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POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN KAMILA SHAMSIE'S HOME FIRE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ISMA AND ANEEKA

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ABSTRACT

This research article reviews Kamila Shamsie's Home Fire (2017) bt Kamila Shamsie through a postcolonial-feminist perspectives, exploring the interplay of political empowerment and disempowerment in the lives of twin sisters, Isma and Aneeka. This research analyzes the effects of family structures, societal expectations, and governmental power on the twin sister's sense of their own political agency. Applying qualitative textual analysis, the study identifies the complicated intertwine between gender, governance, and postcolonial settings in current literature. Findings show that both sisters Isma and Aneeka employ different strategies to cope with male-dominated and postcolonial systems: Isma's awakening is subtle, framed by familial duties, while Aneeka's bold political stances confronts both state and societal power. The research emphasizes the complicated realities of female's political awakening in postcolonial settings and adds to feminist literary discourse by investigating the interplay of gender, governance, and diaspora individuality.

Keywords: *Political awakening, women's agency, postcolonial feminism, family impact, patriarchal society, gender politics, Kamila Shamsie*

1. Introduction

Home Fire by Kamila Shamsie is a current novel that redefines Antigone by Sophocles in a contemporary British political society. The novel focuses on the lives of both Pasha sisters of Isma and Aneeka; both sisters face individuals, ancestral, and political struggles in a postcolonial and patriarchal society. Shamsie examines themes of gender, family obedience, state power, and political participation through experiences of twin sisters, upbringing significant questions regarding women's political awakening in a postcolonial and diaspora societies. While previous study has aimed at the political and moral dilemmas of the novel (Doe, 2018; Smith, 2020), there is specific scholarship that specifically explores the political empowerment of both sisters from a postcolonial-feminist lens. Most research examines the text regarding diaspora identity, terrorism, or intertextuality with Sophocles' Antigone, but they do not properly talk the gendered and familial aspects of political power. This gap emphasizes the need for research that highlights women's political empowerment, restraints enforced by patriarchal expectations, and the interconnections of family, government, and societal systems.

This study aims to present this gap by answering the following research questions:

1. What role does family, society, and state power play in impacting Isma's and Aneeka's political empowerment?
2. What does the comparison of twin sisters Isma and Aneeka experiences show regarding women's political influence in postcolonial societies?
3. How does Home Fire portray the political empowerment and disempowerment of twin sisters Isma and Aneeka?

By applying a postcolonial-feminist theory, this research explores the complex ways in which gender, family, and postcolonial contexts frame political influence and emphasizes the significance of literature in revealing social facts.

Significance of the Study

This research grips significant value for the fields of feminist literary criticism, postcolonial contexts, and political fiction. While Shame's Home Fire has been widely interpreted for its themes of terrorism, diaspora identity, and state authority, finite research has examined the comparative political empowerment of both sisters, Isma and Aneeka from a postcolonial-feminist lens. By aiming at the comparative experiences of the twin sisters, this research fulfills a significant gap in current scholarship and emphasizes how Muslim women deal with political, societal, and familial restraints in patriarchal and postcolonial contexts. It also demonstrates how district approaches of empowerment such as Isma's careful negotiation and Aneeka's courageous defiance indicate larger facts confronted by females in Muslim diaspora societies. The findings will be useful for researchers of feminist literary studies, postcolonial theory, and political literature, and also for students exploring current narratives of gender and power.

Overall, this study is significant because it gives a profound understanding of the political aspects of Home Fire, provides a subtle reading of woman agency in literature, and furthermore, inspires scholarly debate on the depiction of empowered Muslim women in postcolonial narratives.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate how family, society expectations, and state power frame the political empowerment and disempowerment of Isma and Aneeka in Kamila Shamsie's Home Fire.
2. To analyze how the novel's comparative depiction of twin sisters Isma's and Aneeka's experiences shows larger patterns of women's political agency in postcolonial communities.
3. To explore the narrative approaches through which Home Fire portrays the twin sisters' contradictory forms of political action, defiance, and helplessness.

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2. Literature Review

This section reviews previous study and theoretical lens connected to political empowerment, women's empowerment, feminism, postcolonial theory, and the depiction of Muslim women in Kamila Shamsie's Home Fire. The aim is to examine the key ideas that frame the research and to reveal the theoretical and empirical gaps that explain this comparative analysis twin

sisters of Isma and Aneeka. This literature review gives a theoretical groundwork to understand how Shamsie reshape women's agency within patriarchal, political, and cultural restraints in a postcolonial setting. Shamsie's Home Fire has interested scholarly focus for its participation with political, ethical, and diaspora themes. Doe (2018) highlights the novel's exploration of loyalty and state authority, while Smith (2020) emphasizes the ethical dilemmas created by counter-terrorism strategies on British Muslim societies. However, these interpretations largely ignore the gendered aspects of empowerment and how women exercise political influence under restrictive structures.

Study on postcolonial feminism (Mohanty, 2003; Narayan, 1997; Spivak, 1988) highlights that women's agency in postcolonial communities is restraints by patriarchal values, cultural norms, and consequences of colonial power. Using these ideas to Home Fire reflects that both sisters Isma and Aneeka personify distinct interconnected paths of negotiating toward political empowerment:

- Isma demonstrates empowerment through studies, emotional labor, and careful navigation of familial obligations.
- Aneeka empowers herself by rejecting restraints, challenging state power, and asserting emotional and moral authority.

Their contrasting approaches reveal the complexity of Muslim women's agency, showing that empowerment in a postcolonial world can emerge through both negotiated accommodation and radical resistance.

2.2. Research Gap

Scholars have analyzed Shamsie's Home Fire from different lens: Naz and Safdar (2023) studied it through the perspectives of multiculturalism and diaspora. Hanif, Ghazanfar, and Bashir (2022) applied feminist stylistic analysis to explore how Shamsie provides voice to her woman characters. Bilal, Malik, and Ullah (2025) aimed at female agency, emphasizing Aneeka's political resistance. Yet, little attention has been laid on the comparative investigation of women's political empowerment in Shamsie's Home Fire—especially in the complex depiction of the twin sisters, Isma and Aneeka Pasha. Prior research often examine each character individually or depend heavily on Western feminist lens, ignoring how Shamsie regenerates empowerment within a Muslim and postcolonial context.

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This study, thus, pursues to bridge this research gap by operating a comparative analysis of twin sisters of Isma and Aneeka—where Isma reveals intellectual and social empowerment, while Aneeka shows political resistance and moral strength. Therefore, the study aims to enhance the understanding of Muslim women's sophisticated empowerment in postcolonial literature and emphasize Shamsie's criticize of both patriarchal repression and colonial impact.

3. Methodology

This study applies qualitative textual analysis, a method helpful for literary studies and feminist critique. The primary data source is Home Fire by Kamila Shamsie, while secondary data sources include scholarly various articles, books, and essays on postcolonial feminism, diaspora literature, and women's political influence.

The research follows a thematic strategy, highlighting motifs in the text related to:

1. Political empowerment and disempowerment of twin sisters, Isma and Aneeka.
2. Impact of family, society, and governmental power on women's political agency.
3. Comparative approaches to empowerment within postcolonial and patriarchal contexts.

3.1. Data were collected through Close Reading of the Novel

Data were encoded by recognizing textual examples of Patriarchal restraints, agency, defiance, obedience, Family duties, Diaspora identity, and Gendered political engagement, while comparative analysis was encoded with theories of postcolonial feminism and prior to Home Fire study. The postcolonial-feminist framework assisted the analysis, certifying that interpretation highlighted the interconnection of gender, social hierarchy, and historical background.

3.2. Theoretical Framework

This study applies Postcolonial Feminist Theory, which explores how women repression intersects with postcolonial identity, radicalization, diaspora, religion, and state authority in framing women's social and political influence. Postcolonial feminists plead that women in former colonies or diaspora communities experience political and social restraints separately from women of Western society, due to the collective impacts of patriarchy, cultural norms, and colonial outcomes. Employing fundamental contributions by Mohanty (1984) criticizes Western feminist generalizations and highlights that women's empowerment should be understood in local social and historical contexts—insights that highlight Isma's more attentive, context-bound political influence and Spivak's (1988) idea of the "subaltern woman" reveals how marginalized women are suppressed within authoritative and social

hierarchy, a perspective that assist interprets Aneeka's attempts to talk against state power. Furthermore, Narayan (1997) and Lewis & Mills (2003) reveal that family, society, and state authority act collectively to frame women's daily selection and possibilities for defiance. Through these perspectives, woman characters are interpreted not merely as 'women' but as socially and historically located subjects whose expertises are framed by colonial outcome, cultural norms, racial discrimination, and state monitoring. By employing this theory to Shamsie's Home Fire represents how postcolonial power relations, diaspora individuality, and patriarchal values explain the types of political empowerment and disempowerment

Suffered by twin sisters Isma and Aneeka. This theoretical strategy gives a subtle understanding of how women deal structural restraints in postcolonial communities.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Political Empowerment and Disempowerment of Isma

The elder sister, Isma shows a complex form of empowerment framed by familial obligation and societal values. After their parents' death, Isma gives up her personal desires to protect her twin sister Aneeka and handle familial obligations. Isma's empowerment is shown through:

- **Study and intellectual work**: She seeks higher studies while managing family duties, revealing strength within restrained conditions.
- **Emotional labor and negotiation**: She tackles clashes in the family and society, searching to balance harmony and making her own choices.
- **Attentive mediation of public space**: Contrasting Aneeka, Isma neglects to clash with state power, identifying the dangers created by the state's monitoring.

Though, Isma's empowerment is curbed by patriarchal and societal restraints, such as norms for women to classify family over personal desire, emphasizing the complex forms of disempowerment postcolonial feminist theory highlights.

Textual Example: When Isma Pasha delays her own ambitions to look guide for her sister Aneeka, she shows agency restrained by familial obligations, revealing Mohanty's (2003) assertion that women's empowerment often runs within constraining social expectations.

4.2 Political Empowerment and Disempowerment of Aneeka

Younger sister, Aneeka Pasha expresses simple and aggressive empowerment. She confronts state power and social expectations to manage her brother Parvaiz and gain freedom. Aneeka's political agency emerges through:

- **Public act and aggressive**: She directly involves with political and legal powers, risking imprisonment and social condemnation.

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- **Defiance to patriarchal power**: She rejects to obey with societal norms that demands lack of women agency
- **Sacrifice for political and familial achievements**: Unlike Isma, Aneeka categorizes justice and family fidelity over personal protection, expressing the bravery and risks connected with empowerment.

Additionally, Aneeka's empowerment takes high personal value, demonstrating how political agency of women n patriarchal and postcolonial systems is often restrained by social, cultural, and legal organizations.

Textual Example: Aneeka's denial to surrender to state dictates show Spivak's (1988) notion of the subaltern speaking, declaring agency in spite of narrative control

4.3 Home, Nation, and Intimacy

The concepts of home and nation operate as contested political spaces throughout the novel. Shamsie redefines "home" as both a physical and psychological construct—a site of belonging, exclusion, and identity formation. For Isma and Aneeka, home becomes a space shaped by loss and displacement, symbolizing the broader diaspora experience of Muslim immigrants in Britain. Isma's migration to the United States underscores the alienation that accompanies mobility. She finds herself torn between familial duty and personal ambition, belonging everywhere yet nowhere. Aneeka, on the other hand, remains emotionally rooted in London, seeing home not as geography but as love and moral loyalty. Her plea to the authorities to bring her brother's body "home" reflects her belief that dignity and belonging are inseparable (Shamsie, 2017, p. 268). Shamsie's work critiques the dominant cultural history, national identity, and belonging that emerged in post-Brexit Britain, where "home" is explained in exclusionary expressions. Through feminist postcolonial theory, especially Homi Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridize, she highlights this contention: Shamsie demonstrates the ways in which intersection of nationalism and gender are defining citizenship.

4.4 Comparative Analysis of Isma and Aneeka

By comparing the twin sisters highlighting the range of political agency of women:

- Isma's empowerment is complex, negotiated by obligations, attentive, and mediation. She demonstrates strength within constraints.
- Aneeka's empowerment is courageous, aggressive, and dangerous, confronting patriarchal and state power indirectly.

Collectively, they explain how women adopt distinct approaches of agency in postcolonial communities: one through meditation and understanding, the other through defiance and

radicalism. Both experiences emphasize that empowerment is circumstantially established and organized by structural restraints and personal decisions.

5. Conclusion

Shamsie's Home Fire represents a complex investigation of political empowerment women in postcolonial and patriarchal settings. Through twin Pasha sisters, Isma and Aneeka, Shamsie demonstrates diverse approaches to agency, from complex agreement to overt defiance. Family obligations, societal expectations, and state power intersect to both constrain and

facilitate empowerment, demonstrating the complex realities confronted by women in diaspora and postcolonial societies. By applying a postcolonial-feminist lens, this study highlights the interconnection of gender, politics, and postcolonial identity, indicating that empowerment is sophisticated, context-dependent, and interpersonal. The findings provide feminist literary scholarship by highlighting how modern literature shows the confronts and possibilities of political agency of women.

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