



## Pakistani Diaspora Cultural Transformation Under Globalization in Shamsie's Home Fire

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Vol. V, No. III (Summer 2020)

Pages: 128 – 135

p-ISSN: 2616-955X

e-ISSN: 2663-7030

ISSN-L: 2616-955X



### Abstract

*This research explores the cultural dimension of globalization that has transformed the lives of masses experiencing Pakistani diaspora in Kamila Shamsie's Home Fire that reflects the life and sensibilities of the diaspora community, especially after 9/11. Shamsie takes into account how the lives of the Pakistani diaspora Muslim community got into difficulties, especially after 9/11. Manfred B. Steger's theorization serves as a framework to evaluate cultural transformation under the ever-increasing influence of globalization through media. This article examines the transformation in the life and identity of the Pakistanis residing in the West because of media and language. This study also reveals that Pakistani Anglophone fiction has a well-established place in the literary world and highlights the issues and challenges faced by the third world in the contemporary globalized world.*

**Key Words:** Culture, Globalization, Media, Pakistani Anglophone Fiction, Transformation.

### Introduction

The term globalization, first coined in the 1960s in popular literature in the context of geographical and economic world paradigm, is still the central point of socio-cultural debates. The world has now the status of a global-village that transcends the geographical and political boundaries. [Modelski \(2003\)](#) argues that globalization has a strong historical basis, and it is the seminal player in the politics of the world in the present times. According to [Held and McGrew \(2003\)](#), globalization has broken the barriers of space and distances. The third world has paid the cost of being global at many levels. The loss of cultural identity and suffering through cultural trauma come along with the third world becoming globalized with the rest of the world. Globalization is linking the whole world together. UK, USA, Germany or other first world countries are getting developed more and more due to strong economy and political history. As [Rodrik \(1998\)](#) asserts, the strong nations and countries have achieved more privileged status as globalization spread across the world. The economy of developed nations is overruling the economy of under-developing and weaker nations hence making them dependent in the name of free-market. Pakistani diaspora, for example, got hit by it harshly. Globalization is brainwashing the weaker nations to adopt the West's culture and lifestyle by introducing brands after brands. Hence the third world's culture is getting transformed and faded in the race of being globalized. The third world has to hide and shun their identity and culture to meet the standards of living constructed by the West. Borrowing the idea of [Jameson \(1998\)](#), [Steger \(2013\)](#) argues that globalization is reflective of the enlarged communication systems that have pervaded the world. He tries to establish the link between this phenomenon with modernity as well. Globalization compresses time and space, the two seminal aspects of socio-cultural reality and relations. Globalization involves the creation of new social networks. It also involves the multiplication in the existing social networks and activities that increasingly overcome the boundaries. These boundaries are traditional, political, economic, cultural and

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geographical. So, globalization, as [Kumaravadivelu \(2008\)](#) observes, has brought about transformations in all the spheres, including economics, politics and culture.

### **Theoretical Framework: Steger's Approach to Culture and Globalization**

According to [Steger \(2013\)](#), as "cultural practices lie at the very heart of globalization" (p. 81), the cultural aspect of globalization is central in any study of globalization. To globalization goes the credit of transmitting cultures across the globe. Globalization made it easy for us to get introduced to new cultures and values through the internet and other advanced technologies. One can easily experience cultural practices across the globe by exploring different countries. Cultural practices are no more bound to some specific locality due to globalization. [Steger \(2013\)](#) analyzes the phenomenon by discussing it in terms of similarities and differences, and then he comes to the role of media and language.

### **Similarities and Differences**

Globalization gives rise to similarities and differences at the same time. [Steger \(2013\)](#) is of the view that "globalization is actually homogenizing the culture underwritten by Western culture" (p. 82). This idea of homogenization has been propounded by many theorists whom [Steger \(2013\)](#) calls 'pessimistic hyper globalizers' (p. 82). Steger enumerates four such perspectives: The first one is related to the idea of McDonaldization. Then, he brings in the theory of McWorld that stands face to face with the reactionary phenomenon of Jihad followed by the stance taken by Fukuyama. Lastly, he discusses the explication related to glocalization.

[Steger \(2013\)](#) first refers to American socialist [George Ritzer \(2012\)](#), who used the term McDonaldization for the process of cultural capturing of third world countries by the American states. At a superficial level, these approaches are rationale to provide you with food in minutes, but the underlying phenomenon is to feed with unhealthy and high cholesterol-ic food and to bind the youth with such an addiction. This McDonaldization works under the ideology of Americanization, which pervades state affairs, education, language, and culture. These theorists think the homogeneity of culture is a political act that is overshadowing human relations, social circles and the elimination of cultural norms. A study shows that the amount of money spent by fast food companies in the advertisement is \$3 million while the money spent on the advertisement for fruit consumption is \$1 million. This difference shows the leading concern is domination, not health. Such McDonaldization is actually a political effort to make the whole world a market of benefit to rule and earn money. The interest is highly economical and political. [Steger \(2013\)](#) further develops his stance by incorporating the idea of glocalization. It is actually in line with the ideas of some theorists like Ronald Robertson, who believes neither in complete homogenization nor in the complete elimination of cultures in a global environment. They rather believe in the blend of different cultures to produce a new culture and name the process "glocalization": an intricate system in which local and global cultures both get amalgamated ([Steger, 2013](#)). He furthermore contends that cultural hybridity cannot be an answer to the sameness or difference of the cultures. He believes it to be a parallel relation between sameness and difference, between connection and disconnection, between place and displacement, between the feeling of home and homelessness. He points out that the antagonizing tendencies in the two opposite perspectives of the theorists related to globalization can be compatible with each other. He specifically refers to the cultural globalization in this regard that has played a seminal part in reforming and transforming the consciousness of the people belonging to different regions and cultures. He also highlights how this globalizing effect is linked with the idea of modernity and how it manifests itself in the postmodern scenario.

[Steger \(2013\)](#) believes that the three factors of media, language and environment shape the culture of any community. The media is also playing a vital role in restructuring the identities of the people that come in contact with various new identities in the globalized world. The second factor that is affecting the culture is the dominant use of one language where other languages are losing their importance. Language has also become a tool for constructing truths and presenting them as facts in this global world. As far as the environment is concerned, [Steger \(2013\)](#) critically evaluates the American approach toward environmental concerns. He is of the view that the approach adopted by the US is based on materialism in which the concerns for other aspects of life go to the background. It seems rooted in American values and culture projected through the multinational corporations that own the media industry and communication systems.

## The Role of Media

Media has always had a great role in shaping people's minds and identities, even by throwing and rolling over advertisements that seem stupid or non-serious. [Kellner and Pierce \(2007\)](#) stress the crucial role that the media industry plays in contemporary times. We are now greatly dependent on the media to shape our reality. Everything is real and unquestionable, which is making it vaguer to identify truth from constructed truth. The earlier mediums of entertainment were the upholders of cultural preservation as well. Those mediums have become non-existent as they cannot compete with the enormous media corporations ([Steger, 2013](#)). He asserts the politics of media by stating that media programs have become the source of transmitting the private lives of American celebrities, calling it global connectivity.

The media hegemony practised by Americans can easily be witnessed by the fact that they have secured most of the media lines by their control. Controlling media has resulted in cultural hegemony, thus making the other cultures and their bond with local people weak. There also has been a great shift in switching the broadcasting from news to entertaining shows, programs, and web series. Journalism which actually connects the world globally and aware of the world's happening around the globe, has been marginalized to a very small portion. This is one reason that the youth is now unaware of the current affairs of the world and its history. This domination of the freedom of journalism is also a side of cultural globalization.

## The Role of Language

Language is an authentic parameter to evident the maturity of a nation and its culture. [Steger \(2013\)](#) suggests that to see the global effect upon any nation, we can map the historical trail the native language takes throughout the period. The progress and deterioration of any language can be explained by the global space they get in any country. The minor languages, when they get merged with the native language in any state, lose their essence. The globalization of language can be described as the promotion of one language as an official language for communicating across countries. English, being a global language, is eventually taking away the need for using other languages. Steger believes that the genesis of the discourse of making English a global medium for communication has political and imperialistic concerns. Such hegemony at the level of language turns to be a great decline in other languages representing different cultures.

## Analysis: Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*

Pakistani Anglophone literary tradition saw the new horizons of prosperity in both style and content as the twenty-first century dawned. A whole new group of writers emerged on the literary scene and set the tone and contour of the contemporary era of fiction. Pakistani diaspora writers in particular incorporated in their works both the local and global perspectives. This research focuses on [Kamila Shamsie's \*Home Fire\* \(2017\)](#). Themes of loss of identity, homelessness, the plight of the diaspora community and nostalgia dominate the works of Kamila Shamsie, a British-Pakistani writer.

Shamsie focuses on the transformation of Pakistani diaspora culture through language, religion, economy and state. This article explores the cultural transformation and globalization and its consequences. The study highlights that the weakening of the borders weakens the established notions of cultural identity, the concept that lies at the heart of the idea of a nation. The characters of *Home Fire* suffer at the hands of political power and also due to the state's unacceptability of the 'others'. Unawareness of language, along with other factors, is affecting the ideologies of the characters belonging to the minority. The language of a nation shows its cultural, religious and political ideologies. Alienating the people from their language is a polite way of making them lose their identity and native ideology.

## Fluidity of Culture: Impact of Media and IT

Media is constructing multiple truths and promoting Americanization in the name of global connectivity. According to [Steger \(2013\)](#), the cultural values and norms have undergone a transformation to emerge in the form of various new different shapes and narratives. This difference is the outcome of the influence of media as well. Media is playing a seminal role in connecting the whole world. [Sirinivasan \(2017\)](#) argues that the debates

on technological advancement in the globalized world need to be revisited so that the marginalized ones also benefit from it. Through media and information technology, the whole world actually seems like a global village. No news is considered to be local anymore. Any piece of news that is aired and any political activity that takes place somewhere get access to every nook and corner of the world through media and information technology. This is how an interrelation among the various parts of the world is created. In this inter-relation through media comes propaganda as well, which creates the multiplicity of truths. The struggle to reach and the truth makes it controversial, and then confusion creeps in that disguise the constructive truth and what we see in the world of conspiracy theories. In *Home Fire*, Shamsie highlights the diplomacy of media, which runs through the diplomacy of state, eventually affecting the lives at domestic and political levels. The usage of media by Isma and Aneeka has been monitored by the state because of their father's issues. How media and communication systems are transforming lives can be seen in the words of Isma when she intimates to Eamon that the British State "monitors" (p. 94) her calls and messages. The information technology and communication systems are affecting the social and familial lives as well. They are the central weapons and tools employed in the globalized world. Isma exclaims with real concern to Eamon that the forces behind the communication systems have all the discursive tools at their disposal. She is being watched over by them, and she is under their surveillance while she travels as in her own words when she exclaims that her act of leaving the country with the son of the Home Secretary to visit another place will not be considered "innocent" (p.94). Shamsie portrayed the working of media in as much fundamentalist extreme as can be seen coloring the working of the state.

The communication systems across the globe are used to propagate certain agendas and policies. They actually represent, according to [Steger \(2013\)](#), the post-9/11 globalization that is quite stricter and entails strict policy decisions from the USA, in particular. The images of jihadists, for example, in the minds of people are owing to these communication systems. The image of a Jihadist in Eamon's mind is the product of the English media's representation. The jihadists, according to the text, have "[t]he black-and-white flag, the British-accented" (p.95). This is actually the representation of the flag a group of jihadists used, but it is now associated with every bearded Muslim due to the propaganda aired through media. The further description of the jihadists suggests how these "men who stood beneath it and sliced men's heads off their shoulders. And the media unit, filming it all" (p. 95). The other characters also seem to be affected by what the media has to offer. We see media has been used for spreading rumors which have been inculcated in the mindset of characters. It happened through the news that media aired with incessantly highlighted headlines mentioning how severely the suspected families will be dealt with if any connection of them with any terrorist comes to the fore. "British government would withdraw all the benefits" (p. 49). Not only that, but also the privileges and benefits that a welfare state provides in terms of educational facilities and other utilities will be withdrawn from any "family if suspected of siding with the terrorists" (p. 49).

Media, apparently, reports the truth, but because of the discursive nature of the media reports, multiple truths come to the fore. In *Home Fire*, media has been shown to play a great role as the only means of communication among Isma, Aneeka and Parveiz. On the other hand, the media avoids raising the more important issues as it focuses on propaganda games. The undisputed issues of society remain unsolved and unnoticed, which appears, as Steger (2013) puts it, in "depoliticization" of the reality (p. 81).

Shamsie has highlighted the controls the checks that Isma and her family are subjected to, maintained through communication systems. As we see in the novel, while he surfs through the internet, investigations related to some violent incidents are going on; Parveiz puts "chrome on private mode" just to safeguard himself against the constant gaze of surveillance (p. 140). Fear and doubt hover around the minds of Isma, Aneeka and Parveiz even when they use the internet. They are afraid that even a simple search on a google search engine may land them into some trouble. The limitation imposed by the communication systems and the sense of being checked upon and being under constant surveillance has curtailed the lives of the people. This also shows the bias of the state that is equally responsible for the limitations on the freedom of the diaspora community. Media having immense control over shaping and marring the reputation of any individual can be witnessed in the novel. The biased media is the weapon of the state: "The 7/7 terrorists were never described by the media as the ones who have relations with Britain. Even when the word 'British' was used, it was always as "British of Pakistani descent" or the

terrorists were associated with Islam and Muslims” (p. 38). They were unjustly referred to as “British passport holders, always something interposed between their Britishness and terrorism” (p. 38).

### Niche for Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity proposes a lifestyle where the peaceful co-existence of various cultures takes place. Cultural diversity includes the harmonizing mosaic of entirely different norms and cultural practices which have to breathe in an alien nation peacefully. *Home Fire* does not show peaceful harmony or order in the name of cultural diversity. According to [Cowen \(2004\)](#), homogenization and hybridization both have their constructive side as well; a healthy blend of two cultures brings about the development for both sides. Aneeka, for instance, has regard for Islam and the flexibility to develop an understanding of Western norms and tradition. Her affection for Eamonn portrays her diverse nature. Hira Shah, too, unlike Karamat Loone, does not abandon Islamic notions, yet she has adopted the Western culture and lifestyle along with her traditional identity.

### Cultural Transmutation through Language

Language is the expression of culture. To preserve culture, preserving the language of the culture is important. It is a crucial tool in the realm of globalization. It affects and is affected by the process of globalization. This happens when two or more languages interact at the cost of one of them. This happens in *Home Fire* too. Despite belonging to a Muslim family where speaking Urdu is the tradition, Eamonn hardly knows about it. He seems to have no idea as to how Urdu is related to the history of Muslims and Pakistan. He has not been introduced to Urdu, the national language of Pakistan, deliberately by his father Karamat Loone, who tries to adopt an English lifestyle and be like the British in his manners. His family changes his name from Ayman, which is an Islamic name meaning faith, to Eamonn to make people know that “the father has integrated” (p. 16). Such transformation related to names in order to modify the identity is an effort to become homogenized so that one could be more relatable to the dominating culture and character. The inability to speak one’s native language because somebody lived in different culture and place cannot be equated with not knowing about the native language in the first place. Eamonn is the most significant symbol of cultural assimilation at the level of language. While talking to Isma’s grandmother, uttering a single word in the Urdu language feels “clumsy on his tongue.” (p. 62). Such alienation with one’s native language is also an alarming aspect of globalization where the languages of the third world country are fading away eventually in the wake of powerful languages. In *Home Fire*, he questions religion many a time. We see him questioning Isma’s Hijab and Aneeka’s prayer, to which Ankeeka replies that offering prayers is not a “transactions, Mr. Capitalist” but a usual ritual (p. 70). The recitation of ayat-ul-kursi, which is a *sura* of the Quranic, by Karamat Loone is just a “reflex” for him: the unfamiliar words spoken not out of faith but out of programmed mindset (p. 107). Such alienation with Arabic and Urdu language reflects the lack of sensitivity and regard for these languages.

### Transformation: A Costly Phenomenon

After putting forward both dimensions of sameness and difference, [Steger \(2013\)](#) says that whether constructive or destructive, the hybrid formulation and diversity resulting inhomogeneity is inevitable in a globalizing world. Such a phenomenon is also giving birth to the cultural loss, and the loss of traditional symbolic expression of meanings as the new symbolic expressions of meanings are created. The crisis of identity with a pressing sense of homelessness is the consequence of globalization in which identities are getting diffused. [Held and McGrew \(2003\)](#) opines that the phenomenon of globalization has multiple dimensions. The homogenization at cultural, political, social and religious levels is resulting in the diffusion of identities. An individual has to make up with the social surroundings under the set circumstances for the survival that gives a space to live but requires the individual to leave some baggage behind. This acceptance and negligence form diffusion in identity, which further results in confusion. It is mentally and socially challenging for an individual to become a part-time British and part-time Muslim. Here comes the debate of optimist globalists and pessimist globalists who consider it gain and loss, respectively. We see the diffusion of identity in the character of Aneeka, where she covers her head with a scarf and wears make-up and jeans, which is a western norm. This fact is being acknowledged by her grandmother

that a person can either be at this or that side of the pole. Thus, she exclaims, "In my days either you were the kind of girl who covered your head, or you were the kind of girl who wore make-up." (p. 64). The process of transformation has engulfed all as the forces of globalization marched forward—the fusion results in a significant shift in people's consciousness and a sense of belonging and home. The restlessness and confusion caused by the hybrid flow blur the boundaries between what and where home is. The loss of identity comes along with the form of a new postmodern expression of mental and social instability and knowledge. The transformation of characters into some others is an externalization of this fact.

Globalization is supposed to treat the minorities with the same concern as it has for the Whites. The reality is quite contrary to it as the minorities suffer in response to the biased nature of globalization. The process of globalization involves multinational dimensions to work together, but in this process, the strong nation gets to dominate the competitively weaker nation, thus emphasizing their rules. In this implication and superiority stretch, minorities suffer. The character of Aneeka, Eamonn in *Home Fire* are crystal clear example of the form of hybrid identities. The ideology of Aneeka for praying once in a morning is neither the true essence of Muslim religion nor the complete rejection of religion. She prays just for "starting the day right" (p. 70). The choices which Karamat had to make under the state pressure and the lifestyle which he decided to adopt for his family and for himself is also a face of hybridization. In the novel, we see while having the issue with Aneeka, who wants to take back her brother's body to Britain to bury, Karamat had to face his son and wife's opposition in this matter. Despite having his family at stake, he chooses to become a Home Secretary of the State of Britain first. He says: "Until this thing is over, I don't have a son, and I don't have a wife. I have a great office of State" (p. 246).

The game of dual identities which Karamat had to play at the start of the career was also the struggle of getting along with the new identity in the new land. In the novel, he has not been given clear choices to opt from both of his identities. Such pressure leads him to the point where he completely drops off his Muslim culture and identity, which later on becomes an expression of betrayal to his Muslim community, which he once supported. As in the article written for Karamat, KaramatLoone has been accused of using his Muslim identity to get elected for election and later misused and exploited the Muslim community after winning. He became bitter against the Muslim Community and drew back his name when "it started to damage him" (p. 247). The mysterious selection of Karamat Loone, instead of being questioned upon his connections with the terrorist as a member of the Muslim community, is another instance of how manipulative the game of identity can be. Then, he, astonishingly, assumed a new role of "the loudest voice of criticism against the community that had voted him out" (p. 247). He perpetuated the prejudice towards Muslims at the end of the day.

Karamat Loone, at the point of his career's sensitive edge, had to choose one of the communities he had been a part of. The position which he made for himself and the future insecurities by the British State made him turn against the Muslim Community, which once voted him for possessing the seat of Home Secretary. His insecurities towards his own political power and reputation in Britain are actually the outcome of his insecurity towards the identity and fear of homelessness, which can never make one person certain of his belonging in the global engagement. The transformation, from one Muslim living in Britain to the Home Secretary of Britain, costs Karamat his family, son, hatred from the Muslim minorities residing in the West. Such transformation takes him to the edge where he becomes insensitive and inhumane towards the matter of the body of Parvez. We see his wife pricking his conscience in the last phase of the novel about the inhumane attitude of Karamat towards Aneeka to "look at her...look at this sad child you have raised to your enemy, and see how far you have lowered yourself in doing that" (p. 253).

## Conclusion

The updated technology and media have their benefits as well as drawbacks in globalization. From the analysis of the novel, it is concluded that the media has imposed Western cultural norms on other cultural identities. In *Home, Fire*, media produces multiple truths and conspiracy about Islam and Muslims. Language is the carrier of culture, but in *Home Fire*, the marginalized characters do not know their native language. [Steger's \(2013\)](#) observation about the disappearing of the minority's languages from the globe is true in that the characters, despite belonging to their native land, do not know the ABC of their native language, suggesting that that global

connectivity is somehow assimilating by making English a lingua franca. Globalization also affects the diaspora characters' decisions regarding their family issues and moral choices. Under economic pressures, the first preference of the diaspora characters is getting adjusted in and accepted by the host society, and this acceptance is earned at the cost of their roots.

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