



RESEARCH PAPER

Fictional Narratives versus State Narratives: A Study of Hussein's "Karima" as a Fictive Response to the 1971 Partition of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The paper reads closely Aamer Hussein's short story "Karima" as a fictional narrative of the 1971 Partition of Pakistan into Bangladesh, previously known as Eastern wing and Pakistan, previously known as the Western wing of the united Pakistan. Utilizing Cara Cilano's ideas, as projected in her book: *National Identities in Pakistan: The 1971 War in Contemporary Pakistani Fiction* (2011), as a theoretical framework, the paper explores various elements of this partition and analyzes the theme of oppression in migrants/refugees camps, class difference between the sons of the soil and the Bihari Muhajirs, identity crisis, ideological Muslim nationalism and violence during the 1971 Partition. The paper also looks into slogan of Muslim nationalism in pre-partition subcontinent and shows dedication of Muslims for this rationale during the partitions of 1947 and 1971. The paper explicates that how, in order to address either the absence or paucity of the state owned narratives, the fictional narratives like "Karima" fill the vacuum and explore various dimensions of the historical events like that of the 1971 Partition uninhibitedly. By projecting all dilemmas and pains which fell on titular character of this short story and her family, the paper portrays the 1971 Partition as a tragic event of oppression and violence.

KEYWORDS 1971 Partition, Aamer Hussein, Fictional Narratives, Karima, State Narratives

Introduction

Fictional narratives unfold social, political, economic and cultural aspects of historical events by utilizing fictive characters in order to view history of a state or a nation. Literary genres of fiction or non-fiction of any state or nation can be useful tools to discover about historical events as these literary genres have the creative force to withstand state or nation's pressure. Aamer Hussein's "Karima", taken from his short story collection *Electric Shadows* revolves around the 1971 Partition of Pakistan and shows that social and political turbulence provoked by 1971 Civil War resulted in mass level killings, crimes, vandalism, violence, dismemberment, anarchy and displacement of East Pakistani Bengalis as migrants/refugees.

In "Karima", the readers can see unbelievable change in attitude and behavior of people of East Pakistan towards people of West Pakistan along with disquieting and heartbreaking scenes of massacre of innocent people. Through the central character of Karima, Hussein explores the journey of a victim of the 1971 Partition, from Bangladesh to

Pakistan and then to London. Structure of the story is such that it is written in alternating first person narrations in which first character is of an unnamed narrator who contributes few paragraphs to the story and his commentary is presented in parenthesis while the second narrator is Karima whose paragraphs are written with a hyphen symbol (-) at the start of the paragraphs. The unknown narrator of the story is a writer based in London who reads letters for Karima and also at her request writes letter to her relatives in Karachi, Rawalpindi and sometimes to someone in Dhaka. After the arrival of Karima's family in Karachi from Dhaka, in the wake of the 1971 Partition, she had to work for a mistress in a big house with whom Karima had to move to London for the treatment of her son. After the treatment when they are to leave for Karachi, Karima's mistress tells Karima about her son Shahzad's death. After hearing this tragic news, Karima loses her last relation with Pakistan and decides to stay in London illegally with a Bengali butcher so that she can earn more money and send it to her relatives back in Pakistan. Rejecting the claim that Karima is a hybrid character, Hussein himself said in his interview to Mushtaq ur Rasool Bilal (2013) that though Karima goes to London, she is always foreign there and as she cannot speak English so she is not a hybrid character.

Literature Review

Sobhan (2017) calls Hussein a poet of fiction. It seems that music flows through his stories. In Hussein's writings, we see a visual beauty describing his emotions in a poetic form. Hussein beautifully crafts poetry in his stories to add an aesthetic value to them. Reading Hussein is like: "we were an ancient audience sitting before a story teller with a lute." Hamza et al., (2023) analysing Hussein's short story "Sweet Rice" observe that his stories deal with issues of identity, cultural conflict, and struggle for independence. "Sweet Rice" illustrates how a damaged sense of self can result from colonization and cultural assimilation. He powerfully shows the dilemma of identity crisis, cultural hybridity and quest for independence through the character of Shireen, the protagonist of the story. Her effort for independence comes to surface when, after being rejected from her husband for a job start-up and consideration of her medical degree as a third world country's degree, she decides to write a book on the recipes like 'Sweet Rice' and other traditional sub-continental dishes. Through Shireen's journey, Hussein presents a potent reminder that real emancipation comes from severing ties with society's norms and following one's own desires. In the end, "Sweet Rice" conveys a powerful message: accepting our cultural roots and paving our own pathways can result in a life that is happy and meaningful.

Hussein uses a compact and concise style of writing in his short stories. By implying direct address, he bridges the gap between readers and characters creating a kind of understanding between them. In his short story "Turquoise", Hussein unfolds the themes of cultural hybridity, identity and time. Two main characters of the story, Nusra and Danny, struggle to find their identities as they occupy multiple transitional territories. Hussein's characters, as most of them are diasporic, face a kind of split personality between their familial relationships and self-improvement. In this way, cultural hybridity remains a continuous theme in most of his writings. He highlights the difficulties and complexities of hybrid ground by using various tools like language and culture. Hussein's stories reveal that cultural identities are never fixed; rather, they shift over time and are not constrained by particular limits (Abbas et al., 2022).

Hussein pursues his writings for identity crisis and hybridity as his novella, *Another Gulmohar Tree*, projects the same issues. A person may go through an identity crisis while settling in a new city or nation. *Another Gulmohar Tree*, the title of the novella, gives the story a lot of significance by clearly illustrating how culture and identity may change. It also indicates that Usman and Lydia go through the same process after changing culture.

Lydia, a girl from London after coming to Karachi, had to change herself according to the traditions, culture and religion of her adopted hostland. Even her name is changed to Rokeya. Similarly, Usman, after going to London felt alienated there and after being failed in locating his identity, had to return to Karachi. A person must adapt to the society in which he seeks to find acceptance and take on that location's culture, traditions, and conventions (Abbas and Gohar, 2023).

In his novel, *The Cloud Messenger* Hussein deals with the themes of culture, lost identities, hybridity and self-improvement once again. Abro (2012) writes in *Dawn* that main characters remain in search of a place which they can call their own. His characters travel physically and emotionally. The title of the novel is taken from Sanskrit writer Kalidasa's poem "Meghaduta" and to some extent story can be compared with the poem but Hussein's story is different and he also uses different styles and narratives to portray it. Hussein mostly writes multi-narrative stories but switches between them so smoothly that reader is never consciously aware of changing narrative perspectives. He mostly writes in first and third person narratives. His writings also include many inter-textual references of Urdu and Persian. In this way reading Hussein not only develops interest in his writings but also for old Urdu and Persian poetry like that of Rumi, Ghalib and Faiz.

Theoretical Framework

Khan (2013), with regard to his review of Cilano's book *National Identities in Pakistan: The 1971 War in Contemporary Pakistani Fiction*, chosen to serve as theoretic framework for the paper at hand, very aptly assesses that she rejects the official state narratives about the 1971 Partition, insisting that it is fiction that determines comprehensive reality of this particular event as the characteristic of numerous truths, according to her, belongs to fiction. She reads Pakistani identity as shaped through literary narratives and unfolds various dimensions of the 1971 Partition by making a comprehensive study of various fictional narratives. As Cilano establishes supremacy of fictive narratives on state narratives in order to reach facts and respond to historical events, the paper reads "Karima" as a fictional narrative responding to the 1971 Partition of Pakistan.

Due to the censorship of media during war times, lack of official narratives and a very late declassification of *The Report of Hamoodur Rehman Commission Inquiry* (hitherto referred to as *The Report*) on the 1971 War, the vacuum of narratives for Pakistani stance were filled by English and Urdu fictions about the 1971 War. Cilano's book "situates its analyses of English and Urdu language fictions about the war against this backdrop in an attempt to fill this vacuum" (2011, p. 2). Moreover, Pervez Musharraf's expression of regret to the people of Bangladesh in 2002 somehow cleared a space for literary narratives and works about the 1971 War and the subsequent Partition of Pakistan.

Cilano, dealing with *The Report*, observes that it "fails to provide an adequate narrative" for the events of 1971 (p. 15). The main report of the commission and the *White Paper on the Crisis in East Pakistan* stated that the Awami League in East Pakistan planned an armed rebellion on March 26, 1971 but the 1974 'Supplement of Commission' differs with the initial findings of *The Report* (pp. 19-20). It is much difficult to locate real reasons of that partition. Cilano believes that even after so many inadequacies still *The Report* has a significant importance in creating a narrative of 1971 but it seems that *The Report* can't locate the various realities and shifts findings. She says that *The Report's* findings are inadequate but it "opens up a narrative field in which the fiction about 1971 animate possible meanings and consequences of that year and its aftermath" (p. 26). Cilano explores that pre-partition India and post-partition Pakistan nurtured an artificial relation between

national identity of Pakistan that was based on Islam and a particular language so, idea of Pakistaniness was religion oriented (p. 28). This homogenized celebration of Pakistaniness was adopted by Pakistani nationalist narratives of state and fiction.

Cilano shows Biharis and Bengalis as eternally displaced persons by referring to specific fictions. She thinks that as these fictions project reality of place or camps for immigrants so their importance can't be undermined (p. 68). Hannah Arendt makes a claim in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*; the camps were "the only practical substitute for a non-existent homeland" (Arendt: 1994, quoted in Cilano, 2011, p. 70). Even after being expelled from Bangladesh, Biharis could not get humane treatment in camps and even lost their identity. They eventually belonged nowhere. "City of Sorrows" by Intezar Husain is a manifestation of statelessness and homelessness of Biharis and Bengalis as characters in the story fail to recognize their identities after the 1971 Partition. The group's status is effectively changed from migrants to refugees when they transition from a location of sanctuary to a place of unfitness (p. 78).

Cilano refers to Pakistani diasporic characters that live away but are still tied to their country, through Hussein's English story "Karima"; Hassan Manzar's Urdu story "British Graves"; and Kamila Shamsie's novel *Kartography*. Hussein's story focuses on the sufferings of displaced Biharis through the story of Karima (a Bihari refugee of the 1971 Partition living in London). Manzar's story explores narratives of belonging from diasporic point of view through characters like Rowdy Bush and Noorul Imam. Shamsie's novel speculates on narratives of different social classes in Karachi and their belongings. Taking cue from Cilano's observations regarding the supremacy of fictional narratives over the state/nationalist narratives like those of *The Report*, the paper at hand subjects Hussein's "Karima" to a more extensive and exhaustive analysis in order to reveal its multifaceted dimensions of critical engagements vis-à-vis the 1971 Partition, in comparison with Cilano's fleeting one in her book and that too focusing on Karima's perpetual trajectory of exoduses: Dhaka to Pakistan and afterwards to London.

Results and Discussion

Hussein's titular character of Karima paves the way for the exploration of the 1971 Partition. Featuring a Bihari girl Karima as a protagonist, the story unfolds the circumstances which forced Karima to migrate from East Pakistan to West Pakistan along with all oppressions which fell on her during that whole journey. Now, it is of utmost importance to recognize various reasons behind the 1971 Partition as Cilano (2011) herself thinks that Indian Muslims had only claim of Muslim separatism as a rationale for their independent country. Farzana Shaikh views Muslim nationalism as a negative identity because whoever "they" are, "they are not the Congress" (Shaikh; 2009, quoted in Cilano, 2011, p. 31). Thus Cilano propels the idea that Muslim nationalism was used by Muslim leaders as an idea to make a balance against Indian nationalism and get a territorialized nation: Pakistan. And to stand by this idea of Muslim nationalism, Muslims in 1947 migrated to West and East Pakistan. Among those migrants, Biharis are significant as Cilano too notes a "Bihari" as an Indian Muslims "who migrated to East Pakistan in 1947" and a large number of those Muslims came from "Indian State of Bihar" (p. 69). Karima mentions the story of migration of her husband Badshah's and her own parents' families from Patna, Bihar: "they came away, his parents and mine when the country was divided by strong ones" (Hussein, 2014, p. 22).

Biharis are those people who migrated to East Pakistan following ideological slogans of Muslim nationalism. In its historical context, Cilano throws the idea of Muslim nationalism as false identity for Pakistanis as there were a lot of linguistic, cultural and

political diversities among the people of that newly established nation of Pakistanis. Nasr observes that “the problematic facing Pakistan was how to manage the discourse of identity that had produced it but prevent other communities from carrying the process of fragmentation further” (Nasr: 2005, quoted in Cilano, 2011, p. 31). This fear of fragmentation practically proved in 1971 when partition occurred due to many factors including political and linguistic differences between two wings of Pakistan. In the ‘Supplement’ of *The Report*, General Farman Ali’s states: “[t]he whole attitude of West Pakistanis totally was this, they will not agree to be dominated by East Pakistanis politically” (quoted in Cilano, 2011, p. 20).

Cilano views the name of the newly established country as an acronym for specific territories that would make West Pakistan: “PAKISTAN” for five Northern units of India, including Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Kashmir, Sindh and Balochistan with no representation of Bengal in it (p. 101). Bengali nationalism was lifted when Bengali language could not get equal status with Urdu. Ahmer (2014) writes in *Dawn* that catalyzed by political and linguistic differences, Pakistan became first postcolonial state to fall apart due to ethnic nationalism. In an attempt to examine schism of 1971 and its aftermath, we can go into the life of the titular character of Hussein’s story “Karima” and her family. This story explores themes of oppression in the camps of refugees/migrants, identity crisis of migrants in the new country, class difference between the sons of the soil and the Muhajirs, ideological Muslim nationalism and violence that occurred during the partition.

Oppression in the Refugees/Migrants Camps

During the civil war of 1971, a mass level migration took place as Bengalis who used to live in West Pakistan had to go to their new established homeland Bangladesh and similarly many individuals who believed in Muslim nationalism decided to leave Bangladesh and they migrated towards West Pakistan. The Biharis were prominent among them. Before their resettling in the new country, refugees/migrants had to stay in the camps which were horrible habitats for the migrants as a study by Arendt states that the camps offered: “the only practical substitute for a non-existent homeland” (Arendt: 1994, quoted in Cilano, 2011, p. 69). Karima while talking to unknown narrator in the story calls to mind the dreadful scenario of their refugees/migrants camps. A story of oppression is evident when Karima appraises the unknown narrator that in the camps there were: “[c]rowding, filth, hunger, people complaining. We’d lost everything” (Hussein, 2014, p. 23). As a habitat, the camps only signify fear and maltreatment which fell on refugees/migrants as Karima continues: “[s]ometimes the shit-stink of those camps still fills my nostrils and I think of it as the smell of fear” (p. 24). A large number of Biharis is still stuck in the camps which have turned into slums. The once educated, upper middle class Bihari refugees are now forced to live in filth, experience starvation and lack access to healthcare and education facilities (Hali, 2018). Cilano portrays deterioration of the camps by referring to Naeem Aarvi’s short story “Godhara Camp” as a narrator in his story says that no one could believe that a camp was set in a desert and it was incomprehensible that it would develop into “a hamlet full of people” (Aarvi: 2008, quoted in Cilano, 2011, p. 71).

Class Difference between the Sons of the Soil and the Muhajirs

Migration results in two classes including the sons of the soil and the Muhajirs. Being true Pakistanis the Muhajirs left their lands and properties for ideological Muslim nationalism. But still these are the sons of the soil or natives who take privileges of that specific territory and the migrants are marginalized. Cilano refers to this idea of benefits and privileges by referring to Mohsin Hamid’s novel *Moth Smoke*’s characters Daru and Shuja. Daru is seen as a drug seller and his buyer Shuja is from a “big feudal family”

(Hamid quoted in Cilano, 2011, p. 38). Cilano further suggest that the sons of the soil take advantage and perpetuate such networks which are beneficial for them. The terrible conditions that drive Daru (a member of migrant family of 1947) to sell drugs contrast sharply with the ease and obvious impunity with which people of Shuja's class (the sons of the soil) operate (Cilano, 2011, p. 38). Thus, there exist sharp class differences between the sons of the soil and the Muhajirs.

Karima, born in Dhaka, a Muhajir in West Pakistan after the 1971 Partition, had to suffer a lot because of her status of a Muhajir, on the other hand native ladies of West Pakistan seemed to enjoy their lives in contemporary era. Karima, while narrating her life in East Pakistan, says, "We lived quite well" and people used to call us "the royal family because of our good food and our happy faces" (Hussein, 2014, p. 22). But as the tragedy of partition occurred and her status changed to that of a Muhajir in Karachi, life got worse for her. She had to work "in a big house in Defence," where her second husband Rahim was working as a "chauffeur". Karima says: "I began to work in the same house," in which she had to iron and stitch clothes and look after "mistress's needs". Mistress being from the sons of the soil class had the privilege to enjoy such a luxury lifestyle while Karima had to work as a servant to fulfil the needs of her migrant family (p. 26).

Rahim was also not satisfied with the treatment they got in West Pakistan, now Pakistan. In this new country they have to live under a stairway "in two small rooms" and they are to share an "outside latrine" with the other people of the same area. While the sons of the soil have the privilege of big houses in Defence and other worth living areas, the Muhajirs live in small rooms. Karima goes on to describe Rahim's discontentment by saying that "his disappointment in the new country" was apparent (p. 27). Thus, there existed a class difference between the sons of the soil and the Muhajirs. Cilano, in her effort to show the maltreatment which was received by the Muhajirs, refers to Intizar Hussain's short story "City of Sorrows" in which one character describes that even after the migration, circumstances cannot be changed for refugees/migrants and each of the land is equally cruel, "one's own motherland as well as the land of refuge" (Hussain: 2008, quoted in Cilano, 2011, p. 36).

Further this difference can be seen as Karima's first son Shahzad is considered as a burden on the family. According to Karima, Shahzad was "one more mouth to feed, clothe and send to school." While Saima, the daughter of the sons of the soil, was celebrating her birthday. When Shahzad had little to eat and his mother was struggling for his better life, birthday party of little Miss Saima was being served with "fried savouries and sticky cakes and pink pastries" (Hussein, 2014, p. 27). Children of Sahib were enjoying their lives by "pop music" which was turned on "a big tape-recorder" while Shahzad, only twelve years old, was sent to work as a "mechanic" (pp. 27-28). Karima even adopted illegal stay in London to earn more money so that she could help her family back in Pakistan and in that attempt she even had to work with a Bengali butcher and got a slap from him once as Karima says: "He's only hit me once" (p. 31). After migration, Karima's family had to suffer in Pakistan while at the same time the Saheb's family, the sons of the soil, enjoyed privileges of life.

Identity Crisis

During the 1971 Civil War, the Urdu speaking Biharis who used to live in East Pakistan and Bengalis who used to live in West Pakistan came under the cloud because of their status as lingual and cultural minorities. Cilano observes that it was a perspective among the sons of the soil that they considered geographical ties or association with land as a source of identity. Cilano digs this understanding through the character of Asif in

Kamila Shamsie's novel *Kartography* when Asif says that as the Muhajirs have no association with land so they can't feel about land as the locals feel because they left their homes at the time of the partition. For Asif, national identity is entirely dependent on the land itself, rather than the concept of a nation that eventually achieves physical shape through territorialization (Shamsie: 2002, quoted in Cilano, 2015, p. 37). Refugees/migrants are the people who, despite their ideological, historical, or geographical claims to national affiliation, are denied recognition by their country (p. 36). Being a migrant family in East Pakistan and having no association with the land Karima and her family lost their national identity during the 1971 Partition. As Punjabi soldiers went to East Pakistan, Karima defines this state to unknown narrator by saying that people were finding safe shelters and they used to say: "Bengalis and Biharis alike should run for their skins" (Hussein, 2014, p. 24).

Now this is obvious that harsh circumstances define Karima as a Bihari girl although she was born in Dhaka and never went to Bihar. Same people who used to call her "Basanti" turned against her during the civil war and in an attack those people called them "Dirty Biharis" and forced them to leave the country by saying: "go home or we'll get you." Same country, where they have spent more than two decades, took their identities away because of no association with the land. Their identity was disrespected and attackers, ignoring background of Karima's family, said: "Get out, get out, go to your murdering, Punjabi masters." Meanwhile Karima's husband said "this is our home." But having no association with the land, their identity was shattered and being considered as Biharis they were forced to leave East Pakistan (p. 24).

During the 1971 Civil War, the people of East Pakistan called them as Bihari "refugees" while they were in the camps. Karima recognizes this loss of identity when she says that they were suddenly considered "foreigners" in the country they had "ever known". Karima projects this sad loss of identity as she says that they were foreigners in Pakistan too where they were supposed to belong. Karima says: "Homeless here, homeless there" (p. 24). On arrival in West Pakistan, migrant family of Karima still faced identity crisis. Same country which was being considered "new homeland" by Karima could not give them a safe life as they have no association with the geographical land. In Pakistan, when Karima went to Clifton with her husband, she felt "strange", "foreign" and "poor". Karima says that their Urdu was "alien" for people around them and they used to call them "*Bengali log*" although Karima defined her identity as "Bihari and Pakistani" (Italics in original, p. 26). Now, it is evident that while people in East Pakistan defined identity of Karima's family with reference to Punjabi masters, peoples in West Pakistan considered them Bengali people. So, there existed a crisis of identity for Karima in both countries. But as soon as Karima left for London where identity is not associated with concept of territorialization, she got better circumstances and enough money to send back home in Pakistan. She recalls this identity in London as she says: "But here, we are all the same, Bihari or Bangla" (p. 31).

Ideological Pakistani/Muslim Nationalism

According to *Penguin Dictionary of International Relations*, nationalism is used in "two related senses, first, to identify an ideology and secondly, to describe a sentiment" (Evans and Newnham, 1998). Considering Muslim separatism as a base for nationalism of this ideological state, Biharis and other Muslims left their ancestral lands on Jinnah's call to get a new country and they made trek to west or eastwards because they were committed to "the ideology of a homeland for India's Muslims" (Cilano, 2011, p. 69). The Bihari community's sacrifices for the foundation of Pakistan in 1946-47 and the 1971 Civil War

demonstrate their perseverance, devotion, dedication, and obligation to the cause of a unified Pakistan (Siddiqi & Shahid, 2022).

Karima says that her ancestors came to East Pakistan by giving a lot of “sacrifices” and they thought that they could follow their “beliefs in peace” and live their “lives in peace” in the new country (Hussein, 2014, p. 23). Karima’s attachment with Muslim nationalism is evident when she defines Pakistan that it is the country which was supposed for them to “belong”. Her husband raised slogan for ideological Muslim state as he said, “Long live Pakistan” in front of a mob of Mukti Bahini. Further he believed that Punjabi soldiers were “friends” for Biharis and they have come to “rescue” Biharis and other West Pakistani Muslims from “marauding Banglas”. Before his murder Badshah refused to say “Joy Bangla, Joy Mukti Bahini” rather he got furious at the mob and declared them as “Bangla traitors”. He continued, “This is Pakistan. *Pakistan Zindabad*” and moments before his death he said: “I’ll live and die in Pakistan.” And eventually for Pakistan, which was result of Muslim separatism, he gave his life (Italics in original, p. 24). Karima defines West Pakistan as their “new homeland” after migration. She defines her family’s identity in Karachi as “Bihari” and “Pakistani” (p. 26). First migration of Karima’s ancestors to East Pakistan to follow Muslim beliefs and live in peace and then migration of Karima’s family to West Pakistan along with her husband’s death all signify their sacrifices for ideological Pakistani/Muslim nationalism.

Violence during the 1971 Partition

The 1971 Civil War provoked violence as majorities in both the wings of Pakistan turned against their ethnic and lingual minorities. Released on 5 August 1971, *The White Paper on the Crisis in East Pakistan* and later *The Report* record rabble-rousing and violent activities of Awami League in the March of 1971. *The White Paper* and *The Report* collectively justified that along with political talks, Awami League had intentions “to launch an armed rebellion” and seize “by power” if they failed to get their so called rights by constitutional struggle (Cilano, 2011, pp. 19-20). In these violent attacks thousands of Biharis were arrested, slain, and forced to flee their homes and seek safety in refugee camps. Thousands of people abandoned their homes in fear of their lives, and the state took their property in Bangladesh (Sattar, 2013). After the cancellation of Assembly opening of March 3, bands of Mukti Bahini massacred thousands of Biharis and other West Pakistanis (Vogler, 2010).

“Karima” is a story about violence as throughout the story violent activities are visible. Karima tells the unknown narrator that when the Punjabi soldiers came, “there were stories of massacres of students, peasants and passers-by.” Karima’s husband was killed by a mob of Mukti Bahini and he was given a painful death as he was set on fire. Karima says that the same person, who wanted to attack her while she was clad in her “thin night sari”, attacked Badshah and set her “man on fire.” The effect of that violent act was so great that Karima still remembers that scene as she says: “The stench of burning flesh still fills my nostrils” (Hussein, 2014, p. 24). While her husband was burning, he asked Karima to run. Karima’s escape further exposes the violence of the 1971 Civil War. She ran “through the flames of houses,” past many “burning bodies” under the sky which was veiled “in the smoke of shame” and “amid brothers tearing out each other’s throats” (p. 25). Karima’s mother-in-law was cruel to her and her first son because she thought that Shahzad brought “ill-fortune” to the family and sucked out “his father’s life.” While Karima rejected claim of her mother-in-law and stated that only the leaders of two the wings “united and divided countries” were responsible for making “brothers against each other” and they were even ready “to tear out each other’s throats and their sisters’ wombs” (p. 26).

It was all due to violence and backwash of violence that initially Karima lost her beloved husband Badshah and later her son, Shahzad, who wanted to become a star but ended as a mechanic and still lost his life. Hearing about death of Shahzad, Karima once again passed through nostalgia and recalls “the face of marauders and the scared eyes of the one who ran” to save their lives while Mukti Bahini attacked their camp. Karima summarizes whole series of violence as: “Lord, your floods and storms, they respect no one, but love us poor best of all” (p. 27).

Conclusion

Karima, a daughter of Biharis, remains homeless in every country. The Muslim nationalism was the only reason for leaders of Muslim League to get a territorialized nation-state but this ideology could not bind both the wings of the nation as Pakistan became first postcolonial nation-state to break into two fragments. Living a good life in East Pakistan before the 1971 Partition, Karima had to suffer a lot due to her identity as a Bihari girl during the 1971 Civil War and even after that in West Pakistan and London. Although her family, especially her husband did a lot in the name of ideological Pakistani nationalism and he even sacrificed his life but still they could not live a prestigious life as they were relegated to the status of Bihari migrants in West Pakistan. The paper concludes that although the Muhajirs left their lands and possessions for Pakistani nationalism but their identity could not be shaped as a Pakistani. The 1971 Civil War provoked mass level genocide and resulted in yet another oppressive and painful story of partition. A large number of refugees/migrants were killed and those who survived had to face dejection in refugee camps and on reaching the country of their choice they were not welcomed there as well. Rather there rose a class difference among natives (the sons of the soil) and the Bihari migrants (Muhajirs) as the sons of the soil lived a prestigious life and the Bihari migrants were marginalized. Victims of identity crisis, the Bihari migrants are still fighting to get an identity in the country of their choice: Pakistan.

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