

## BEREAVEMENT AND DISASSOCIATION: AN ANALYSIS OF *HOME FIRE* THROUGH DUAL PROCESS MODEL

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### ABSTRACT

*This thesis explores dissociation and other grief coping strategies in Kamila Shamsie's Home Fire. Using Stroebe and Schut's Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement and Disassociation as an analytical framework and Kubler Ross's Five Stages of Grief as a theoretical framework, the study explores how characters experience and express loss within their socio-cultural contexts. Through textual analysis and thematic interpretation, the research examines how the novel constructs emotional and narrative landscape of grief and related coping strategies. The analysis reveals that the novel portrays grief not as a linear psychological process but as fragmented experience shaped by identity, memory and belonging. In Home Fire it presents an internalized narrative of childhood loss and detachment. The novel highlights moments of emotional disconnection and oscillation between confronting and avoiding grief, aligning with the dual process model's framework. By situating these narratives within broader conversations about dissociation and other grief coping strategies, the study contributes to an interdisciplinary understanding of dissociation and other grief coping strategies in literature*

### Keywords:

Bereavement, Coping, Socio-cultural, Oscillation, Grief, Disassociation

### INTRODUCTION:

Disassociation and related grief coping strategies are common during bereavement, and they can be a normal part of the mourning process. Different grief coping strategies can be triggered by grief, especially if the grief is recent or if there is an unresolved past trauma related to loss, abandonment, or anxiety (George A, 2004, p.20-28).

While disassociation and related grief coping strategies can be distressing and impact the grief process, these are not necessarily bad or wrong. In fact, some research suggests that negative disassociation at the beginning of bereavement can be associated with minimal grief symptoms over time (Stroebe, M., Schut, H., & Stroebe, W. (2007).

The phenomenon of grief and related grief coping strategies also find their representation in the literary works all around the globe and owing to their importance need to be scrutinized from different lenses in order to get a better understanding of the on going cognitive and social makeup affecting and getting affected by these phenomena. The themes of disassociation and related grief coping strategies are also obvious in *Home Fire*. The current study aims to explore *Home Fire* from the the lense of dissociation and other grief coping strategies used by the protagonists.

### Statement of the Problem:

Bereavement, disassociation and other grief coping strategies are very prevalent features in human life, resulting in a number of significant psychological and physical changes.

The themes of bereavement and other grief coping strategies have been discussed in *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie very effectively.

Despite that the novel still remain to be explored through the lens of disassociation and other grief coping strategies. Thereby, the current study aims to explore *Home Fire* from the the lense of dissociation and other grief coping strategies used by the protagonists.

#### **Research Aim:**

The current study aims to explore *Home Fire* from the the lense of dissociation and other grief coping strategies used by the protagonists.

#### **Research Gap:**

The novel *Home Fire* remains to be explored through the perspectives of disassociation and other grief coping strategies.

#### **Research Objectives:**

The objectives of this research were as follows:

- To analyse the loss-oriented coping strategies deployed by the characters in the selected novel.
- To identify the restoration-oriented coping strategies deployed by the characters in the selected novel.
- To examine how the cultural and social context in the novels influence the grief-management strategies employed by the characters.

#### **Research Questions:**

The following research questions guided this research:

- What are the different loss-oriented coping strategies deployed by the characters in the selected novel?
- What are the different restoration-oriented coping strategies deployed by the characters in the selected novel?
- How does the cultural and social settings of the novel influence the grief-management methods adopted by its characters?

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

Disassociation and related grief coping strategies are some of the common themes in literature around the world, and studying them from different perspectives is important to better understand how they affect both the mind and society. These themes are clearly present in *Home Fire*. This study, therefore, aims to explore these two novels from the perspective of disassociation and related grief coping strategies. Disassociation is a common response during mourning and can be a normal aspect of the grieving process. It involves a sense of detachment from one's body, thoughts, emotions, or environment. This feeling can be triggered by grief, particularly when the loss is recent or when there are unresolved past experiences related to trauma, abandonment, or anxiety. In order to prove my contention, it is important to have a look at what the experts of these theories have to say when it comes to the matter of their connection. We will find their takes on this particular topic so that we can effectively use and apply those arguments to this novel to prove them. Recent studies suggest that grief is closely tied to social structures and political realities. Dennis Klass, in his article *Grief and Collective Memory* (2024), argues that "grief is not just a private experience but is shaped by the collective memory and historical consciousness of a community" (p. 12). This is evident in *Home Fire*, where Aneeka's grief for Parvaiz is amplified by the societal rejection he faced, reinforcing the idea that mourning is influenced by external forces. "She could not separate her grief from the injustice that had stolen him away" (Shamsie, p. 239). The concept of unresolved grief is central

to the novel. Hall and Finch, in their article *Psychological States of Unresolved Grief* (2014), describe unresolved grief as "a psychological state where mourning is prolonged due to a lack of closure or social recognition" (p. 79). Isma in *Home Fire* exemplifies this as she attempts to move forward but remains haunted by her fractured family history. "She told herself she had let go, but in the quiet moments, the past crept back in" (Shamsie, p. 218). The role of ritual in coping with loss is another critical aspect explored in both novels. Colin Murray Parkes, in his article *Rituals and the Mourning Process* (2022), argues that "rituals provide a structured way to process grief, helping individuals transition through mourning" (p. 54). In *Home Fire*, Aneeka's insistence on publicly honoring Parvaiz is her way of preserving his memory and resisting erasure. "She would not let him be forgotten, no matter the cost" (Shamsie, p. 215).

Furthermore, the theme of exile and its relationship to grief is explored in both texts. Edward Said, in his essay *Exile and Mourning* (1984), asserts that "exile magnifies the effects of grief, as the loss of a homeland compounds the pain of personal bereavement" (p. 16). This is particularly evident in *Home Fire*, where Parvaiz's search for belonging leads him to dangerous paths, and his ultimate fate is marked by a sense of exile even in death. "He had hoped to return, but there was no place left for him" (Shamsie, p. 245). Gabriella Pishotti in her article "Materializing Grief: The Reclamation of Loss in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*" (2022). Pishotti examines how Muslim lives are marginalized by Britain's post-9/11 Islamophobic politics and media. She argues that the characters in *Home Fire* resist this marginalization by using mourning as a way to reclaim their dignity and humanity. Inam Ullah, in the study "Divided Loyalties, Identity Trauma and Social Stigmatization; A Study of the Diasporas' Identities in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*" (2022), discusses the profound impact of grief on the characters, particularly focusing on Aneeka's experience. He notes that grief manifests in various ways, often leading to a sense of rage and helplessness. (p. 89). "But this was not grief. It did not cleave to her, it flayed her... This was not grief. It was rage." (Shamsie, p. 199). Zobia Alamgir, in her article "Real Selves and Adopted Personas: Performance of Self in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*" (2021), examines how characters adopt different personas to navigate societal expectations and personal grief. She discusses how individuals present themselves differently in various situations, often hiding their true selves behind adopted masks. (p. 56). In *Home Fire* this is reflected in, "They are performing their best but in spite of their required best presentation they are maltreated and considered as others." (Shamsie, p. 178). Farzaneh Doosti, in the paper "Mourning, Resistance, and Statelessness in Shamsie's *Home Fire* (2018), explores the political dimensions of mourning and how it serves as a form of resistance against state-imposed marginalization". Sara Ahmed, in her book "Living a Feminist Life" (2017), discusses how grief intersects with female agency. She argues that women often experience grief within patriarchal limits, which dictate how they should mourn and express emotions, "Women's grief is policed, structured, and at times invalidated, making mourning a political act rather than just a personal experience." (p. 56). Marianne Hirsch, in her book *The Generation of post memory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (2012), introduces the concept of "post memory", which describes how trauma is passed down through generations. She argues that individuals who did not experience a traumatic event firsthand can still feel its effects through family narratives and inherited memories, "post memory is a structure of transmission... where the memory of trauma is passed down, shaping the identities of those who come after." (p. 82).

## **METHODOLOGY:**

### **Research Design:**

This research follows a qualitative design, since grief, disassociation, and coping are complex psychological and emotional processes, a qualitative approach is the most suitable method for this study.

### **Data Collection:**

The primary source for this study is *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie. This novel is chosen because it directly explores themes of grief, disassociation, and coping. In addition to the novel, secondary sources such as academic articles, books, and literary critiques provide further understanding. The data collection process begins with a close reading of the novel, identifying key passages that highlight grief, emotional struggles, and coping mechanisms. Detailed notes are taken on character development, emotional responses, and elements that reflect the psychological impact of loss.

### **Data Analysis Method:**

To examine how grief, disassociation, and coping are portrayed in *Home Fire*, this study uses textual analysis and thematic analysis. Textual analysis focuses on how language, symbols, and emotions are used to convey grief in the novel. This involves carefully examining the words, phrases, and dialogues that reveal the characters' inner pain and emotional chaos. The study also looks at how grief is expressed through actions and interactions, such as how the characters react to loss and how their relationships with others are affected. Additionally, literary techniques such as metaphors, imagery, and symbolism are analyzed to understand how bereavement is portrayed beyond direct descriptions. For example, certain objects, places, or recurring images in the novels may serve as symbols of loss, longing, or emotional detachment, adding depth to the characters' experiences.

Alongside textual analysis, thematic analysis is used to identify recurring ideas and emotional patterns in the novel. This involves categorizing key themes such as loss, isolation, memory, and healing to understand how different characters experience and process grief. By comparing the emotional responses of protagonist of the novel, the study explores how grief manifests in different ways and how coping mechanisms vary from person to person. Some characters struggle with accepting loss, while others gradually find ways to move forward. These themes are then related to psychological theories on grief, particularly Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief Theory and Stroebe and Schut's Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement, to explore the deeper meaning behind the characters' emotions and behaviors.

### **Theoretical Framework:**

Grief, disassociation, and coping are complex emotional experiences, to explore how these themes appear in *Home Fire*, this study uses Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief Theory. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief remains one of the most widely recognized theories of bereavement, outlining the emotional stages individuals often go through when coping with loss. These five stages are:

- Denial – Refusing to accept the reality of the loss.
- Anger – Feelings of frustration and resentment over the loss.
- Bargaining – Attempts to change or reverse the loss.
- Depression – Deep sadness and withdrawal from normal activities.
- Acceptance – Coming to terms with the loss and adjusting to a new reality.

This perspective help explain how the protagonist in the novel react to loss, the struggles she faces, and the ways she tries to cope. The protagonist goes through different emotional stages of grief. By using this psychological theory, this study provides a clearer



understanding of how grief is portrayed in literature and how different people experience loss in different ways.

### **Analytical Framework:**

This research uses Dual Process Model by Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut to present a more flexible and dynamic approach to grief compared to earlier models. Unlike traditional models that suggest a linear progression through grief, this model recognizes that individuals oscillate between two types of coping mechanisms:

- Loss-Oriented Coping: When individuals focus on the emotional pain of the loss, remembering the deceased, and feeling deep sorrow.
- Restoration-Oriented Coping: When individuals focus on adapting to life without the deceased, engaging in daily activities, and seeking distractions.

### **DATA ANALYSIS:**

This chapter explores the portrayal of grief in *Home Fire* by analyzing the characters' emotional journeys through the framework of the Strobe Dual Process Model and Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief. Through close reading of the texts, the chapter identifies key instances where characters exhibit behaviors consistent with the loss-oriented and restoration-oriented processes of the Strobe model. Specifically, the analysis focuses on the protagonists' experiences of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance as they navigate the emotional complexities of their respective losses. The five stages of grief—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance are not experienced in a fixed, linear order. People move through these stages in different ways, sometimes repeating or skipping stages. A qualitative approach helps us understand these variations by closely analyzing how each character expresses grief. Instead of measuring grief through numbers, we focus on how characters react to loss. For example, in *Home Fire*, Aneeka's deep sorrow and refusal to accept Parvaiz's death illustrate the bargaining and denial stages. Her emotional expressions, actions, and dialogue reveal her internal struggle. As the novel progresses, we see how characters adapt to their loss. Some, like Isma, lean more toward restoration-oriented coping, while others, like Aneeka, remain stuck in their grief. The qualitative method helps us explore these differences in depth.

Aneeka, in particular, exhibits deeply rooted loss-oriented coping. Her entire world collapses with her brother Parvaiz's involvement in ISIS and his consequent death. Aneeka's mourning is instinctive and public, "She had no interest in arguing the politics of the situation. Her brother was dead. She would not be silent." (Shamsie, p. 98). Isma shows stronger movement toward restoration-oriented coping. She chooses to rebuild her academic career, leave for America, and attempt to live life beyond her family's tragedy. Her approach is more pragmatic and conforms with societal expectations. This is a key example of restoration, "She was getting used to living in a world where people looked at her with suspicion. It didn't matter anymore. What mattered was the future." (p. 111). *Home Fire* is set in modern Britain, in a post-9/11 world, where being Muslim is often equated with being suspicious. Kamila Shamsie's characters are British-Pakistani Muslims who live with the double burden of personal grief and societal prejudice. Their emotional expressions are not only personal but highly politicized.

Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz all experience grief in very different ways, but their coping strategies are deeply influenced by the Islamophobic environment they live in. For instance, after Parvaiz's death, Aneeka's public mourning is not seen as an emotional reaction but a political act, "She had no interest in arguing the politics of the situation. Her brother was dead.

She would not be silent.” (Shamsie, p. 98). Aneeka rotates between denial, anger, and depression as she struggles to process her brother’s death. She refuses to accept that he is gone, becomes furious at the government for their role in his fate, and experiences overwhelming sadness. However, she never fully reaches acceptance, showing that some people remain stuck in certain grief stages, especially when the loss is traumatic or unjust. “She wanted to believe she had moved on, but the weight of the past always found a way to return. She hung to his presence, to his voice echoing in her mind, as if letting go meant losing him all over again. How was she supposed to heal when everything reminded her of what she had lost?” (Shamsie, p. 145).

In the end, this novel reminds us that grieving is not just personal. It is shaped by our surroundings, our families, our culture, our society and it doesn’t look the same for everyone. Some people try to move on. Others can’t. Some find peace over time. Others are left struggling. The novel helps us understand that grief is complicated, painful, and deeply human.

### FINDINGS:

This chapter deals with the key findings from the analysis of *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie. Using Stroebe and Schut’s Dual Process Model, we explore how characters move between feeling the pain of loss (loss-oriented coping) and trying to carry on with life (restoration-oriented coping). This chapter also shows how culture and society shape the way characters grieve.

Responding to research question 1 and 2, the most important findings is that grief looks very different for each character. While some try to carry on with daily life, others get stuck in their sadness and memories. In both novels, the main characters show signs of grief through silence, emotional pain, withdrawal, or anger. But over time, some of them begin to shift from focusing on the loss to adjusting to a new life. Aneeka and Isma, the two sisters, respond very differently to the death of their brother Parvaiz. Aneeka refuses to accept his death quietly. Her grief is open, loud, and filled with anger. She wants the world to see her pain and recognize her brother’s humanity, despite the fact that he was involved with a terrorist group. She shows strong signs of loss-oriented coping and she stays connected to her brother through memories, grief rituals, and protest. Isma, on the other hand, chooses to focus on survival. She moves to the United States, continues her education, and tries to stay away from politics and the past. Though she misses her brother deeply, she tries to bury her emotions and move forward. This shows a strong shift toward restoration-oriented coping. However, at times, her bottled-up emotions rise to the surface, reminding us that grief is not a straight path. Another character, Parvaiz, also shows signs of emotional struggle. His search for identity and understanding of his father’s past leads him down a dangerous path. His decisions are based on a mix of confusion, loss, and a desire to belong.

Responding to research question 2, the characters’ ways of grieving are not just personal yet they are also shaped by the societies they live in. Both novels show how culture and community expectations influence how people express or hide their grief.

In *Home Fire* grief is also heavily influenced by politics and social expectations. The family is British-Pakistani, living in a country where Muslims are often viewed with suspicion, especially after events related to terrorism. Parvaiz’s actions bring shame and danger to his family. Aneeka’s grief becomes a political act. Her pain is not just about losing a brother but it is about fighting for his right to be seen as a human being. Her protest is not just personal, it is a way of fighting against how society views people like her.

In contrast, Isma chooses to fit into society’s expectations. She avoids talking about her brother’s past and tries to live a quiet life. Her silence is also shaped by fear of being judged,

punished, or losing her freedom. To summarize the findings of this research, grief is unique for each character. No one grieves the same way. Some cry, some act strong, and some escape into imagination or silence.

### CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, literature serves a vital role in helping readers understand and process emotions that are often difficult to express. Novels like *Home Fire* and *Those Children* allow readers to see grief not just as something to suffer, but as something that shapes who we become. In *Home Fire*, the story revolves around a British-Pakistani family dealing with the consequences of their brother Parvaiz's radicalization and death. Each sibling processes this loss differently. Isma attempts to focus on her education and future, which aligns with the idea of restoration-oriented coping. She avoids painful emotions and instead focuses toward rebuilding her life. Aneeka, on the other hand, stays in a state of loss-oriented grief. She refuses to let go of her brother and makes her mourning public, using it as a form of protest. These two contrasting responses show that how emotional reactions within a single family varies. Parvaiz's journey, shows how unresolved grief and identity struggles can lead a person to dangerous paths. He joins a terrorist organization not because of hatred, but from a desire for connection and meaning. His actions are shaped by his desire to understand his father's past and reclaim his family's honor. His choices, reflect the role that grief can play in pushing individuals toward harmful decisions when there is no healthy way for emotional pain. The novel reveals that grief is not just about missing someone, it's about adjusting to life without them. This adjustment is emotional, psychological, and social. For Isma, the path to healing involves taking on new responsibilities. For Aneeka, her refusal to move on shows how grief can become overwhelming when it is not shared or supported. The contrast between these characters helps readers understand the different outcomes of grief. By close reading of *Home Fire*, it is clear that the novel does not offer quick resolutions to grief. Instead, it shows how grief can be confusing, exhausting, and deeply personal. It also demonstrates that while loss changes people, it does not break them. Characters may feel lost for a time, but many find ways to keep going, and to rebuild.

Moreover, this study has shown that grief is not just a theme in literature, it is a driving force. It shapes characters, guides decisions, and transforms relationships. Through the stories of Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz, readers are given a map of what it means to lose someone and to find a way forward. Grief may never fully leave a person. But as these novels show, it can change, it can become memory, and it can even become strength.

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