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TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITIES IN KAMILA SHAMSIE'S NOVEL *BRUNT SHADOWS*  
: A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the developments of transferring and re-structuring identities in Kamila Shamsie's novel *Burnt Shadows*, predominantly by the two focal characters Hiroko Tanaka, a Japanese language educator, and her son Raza Konrad Ashraf. Portraying Rushdie's conception of migrants as translated men and women, imaginary homeland, Diaspora, and the complex number of identities, the researcher here aims to investigate how cultural identities are formed and manipulated in a transnational aspect, disturbing different social and cultural treaties as gender, race, religion, and national belongingness. Hiroko Tanaka and Raza Konrad Ashraf are multi-lingual transmigrants who perpetually migrate and navigate their identities through the distinctive languages they know, thus thought-provoking the conventional notions of nation, home, community, and sense of belongingness; and even then, sustaining their individuality by having multi-linguistic proficiencies. The researcher also takes into deliberation how these two characters are diverse from other characters in the novel; the confronts and conflicts they are processed with during the course of the novel in restructuring their identity. Shamsie by depicting Hiroko, indirectly indicated the Western policies towards the East. In attacking the Hiroshima bomb, the 11 September 2001 Partition of the sub-continent, Guantanamo Bay, and how the Muslim hostages' experience. The researcher also realizes that the Empire is for the West. This is what Shamsie attempts to convey, the West responsibility for the East's suffering.

**Keywords:** *Burnt Shadows*, Diaspora, History, Identity, Migrants, Politics, Translated.

Discussion

*Burnt Shadows* is an account of a Japanese woman's life, named Hiroko Tanaka, who moves the story from 1945 Nagasaki, World War II to the 1947 Partition of the Subcontinent, momentarily in Turkey and then law-abiding to the Post 9/11 United States. Hiroko Tanaka, the survivor of the atomic bomb attack of Nagasaki migrates to pre-partitioned India and is saluted by the Anglo-German step-sister of her German fiancé who died during the 1945 American attack. There she encounters, acquires her trust in, and falls in love with Sajjad Ashraf, her Urdu teacher whom she espouses later. Being in the most horrific times of post-partition in Turkey along with her husband, Hiroko shifts to Pakistan unpredictably when Sajjad is rebuffed going back home (India). The last segment of the narrative is, nevertheless, to come to stay in the United States, where fatefully Hiroko finds

discharge from the symbolic atomic conflict between India and Pakistan. It is here that she perceives the 9/11 incident. Hiroko and Sajjad have a son named by her Raza Konrad Ashraf, who credits his mother's multi-linguistic commands becomes equivalent. His Japanese, Indian, and Turkish heritage empowers him to pass as a Hazara Afghani, with unpredicted effects. Knowledge of various languages helps him to secure a job as a translator in the CIA. Both the mother and the son play-act as Rushdie's 'translated man and woman' and consequently continue re-constructing themselves in relation to their lived understandings throughout their voyages. All these historical proceedings have melded their physical replacements and they keep on re-negotiating their identities through a practice of modification.

The episodes of history are not cited in detail by the author but the shadows of personal history, and politics are tossed over which comprehends her during her journeys. *Burnt Shadows* alternatively be a symbol of the disturbance of wars. Hiroko's identity as a Japanese woman takes numerous forms as she journeys around different spaces. The author acquaints a remarkable assessment through her protagonist Hiroko Tanaka about the sagacity of belonging. Shamsie describes how vehemence reasons pain in the neck in human personality which consequences in the reputation of the primal effort for survival. The protagonist of the novel *Burnt Shadows* is a Japanese migration through whom Shamsie arranges the disturbing dislocation of innocent people triggered by world power politics. Hiroko symbolizes those people who devote their lives to resettlement from one place to another looking for a non-violent environment. Kamila Shamsie falls under the category of Postcolonial authors and that's why her characters' breaths are trapped in the web of transnational identity. The sign of a 'bird' on Hiroko's back may conceivably be a symbol of her life where she is to fly to unlike settings like a bird.

Scrutinizing the novel from the viewpoint of Salman Rushdie's Imaginary Homelands assists to introduce transnationalism and combination in the individuals of the novel. Rushdie's Imaginary Homelands surveys the notion of "homeland" contained by the milieu of ephemerality and elasticity. It is a compendium of essays written from 1981 to 1992 about the controversial disputes of the decade. It disguises the encounters of Rushdie as well as his contemporary interlude. Conferring to Rushdie, migrants can be termed as translated men and are supposed to implement the ways of their accepted homelands. This notion of Multiculturalism and transnationalism is comprehended in the characters of Hiroko and Raza. They epitomize a homing longing rather than a longing for a homeland as both characters are strangers at home. Hiroko and Raza re-establish their home where they transfer or remain and adapt to that place's languages and cultures with the advantage of the endowment of languages they know "for language came on very easily as if retrieving some forgotten knowledge. ..." (Shamsie)

The keyword 'translation' Rushdie alludes, originates from the Latin for the expression "bearing across," and "having been born across the world", he declares that we are "translated men". It is generally hypothetical that something always disoriented during the process of translation but Rushdie holds to the detail that "something can also be gained." For instance, he engraves in his essay on John Berger, "the migrant is not simply transformed by his act; he also transforms his new world." (Rushdie) One such gain is the remarkable capacity for strengthening the language and the culture too. Languages vocalized by the individual character minister as indications of both history and their identity. For Hiroko, the languages she dialogues manifest her involvement and her place in the world's abode. For instance, her practice of language with Konrad, her first adoration, is fashioned by their bond and their distinct identities: "As ever their conversation moves between German, English, and Japanese. It feels to them like a secret language which no one else they know can fully decipher." (Shamsie, 19) The comfort and flair with which she experts different languages aid her reside positively in different cultures. She has previously thrust herself frontward to understanding the new opportunities of cultural hybridity. Enigmatically, Hiroko not only transmits their languages with her, but after Konrad's death, she also masters Urdu and teaches her son Raza to speak German, in a surcharge to Urdu, English, and Japanese.

Therefore, Shamsie sketches the complex and interrelated tangle of relationships that Hiroko advances through her languages throughout her voyages. Identity, as put forth by Gilroy, essentially comprises "an ongoing process of self-making and social interaction" (2000, p. 103). Thus, anywhere she acts or stays, Hiroko

is capable of adapting to that specific place and nation; the social order, and its language and civilization. In doing so, she still remembers her individuality and is not destined for any social burdens. She is a multi-lingual transmigrant, who is experiencing ceaseless fluxion in terms of migration. We perceive that Hiroko's own society turns into strangers to her after the atomic attack of Nagasaki. Amid her people, she feels estranged. She converts a victim of their triviality. Her identity is compact only to a survivor of the atomic bomb attack, that is to say, 'Hibakusha'. As Shamsie herself utters her outlook on it, "It was a fear of reduction rather than any kind of quest that had forced her away from Japan... To the Japanese, she was nothing beyond an explosion-affected person; that was her defining feature." (Shamsie, 49)

Therefore, she is compelled to shift to Delhi due to the alienated behaviour of her society. She took asylum in order to manage to get a comfortable space with step sister of her demised intended as she thinks, "there was nowhere else for her to go." (Shamsie, 48) In India, Hiroko feels at home when she came in touch with her Urdu teacher Sajjad Ashraf. His frank and welcoming viewpoint compels Hiroko to reveal her emotion in front of him and she assesses her identity with his as she verbalizes; "It seems to me that I could find more in your world which resembles Japanese traditions than I can in this world of the English." (Shamsie, 90) Hiroko even appreciates learning Urdu as she finds it easy. Gohar Karim Khan claims that captivatingly Hiroko does not permit language barricades or cultural differentiations to counter in the way of her relationship with nations and their habitats. She amends "foreignness" with preposterous effortlessness. She passes time with Sajjad and displays welfare in knowing him through his language Urdu more willingly than in English. In an elegantly distressing spectacle in the novel, Hiroko vindicates Sajjad how, after the atomic blast, she got a rock on which a large shadow was stamped. Supposing it to be Konrad's shadow, she moved the rock to a graveyard and buried it. Sajjad says in the act in response, "There is a phrase ... in English: to leave someone alone in their grief. Urdu has no equivalent phrase. It only understands the concept of gathering around and becoming 'gham-khaur' – grief eaters who take in the mourners' sorrow. ... There was a moment's hesitation, and then she said, 'This is an Urdu lesson,' and returned to sit at the bridge table, pen poised to write the word 'ghum-khaur'." (Shamsie, 55) Hiroko even believes him and reveals to him, her 'Bird back' and communicates to him that she will stay single throughout her life. Her marriage to Sajjad is also a long series of negotiations, consistent with Hiroko. Hence, Hiroko's "identity is at once plural and partial." (Rushdie, 15)

Languages correspondingly cooperate as a very worthy part of Raza's life. He accepts the occupation of a 'polyglot' and considers that "through this, he will be able to play with words in every language." He additionally exposes his temperament to his mother, "I think I would be happy living in a cold bare room if I could spend my days burrowing into different languages." (Shamsie) This tractability and reassurance with the words and languages indicate that he has arrived at the same adaptability and swiftness as his mother to implement any language in the realm and be affluent with it. A cross-cultured child and an exceptional polyglot from a tender age, he promptly learns new languages from those practiced around him: "In his decade in Dubai, ..., he sought out as many ethnicities as possible, acquiring language with the zeal of a collector – Bengali and Tamil from the hostel staff; Arabic from the receptionists; Swahili from the in-house jazz band; French from Claudia – the most consistent of his many lovers; Farsi from a couple who ran the restaurant at the corner of his street; Russian from the two hookers who lived in the apartment next door to his studio ...; and beyond this, a smattering of words from all over the globe." (Shamsie, 193) Raza himself depicts in his own words, "The further languages you learned, he discovered, the more you set up overlap: 'Qahweh' in Arabic, 'gehve' in Farsi, 'café' in French, 'coffee' in English, 'kofi' in Japanese . . ." (Shamsie, 193)

This linguistic assortment and contemplation of Raza also advantage towards multicultural and transnationalism identity. He has proprietorship over the linguistic comprehension of belonging to distinct cultures of the whole world. He adjoins the excesses of nearly five cultural configurations in his identity. He is in a situation that prohibits any entry to a sole cultural identity. He always breathes on the 'threshold' of the well-defined figures of identity. The ultimate question is 'Where he belongs?'; the answer will be that he belongs everywhere. Raza Konrad Ashraf the name itself has been taken from three diverse nations and cultures, Raza from Pakistan, Konrad from German, and Ashraf from Indian society. Furthermore, he articulates his name to

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Abdullah, a fourteen-year-old Afghan boy, as Raza Hazara, consequently supplementing alternative identity to his multi-lingual and multi-cultural identities.

Allowing the recurring allusions to many varieties of language transformation, the relationship surviving between this type of transformation and the physical translation beyond borders seems apparent 'to translate' means passing on something across a boundary. By quoting Salman Rushdie, it could be stated that Hiroko is a 'translated woman' and in the same way Raza is a 'translated man'. The linguistic translation is a dynamic process where negotiation between the languages took place, and the consequence is that 'something can also be gained' regardless of something that is perplexing according to the notion of Rushdie. For Rushdie, Bhabha, and Benjamin, translation is an impression that entails survival as a refugee is a human who has traversed the border lines and must alter according to the new atmosphere in directive to survive. For Hiroko herself, translation is survival in the impression that it allocates her courage to survive her loss by surviving between the borders of various distant worlds. Using translation in her process of identity formation, Hiroko herself becomes a cultural mongrel and depicted her smart station by performing translation as she uses the languages, she speaks to cross the cultural borders she comes through. The verbal translation is therefore one of the mediums the character uses to laboriously make her subjectivity.

Rushdie's concept of return to home is based on imagination. In his words, ... exiles or migrants or expatriates, are haunted by an urge to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge- which gives rise to profound uncertainties – that our physical alienation ... almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost: that we will, in short, create ... imaginary homelands, (Rushdie, 10)

Thus, it is impossible to return to the original homeland, it can only be re-constructed in memory. Furthermore, his perception of homeland is not grounded in geography, it is adequately spatial. Past is a place of no return, as he says, "past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time." (Rushdie, 9) Both Hiroko and Raza epitomize a true representation of this concept. Hiroko understands very timely in her life; when she departs from Japan; that recurring to this homeland will never be achievable. Raza also has this in mind while leaving Pakistan for the first time. This fact does not hinder their future movement. They rather re-construct their identities through the languages they know. So, Hiroko proceeds to her homeland in her vision when while in Karachi she encounters the Japanese woman, she uses her own language, conversations, jokes, and giggles in her own language with the society of her own kind. Henceforth by appreciating Japanese festivities, celebrations, cooking Japanese food at home, and wearing Japanese dresses she is able to relive her lost life.

Conferring to Salman Rushdie, the sagacity of damage is transformative, it transforms a person for better opportunities, and it is optimistic and worth praising which can be distinctly perceived in Hiroko's personality. For Hiroko consciousness of loss is very sound but so is her flexibility. After the demise of her homeland and the loss of her father and fiancé, Hiroko treasures every recollection belonging to them but does not formulate these memories as her only valuable properties and hence transports on. Her loss does not delay her progression into the future. Hall (1996) records that identities are about inquiries of using the assets of history, culture, and language in the cure of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from,' so much as what we might become, how we have been epitomized and how that accepts on how we might represent ourselves. (4)

Identity is hence intermediated by distinctive representations, language exercise, remembrance, desire, and so on. Therefore, we realize that Hiroko and Raza are polyglot transnational identity holders and hybrid characters. They appear to be borderless individuals and acknowledge all cultures, languages, religions, societies, and nations with the enormous manoeuvre. They may not have any single nation to call their home, although they have a home universally. For Rushdie, being a migrant is enjoyable. He articulates in his work *Imaginary Homelands*, "the immigrant who loses his roots, language and social norms is obliged to find new means of describing himself, new ways of being human". (Rushdie, 66) This is how we perceive that humanistic standards are valued in Kamila Shamsie's novel *Burnt Shadows*. To situate it in Chamber's expressions,

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confronted with a loss of ancestries, and the following dwindling in the language regimes of 'authenticity', we take the first step to a gigantic landscape. Our perception of being in the right place, our language to celebrate, and the myths we carry with us persist, but no more as 'origins' or symbols of 'authenticity' efficient of ensuring the sagacity of our lives. They now remain remnants, accents, remembrances, and mumbles blended in with other histories, episodes, and encounters.

### Conclusion

Hiroko does not un receptively admit the numerous kinds of boundaries that have been obligatory on her by proceedings that are fragments of a nationalistic view, actions that might have imprisoned her into a particular set of cultural as well as social, linguistic, and possibly geographical borders. On the divergent, she responds to the occasions that intensely affect her life, exigent the roles that social and political faculties seem to have elected for her. She endorses a process of self-directed identity interpretation by traversing social and cultural borders as well as leading edge amid nation-states. As a result, she occupies a crossbreed space where the never-complete process of identity construction progresses through the arbitration of several alterations. Raza also advantage towards multicultural and transnationalism identity. He has proprietorship over the linguistic comprehension of belonging to distinct cultures of the whole world. Through such a conversational exercise, the leading roles of both characters question both social models and nationalistic notions. From the beginning to the end of the extension of the narrative account of the story, questioning nationalism surfaces to be the trait union associated with the different parts of the novel. Nationalistic thoughts and plans are certainly the reason that justifies every of Hiroko's interchanges from one place to another, not only compelling her to develop a transnational identity but also pressurizing her to uphold ideas of transnational cohesion.

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