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Troubling Identity, Citizenship, and Belonging in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*: Socio-political Discourse of Characters Trapped in Familial and Social Pressure

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fatibrahim358@gmail.com**Abstract**

This study explores the intricate themes of identity, belonging, and citizenship within the context of the contemporary world. Shamsie's novel, inspired by Sophocles' Antigone, centers on a British Muslim family navigating their cultural heritage and personal struggles against societal pressures in a post-9/11 Britain. The research delves into the experiences of the Pasha family and the Lones, examining how personal and political identities collide, producing moral dilemmas. By drawing on theoretical frameworks such as Francis Fukuyama's concept of Creedal National Identity, the study analyzes the complex ways in which characters like Isma, Aneeka, Parvaiz, and Karamat grapple with dual identities, divided loyalties, and societal expectations. Themes of radicalization, Islamophobia, and the challenges of multiculturalism are critically examined to understand how cultural, religious, and national expectations shape the experiences of diaspora communities. The research highlights how Home Fire offers a multifaceted commentary on identity politics and the struggles faced by minorities in reconciling conflicting identities, bringing to light the emotional and psychological dimensions of belonging and alienation in contemporary societies.

Keywords: Identity politics, Diaspora communities, British Muslims, National identity, Creedal national identity, Francis Fukuyama, Belonging and Multiculturalism, Radicalization,

Introduction

Identity Politics highlights how aspects like race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and nationality shape political beliefs, and social affiliations. In the context of Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*, these aspects become crucial as the characters navigate post 9-11 Islamophobia, state suspicion, and familial responsibilities. The political space uses identity as its main focus to address experiences of marginalized communities in their pursuit of social and political justice. Identity politics creates divided social dynamics that sometimes set groups opposed to one another in conflicts for recognition and identity group conformity expectations. This leads to challenging political interactions when strong emotions and group divisions appear. Political comprehension of

identity enables the resolution of issues involving social admission along with justice standards in present-day society.

Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* sketches the intricate experience of two British-Pakistani families the Lones and Pashas that become caught up in the twisted dynamics of identity politics, belonging, and citizenship in the context of national security, extremism, and the Muslim minorities' struggles in the wake of ISIS in the Middle East. The Lones represent the British identity led by Karamat Lone a non-practicing Muslim politician who values integration in British society over his faith. The Pashas, on the other hand, are conservatives, practicing Muslims with a history of Jihadi involvement.

The present study explores the complexities of identity politics, citizenship, and belonging in *Home Fire*, and analyzes instances like Karamat switching from a Muslim identity to a British one for political power and recognition. Similarly, the Pasha's family experiences with citizenship, immigration laws, and ISIS. Likewise, Pervaiz renounces his British nationality to join Jihad. Further, despite being born and bred there the Pasha family's lack of belonging to British society, and Aneeka's yearning for community, which she will embrace illustrates human needs for acceptance and recognition. These instances are pivotal in delineating complexities of identity, citizenship, and belonging within this narrative explaining characters' reactions shored up by societal canons.

Problem Statement

This study examines how identity politics functions in *Home Fire* by focusing on family, citizenship, and belonging, and how these dynamics impact the characters' sense of self in their social interactions. In Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*, the struggles and experiences of British-Pakistani characters in the West have been explored, particularly in the context of Post 9/11 and the rise of Islamophobia. However, the ways in which societal pressures, political realities, and familial expectations shape the lives and perceptions of Muslims in the Diaspora remain unclear.

Research Question

How do the characters shape their perceptions of identity, belonging, and citizenship in British society?

Research Objectives

To analyze the socio-political factors that influence the characters' perception of identity, citizenship, and belonging in the face of societal pressures, familial expectations, and political realities.

Research Methodology

This study will adopt a qualitative approach to analyze the novel through the lens of Fukuyama's framework of identity politics. The researcher will closely read the text and identify passages that illustrate aspects of identity politics, belonging, and citizenship to understand the multiple challenges diaspora communities face in the modern world, emphasizing the need for empathy and concern regarding these issues. A thematic analysis approach will be used to analyze the text, outlining common themes and patterns.

Kamila Shamsie's novel *Home Fire* will be used as a primary source of data collection. The researcher will also make use of secondary sources to give background on Fukuyama's theory regarding identity politics and its extension in the complexities surrounding diasporic identities in a period characterized by globalization and cultural pluralism.

Literature Review

Debanji explores how Shamsie's novel critiques the concept of a clash of civilizations. Ahmed demonstrates how the narrative humanizes Muslim characters and defies stereotypes through themes of dignity and recognition. His analysis emphasizes the way *Home Fire* challenges reductive depictions of Muslim identities, offering a counter-narrative that resists the portrayal of civilizations in conflict. Ahmed argues that Shamsie's characters embody the struggles of marginalized communities striving for acceptance and understanding in a polarized world (88-302).

Akash Joshi and Surekha Patil's conference paper examines Kamila Shamsie's novels *Home Fire* and *Burnt Shadows* through a postcolonial perspective focusing on themes like identity crisis, politics, assimilation, and hybridity. Identity crisis can be seen in the characters' struggle to find their place in cultural and personal identities. Another theme is politics dragging the characters into bigger political issues and power struggles. Both of these novels focus on characters whose father's terrorism continues to victimize them even after his crime. Another problem is how characters navigate foreign lands and societies in this context: assimilation. Moreover, the paper analyzes the idea of hybrid, characters struggle with multilayered, cultural identities reflecting the cultural hybridity of postcolonial societies. In representing these cross-cultural encounters, Shamsie's novels present a multilayered representation of postcolonial identities that underscores intricate ways individuals are connected to their culture abroad and in their homeland (8912-8915).

The familial relationships in *Home Fire* are intricately tied to Fukuyama's concept of thymos, which refers to the demand for dignity and recognition. In their analysis, Rivaldy, P.M.R, et al. explore how the Pasha siblings—Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz—embody the tension between personal identity and the collective expectations imposed by societal norms. According to Ahmed, their struggles are not just individual but reflect a broader societal issue where individuals must navigate the conflict between maintaining personal autonomy and meeting the often rigid expectations of the communities and societies they are a part of. The Pasha family's internal dynamics offer a lens through which we can examine the challenges of growing up in a multicultural society, where cultural, religious, and national identities intersect in complex ways. The siblings' varied responses to their family's expectations—Isma's desire to assimilate, Parvaiz's search for a radicalized sense of belonging, and Aneeka's defiance—illustrate the complex negotiations involved in forming an identity in a world that often imposes a narrow view of who one should be based on ethnicity, religion, and national origin. Their study further emphasize how Shamsie portrays family as both a source of support and conflict, capturing the complexity of identity formation in a multicultural society. Family, in this context, is not merely a place of unconditional love and care but also a site of intense struggle. For Parvaiz, the family's

expectations become a burden that he seeks to escape, as he feels trapped between his familial ties and the allure of an external identity offered by extremist ideologies. For Aneeka, her familial loyalty is deeply intertwined with her own sense of dignity, and her fight to reclaim her brother's body becomes a battle for both personal and familial recognition. Meanwhile, Isma's role as the eldest sibling and caretaker is complicated by her desire to balance personal autonomy with her responsibilities towards her family. These emotional and psychological struggles illustrate the power dynamics within families, where the demand for dignity and recognition is often shaped by both familial loyalty and societal pressures. This analysis of these relationships underscores how the Pasha siblings' lives are marked by the tension between honoring familial obligations and asserting individual identity in the face of external forces—forces that often limit their opportunities for self-realization and belonging. Through this lens, *Home Fire* becomes not only a story about the Pasha family but also a reflection on the broader struggles of individuals living in multicultural societies, where the pursuit of dignity and recognition is constantly at odds with the collective expectations of society.(27-38).

In his article, Naomi examines how the marginalized communities face a world shaped by the politics of fear and exclusion. This analysis highlights the ways in which Shamsie critiques systemic biases that dehumanize and alienate individuals based on their cultural or religious identities. He discusses the emotional and psychological toll that surveillance, discrimination, and political scapegoating have on the characters in *Home Fire*, illustrating how the demand for dignity and recognition becomes a central driver of their actions. He contends that the novel sheds light on the failures of liberal democracies to uphold their ideals of equality and justice, particularly for those in the Muslim diaspora. By connecting these themes to Fukuyama's framework, he emphasizes the novel's relevance in exposing the deep-rooted structural inequities that shape contemporary identity politics. This study underscores *Home Fire* as a significant contribution to post-9/11 literature, offering a powerful critique of the sociopolitical dynamics that marginalize entire communities (240-263).

Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* explores the theme of identity and belonging within the context of contemporary British Muslim life. Shamsie poignantly examines the complexity of personal identity, especially in the aftermath of 9/11, as characters navigate the tension between familial loyalty, religious beliefs, and national loyalty. The novel focuses on Isma, the eldest daughter of an immigrant family, who is forced to choose between her duties to her family and her own personal aspirations. Claire Chambers and Arundhati Roy suggest, *Home Fire* reflects the struggles of Muslim diasporas, who often find themselves torn between competing demands from their heritage and society's expectations (34-37).

In *Home Fire*, Kamila Shamsie draws inspiration from the classical Greek tragedy *Antigone*, reimagining its themes of fate, duty, and defiance within a contemporary setting. Nesia, Al Nindita et al. Argue that Shamsie's novel functions as a modern retelling of the ancient myth, with characters such as Isma, Parvaiz, and Aneeka paralleling the figures of Antigone, Polynices, and Ismene. The tension between family loyalty and state power in *Home Fire* mirrors the central conflict in *Antigone*, but Shamsie updates it by addressing modern political issues like

radicalization, immigration, and Islamophobia. They emphasize how *Home Fire* reflects the contemporary global political climate, particularly in the aftermath of events like 9/11, showcasing how identity and allegiance to both family and state are shaped by these societal pressures.

The novel's setting allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the classical themes, as the characters' struggles are not just about defying state authority but also about navigating complex cultural and political landscapes. They highlight that Shamsie's reinterpretation of *Antigone* addresses modern issues such as terrorism and national identity, making it particularly relevant to contemporary readers. The characters in *Home Fire* are caught between multiple, often conflicting identities, not just challenging state power, but also grappling with their place in a society that may never fully accept them. Through this reimagining, Shamsie underscores the timelessness of the themes of loyalty, defiance, and identity, while emphasizing the ongoing relevance of these themes in today's divided world. (14-21).

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND THE INTERPLAY OF CITIZENSHIP, BELONGING AND CONFLICT IN *HOME FIRE*

The novel portrays the main characters' elaborating on how their identities are constructed, and challenged throughout the narrative. These characters born in the British-Pakistani diaspora, grapple with competing cultural, national, and religious identities, leading to complex personal and societal conflicts.

This section looks into the role of loyalty, belonging and conflict to characterize the fight to recognition and acceptance of the characters on a personal and national level. It illuminates on the conflicts between individual and collective persona due to the commitments that they give to their family, country, and faith, which make them struggle with identity issues. The paper also addresses the dystopia of identity politics as offered by Francis Fukuyama in his conception of creedal national identity.

Home Fire presents the characters that include Isma, Aneeka, Parvaiz and the Lone family, the lives of whom revolve around citizenship, belonging and political identity. With the struggle between family heritage, patriotism and expectations of their society, on the outer and inner side, Kamila Shamsie touches upon the issue of duality, the rootlessness, extremism, and love, underlying the multiple aspects of identity in an era of globalization.

Loyalty vs Citizenship

The central tension in *Home Fire* is Isma Pasha representing the contradiction between the citizenship, belonging, and conflict as a descendant of the Muslim families in the post-9/11 Western society and the tensions between the identity and personal desires and necessities. Her narrative reflects the issues surrounding the need of learning how to handle multiple identities that are influenced by political and personal powers.

In *Home Fire*, Isma Pasha is nowhere near home when she is torn between her needs as a sister and as a British Muslim citizen. She is in conflict between keeping the radicalized young man, Parvaiz, and her have to report him that leads her into a state of guilt and emotional distress. She has also been subjected to interrogation at the airport showing the fear about the Muslim

identities in the present day West. It is evident in her statement that: "I love him, yet I love this country." Why must I make a choice between the two? (Shamsie 96).

She complains about being suspected in Britain, where she is considered a Muslim before she can be considered a citizen; her success is put second to her faith. Her ordeal is the biasness of the system and Islamophobia that fails to accord her complete citizenship in her own country where she is a patriot. This reflects the theme of religious and national identity contextualizes the society rooted in fear and suspicion as demonstrated in the novel.

Family Loyalty vs State Law

In *Home Fire* Aneeka Pasha is presented as defiant and emotionally dire in many ways opposing the pragmatism and survival cautiousness of her sister Isma. Although Aneeka struggles to be included and to win the battle of recognition and justice in claiming Parvaiz body, Isma exercises restraint having been conditioned over the years to sacrifice and take up responsibilities. I have been living my life taking care of my family. Parvaiz has disappeared and I cannot do anything. I have to go on, to be helpful to the others, who are left behind (Shamsie 102). Likewise she confesses: The thing to do, the moral thing, would be to defend him. The practical thing is, however, to allow him to go. It is her conflict between moral duty and self-preservation because she said, He made his choices and I made mine" (Shamsie 110). Such contradictory actions indicate how Isma and Aneeka represent the divergent behaviors when it comes to family, identity, and belonging to a society subject to political and cultural pressures.

The difficulties Aneeka faces when trying to obtain the remains of Parvaiz place her on the frontline against the structural discrimination imposed by the state, its hostility towards her family and denial of dignity to the latter. The refusal to repatriate is perceived to be immoral by her, together with a form of marginalization of Muslims in Britain. Unlike Isma who tries to find security in integration, Aneeka is opposed to the power structures and puts justice, recognition, and family loyalty above her own safety. Her emotional statements show that in her case the idea of citizenship is associated with dignity and humanity and not the legal membership. As a result of this resistance, Aneeka finds herself in the conflict between identity and political exclusion and highlights the cost of belonging when the society becomes unwilling to accept them. The process of Aneeka getting radicalized alongside her perishing destiny underline the limitation of citizenship and the fight against indignity in the context of a society that discriminates against the Muslim. Her selfless devotion to her brother Parvaiz prompts her to defy state codes and defy the script that deprives her family its humanity even at the cost of her life. The conflict is set up in Aneeka, between romance and the law, and between her and the British official state, demonstrating the stress between personal loyalty and national security. Her insistence on bringing Parvaiz back to the homeland becomes a symbol of the Muslim struggle as a whole to be recognized, understood and be able to belong to a post-9/11 environment. As opposed to Isma and her reluctance to safety by means of assimilation, Aneeka also represents the resistant movements that manifest through love, loyalty, and justice in opposition to prejudiced political systems.

Alienation and Radicalization

Parvaiz Pasha, in *Home Fire*, is the reflection of the marginalized persons who find their way in the world of belonging, citizenship, and political conflictuality in a post-9/11 era. Stuck between his British education and Pakistani Muslim identity, he is caught up in identity fragmentation and lack of inclusion/acceptance. Significance is an issue that he tries to find in the memory of the extremist father, who also joins ISIS because he thinks that they will show his value and visibility in the society, which does not accept him. The conflict that occurs in his journey is the conflict between feeling loved and needed, in a society where he does not belong or fit in, due to his wrong decisions he made earlier in life. Shamsie uses Parvaiz to discuss the force of estrangement and the desire to gain a sense of identity and belonging which can lead people to travel down the route of radicalization due to lack of views that move outward into the world. The misguided reason as to why Parvaiz Pasha undergoes this wave of a complex of forced identity, belonging and citizenship in the environment of the diasporic exists in the novel *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie. These struggles can be seen as an element of what Francis Fukuyama (2018) call the politics of recognition: the demand by marginalised individuals to have their identity and their dignity acknowledged by the rest of society and the state. In the case of Parvaiz, the process of being deprived of such self-recognition in Britain creates a condition of extreme alienation and disillusionment, which renders the latter susceptible to the advancing influence of radical ideologies that seem to prove his existence.

A second generation British-Pakistani, Parvaiz represents a postcolonial hybrid subject-caught in between the cultural traditions of the Pakistani Muslim world and Britain nationalist exclusion. This is explicable through such a notion as the third space (Homi Bhabha, 1994), as the subjects of diaspora ideally balance the interception of two identities creating both a hybrid identity and space to inhabit it; however, Parvaiz only feels a sense of fragmentation as there is no such space in the British society, and not in his family history. Britain ranks him at an eternal outsider owing to his Islamophobic suspicions and the extremism legacy of his father a legacy that in a sense leaves him without any kind of family shield but also bereft of a place in society.

It is Consequently not surprising that Parvaiz turned to ISIS as a political sign of extremity, but rather as a mode of reacting to a structural exclusion. He infuses the category of invisibility that others place on him into himself- he hopes to find his validation within that group that offers meaning and connection to him. His thoughts that he should be a man, like his father and those which made them feel like they belonged are indications of a psychological need to be recognized which explains why Fukuyama reckons that the deprivation of dignity provokes individuals to seek identity in surrogate areas leading to the creation of destruction. Extreme groups take advantage of this weakness when they present an illusion of citizenship based on belonging and common fight.

Shamsie however does not idealize this search. The final realization of deception and suffering by Parvaiz is supported by the paradox of radicalism that despite the identity and purpose that it offers, radicalism is what also cuts one loose of family, community, and self. His tragedy shows that unresolved intergenerational traumas which especially included fatherly extremist existence

eradicated by his father result in increased vulnerability of diasporic subjects who are being further misused and exploited.

In the framework of Fukuyama, it is evident that in *Home Fire*, the alienation of immigrants and their radicalization through the incomplete recognition of immigrant identity is described. His loss of a sense of belonging, through his incapability to accept Pakistani heritage as compatible with British citizenship, drives him onto the path of extremist groups that pretend to be able to provide him with a sense of belonging and meaning, which he is forced to lack. Fukuyama says it is not sufficient to call your citizenship merely legal approval; it involves also the cultural acceptance and social recognition which Parvaiz does not ever gain. Karamat Lone, on the other hand, voices an assimilationist model that only regards the values of the British and avoids everything of his own Muslim background, which is quite contrary to the confusion with identity integration that the Pasha family is facing.

Assimilation vs Multiculturalism

Karamat Lone in *Home Fire* represents an assimilationist ideology as he places his priority in the loyalty to Britain, than his doctrinal and cultural ties. He is of the opinion that being a citizen involves embracing the British values fully and even at the danger of losing your ancestral identities. His denial in the repatriation of Parvaiz's body and rigid stand on immigration issues indicates that he values the interests of national security over family or communal affiliations. This shows the contradiction between assimilation and multicultural belonging as Karamat is willing to forfeit his Pakistani Muslim identity to establish his belonging only in the British nation-state. Karamat Lone is an assimilationist politician because he demands that in order to belong to Britain, the Pakistani Muslims must shed off their cultural roots. His words, e.g. I am British. This is because according to him, life is a priority in everything and anyone who feels that otherwise is not welcome (Shamsie 14) or as he puts it, anyone who does not belong attains loyalty to Britain, like the title of a book the man carries with him, which is: Anyone who chooses otherwise does not belong here (Shamsie 196). This attitude creates a lot of trouble with the Pasha family, especially Aneeka, as he declines to repatriate the body of Parvaiz due to national security reasons ahead of expectations of national, familial and cultural duty.

Generational Divided Loyalties

Eamonn struggles represent the notion by Fukuyama that the identity fractures are when the aims in life of individuals conflict with the cultural or family aspirations. In Karamat, this key is assimilation, whereas in the case of Eamonn, it is a self-sufficient identity, which balances between upbringing as British and Pakistani roots. Fukuyama opines that reconciliation can be achieved through institutions and development of inclusive policies that acknowledge the existence of a multiplicity of identities so that people can reconcile and harmonize personal and cultural identity. The conflict between the father and son is exemplified by the journey of Eamonn who has opposed the strict principles of his father and has instead affirmed his own principles, one that he took when he reinstated Parvaiz despite what his father had to say. It is all about doing the right thing (Shamsie 157).

The life of Eamonn brings out the conflict between citizenry and loyalty. It is possible to contrast two lives of his father, Karamat, who celebrates assimilation into British culture at the cost of losing connections to the culture and Eamonn who becomes disillusioned with this paradigm. His attachment to Aneeka and his compassion with Parvaiz attract him to emotional belongingness and inheritance, which he is compelled toward by his attachment owing to his loyalty to his father. It is reflected in such an instant as when he turns away from his idealistic father Karamat: I am not my father. His refusal to join his father in accusing Aneeka and his stand against political repercussions of this action, as he says, I see things differently than him (Shamsie 2005). Finally, Eamonn invokes the conflict of assimilation to state-driven identity and personal identity relation, cultural identity, and emotional connection drawn by second-generation immigrants. In *Home Fire*, Eamonn can only be dictated by the issue of divided loyalties with the young man torn between his affections to Aneeka and his adherence to Karamat, his father. His father conforms to the national loyalty, whereas Eamonn starts to appreciate the role of personal and family relationships, which makes him doubt the strict state-centered moral. Trying to juggle both his loyalties, however, causes him to be emotionally torn to pieces, and he ends up losing both Aneeka and his father. This struggle serves to further emphasize the larger theme in the novel that love and loyalty when divided or separated between two incompatible forces, can be the cause of isolation, disillusionment, and personal tragedy.

The novel *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie deals with the issues of belonging, citizenship, loyalty, and conflict in the figures. Karamat Lone epitomizes political assimilation who put all his devotion on the national loyalty instead of his cultural identity, whereas, Eamonn as his son tries to waver in both love and duty of his father. All three Isma, Aneeka and Parvaiz represent various struggles between family expectations, religious values, and duty to the nation, and the burden each person bears to hold two identities. It is the conflict between the loyalties of family, faith and state, that is shown as raging in the novel, which captures the dilemmas of the British-Pakistani living as part of the greater game of identity politics and the pressures of the community.

Conclusion

The author investigates multiple elements of nationalistic movements and citizenship processes as well as identity development and integration success in contemporary society throughout the narrative of *Home Fire*. The story portrays its characters' dual identity conflicts to demonstrate how nationalism fails to resolve matters while simultaneously generating separate social communities. The inability of multicultural communities to properly integrate people leads to two consequences: radicalization and political disloyalty. A single attempt to establish national belonging through one identity structure fails to produce results because states need to validate all the various personal identities that shape their history and heritage.

Kamila Shamsie explores the fragile nature of national cohesion that develops through religious nationalist beliefs through her work *Home Fire*. Through their story the Pashas establish that democratic and free citizen values fail to generate authentic social connections between people. The way British authority supervisors enforce core British values results in inconsistent treatment of Muslim communities due to insincere security measures laid out in the constitution. Approving

individual concepts instead of complete principles weakens morality and destroys their power to build social unity. The analysis within the novel demonstrates a rising democratic crisis in modern nations by showing the progress of discriminatory Muslim and immigrant hate speech in populist nationalism.

A shift toward embracing multiculturalism in national identity would create necessary changes in support toward marginalized communities. Current acceptance models should understand diversity as a source of strength rather than viewing it as dangerous since there are no definite requirements for defining someone. A complete citizenship requires legal documentation along with emotional and cultural acceptance to be considered complete. The implementation of suitable policies depends on direct experiences with minorities because these experiences produce necessary details for effective policy-making. The repeated probes about ancestry heritage within *Home Fire* among British residents having legal residency make their situation identical to current population discrimination practices. Life demands essential transformations in cultural perspectives to establish national stories containing varied forms of loyalty which exceed standard cultural attributes.

Political representation stands as an essential requirement to achieve inclusion between different groups. Through advocacy adopted minorities can gain strong influence in parliament as well as court systems and civil service positions to validate their importance. The governmental institutions presented in *Home Fire* lack the capacity to accept the communities within their jurisdiction. The author demonstrates through Karamat Lone that Muslim officials who select their political interests over prioritizing group cohesion prove the inability of isolated leadership to achieve meaningful institutional progress. Authentic representation needs something beyond tokenism because marginalized communities must have the authority to decide how their existence is affected through policy development.

It can be concluded that *Home Fire* provides a rich commentary on contemporary issues surrounding nationalism, citizenship, identity, and belonging. By exploring the personal struggles of characters caught between conflicting national and religious identities, the novel highlights the limitations of national creeds and critiques the exclusionary nature of contemporary nationalism. It illustrates how marginalization and alienation in a multicultural society can lead to tragic outcomes, from radicalization to political betrayal. The novel is a powerful reminder that true belonging cannot be achieved through the imposition of a single national identity, but must involve the recognition and accommodation of diverse identities within the national narrative.

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