



Bloodline Order and Sculpted Self: A Psychological Study on the Characters of Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*

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Abstract

Siblings have the key to understanding the inner self of one another, opening the doors of childhood. Fate makes them constant companions who share their entire childhood, which helps them predict or solve problems for each other since they share their developmental period. The love they provide can be compared to parental love, the arguments they have can be compared to the fights of cats and dogs, and the protection and rights they have for each other are beyond comparison. Thus, their bond defines the inner self, identity, and much more. Home Fire by Kamila Shamsie narrates the intersecting lives of siblings where the choices made by one shape the entire siblings' lives. Through her strong political narratives and soulful depiction of familial bonds, Shamsie encourages readers to discover the dimensions of love and identity. Alfred Adler's Birth Order theory proposes the order of siblings and their traits, which are constructed under social norms. It talks about how the position of each person in the family influences their personality and psyche. By applying Alfred Adler's Birth Order theory, this paper strives to unfold the importance of siblings in one's life. This paper focuses on the sibling connection that alters their entire paths of life, reshaping their aspirations and even redefining their nationality and identity. It strives to highlight the important role of siblinghood, which makes them, as companions, to support and nurture each other to elevate their lives.

Keywords: siblings, nationality, identity, birth order, personal development

Literature as Mirror and Mentor

Family, rooted with kindness, love, care, and protection, plays an important role in shaping one's life. Every trait a person holds is defined by the familial environment, and their roots will portray the psyche of that person. One may groom oneself through the external experience. Families consist of many relationships and bonds filled with love, traditions, singular beliefs, and customs. Among all such relationships, the parental bond stands out as their affection is beyond measure; next to them are

siblings. A sibling is someone who is born to the same parents as the particular individual. They may not express their fondness explicitly, but the sacrifice they make, the love they possess, and the protection they feel towards each other anchor the soulful life of the family. Siblings play an impeccable role in shaping one's life. They are like parents to protect, grandparents to love, friends to support, and teachers to make us grow. Brothers act like friends, pulling legs for fun, and at the same time, they protect and provide like a father. As the finest pearls are found



in the cold, deep seas, the love carried by brothers is latent. On the other hand, sisters are emotionally connected than the brothers and they act like a mother taking care of their siblings.

Alfred Adler, an Austrian medical doctor who is also a psychotherapist and founder of the school of individual psychology, gives an excellent insight into the psychology behind the behaviour of children that varies depending on the order of their birth. Birth Order theory is one of his brilliant ideas about understanding the hierarchy of responsibility made up by the social structure for the children of the family. He analyses the psyche behind this ideology and how it affects the lives of children. Instead of letting them do what they want, it simply draws the staircase for them to step on. This theory classifies the stages of children according to their birth order: first child, middle child, youngest child, and the only child. Here he describes the traits of each as the first carries responsible, strong leaders, and dependable. The middle child has the traits of being flexible, peace-making, adaptable, and they are mostly diplomatic. The youngest child has the personality of outgoing, charismatic, charming, and sociable. The only child carries the traits such as being independent, mature, and responsible (Adler).

Many families are split up these days due to trivial matters. When the children are grown and create their separate households, the role of their parents is reduced. The affection and adoration decrease, the wire that connected all the keys in an instrument loses its spark. This should be taken care of by the next generation of the family, and thus it eventually goes into the hands of siblings. They should not forget their entire childhood and how they loved and cared for each other, for any petty issues. Recent criticisms have proposed the larger study across the families instead of focusing on a single family, as Adler suggested, and failed to bring the proposed results. This paper exclusively considers all such evolution of this theory, and focuses on one particular family mentioned in the novel ("Pressure That the Eldest Child Faces"). Kamila Shamsie, in her novel *Home Fire*, beautifully describes the relationship between the siblings. This novel talks about the lives of three siblings, Isma Pasha, Aneeka Pasha, and Parvaiz Pasha. Among them, Aneeka and

Parvaiz are non-identical twins. The plot surrounds their life and how their bonding affects or influences each other's lives. She blends the beauty of familial ties with the emotion of national loyalty, along with the political discriminations. The choices made by the siblings define their identity, personality, and, in the end, their destiny.

Born in Pakistan, Kamila Shamsie started her career at a very young age, inspired by her family members. Her aunt, grandmother, and mother hold remarkable places in her writing career. Thus, from her personal life, one may comprehend how she does an excellent portrayal of family in her works. She was awarded the Prime Minister's Award for Literature in Pakistan and the Patras Bokhari Award for her notable works and many more (Penguin Random House). Translated into number of languages, these are the works of Kamila Shamsie: *In the City by the Sea* (1998), *Salt and Saffron* (2000), *Kartography* (2002), *Broken Verses* (2005), *Offence: The Muslim Case* (2009), *Burnt Shadows* (2009), *A God in Every Stone* (2014), *Home Fire* (2017), *Duckling: A Fairy Tale Revolution* (2020), *Best of Friends* (2022).

Studies like Cultural hybridity, Political discrimination, National identity, Analysis of Sophocles's *Antigone*, Muslim diasporic identities, and so forth have been done on Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*. This paper strives to focus on the loyalty between family and nation, which shapes identities and destiny. Dealing with the interpersonal relations among family members, this study elevates the analysis by focusing on the psychological traits refined by external influences and the siblings' relationship.

Psychological Understanding of Children's Personality Development

Alfred Adler observed and conveyed that birth order theory is a part of individual psychology. Those observations include a child's relation to their environment, injustice experienced by them, their ambition, envy, will-power, fear of stepfather or mother, and thoughts of children born with inferior organs, digestive troubles, where they often use feelings of illness to gain importance. After all these discussions, he classifies the stages of children and their personality development based on their birth



order: the first-born child, the second-born child, the last-born child, and the only child (Hoffman).

Isma Pasha – The Firstborn

In this novel, *Home Fire*, Shamsie depicts the lives of three siblings. Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz. After their parents' death, Isma was taking care of her younger siblings, "Isma to parent and provide for two grief-struck twelve-year-olds" (Shamsie 13). Struck between her passion and family, Isma was determined enough to pursue her career. Discriminated by religion, nationality, and race, Isma went through many struggles, yet her ambition was as strong as a pillar. This shows the characteristics of the eldest child as portrayed by Alfred Adler. The firstborn possesses a sense of responsibility and a strong leadership quality. They have this strong sense of responsibility where they are convinced to take care of the rest of the household after their parents (Adler). Here, Isma, being the elder sister, strives to be dominant and strong in her decision-making in certain situations. For instance, Isma was detained at the airport, where the officers held her in custody without any proper reason. She gave them the required documents along with her qualification proof, i.e., Ph.D., but she was questioned for her hijab, indicating political discrimination. After giving them several explanations and evidence of her Muslim background and British citizenship, Isma solves the struggle and continues her journey. This is a substantiation of her possessing the characteristics of the firstborn child. She was determined enough to stand there instead of losing her control and sorted out the situation, finding her identity "I am British. I've lived here all my life" (Shamsie 5).

Events took a turn when their youngest sibling, Parvaiz, decided to join the jihadist group without knowing the depth of the problem. Isma and Aneeka were shocked by his behaviour and never expected him to leave them without any notice. This shook their entire lives. Isma felt the innate responsibility that every firstborn carries and informed the cops about her brother. "People in the neighbourhood knew. The police would have found out. There was nothing I could do for him, so I did what I could for you, for us" (Shamsie 42). She felt that it was her responsibility to take care of her siblings, and by

doing so, she thought the government might help them save Parvaiz, at the loyalty of Isma. Aneeka felt betrayed by her own sister, "You betrayed us, both of us" (Shamsie 42). Out of rage, she stopped connecting with Isma, which shows how Isma lost her loyalty in her family. The choice of her sibling brought the innate quality of an elder sibling in her, and she chose nation over family. This changed her bond with her siblings, determining her identity for the rest of her life.

Parvaiz Pasha – The Second-born

Parvaiz and Aneeka are twins. Parvaiz is treated as a less assertive one, which makes him the middle or second-born child according to Adler's evaluation (Her et al. 450). In the birth order theory, the situation of the middle child is described as that they may have one before and behind them who can do more, who are important and superior, which makes these middle children feel overshadowed (Adler). In this novel, being the only brother to his two sisters, Parvaiz was always overlooked and ignored because of his sisters. "If he were standing in a room next to his sisters, your eyes would go straight over him to Aneeka's beauty, Isma's gravitas" (Shamsie 99). His opinions were not given much importance, and the curiosity about his father was always brought down and concealed. He wanted to prove himself to society and family, so he decided to explore the unknown path that his father had proven the analysis of Adler about the middle child and their insecurity. Adler notes that second-born children develop compulsion-neuroses resulting in craving authority, feeling insecure, and lacking recognition (Adler). Parvaiz, surrounded by a bunch of females in his family, wanted to anchor his male identity, and to prove it, he was manipulated into thinking that a jihad group would bring him back his identity.

Being known as his father, an anti-nationalist and irresponsible all his life, Parvaiz was drawn to a heroic image of his father through the lens of Jihad. This kindled the love he has for his father, and he joined the jihadists. "Parvaiz would listen to those stories of his father for which he'd always yearned – not a footloose boy or feckless husband, but a man of courage who fought injustice" (Shamsie 128). Unaware of the situation, he entered the group and



later found that all he heard was a lie, deceptive. Facing the harsh realities, he tried to escape from them, thinking the government would support him. "I made a mistake. I'm prepared to face trial if I've broken laws. Just let me go to London" (Shamsie 171). By the time he realised all such things, the government declared him to be the betrayer, "But he was the terrorist son of a terrorist father" (Shamsie 171). His actions completely transformed his identity in society.

Aneeka – The Lastborn

Aneeka is a charming woman known for her brave decisions and strong stand on opinions. "Even as a very young girl, she'd known how to do this: someone would approach the subject of their father and Aneeka would turn cold" (Shamsie 23). Adler classifies the lastborn into two types. According to the first type, the younger ones grab the attention, love from all, and they are a reserved and hesitant type, not trusting others so easily. On the other hand, they receive everything even before asking for it, which may make them expect everything to be done by the others for them, which may affect their psychic development and push them into a dependent one (Adler). Aneeka, being tough and cold on the outside, shows her extreme love to her closest circle. Though she initially befriended Eamonn, the son of politician Karamat Lone, to save her brother, "I was with him because I thought he could help. I wanted my brother to be able to come back" (Shamsie 194), she eventually falls in love with Eamonn. This proves her outward independent behaviour vanishes once she falls in love. But her ambition towards saving her brother's life proves how stubborn and strong she is. She went through all the threats from the government, defamation from the media, "Daughter and sister of Muslim terrorists, with history of secret sex life – the exclusive story of 'Knickers' Pasha" (Shamsie 204), and struggles from her family to save her brother's life. When she realised he was shot dead, she didn't stop her protest; she underwent many trials to retrieve her brother's body and, in the end, she lost her life.

The second type, which is called the Joseph type, talks about the uniqueness of the younger children. They strive to create their own path, which makes

them the pathfinders (Hoffman). Similarly, Aneeka challenges both British and Muslim community norms and the government to save her brother's life. Instead of seeking help from them like Isma, Aneeka finds her own way to attain what she wants. She befriended Eamonn, she talked to Karamat Lone, she protested against the government, and beyond all the rules, she travelled to another country, losing her nationality, keeping her identity at stake to retrieve her brother's body. "He's my twin, He's me" (Shamsie 42). She was passionately determined to save and protect her brother by waiting in the park until the government helped her reach the destination. This conveys her determination, passion, and martyrdom-like resistance.

Conclusion

The life of an individual develops over time, shaped by the environment in which they grow up. Isma, as the eldest child, carried out her responsibility and determination as expressed by Adler's theory. Parvaiz being overshadowed as a middle child led to the consequences of death due to the choices he made because of the influences. Aneeka, as the younger one, has been a resilient and ambitious person who has strived to save her twin brother, as he is the other half of her soul. All their traits are analysed by the observations of Alfred Adler's Birth Order theory. The choice made by Parvaiz splits up the siblings' connection between them and totally changes their destiny. It also shaped Aneeka from being a younger daughter to being a woman who took measures and risked her life to save her brother. Siblings, though they may seem distant, are connected soulfully, which at times shapes their lives. Using Adler's theory, one may analyse the structured traits and stereotypical psychological practices and break them down to help every child attain their own personality and identity.

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