanaka-Ashrafs for two generations, and she had never held any kind of bias for the Muslim race. But after witnessing the 9/11 attacks and living through her father's death she unconsciously harbors a prejudice against Muslims even though she remains in denial about it proving that "violence is the worst of all the madnesses" (BS, p. 125), capable of bringing the worst in human beings without any conscious effort on their part. The demands of national identity vs. transnational realities are repeatedly highlighted in this last section of the novel and the base cause for it is once again war – specifically the US war on terror as an "ineluctable abstraction" and its consequent link to the Afghanistan war (Cilano, p. 193) that Shamise had traced out via the intergenerational and interlinked lives of her characters.

For Kim, it is an Afghan in whose presence she felt threatened, because his five-minute conversation about his religious beliefs, of martyrdom and heaven, offended Kim to the point that she began to question his innocence (BS, p. 345). Itakura's article also highlights this aspect of Shamsie's novel by focusing on the different ways trauma is represented – and this translates into the ways the dominant narratives of 9/11 are undermined through a reimagining of trauma in a broader context. He also refers to the model that Judith Butler also lays out in Frames of War. By placing the events of 9/11 as part of a bigger picture, Itakura similarly shows how this allows Shamsie to enter what was previously a predominantly American outrage only.

The Frames of War, as Judith Butler writes, are thus always dictated by violence, and we can talk about them from the aspect of ethics, power, politics or value of life and its lack thereof. Hiroko in the closing pages of the novel once again questions how war can dehumanize people by "put[ting] them in a little corner of the big picture", making them "expendable" and their deaths acceptable". For her, as she has personally witnessed the events in Nagasaki, historically seen in Nazi Germany and experienced by Raza in Afghanistan (BS, p. 369-70) Kim Burton's actions seem unintelligible. Hiroko finally finds the answer to her question when, as frustrated over Kim's actions of calling the FBI to hand over an innocent man, she gives Kim a picture of her self-absorption and bias - which is also a criticism on the countries who in their larger context ignore the consequences of their decisions and how it impacts people all for the sake of fulfilling one's selfish interests (BS, p. 362).

Through Hiroko's final statement, Shamsie concludes the novel with a provocative issue for all those nations who have faced war, violence, and turbulence at the hands of superpowers of the world. Furthermore, she also brings the novel full circle, in finally answering the question Raza – who is as we have learnt the unknown man being imprisoned in the preface of the novel, this is how it can be. And finally, taking the relevance out of the world of fiction into the very real world the author resides in, Shamsie perhaps found her own answer to a college memory of a student wondering why a second bomb.

War and Displacement in Home Fire:

In the words of (Haanif et al., 2022), the title of the novel gives a very clear idea about what Shamsie wants to discuss. 'Home Fire' refers to a fire glowing in a room's fireside. The word is widely used symbolically to describe the situation of the families within the narrative, Throughout the Pasha residence, a flame had burned everything, much like the flame that had enveloped England, bringing

people from Britain's cultural society to oppose against one another (Khan et al., 2017). The story follows Aneeka's extremely desperate attempts, increasingly so, to convince her sibling to return to London. Karamat Lone, the Home Secretary, is opposing Aneeka throughout every point, argues that all those who "separate themselves from Britain culture should be "handled differently" and refused a home" (Chambers, 2018).

Home Fire represents how identity and politics intertwine with external influences to articulate how one's sense of belonging can be created as well as disrupted. Debjani Banerjee's study [4] for instance focuses on the Muslim identity politics that the novel depicts, and how this can be represented in literary works. This study proposes that for Muslims born in other countries, their sense of place is of necessity linked to multiple environments - their place of origin and their place of residence. It then follows that any disruptions in these environments causes their sense of belonging to be disrupted; the events of September 9/11 being one such example. The incidents of 9/11 and its aftermath changed the dynamics of international politics and international system regulation: "Starting from America the whole of the West was grazed by the fire of Islamophobia and extremist reactions became rampant against the diasporic Muslim communities settled in the West for centuries." (Shaheen et al, p. 151). In Home Fire, Karamat Lone is disliked by the Muslims residing in Britain for generations and is known as "Lone Wolf" publicly. Since he feels indebted to Britain for giving him and his family the opportunities that were not possible for them in Pakistan, he looks down upon practicing Muslims. He is of the view that if a person, especially a Muslim wants to prosper, they must distance themselves from the East. Karamat married an Irish American woman, named his daughter Emily and son Eamonn instead of Ayman to seem closer to West rather than East, rather to be more specific, the Muslims (HF, p. 15–16).

Paul Ricoeur proposes the idea of selfhood as being linked to the socio-cultural context (p. 23), and it changes in response to national and global events (p. 65). Individuals who belong to ethnic minorities especially feel that they need to constantly adjust how they are perceived by others (p. 78). For Karamat Lone, it is understandable then why it seems to be a matter of shame or disgrace to be seen near a mosque by the paparazzi. Being Muslim, he is happy in showing the world that he is against Islam, but he is fine with going to the church:

… he had been there only for his uncle's funeral prayers and would otherwise never enter a gender-segregated space. This was followed by pictures of him and his wife walking hand in hand into a church…Karamat Lone had precisely calculated the short-term losses and long-term gains of showing such contempt for the conventions of a mosque (HF, p. 35)

The problem he faces is that he has been brought up in an environment where he has learnt that he can only be accepted by British society if he disregards and unlearns the teachings of his ancestors. This is the only way through which his hard work will bear fruit or else success and social acceptability is not possible.

Laughing, he said, "Cancer or Islam—which is the greater affliction?"

There were still moments when a statement like that could catch a person off-guard. He held his hands up quickly in apology. "Jesus. I mean, sorry. That came out really badly. I meant; it must be difficult to be Muslim in the world these days."

"I'd find it more difficult to not be Muslim," she said… (HF, p. 21)

This struggle to find a sense of place in a country where, despite a legal identity, one is considered an outsider is key to also why Isma is worried about the interrogation she must go through because she missed her flight to The United States of America to pursue a Ph.D. program in Sociology. Her family - particularly her father's past and brother's suspected ties to isis - become a

hindrance to Isma'a ability to belong because she challenges the accepted standard. Shamsie herself in an interview [5] also mentioned these very real struggles she faced while going through the process of citizenship. Isma's denouncing of her brother is an illustration of the extent of demands placed by their place of residence which in turn is also an act of displacement of her own sense of self. Her continued wearing of the hijab is a passive act of resistance than by these standards. It is not an exaggeration to say that such demands can also be an act of overt war on a minority community's sense of belonging. In Shamsie's Home Fire both the Lone family and Pasha family were home, yet they did not feel at home anymore because of Islamophobia and the world associating Islam with terrorism. Isma, like other well-practicing Muslim, wore a turban and in a foreign land, wearing a turban makes them stand out, and she wonders "how much more pleasant life was when you lived among foreigners whose subtexts you couldn't hear." (HF, p. 22).

Due to the tragic events of the 21st century, and the politics at the level of religion that have been directed solely towards Islam, an environment of fear and hatred for the Muslims has been created. It also created an insecurity among Muslims along with the feeling as if they were not in their own nation of origin. Peter Morey's survey of fictional works that portray this "clash of civilizations" (p. 2) discusses the western sense of cultural superiority that causes a sense of ambiguity and stereotyping in the portrayal of Muslim characters. For instance, when Karamat Lone goes to speak at a school in Bradford, urging the Muslim students there to assimilate by giving up any outward symbols of their identity (HF 89-90) is reinforcing the internalized war that is taking place within Muslim migrants globally. By urging them to give anything that makes them different, Lone is emphasizing that the environment of one's place of residence should supersede that of one's ethnic identity.

Like in Burnt Shadows, the physical body has become a site for political conflict within this novel as well - as Aneeka writes to Isma in one of their text exchanges, "it's all going to get worse. He [Karammat Lone] must prove he's one of them, not one of us, doesn't he?" (HF 35). Aneeka's fiance, Eamoon, however is unable to understand why Aneeka finds his father's words to be objectionable. His 'self' is a sheltered one due to his father's status and by being half-white and his 'place' is one which is more assured than that of his father or her. Stuart Hall declared these "points of identification" to be the narratives that people create to locate themselves within a land, to create their own sense of place within a community (p. 235). Shamsie has masterfully shown that the characters in Home Fire (2017) believed that they are home, when they are not. Karamat Lone's profession and the reputation he had built for himself was always at a state of risk. His efforts to adapt to his new environment only led to the destruction of his family. Pervez decides to embark on his father's journey only to later realize that the noble cause they had set out was nothing more than propaganda and there is no way to go back home. He provides his services and talent to protect his religion but when he understands the agenda behind the Jihad he escapes only to get killed. Aneeka fights for her brother's right to get a proper burial and her right to return but fails eventually.

The way a person practices a religion varies from person to person and is dictated by their environment of birth. Even after becoming part of a new environment, displaced persons often find it difficult to assimilate into their new environments. This is one reason why many people, despite being born in a particular religious or cultural sphere, find it necessary to give up on part of their identity. At some point, each character in the novel asks themselves, which country, which land they belong to, which environment to become a part of. This aspect is shown in the novel through the experiences of Aneeka, one of which is a man spitting on

her for wearing the hijab, while she is going to Eamonn's place. In Aneeka's experience, being "nineteen and female" means one is open to harassment, but events like "Terrorist attacks involving European victims. Home secretaries talking about people setting themselves apart in the way they dress" (HF, p. 90) exacerbate the environment for Muslims in particular. The environment functions then as background, which only comes to the forefront [6] once it is acknowledged, and thus becomes a material reality.

Place and environment thus become constructed realities that play between the human and non-human forces - in the case of Shamsie's Home Fire it is between the creation of a stable sense of identity and the outside political forces that do not allow for a sense of selfhood and belonging within the place migrant Muslims have chosen to settle. Their displacement is constantly impacted by the socio-cultural and political forces around them. The conditions placed on citizenship, and Karamat Lone's decision to withdraw Parvaiz's citizenship, the deaths of Aneeka and Eamon shows the very concrete consequences faced by Muslims in a post 9/11 environment. Even the hashtag that trended after Lone's announcement "#GOBACKWHEREYOUCAMEFROM" (HF, p. 193) shows how much even in the eyes of the white residents, place is tied indelibly to identity. The novel thus raises questions about belonging, and the type of response that a failure to belong can produce. The only way to create a stable identity is to break free of these outside forces. So, when Eamoon defends Aneeka's protests as completely legal later on in the novel (HF, p. 258), he is reconstructing his own selfhood in response to the changing political environment, and his own understanding of his place outside of its constraints.

According to Eamon, his father is deeply involved in a personal animus. There is a war going on between his preferences and the various identities and responsibilities associated with these identities. Karamat Lone's identity as a

father and that as a Home Minister in Britain are in constant conflict throughout the novel. Same is the situation if the character is analyzed from the perspective of faith. He is a muslim, yet he claims in an interview that he hates "the Muslims who make people hate Muslims." (HF, p. 231) It is his actions and decisions that are creating hatred among Muslims for him. Even Terry, his non-Muslim wife, is human enough to realize the fact that his fight against 19 years old twins – one who is deceased and the other who is mourning the loss of her brother – is both undignified and unjustified.

A few days ago, your greatest rival was a man born with a diamond-encrusted spoon in his mouth, a party insider for years. And now it's this orphaned student, who wants for her brother what she never had for her father: a grave beside which she can sit and weep for the awful, pitiable mess of her family life. Look at her, Karamat: look at this sad child you've raised to your enemy and see how far you've lowered yourself in doing that. (HF, p. 253)

The story can be taken as a constant fight to create and maintain an image which is at constant risk and the following paragraph summarizes Karamat Lone's life and his achievements.

"…yesterday's principled man of action and remade him: an ambitious son of migrants who married money and class and social contacts to transform himself into an influential party donor, which allowed him to be selected ahead of more deserving candidates to run in his first election. He used his identity as a Muslim to win, then jettisoned it when it started to damage him. It remains a mystery how he had had the privilege of running in a by-election for a safe seat after his constituents threw him out following Mosquegate; it had led to resignations within the party. Rather than fully address the questions regarding his connections to known terrorists in the mosque he frequented, he'd taken on a new role as the loudest voice of criticism against the community that had voted him

out. Working-class or millionaire, Muslim or ex-Muslim, proud son of migrants or antimigrant, modernizer or traditionalist? Will the real Karamat Lone please stand up? And the final blow, again from Anonymous Cabinet Member: "He would sell out anyone, even his own son, if he thought it would move him closer to number 10."" (HF, p. 247)

When Aneeka is grieving the loss of her brother in Karachi, many people show sympathy for the bereaved family and the deceased body out of humanity. She only receives this humanitarian treatment at Home, while in Britain, the complete family is isolated except for a few people who help her. On the other hand, Karamat Lone's family is also breaking apart. He believes that he is protecting his son by separating him from Aneeka even though he flees to Karachi as soon as he is no longer paralyzed by indecision (Shamsie, 2017, p. 242) only for the lovers to get killed in a terrorist attack.

Living in a multicultural society, has many problems considering the world has been under colonial rule for so long that it has become a part of the personality of every person around the world whether they were part of the colonizing nations or the colonized. The Home Minister and Pervaiz are seen as best examples of an identity crisis and the notion presented by Homi K. Bhabha that "ambivalence undermines the colonizer's unambiguous authority by undermining the straightforward relationship between colonizers and colonizers." Both are either in search of their identity or are trying to create an identity that they feel is the right one for them. Pervais has been brainwashed by Farooq by manipulating him into believing that he must follow his father's legacy and give his talent for a noble cause. On the other hand, no matter how much Karamat Lone had to struggle and work hard to convince that he was a true British patriot, the fact is that no matter what he does and says, he will always remain an orient. (Joshi & Patil, 2022) The notion had been very clearly stated in The Ballad of East and

West by Kipling when he writes, "Oh, East is East, and West is West, and they shall never meet." (Joshi & Patil, 2022)

If the West keeps the fact in view that colonization created multicultural society in the west, and the people who have been living there for generations due to many reasons such as world wars, migration, etc., they are as human and as deserving of human rights as the Occident. It is when people are deprived of their rights that hatred begins, and it leads to the desire for revenge. It is the West, the Occident, that created such an environment that made themselves fearful of their own doing and put the whole world in such a state of confusion that Muslims that had migrated to the West and adopted it as their home no longer felt secure at home. Muslims were afraid of fellow Muslims as well as non-Muslims. The non-muslims were no longer ready to accept Muslims becoming a part of their nation and community even after giving up their homeland for generations. Therefore, the fearful life that people have been living around the globe after 9/11 is the result of the environment that was created by man rather than nature.

Lessons to be Learnt:

As seen in the novels overall, whether a character witnesses' nuclear warfare in 1945, or is caught in the never-ending cycle of war and political conflict– they have to face environmental and physical trauma in terms of losing their loved ones, their fears, and insecurities regarding their own mortality, and how the past leaves indelible traces on them and their surroundings. For Shamsie the point of origin for a lot of the conflicts in her characters' lives is WWII – which can essentially be called the origin of the trophic cascade that the study of war's aftermath has revealed. In fact, even in environmental studies, WWII holds a place of significance as it was a turning point for ecological concerns in the world. The post WWII world became one that was focused on economy, profit, capital - but with no thought for the eventual cost that is only now coming to light.

Furthermore, the novels also show that war – whether fought by armies, by politics, or internally by a single individual is something that indelibly alters the environment of humans' life relationships. We see the worst of human nature, all the victims try to save their own life, and then throughout their lives they try to cope with it. It is here perhaps that not only the study of literature, but an ecological approach to literature can help for "literature and other forms of artistic production can promote collective identification" (Cilano 6). When it comes to fiction, the authority of the writer plays a large role in how the experience and impact of war is framed for the audience. Understanding history through documentaries and historical accounts helps us to empathize with the survivors. Yet, when history blends with imagination such as in fiction it becomes a more powerful medium that could help in a better understanding of how certain events can affect personal lives – to the extent that it can potentially change one's' outlook towards life and humanity.

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[1] Shamsie in various interviews has also credited the survivor stories of WWII nuclear attacks as recorded by John Hersey in his book Hiroshima (29).

[2] Hersey states that the term Hibakusha was first used after the atomic bomb was dropped in Hiroshima, replacing the original term "survivors" (92)

[3] Filgate, Michele. "Interview with Kamila Shamsie". Quarterly Conversation, 2009.

[4] "From cheap labor to overlooked citizens: looking for British Muslim identities in Kamila Shamsie's Home Fire." South Asian Review 41, no. 3-4 (2020): 288-302.

[5] With Vanessa Thorpe, The Guardian, 27 August 2017

[6] Timothy Morton in Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics (2009) discusses an environment "which cannot be

indicated directly… It is the background, caught in a relationship with a foreground" (175).