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melsasing2023@gmail.com

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VOL. 4, Number 2, 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Muslim English Literature
Muslim English Literature
Volume 4 Number 2 December 2025
Page 116-129
P-ISSN: 2961-7502
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Muslim Stereotypes, the "Other", and the Consequences in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*

[1]Jawad Akbar, [2]Mira Utami*
[1]Abdul Wali Khan University, Pakistan, [2]Institut Seni Indonesia Padangpanjang, Indonesia*
Email: jawadakbar997@gmail.com, koharami87@gmail.com*
***Corresponding Author:** Mira Utami

Abstract

This study examines the stereotypical portrayal of Muslims in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* as the "Other" within an Orientalist framework. Stereotyping is understood as a prejudiced, exaggerated, and often inaccurate set of beliefs attached to particular groups, while Orientalism refers to the Western tradition of depicting the East as inferior, backward, and threatening. The novel reflects these intersecting paradigms through its representation of Muslim characters particularly the Adil Pasha's family, and, more specifically the treatment on Parvaiz Pasha after his involvement with a militant organization. Despite his British citizenship, Parvaiz is denied burial in Britain, symbolizing his repositioning from citizen to outsider.

The textual analysis undertaken in this study, grounded in Allport's (1954) theory of stereotyping and Said's (1978) theory of Orientalism, reveals how Muslims are framed as inherently suspect, dangerous, or undeserving of equal rights. The research demonstrates that Shamsie's narrative exposes deeply embedded Western biases that continue to shape the experiences of Muslim communities in diasporic contexts. Ultimately, the study highlights how the novel challenges the dominant Orientalist discourse by foregrounding the human consequences of stereotyping, marginalization, and exclusion.

Keywords: *Muslim Representation, Orientalism, Otherness, Prejudice, Stereotyping.*

Introduction

Stereotyping refers to the fixed, oversimplified, and often negative assumptions attached to a particular religion, ethnicity, race, or social group. These assumptions are not grounded in evidence; rather, they rely on exaggerated generalizations that deny individuals and communities in their complexity and dignity. As a result, stereotyping frequently leads to discrimination, misrepresentation, and the erosion of basic rights.

Orientalism, as theorized by Edward Said (1978), complements this dynamic by constructing a binary opposition between the "Self" (the West) and the "Other" (the East). In this discourse, the West is positioned as rational, progressive, and superior, while the East is depicted as irrational, passive, inferior, or dangerous. This hierarchical representation has historically served as a justification for domination, exclusion, and political control. Both stereotyping and Orientalism therefore play powerful roles in shaping how certain groups particularly Muslims are perceived and treated.

In contemporary contexts, these frameworks remain highly relevant. They continue to inform media portrayals, political narratives, public opinion, and cultural discourse surrounding Muslim identities. The persistent association of Muslims with extremism, violence, and backwardness has produced a climate of suspicion that affects their everyday experiences, especially within Western societies.

Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* offers a compelling literary exploration of these themes. Through the story of the Pasha family, the novel exposes how stereotypes and Orientalist assumptions shape social interactions, state policies, and personal lives. The treatment of Parvaiz Pasha, in particular, illustrates how a British-born Muslim can be swiftly reclassified as an outsider when viewed through the lens of national security and cultural prejudice. By situating the novel within the theoretical frameworks of stereotyping and Orientalism, this study aims to illuminate the mechanisms through which the Pasha family and by extension, many Muslim communities are marginalized and constructed as "Other."This study is anchored in two key theoretical perspectives: Gordon W. Allport's (1954) theory of stereotyping and Edward Said's (1978) theory of Orientalism. Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive lens through which to examine the representation of Muslims and the construction of Parvaiz Pasha as "Other" in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*.

Allport defines stereotypes as exaggerated beliefs associated with a particular category, noting that their primary function is to rationalize attitudes and behavior toward the groups they target. Stereotypes may arise without substantial evidence and often persist despite contradictory information. Allport emphasizes that prejudice, though not always present, is frequently intertwined with stereotypes, shaping negative evaluations of individuals based on group membership. He illustrates how stereotypes can be reinforced through cultural transmission, collective memory, and social habit. For example, certain ethnic groups have been historically stereotyped as dishonest or incompetent based on overgeneralized interpretations of isolated traits or statistical differences. Such characterizations, even when presented as "positive" or "neutral," limit individual identity and contribute to discriminatory practices.

Applying Allport's theory to *Home Fire* enables an understanding of how Muslims in the novel are subjected to preconceived notions that frame them as dangerous, suspicious, or regressive—perceptions that profoundly shape their lived experiences in the Western diaspora.

Edward Said conceptualizes Orientalism as a political and intellectual system through which the West constructs a dichotomy between itself and the East. In this framework, the West ("Occident") is associated with modernity, rationality, and cultural superiority, while the East ("Orient") is characterized as backward, mystical, uncivilized, or threatening. This binary opposition has long been embedded in Western literature, scholarship, and political discourse. Said argues that Orientalism is not merely an academic discipline but a "style of thought" that reinforces Western dominance by producing authoritative knowledge about the East. Through this discourse, colonized peoples are dehumanized and essentialized, their identities reduced to simplified

Vol.4 No. 2, December 2025 DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mel.v4i2.48684

images that serve Western interests. The portrayal of the East as inferior helps justify intervention, control, and exclusion.

The concept of stereotyping was first introduced by Walter Lippmann in 1922, although scholarly interest in the phenomenon intensified throughout the twentieth century, particularly following Gordon Allport's seminal work The Nature of Prejudice (1954). Despite decades of research, stereotyping remains a pervasive social issue across the globe. Individuals continue to be judged on the basis of race, gender, religion, age, and other group markers, often resulting in discriminatory attitudes, distorted perceptions, and flawed decision-making.

Lippmann initially described stereotypes as "pictures in our heads" mental templates that people use to simplify social reality. These mental constructs are typically formed without adequate knowledge of the groups they target. Consequently, stereotypes tend to be exaggerated, uncritical, and frequently inaccurate. They shape how individuals perceive others and influence expectations before any real interaction occurs.

Although stereotypes can occasionally be positive for instance, the belief that Asians are disciplined students or hardworking employees: they are predominantly harmful. Whether positive or negative, stereotypes reduce individuals to oversimplified traits and deny them the complexity of their personal identities. Brink and Nel (2015) emphasize that stereotypes, even those framed positively, can limit opportunities and reinforce rigid social expectations.

Importantly, stereotyping is closely tied to prejudice. Allport (1954) argues that an exaggerated belief about a category often functions to justify attitudes of favoritism or hostility toward that group. Prejudice can intensify stereotypes, and stereotypes can rationalize prejudiced behavior, creating a self-reinforcing cycle. Stereotypes flourish particularly when individuals possess only superficial or second-hand knowledge of a community. In such cases, generalized assumptions replace nuanced understanding, leading to distorted perceptions and discriminatory conduct.

In essence, stereotyping is a cognitive shortcut that simplifies social complexity at the cost of accuracy, fairness, and human dignity. When applied to marginalized groups, it becomes a powerful tool of exclusion and inequality—one that shapes how societies view, to interact with, and judge the "Other."

Orientalism refers to the Western tradition of representing the East—particularly the Islamic world—through a lens of superiority, distortion, and cultural bias. Edward Said's groundbreaking work Orientalism (1978) argues that these representations form a system of knowledge through which the West constructs itself as rational, progressive, and authoritative, while depicting the East as irrational, static, exotic, or dangerous. This hierarchical worldview not only shapes academic and literary discourse but also legitimizes political domination, colonial expansion, and cultural control.

Said maintains that the boundary between the Occident (the West) and the Orient (the East) is not natural but constructed—shaped by history, power, and ideology rather than geography. European scholars, travellers, writers, and colonial administrators such as Lane, Massignon, Lyall, Conrad, and Kipling contributed to this tradition by producing

Vol.4 No. 2, December 2025 DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mel.v4i2.48684

knowledge that portrayed Eastern societies as inferior or incomplete versions of Western civilization. These portrayals framed the East as something to be studied, governed, corrected, or feared.

In this binary worldview, the West becomes the "Self": enlightened, modern, scientific, and morally superior. The East becomes the "Other": backward, emotional, passive, uncivilized, or threatening. This dichotomy is central to postcolonial theory, which examines how such constructions justify dominance and shape identity formation. According to Moosavinia et al. (2011), Orientalism produces a rigid opposition in which the Orient is everything the West claims not to be—exotic, irrational, unreliable, dangerous, or in need of Western intervention.

Said highlights that Orientalism is far more than a set of misconceptions; it is a political vision of reality. By presenting the West as "us" and the East as "them," Orientalist discourse enables the West to assume authority over Eastern cultures, interpret them through its own biases, and define their worth. In this framework, colonized people are often dehumanized, reduced to simplified images, and denied agency.

The consequences of such representations endure well into the contemporary period. They continue to influence Western media, scholarship, policy-making, and public opinion, particularly regarding Muslim-majority societies. Orientalism thus remains a powerful cultural and ideological force—one that constructs the East as inherently inferior while affirming Western superiority and entitlement.

Plous and Williams (1995) discuss how racial stereotyping was deeply rooted in eighteenth and nineteenth-century America and Europe, where Black individuals were depicted as physically, psychologically, and culturally inferior. Such perceptions were institutionalized in authoritative texts, including the ninth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, which described the "Negro" race as occupying "the lowest position of the evolutionary scale" (p. 795). Physical features such as large arms, flat noses, thicker skulls, and fuller lips were interpreted as evidence of primitiveness. Even Black women were stereotyped as experiencing less pain in childbirth—an assumption used to justify discriminatory treatment. These racial constructions reveal how stereotypes were weaponized to rationalize unequal systems of power. However, the stereotyping of Asians goes way beyond that, in which the term "Saracen" was widely used by medieval European for non-white people particularly, the Arab-Muslims in the age of Crusade wars.

Davine (1989) further emphasizes that stereotypes and prejudice are inseparable in social psychology. He argues that stereotypes function as cognitive shortcuts shaped by inherited social norms and cultural traditions. Because they are embedded within social heritage, stereotypes persist and often generate prejudice. Once a stereotype is activated, it becomes difficult to separate individuals from the negative assumptions attached to their group, reinforcing cycles of bias.

Matusitz (2012) expands this argument by explaining that stereotyping begins when societies divide people into groups and attach discriminatory labels to them. These labels then influence expectations, perceptions, and interactions. He provides

Vol.4 No. 2, December 2025 DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mel.v4i2.48684

several examples from the American context: Hispanics are often stereotyped as uneducated or unable to speak English; Asians are portrayed as mysterious or emotionally distant; African Americans are labeled as unintelligent or suited only for menial work; and Americans themselves are described as materialistic and loud. According to Matusitz, stereotypes are remarkably resistant to change, especially when they target marginalized or less powerful groups. Such rigid beliefs have historically positioned Arabs as violent or unemployed and Mediterranean communities—such as Greeks and Turks—as idle or aggressive.

Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick (2018) argue that stereotypes vary widely across groups and cannot be understood as a single category. For example, older adults are often stereotyped as incompetent, whereas Asians may be admired for exceptional competence but simultaneously perceived as socially distant or threatening. Similarly, housewives may be characterized as warm and nurturing, while wealthy individuals are frequently viewed as arrogant or cold. Drawing on Allport (1954), the authors reaffirm that negative stereotypes play a crucial role in shaping prejudice, defined as a hostile attitude toward an out-group. Their research demonstrates that stereotypes often target both in-groups and out-groups and can produce contradictory judgments—such as Jews being viewed as competent but not warm, or African Americans as warm but incompetent.

Yosef (2013) highlights how Islam is frequently portrayed by Western intellectuals, politicians, and media figures as a rigid, backward, or unimaginative religion. Muslims are stereotyped as violent, intolerant, and resistant to progress. Western narratives often equate Islam with "political Islam," fundamentalism, or extremism—associations reinforced by references to groups such as Islamic Jihad, Hamas, or Hezbollah. These portrayals depict Muslims as threats to Western values and political stability. As Yosef notes, this perception has led to the popularization of terms such as "green threat," a metaphorical label that frames Islam as an ideological and civilizational danger.

Al-Shamiri (2016) explains that Said's theory of Orientalism centers on the West's longstanding representation of the East as inferior and subordinate. Through deeply ingrained stereotypes, the East is depicted as weak, irrational, deceitful, inactive, or emotionally driven, while the West is portrayed as strong, rational, trustworthy, progressive, and active. This system of binary oppositions appears across literature, journalism, religious scholarship, and political discourse. According to Al-Shamiri, Orientalism shaped the Western depiction of Islam as a corrupt imitation of Christianity and fueled the belief that Islam is inherently dangerous or fraudulent. Before Said's intervention, the concepts of "self" and "other" had not been theorized with such clarity; Orientalism brought these ideas into academic and political consciousness.

Hande (2017) adds that Orientalism reinforces a series of stereotypical representations that elevate the West as advanced, intelligent, and masculine, while casting the East as retrogressive, irrational, and effeminate. This ideological structure has historically supported imperialism and colonial expansion. Drawing on Said's broader definition, Hande argues that Orientalism is not only a scholarly field but also a "style of thought" that legitimizes the West's authority over the East by producing and

Vol.4 No. 2, December 2025 DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mel.v4i2.48684

circulating knowledge about it. In this sense, Orientalism becomes a mechanism for reshaping, controlling, and subordinating Eastern cultures.

Kerboua (2016) notes that Orientalism has evolved over time, particularly after the events of 9/11, which giving rise to what he terms "Neo-Orientalism." This form retains the basic structure of traditional Orientalism while adopting a more overtly political and security-driven approach toward Islam and the Muslim world. Neo-Orientalism positions Islam as an empirical threat to Western cultural and political systems. Manifestations of this discourse include Islamophobia and heightened suspicion toward Muslim diaspora communities. Kerboua argues that pro-Israel lobbies and neo-conservative groups in the West have played a major role in shaping this contemporary Orientalist narrative.

V.A.P. (2016) asserts that Orientalism functions as an institutional framework through which Western writers, politicians, and philosophers study and dominate the East. He emphasizes that Orientalist stereotypes extend beyond racial and cultural representations to include gendered assumptions as well. Arabs are often depicted as violent, Indians as indolent, and Chinese as secretive. Additionally, Orientalist discourse frequently eroticizes or objectifies Eastern women, portraying them as exotic, submissive, or overtly sexual. For example, in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the character Marlow describes an Eastern woman in hypersexualized and dehumanizing terms—an embodiment of how Western literature has historically positioned the East as both alluring and inferior.

Shadid and van Koningsveld (2012) argue that Western suspicion toward Muslims is neither new nor accidental. Since the 1980s, political leaders, NATO officials, and influential public figures have repeatedly framed Muslims as potential enemies of Western civilization. Despite the lack of evidence linking Muslim communities to widespread aggression in the West, Muslims continue to be blamed for acts of terrorism and treated as cultural outsiders. The justification often given is that Islamic cultural practices—such as veiling, polygamy, or circumcision are incompatible with Western values.

Halliday (1995) characterizes this hostility as a Western "delusion," noting that Islamic countries lack the unity, military capacity, or economic power to pose any real threat to the West. He argues that Western enmity toward Muslims is shaped less by geopolitical realities and more by xenophobia and racism, which he terms "anti-Islamism." This rising hostility, he claims, has contributed significantly to anti-immigrant sentiment in Western Europe.

Method

The presented study adopts a qualitative research paradigm, consistent with its aim of exploring how stereotypes and Orientalist constructs operate within *Home Fire.* Because the research questions focus on interpretation, meaning-making, and the nuanced representation of characters, a qualitative approach provides the most suitable framework. This paradigm enables the researcher to examine textual details, thematic patterns, and ideological underpinnings in depth. Guided by the theoretical lenses of

Vol.4 No. 2, December 2025 DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mel.v4i2.48684

stereotyping (Allport, 1954) and Orientalism (Said, 1978), the qualitative paradigm ensures that the analysis remains grounded in textual evidence while also engaging broader sociocultural contexts. Overall, this approach provides a coherent structure for addressing the research questions and supports a comprehensive exploration of the novel's representation of Muslim identities and their sociopolitical implications.

The present research examines the Orientalist and stereotypical elements depicted in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*, focusing particularly on the characterization of Parvaiz Pasha and the broader representation of Muslims. To achieve this objective, the study employs a qualitative research design rooted in interpretive analysis. This design allows the researcher to explore the narrative's thematic layers, ideological implications, and character constructions in a nuanced and contextually grounded manner. Through this approach, the researcher is able to analyze how Shamsie embeds ideas related to stereotyping, prejudice, and Orientalism within her portrayal of Muslim characters and their experiences. By situating these findings within established theoretical frameworks, the research design ensures a systematic and coherent exploration of the novel's social and political meanings.

This study employs a qualitative mode of data collection, consistent with its interpretive and analytical aims. The primary source of data in *Home Fire* serves as the core material for examining the portrayal of stereotyping, Orientalism, and Otherness. The secondary sources consist of scholarly books, journal articles, and previous research related to stereotyping, Orientalism, Muslim representation, and postcolonial discourse. These sources help contextualize the textual analysis and provide theoretical grounding. The secondary literature also functions as supporting evidence that reinforces or challenges the interpretations drawn from the primary text.

The data analysis for this study is grounded in qualitative interpretive methods. The primary text, *Home Fire,* serves as the central source from which themes and patterns related to Orientalism, stereotyping, and the construction of "Otherness" are extracted. The analysis involves close reading, thematic identification, and contextual interpretation of key passages, character interactions, and narrative developments.

Drawing on Said's (1978) theory of Orientalism and Allport's (1954) framework of stereotyping, the study interprets how the novel constructs ideological meanings and reflects broader sociopolitical attitudes toward Muslims. Through this lens, particular attention is given to the portrayal of Parvaiz Pasha, whose character becomes a site for examining Western notions of suspicion, exclusion, and cultural hierarchy.

The interpretive process also incorporates insights from secondary sources, which help situate the novel within wider academic debates on Muslim representation and postcolonial identity. By triangulating textual evidence with scholarly perspectives, the analysis aims to produce a coherent and well-supported understanding of how *Home Fire* critiques the biases and injustices faced by Muslim communities.

In *Home Fire*, Said's theoretical insights are vital for analyzing how Western political institutions and media narratives position characters like Parvaiz Pasha as perpetual outsiders, regardless of citizenship or personal history. The distinction between "us" and "them" central to Orientalist ideology becomes visible in the state's

Vol.4 No. 2, December 2025 DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mel.v4i2.48684

refusal to recognize Parvaiz's belonging and in the public rhetoric that labels him a threat even after his death.

Results and Discussions

Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* presents a layered and incisive critique of the stereotypes and Orientalist assumptions directed at Muslims, particularly those who are living in Western societies. Through the experiences of the Pasha family, the novel illustrates how institutional suspicion, cultural prejudice, and racial profiling shape the everyday lives of Muslim individuals. This section analyzes key episodes in the novel to demonstrate how Shamsie exposes Western constructions of Muslims as suspicious, inferior, or "Other."

Stereotyping of Muslims and the Experience of Surveillance

From the opening pages, the novel foregrounded the scrutiny directed at Muslim bodies in Western diaspora. When Isma traveled from London to America, she anticipated interrogation not because of her actions but because of her Muslim identity. Her preparation—removing items such as the Quran, family photographs, and academic books—reveals the extent to which Muslims must regulate their self-presentation to avoid suspicion, because they would be considered conservative and ultimately labeled as terrorists. Isma did not bring any of the mentioned things but still she was escorted to the interrogation room because she was Muslim by her identity and appearance.

> "She had made sure not to pack anything that would invite comment or questions-no Quran, no family pictures, no books on her areas of academic interest-but even so, the officer took hold of every item of Isma's clothing and ran it between her thumbs and fingers, not so much searching for hidden pockets as judging the quality of the material." (Shamsie, 2017, p.3)

Despite her precautions, she was still singled out and subjected to humiliation. This scene reflects Allport's notion that stereotypes persist regardless of individual behavior: Isma was presumed suspicious solely because she is Muslim.

Her interrogation continued for two hours, during which she is questioned about issues ranging from sectarian divisions to homosexuality, foreign policy, and terrorism—topics that reflect stereotypical Western assumptions about Muslims:

> "He wanted to know her thoughts on Shias, homosexuals, the queen, democracy, the great British Bake off, the invasion of Iraq, Israel, suicide bombers, dating websites." (p. 5)

This interaction highlighted how Muslim identity was perceived as a potential threat, requiring explanation and justification. Moreover, a Muslim can't exercise his religious duties freely in western world by seeing the difficulties they face to even bring the holy scripture Qur'an everywhere.

Shamsie also highlighted the intensified surveillance faced by Muslim families from the State's institutions. Isma's siblings, Aneeka and Parvaiz, were monitored by

Vol.4 No. 2, December 2025 DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mel.v4i2.48684

MI5 after their father's death, illustrating how Muslim families are often viewed through a lens of collective suspicion.

This connects to Allport's claim that stereotypes escalate prejudice by justifying discriminatory practices toward entire groups. Muslims are not only stereotyped individually but collectively marked as potential threats.

> "Do you say, why didn't you mention that among the things this country will let you achieve if you're Muslim is torture, rendition, detention without trial, airport interrogations, spies in your mosques. Teachers reporting your children to the authorities for wanting a world without British injustice?" (p. 90).

This passage reflects the disproportionate policing of Muslim thought, identity, and speech in Western contexts. Muslim must faced these hardships because they have been seen with suspicion. Muslims in particular had to go through these injustice and prejudiced behavior. Muslims couldn't exercise their full freedom of thought, status, religion, education, expression but instead the punishment for a slight mistake.

Cultural Assimilation and the Erasure of Muslim Identity

Shamsie also explored how Muslim characters navigate pressures to assimilate by altering or concealing their cultural and religious identities. Eamonn's father changed the spelling of his son's name from Ayman to Eamonn to appear more integrated:

"An Irish spelling to disguise a Muslim name-Ayman became Eamonn so that people would know the father had integrated." (p. 16). This act demonstrates how Western societies often expect Muslims to downplay or erase the aspects of their heritage to gain acceptance.

Muslim physical and religious markers such as beards, hijabs, and traditional clothing are repeatedly framed as signs of extremism or backwardness. Shamsie illustrated this through social commentary on turbans, veils, and traditional dress, especially after 9/11, when such expressions became associated with terrorism. Women who wear hijab are stereotyped as oppressed or unwilling to engage with men, while bearded Muslim men are viewed as dangerous, as shown in *"What would you have done if I'd walked in with a full beard?"* (p. 83). The question shows the restriction of Muslims in western diaspora who are not expected to grow beard because it is stereotyped as a sign of terrorist's looks. It means Muslims can't exercise their religious injunctions freely, being hated and shunned, thus Muslims are unwillingly cut off their beard.

Moreover, in *"Assuming women who wore turban as 'a Muslims thing' couldn't possibly shake hands with men"* (p.22) is shown of how the values of Muslim women being overlooked. Such perceptions align with Orientalist portrayals of Islamic practices which is regraded as incompatible with modern Western values, not only in form of life values and morality, but also a mere appearances. Another quotation shows, *"I suspect she can be persuaded out of the hijab in time. Get your sister to take her off to the hair salon next time she comes to visit."* (p. 107). As a Muslim thing, hijab worn by Muslim women in Europe is considered improper. They have banned the hijab for attaching

Vol.4 No. 2, December 2025 DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mel.v4i2.48684

different stereotypes with it. Women are not allowed to wear hijab in the public places and they are forced to remove it.

In "Home secretaries talking about people setting themselves apart in the way they dress" (p. 90) can be seen that those people who are having different clothing from the rest of the White are detached. The state's secretary gave open announcement against the diasporic, especially Muslim dress which had negative connotations after the 9/11, adhered Muslims with extremism and terrorism.

Media and Political Reinforcement of Anti-Muslim Stereotypes

The novel also emphasizes how politicians and media outlets reinforce harmful stereotypes about Muslims. Karamat Lone—himself of Muslim heritage—gains public admiration by distancing himself from Muslim communities and embracing rhetoric that disparages Islamic culture.

> "All because he expressed a completely enlightened preference for the conventions of a church over those of a mosque, and spoke of the need for British Muslims to lift themselves out of the dark Ages if they wanted the rest of the nation to treat them with respect" (p.59).

These lines show Karamat Lone approach toward Muslims and Islam. He prefers Christian traditions over Islamic. He believes that Muslims are still living in dark ages thus they must out from the darkness and being enlightened to be respected. It reflects the inner emotions of West that Islam is not a religion of peace. It shows the westerns approach towards Muslims which is totally based on racism, hatred, prejudiced and stereotype.

Karamat is celebrated by British for going against Muslim, as in "The tabloid that had previously attacked him championed him as Lone Crusader taking on the backwardness of Muslims" (p. 35), He is a Muslim but he distances himself from being called a Muslim and try his best to convert the customs, tradition, and religion of every British Muslim to European context because he considers those three domains of Muslims as a setback of modern humanity. It is symbolizing the Western preference for Muslims who reject their own cultural roots to gain social mobility, as well as shows the tendency of the West to support and give respect to those who are against Muslims and challenges their values in every way of life. Shamsie suggests that political acceptance is often conditional on displaying loyalty to Western norms and criticizing one's own community.

Western hostility toward Muslim cultural practices is further evident when a character compares Islam to a disease, as shown in "Cancer or Islam—which is the greater affliction?" (p. 21). Cancer which is one of the fatalistic diseases has been compared with Islam. This extreme statement underscores how deeply ingrained Islamophobia can be and shows that the outlook on Islam in western countries is very arduous. Islam is viewed as a religion of violence and extremists, and it's echoing Said's argument that Orientalism constructs Islam as dangerous or uncivilized.

Vol.4 No. 2, December 2025 DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mel.v4i2.48684

In the eye of the West, Muslims are considered brainwashed, conservative and terrorists who would disperse terrorism. However, the brainwash act isn't always an inside job. It's shown in quotation below:

> "…but in Farooq's company, he came to see there was such a thing as 'an emasculated version of Islam, bankrolled in mosques by the British government which wants to keep us all compliant', and there was more than a little satisfaction in knowing this." (p.131)

Muslims can't exercise their religion in British freely, and face prejudice regarding the assumption as a violent religion. The State weakens Muslims' faith by adopting strategies, for example by funding mosques. As Muslims are considered as a threat to western society so Muslims are forced and sometimes deceived to make changes in their religion according to the wishes of the West, thus Islam and Muslim are weakened.

Depiction of the Characters as "Other" and Institutional Discrimination

Parvaiz Pasha's storyline is central to the novel's critique of Orientalism. Though groomed and manipulated by Farooq, Parvaiz only participated indirectly in ISIS activities. He expressed remorse for his actions and sought the chance to return home, as shown in *"He knows he was wrong. He was brainwashed but now he understands, and he wants to come back. He didn't take part in the fighting, never actively recruited anyone"*. (p. 108). However, Western institutions refused to see the truth. Instead, they classified him as a terrorist and revoked his citizenship, illustrating Said's contention that the West defines the East through rigid, essentializing categories.

> "A news report states: "A terror attack has not been ruled out. The man in the white SUV who shot Pasha has not been identified, but security analysts suggest he could have belonged to a rival jihadi group" (p.188)

In the story, Parvaiz was killed on his way to approach consulate office. He was in need to be secured and to get a new passport, but the government denied to have killed him and created a plot that he might have been killed by the rival jihadi group. The quotation vividly shows that every Muslim is considered as attached to a jihad group in which regarded as a terrorism. Even when the evidence contradicts the narrative, such as the Istanbul police confirming that Parvaiz was unarmed as seen in, *"The dead man was not carrying any weapon."* (p. 197), British officials persist in framing him as a threat. This institutional narrative paints Parvaiz as dangerous even in death.

Furthermore, a diasporic has to struggle and fight for getting his rights. Aneeka tried her best to get her brother's corpse but didn't get accepted because the British government refused to accept Parvaiz as their citizen, as seen in *"the very word 'repatriation', which is what the girl wanted for her brother's corpse"* (p.230-231). The denial of Parvaiz's burial in Britain offers the starkest example of Orientalist exclusion. Although born and raised in the UK and holding dual nationality, he was stripped of citizenship after death:

> "And Parvaiz Pasha was a dual national? That's correct. Of Britain and Pakistan. Practically speaking, does this have any consequences now that he is dead? His body will be

Vol.4 No. 2, December 2025 DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mel.v4i2.48684

> repatriated to his home nation Pakistan. He won't be buried here? No. we will not let those who turn against the soil of Britain in their lifetime sully very soil in death" (p.188)

Here, the state positioned itself as morally superior, casted Parvaiz as permanently foreign. It reflects Said's assertion that the West maintains power by determining who belongs and who does not. Even Aneeka's desperate attempts to reclaim her brother's rights are dismissed. A government official declares:

> "If there is an Almighty and He sends his angel Jibreel to lift up your brother-and your sister-in his arms and fly them back to London on his wings of fire, I will not let him enter" (p.238)

This statement reveals the absolute authority the state assumes over Muslim bodies, even against moral or religious appeals.

The narrative also contrasts the care shown for British citizens like Eamonn—whose status protects him from scrutiny—with the disregard shown toward Parvaiz, as shown in *"The anonymous cabinet member reflected on the irreversible damage to the home secretary if his son has been attending the funeral of a terrorist"* (p.247). Muslim identity is thus associated with danger, whereas Western identity is associated with innocence and legitimacy. It shows the total neglect of a government to its citizen which is not recognized as one because of the prejudice.

Beside the act of othering, structural discriminations also happened to Muslim characters. The question is around registry and identification documents, in this case is visa. Despite being British citizens, Isma and her siblings fear that their visas will be denied simply because they are Muslim, as shown in quotation below:

> "America", he said. The word felt strange in his mouth. "They really gave you the visa?"
> "I know, I didn't think they would either." (p. 118).

Such fear demonstrated how Muslims internalize external narratives of exclusion and scrutiny. As in the case of Pasha's family, they had been living since childhood in London but they were still afraid to get American visa because of the difficulties for Muslims to obtain the document.

The similar issue on Muslim character in the novel also appear in, "..if he has a UK visa, find a reason to cancel it" (p.221), which shown the State's indifference toward Muslim.

Muslims are considered brainwashed, conservative and terrorists who would disperse terrorism. However, the brainwash act isn't always an inside job. It's shown in quotation below:

> "…but in Farooq's company, he came to see there was such a thing as 'an emasculated version of Islam, bankrolled in mosques by the British government which wants to keep us all compliant', and there was more than a little satisfaction in knowing this." (p.131)

Muslims can't exercise their religion in British freely, and face prejudice regarding the assumption as a violent religion. The State weakens Muslims' faith by adopting

Vol.4 No. 2, December 2025 DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mel.v4i2.48684

strategies, for example by funding mosques. As Muslims are considered as a threat to western society so Muslims are forced and sometimes deceived to make changes in their religion according to the wishes of the West, thus Islam and Muslim are weakened.

Conclusion

The analysis of *Home Fire* demonstrates that Muslims in Western contexts frequently become targets of suspicion, discrimination, and structural bias due to deeply embedded stereotypes and Orientalist assumptions. Throughout the novel, Shamsie illustrates how cultural markers such as hijab, beards, religious texts, and traditional clothing are coded as signs of extremism or backwardness. These stereotypes shape how Muslim characters are treated by institutions, the media, and political authorities.

The Pasha family's experiences reveal the far-reaching consequences of such prejudice. Isma endures demeaning interrogation at the airport simply because she is a Muslim woman; Aneeka lives under constant surveillance and must fight for basic rights on behalf of her brother; and Parvaiz becomes the ultimate victim of institutionalized Othering. Although manipulated into joining a militant media unit, he neither commits violence nor poses a proven threat. Yet he is denied the possibility of redemption, stripped of citizenship, and refused burial in the country of his birth. His death and forced repatriation symbolize how the state categorically excludes Muslims from full belonging.

The novel also critiques figures like Karamat Lone, who distance themselves from their own cultural and religious communities in order to gain acceptance in Western political spheres. His rhetoric reinforces the notion that Muslims must abandon their traditions and identities to be seen as civilized or modern. This internalization of Orientalist discourse underscores the pervasive pressure placed on Muslim individuals to conform to Western expectations.

Ultimately, the treatment of Parvaiz Pasha exemplifies the novel's central argument: that Western societies often define Muslims as irrevocably "Other," regardless of citizenship, loyalty, or individual circumstances. Through textual analysis and the application of Allport's stereotyping theory and Said's Orientalism, this study shows how *Home Fire* exposes the injustices produced by prejudice and cultural bias. Shamsie's narrative challenges readers to confront the human cost of these assumptions and to reconsider the moral implications of excluding entire communities based on fear, generalization, and political convenience.

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Universitas Islam Negeri
SYARIF HIDAYATULLAH JAKARTA

Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora
UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta
Jl. Tarumanegara, Pisangan, Kec. Ciputat Timur,
Kota Tangerang Selatan, Banten 15419, Indonesia