

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology
of Egypt / Egyptology

LOCATING CULTURAL HEGEMONY: A MARXIST ANALYSIS OF *HOME FIRE*

Authors' detail:

1. Dr. Syrrina Ahsan Ali Haque

Assistant Professor, Department of English, The University of Lahore, Pakistan. Email:
syrrina.ahsan@ell.uol.edu.pk

2. Hina Iqbal

Ph.D. Scholar at English Department, The University of Lahore, Pakistan. Email:
hinnaa83@gmail.com

3. Naghmana Siddique.

Assistant Professor of English, Govt. Postgraduate College for Women. Sahiwal. Email:
amavas18@gmail.com

4. Asia Saeed

Lecturer, Department of English, University of Sahiwal asiawaris@uosahiwal.edu.pk
(Corresponding author)

Dr. Syrrina Ahsan Ali Haque, Hina Iqbal, Naghmana Siddique, Asia Saeed, LOCATING CULTURAL HEGEMONY: A MARXIST ANALYSIS OF HOME FIRE-Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 17(9), ISSN 1567-214x

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore cultural hegemony in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* through the class systems and hierarchies in a multicultural society. This research takes the theoretical framework of Marxism with the insights of 'cultural hegemony' by looking at the multiple links between the characters and cultures. It aims to explore the way Kamila Shamsie develops Eurocentric biases through culture, using Muslim characters, and also presents the ideals of aristocracy by highlighting the function of cultural hegemony in Britain. Cultural hegemony by the ruling class is not a matter of supremacy and violence; instead consent, language, utilization of intellectual men's power, and informative skills are the ways to complete

the process of cultural hegemony. This study not only examines how the Muslim migrants of Kamila Shamsie in *Home Fire* are affected by the ruling class but also depicts the alarming effects of cultural hegemony that create cultural infidelity and class conflict between characters. This study would be helpful for future researchers to highlight the repressive factors in multi-cultural societies and their prevention.

Keywords: *Cultural Hegemony, domination, consent, language, Muslim migrants.*

Introduction

With the rise of Globalization, people's belongings, views, ideas have been extended from one culture to many different cultures. This turn from monoculture to multiculturalism is a turn of nationalism to transnationalism. The rise of new developing societies, new social identities and international relations lead people from a single culture to multiculturalism. It creates cultural diversity with the consequence of hegemony in culture. In western societies, there is a considerable cultural diversity which develops racism and other class conflicts which result in prejudices. Human history witnessed to major world wars which resulted as the demolition of civilization that triggered from the desire of one culture to overlap the other. Cultural hegemony maintains an imbalanced relationship among classes by favoring one class over other. It is a practice of imposing the values of politically powerful class over less powerful class.

Kamila Shamsie's novel *Home Fire* deals with the same notion of cultural hegemony. Kamila Shamsie has composed eight novels during the period of 1998 to 2017. Shamsie highlighted the issue of hegemony at political and cultural level in *Home Fire* (2017). In this novel, she presents Eurocentric biases through British culture from the Muslim characters of Isma, Aneeka, Karamat and Parvaiz who are migrated to London from Middle East and the character of Eamonn who is the son of a powerful politician Karamat, as he recently elected a Home Secretary of London. Shamsie skillfully portrayed how these characters utilize other characters for their own personal

advantages. She displayed how these characters are morally and ethically exploited by powerful class in the name of love.

This research aims to locate cultural hegemony through different characters of novel within the concept of Antonio Gramsci's cultural hegemony. This study will analyze the class conflicts and clashes in the society because of domination of one social group over other through different characters.

This research delineates cultural hegemony within the Marxist theory in the major characters of novel *Home Fire*. Marxist theory asserts that we perceived the world around us according to the way the world economy is established. Karl Marx presents Marxism by saying that the conscience of men not determines the social existence of men, it is their social existence that determines their consciousness(Karl Marx). Antonio Gramsci presents a different ideology in Marxism theory that leads to a "spontaneous consent" which is given to the powerful masses to imposed general direction in their social life by the aristocratic group. This consent created the high standards for dominant class in the field of production; this domination is called 'hegemony' by Gramsci- the domination of ruling class' culture, views, and values through consent rather than through imposed power.

This research will help the readers to know about the sufferings and resistance of lower and middle classes, who are marginalized in their own country by the domination of Elite class in multicultural society. It will also find the ways for future researchers how these effects of cultural hegemony can be overcome which create class conflicts in multicultural society like Britain. So this issue of cultural hegemony requires further exploration and discovery.

Literature Review

This article is based on cultural hegemony in *Home Fire*; where different characters are shown as victims of upper political group which dominates them and use them in the name of love. Kamila Shamsie presents her

characters as doing resistance against the elite class of society for gaining their personal and social rights as a lower class. In *Home Fire*, Kamila Shamsie geographically set the story indifferent countries, Britain, America, Syria and Pakistan. The text of the novel depicts multiple perspectives that develop the concept of un-belongingness, social hierarchies, class conflicts, hegemony and resistance.

In *Home Fire*, Karamat Lone the home secretary of London tries to control the life of Pasha's family, he becomes successful in controlling the thoughts and views of Isma Pasha and Zeenat Pasha about Adil Pasha but Aneeka Pasha shows resistance till the end of novel to find her brother Parvaiz back to Britain. Bresseler assert that reality is shaped and constructed by society. Our social and economic circumstances and situations directly manipulate how and what we suppose and value (Bresseler 211). The same is the case with Isma in the novel. Isma admitted the reality that presented by Karamat Lone in front of her about her father as Karamat says: "They're better off without him" (Shamsie 50). Basically, hegemony is the supremacy of aristocratic class that convinces the other classes that their interests are not only for them but for all (Majeed and Akbar 2019).

Different writers have discussed the concept of cultural hegemony in their particular writings. But I have discussed only those writers in my literature review who strongly present cultural hegemony through the characters of their novels. Charles Dickens reveals the theme of cultural hegemony in his novel *A Tale of Two Cities*. Most of characters of the novel have political power that imposed their culture and views to the common people regarding themselves as aristocrats. As a selfish man Stryver tries to dominate Carton's world and Carton willingly makes himself a servant of Stryver. Another example of dominance can be seen among St. Evremonde family especially in the character of Marquis, who horribly murders a kid by a carriage but he does not feel any shame about his act and considers it a fun to kill the commoners. This shows the hegemony or power of the ruling class over the others.

Similarly, George Orwell in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), expresses the concept of cultural hegemony. It is dystopian social science fiction which depicts Big Brother as a supreme power of ruling party for the people of Oceania who is controlling the life of people of Oceania in almost every aspect of life. The party regulates the thoughts and actions of the people in such a way that they are unable to understand the facts. Winston tries to go against the powerful party but in the end, he himself admits the supremacy of party by saying that he loves Big Brother. It looks like that all the people have the same equal rights in that society but all of them are suffering from the effects of cultural hegemony.

Many articles and researches have been made on the novel *Home Fire*. Padel Muhamad Rallie Rivaldy (2019) has conducted research on the topic “Muslim Diasporic In Kamila Shamsie *Home Fire* (2017)”. Rallie describes that how Shamsie creates a negative stereotypical image of Muslims by depicting an alternative world as each Muslim character of *Home Fire* have established many different identities. Their identity crisis leads these characters towards many themes as alienation, inequality and existential dimensions in *Home Fire*.

Natalie Haynes in *The Guardian* (2017) considers *Home Fire* as rewriting of Sophocles’ *Antigone*. According to her, Shamsie presents Aneeka as Anouilh (Antigone); making her younger sister of Isma (Ismene) where as Sophocles’ original version is quite opposite.

Claire Chambers writes in her article about intertextuality that presents in Shamsie’s *Home Fire*. She says that through this novel Shamsie leads the readers to the problems of people living in Britain. Chamber describes how Shamsie used literature to highlight the political and social issues in multicultural society. Chamber’s main focus in his research is radicalization that how Shamsie raises voices against British laws through her different characters. All these articles are proved very useful for my research because they create a research gap between my research and past researches and stress

the need for the exploration of the concept of cultural hegemony regarding *Home Fire*.

In *Home Fire*, Shamsie's characters show how the immigrants faced problems as hybrid being. Their struggle to assimilate with new cultural affecting them psychologically which creates hierarchies between the social classes that results in the form of domination of one social class (Raees and Akhtar 2019). The struggle of survival of lower class leads them towards the dependency on the aristocratic ruling class. In *Home Fire*, Isma tries hard to assimilate with British society by moving on towards her studies, doing Ph.D in Amherst Massachusetts. But on the airport the interrogation from security gives her much trouble. But she moves on towards her daily routine even when she sees Eamonn first time she does not feel panic to recognize him as the son of Karamat Lone. But she frequently tells him about her father Adil Pasha, by saying that her life was not stuck there as she accepts the reality which Karamat Lone told her as MP at that time. In the words of Parmod .K. Nayar, "hegemony is not necessarily created through threats of violence or the law but by winning their consent to be governed and dominated" (Nayar 130). Karamt Lone does not threaten Isma but because of his political power and supremacy, Isma moved according to his thoughts.

The above studies and discussion helps me to develop links between culture and hegemony through the characters of *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie. It assisted me to view the gaps left in the researches of Pakistani literature which made me able to fill the gap by leading my research towards new examined area 'cultural hegemony'. The presentation of Pakistani- British Muslim characters in *Home Fire* also helps me to explore the difficulties faced by the dependent or lower class in order to adjust in multicultural society.

This research undertakes the theory of cultural hegemony by Antonio Gramsci with the Marxist perspective in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*. Shamsie's novel deals with the resistance of immigrant characters against the cultural domination of host country. This resistance is the result of struggle between

ruling class Lone's family and the subordinate class Pasha's family who are regarded as the family of terrorist because of the joining of Adil pasha as Jihadi in Bosnia. This research takes a qualitative approach to analyze this literary text with the help of Marxist theory to discover hegemonic effects on characters.

Marxist theory focuses on the views of Karl Marx who describes that the economic base of a culture and society establishes through its political, cultural and social conditions. According to him, the dominant class not only rules and controls the resources of production but also control the minds of intellectuals and culture. Marx writes that the ideas of aristocratic class are in every epoch, the ruling class which has the authority of controlling the material production at the same time also has the authority to control the means of mental production (Jones 28).

Gramsci discards the Marxist ideology that the supremacy of powerful class is not confined to just economy, but a social class becomes hegemonic by establishing their consent to control the resources of production and coercing other lower classes. In fact the word 'consent' is very important in Gramsci's concept of hegemony. It means before the ruling class tries to force the subordinate class, the lower class inculcates the complex of inferiority through consent to maintain their position in society. Gramsci depicts hegemony as:

"The 'spontaneous' consent given by great masses to imposed direction on social life by dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige, which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production" (Gramsci 12).

Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony helps to study that How the characters of *Home fire* deprived of their assimilation of western culture due to the biases of major groups in Britain. Moreover, Gramsci's hegemony could be the one reason of their struggle to live in Britain as being national of that culture. So it can be said, that the notion of cultural hegemony is quite relevant to novel

Home fire, as most characters feel suffer because of hegemony that present in British society even some characters try to resist against this hegemony but could not achieve their object successfully.

Discussion and Analysis

Kamila Shmsie's novel *Home Fire* investigates the cultural resistance on the part of some Muslim characters in order to maintain their position in society. Some characters of the novel face unexpected complex situations that result in destruction and devastation of characters. In this novel Shamsie describes that politics has a great impact on our personal and social life. The wrong use of politics creates cultural hegemony on the part of the ruling class who considers lower classes as inferior to them.

Shamsie also depicts the fusion of politics and religion through the Muslim character of Karamat Lone. He first exploits the religious ideology by making British Muslims emotional to gain a political seat of MP for him. The Muslim community gives him full support that being a Muslim he will resolve their all problems after becoming MP of that state but after winning election; he creates a lot of troubles for Muslims. In the novel Isma Pasha, Aneeka Pasha and Eamonn all these characters affected by the cultural hegemony created by Kramat Lone as a powerful new elected home secretary of British society. This hegemony creates an uncertain situation in which nobody can trust to anyone. Aneeka does not have any trust on Isma, Isma does not trust on Parvaiz, Karamat Lone on his son Eamonn, Parvaiz on Farooq all these characters are in a world of uncertainty and chaos. Karamat political attitude and his actions lead the characters towards a horrifying situation which results in death of Parvaiz, Aneeka and Eamonn. Aneeka loves her brother Parvaiz who becomes an agent(jihadi) in ISI in Syria, Parvaiz was not satisfied with his life and wanted to come back. Aneeka tries to help him by having an affair with Eamonn who is the son of Karamat. Aneeka was of the view that Karamat was that powerful person who can do anything to bring Parvaiz back to home. When Eamonn told Aneeka:

“He’s one kind of person as a politician. Another kind as a father. There’s nothing he wouldn’t

do for me (Shamsie 80)”

Then Aneeka says: “That’s good... That’s how it should be (Shamsie 80)”,

So, Karamat was the person who spoilt the subaltern class through his power without using his force. As Gramsci says that the dominant class tries to maintain its rule in capitalist societies without any physical force and coercion. (Gramsci 165)

When Isma meets Eamonn she tells him about her father Adil Pasha and she does not like Eamonn’s father Karamat because he has not taken any step in favor of Adil Pasha as he only wanted to save his seat of MP. Even Isma did not sure about the death of his father. Shamsie stresses Karamat Lone’s politics to prove himself a British rather than Muslim. In the novel, Shamsie makes a satire on British government that they use Karamat; a Muslim against other Muslims. In her words we can say that if Muslims perform according to the British society only then they will be considered as British just as Karamat did, so he becomes powerful and uses his power to exploit the other Muslims of society. He passes a new rule as Home Secretary that: “Under present rules only dual nationals or naturalized citizens with a claim to another nationality can have their citizenship revoked... citizenship is a privilege not a right or birthright (Shamsie 198)”. It means that people of Britain now can keep only one identity otherwise their citizenship will be cancelled (Ghafoor and Farooq 2020). It seems that according to this law all the British are equal which shows the positive side of rule and all the British accept this law happily. But through this law Karamat just wants to save himself as British and uses the law against Pasha Family who did not get back Parvaiz dead body from Pakistan. This shows that Karamat does not use physical force to exploit Pasha Family but rather he controls whole society through his conscious. This shows how dominated group in the society manipulating the reality through the brain

washing of other classes in accordance to get leadership. This process of hegemony described as:

The 'organizing principle' that is disseminated by process of socialization in each aspect of daily life, this prevailing thought becomes the part of 'common sense' of people through the process of internalization. That's why the philosophy, culture and morals of elite appear into natural order of things(Boggs 39).

In *Home Fire*, Isma does not consider herself as a part of White dominated culture. She feels like an outsider. She has no feeling of association with British community and keeps distance with the people; she does not talk with any outsider who is not related to her family. She does not reject the dominance of culture completely rather she tries to avoid the dominancy of high class as she says: "I am not one of them"(Shamsie 26). She criticizes Karamat Lone for his hatred for Muslims community and his action as being a puppet in the hands of British aristocracy. She tries to accept the hegemonic effects of culture without creating any trouble in that society. Isma, without consulting her sister Aneeka, tells the police about Parvaiz departure to Istanbul. Aneeka feels hurt when she comes to know about it but Isma says that one day police will find everything about Parvaiz,Aneeka says that when Parvaiz feelsthat he has done a mistake, "... he could have come home. ... You have made him not able to come home". But Isma says that "we are not in a position to let the state question to our loyalties. Don't you understand that? If you co-operate, it makes a difference (Shamsie 42)". These lines show how Isma is being exploited by the dominated white society that in order to safe herself and her sister she did not think about the rescue of her brother. Gramsci asserts that when ruling class successfully establishes the consent of the subjugated class, force and oppression are not required to control the dependent class.

Karamat Lone considers himself as completely a British person. As a politician he was conscious about the ideologies and social beliefs of society.

He fully understands the boundaries of both cultures and chooses for himself a dominated one – the British culture. His marriage with an Irish woman also considered as the most important step to accept the dominance of White culture (Ahmad et al. 2020). By accepting this White British culture, he considers himself as a part of dominate class who controls the social matters of lower classes. He enjoys his supremacy against the other classes of that society. According to Gramsci: in hegemonic society “physical force is used only against those who refuse to consent either actively or passively”(Gramsci 12).

Parvaiz and his twin Aneeka both show struggle against the dominate class of society. Aneeka’s character portrays the mixed feelings of confusion about culture acceptance. The resistance of Parvaiz against the powerful classes leads him towards the physical devastation of people as being jihadi he tries to complete the incompletework of his father. While Aneeka tries to manipulate people just for her own benefit as she uses Eamonn for her personal purpose. After when Parvaiz dies in Syria, she wants to bring his body back to England. She moves to Pakistan and plans to sit outside British embassy in Pakistan, to give her brother a burial in England but she could not because of the new law was passed by Home Secretary Karamat Lone. She wants to give an identity to his brother Parvaiz, she does not admit the reality that Parvaiz is not allowed to burry even in his birth place in England. She protests against the British authority by not accepting their rule who is not considering Parvaiz a British citizen. Through this rule of British Government Karamat Lone proves his authority in hegemonized culture which affected badly on the lives of different characters resulted in the death of Aneeka and Eamonn also. Karamat Lone also manipulate his son Eamonn by saying him that he will help Pasha Family only on one condition when Eamonn will leave Aneeka. Eamonn leaves Aneeka but Karamat does not take any step in favor of Aneeka rather he sets a plan of revenge and imposed his authority on their relation as a result both Eamonn and Aneeka dies because of Karamat authoritative behavior. He just wanted to secure his political position in that society.

Conclusion

In *Home Fire* most of the characters faces the problems and complexities because of cultural hegemony that prevailed in British society. In Shamsie's *Home Fire* the lower class is exploited by the ruling class throughout the novel. Shamsie presents the concept of bourgeoisie and proletariat through the families of Lones and Pashas. Throughout the novel the upper aristocratic class tries to suppress the other classes just to get personal benefits. Some of the characters like Aneeka and Parvaiz try to show the resistance against the hegemony but the result was only in the devastation and destruction of characters in the form of death. This research highlighted the imbalance relationship of political authorization of powerful group through applying the theory of Marxism which shows the hegemonic effect in multicultural society. This study also shows the class struggle against the prevailing system of society. In Shmsie's novel the entire political, social, individual and cultural events are discussed economically. As Louis Tyson says that there is always an economic power behind every activity of life (Tyson). According to Marxist theory people do politics just to get personal benefits in order to gain power and fame that creates hegemony in culture. The same is the case with Karamat Lone whose wrong decisions destroy everything in novel *Home Fire* that he takes just to maintain his political power. Gramsci considers political and cultural instability to constitute the standards for common people as they are pressurized by the hegemonic forces. The aristocratic class uses consensus traits and methods rather than physical force and violence to achieve their purposes. In *Home Fire* mostly characters are below the supreme power of aristocratic class that forces its culture to the common people, in order to maintain aristocracy. Karamat Lone as a selfish person tries to control the whole British society and destroys his own family life.

References

Ahmad, D. S., D. F. Chaudhary, and D. G. . Murtaza. "Parental Hunger and Alienation in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*". *International Review of*

Literary Studies, vol. 2, no. 1, Nov. 2020, pp. 22-31, <https://irlsjournal.com/ojs/index.php/irls/article/view/12>.

Boggs, Carl. *Gramsci's marxism*. Pluto Press, 1976.

Bressler, Charles E. "Literary Criticism." *An Introduction to theory and practice*(1999). Second ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999. 210-35. Print.

El Aidi, Abdellatif, and Yahya Yechouti. "Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony in Edward Said's orientalism." *Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal* 6.5 (2017): 1-9.

Ghafoor, S., and U. Farooq. "Can Subaltern Be Heard: An Analysis of The Kite Runner and The Thousand Splendid Suns by Khalid Hosseini: Can Subaltern Be Heard". *International Review of Literary Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, Nov. 2020, pp. 42-56, <https://irlsjournal.com/ojs/index.php/irls/article/view/10>.

Gramsci, Antonio. "Selections from the prison notebooks, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith." (1971).

Jones, Steve. *Antonio Gramsci*. London: Routledge, 2006. Print.

Majeed, M. and N. Akbar. "A Marxist Approach to Bapsi Sidhwa's The Trouble-Easers". *International Review of Literary Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, Dec. 2019, pp. 61-69, <https://irlsjournal.com/ojs/index.php/irls/article/view/8>.

Nayar, Pramod. "Barry, Peter. Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Culture Theory. New Delhi: Viva, 2010.

Orwell, George, and A. M. Heath. *Animal farm and 1984*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2003.

Raees, G. and S. Akhtar. "Accumulation of Self in Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway". *International Review of Literary Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, Nov. 2020, pp. 1-12, <https://irlsjournal.com/ojs/index.php/irls/article/view/4>.

Shamsie, K. *Home Fire*. USA: Riverhead, 2017.

Spriggs, Matthew “Who Taught Marx, Engles and Morgan about Australian Aborigines?” *HistoryandAnthropology*10.2-3(1997): 185-218.

Tyson, Lois. *Critical theory today: A user-friendly guide*. Routledge, 2014.