

LOCATION, MIGRATION AND SPACE IN KAMILA SHAMSIE'S *A GOD IN EVERY STONE*

Dr Shashikant Mhalunkar

*Department of English,
B.N.N. College, Bhiwandi*

Ms Anita Vasant Ubale

*Research Scholar
Department of English
University of Mumbai*

Abstract:

Kamila Shamsie through her novel, A God in Every Stone (2014) makes her readers to traverse and witness the historical, geographical and cultural spaces and locations of various countries like ancient Caria, Persia, Turkey, London, France, Germany and Peshawar that too without moving their feet. Shamsie intertwines the migration with the history, culture, archaeology and war. Her characters represent nomadism. They move from one place to the other, from one nation to the other. The author develops the narrative with the itineraries of the characters. The shift in the narration from past to present also explicates theme of migration. Kamila relates migration with physical, psychological, cultural and historical space. The paper attempts to analyze the instances of migration, location, and space from A God in Every Stone.

Key Words: *Migration, Location, Space*

The term, Migration “can be used for the journey from one place to another or for the act of movement.” (Web) Kamila Shamsie’s novel *A God in Every Stone* (2014) documents marathons of migrations to various places, locations and spaces. Shamsie begins narration with a quotation from *The Histories* by Herodotus which states the ancient assigned migration of Scylax, the great Greek explorer in order to discover the new spaces and locations joined by the River Indus. Kamila explicates how the wish to know new locations and will for adventures make the Persian king, Darius I and the great navigator, Scylax to plan and participate in the migration:

The greater part of Asia was discovered by Persian king, Darius I who had wished to know where it was that the sea was joined by the River Indus (this being one of only two in the world which provides a habitat for crocodiles), and so sent ships with men on board whom he could trust to report back truthfully, including Scylax, a man from Caryanda. These duly set off from the city of Caspatyrus, in the land of Pactyike. (Shamsie, 2014)

Kamila narrates the act of changing location from one place to another (Web) in Book I, of the novel captioned, “FOR KING AND COUNTRY” deals with instances from 515 BC of ancient Caria, exhibiting the navigations of Scylax. Further, she introduces the character of Vivian Rose Spencer, an archaeologist who traverses from London to Labraunda. The author through these migrations pinpoints Vivian’s love for archaeology and excavation. She also presents a senior archaeologist from Turkey,

Tahsin Bey who is also on the trip to excavate the Circler of Scylax at Labraunda. His stories from past entertain and spatially shift the people during their journeys. Archeologists' temporary migration to Labraunda virtually migrate the readers to witness the historical locations, Carian forces and the valor of King Darius and also Alexander the Great.

Migration is one of the prime concerns of the author. Through physical mobility and spatial shift the characters envision various places, locations and journeys. Similarly, Kamila introduces the nomadic aspect of Vivian and Tahsin Bey's personality. The author says, "It takes considerable courage to come to an unknown part of the world, away from everything you've ever known." (Shamsie 14) The author represents the universal nomadism with mixed cultures, genders, identities and habits. Kamila shows multiple migrations of archeologists from different parts of the world to Labraunda. She underlines:

That night there were ten at dinner around a long wooden table under the night sky. There Germans, six Turks, and Viv. They started the meal in near-silence, all attention on the stew which Nergiz the cook had prepared, but when it was over they pushed their plates away, and everyone other than Viv – even the two German women – lit up cigarettes and fell into rapid chatter about their day in a mix of languages in which French dominated. (Shamsie 16)

Subsequently, Shamsie gathers characters from different locations of the world. They not only traverse from the different places to Turkey but they dig the ruins of the temple complex and transgress into past. This excavation of the historical locations uncovers the glorious past and rich culture. Similarly, the author through a dramatic and picturesque narration virtually shifts the readers to ancient location and space.

Shamsie's characters - Vivian Rose Spencer and Tahsin Bey migrate from their homelands to Labraunda, Turkey as well as from present to past. They spatially shift into past through their discoveries. Vivian Rose Spencer finds out the Temple of Zeus, a place which throws light upon Greek history. The author also traces Alexander the Great's migration to see Amazon queen's two headed axe. She also showcases how the temple represents a devotional, emotional and psychological space of Carian forces who take refuge in the temple after the defeat at the hands of Persians.

Vivian Rose and Tahsin Bey also represent nomadism as they move from one place to another, digging out evidences from history. In a way, they also attempt a spatial shift in past. Tahsin Bey takes many journeys in order to find the Circler of Scylax, the Greek explorer. Through archaeology and the archeologists the author takes the liberty of spatial switch to ancient history and come back to the present. Characters move temporarily from their homelands to different places like Labraunda and Peshawar. They throw away their cultural and ethnic identities and embrace nomadism. They stay in tents and become a part of the crew. Every summer they leave their homes and migrate to Labraunda, Turkey. As the work for summer gets over, these archeologists move back to their respective homes and homelands.

Further, Kamila portrays the darker side of war as the soldiers in hospitals are ill-treated. Vivian Rose facilitates the nation by working as a VAD nurse. Her returning to England from Turkey highlights her love for her nation. She has been called from the hospital as one of government officers has approached the Spencers to see Vivian as the Map Division thinks that Vivian has drawn maps which are useful to the army. The maps of Cairo during her excavation which Vivian has drawn represent her itineraries. Lawrence and Woolley are also sketch details of landscapes, buildings and monuments as they travel and explore different places. According to the officer from the War Office, “They are the great travellers and explorers and linguists of the age. In times of war, such men are indispensable.” (Shamsie 37) This instance traces the usefulness of the migratory subjects during the war.

Consequently, Kamila points out Vivian’s virtual migration, when the War Officer and Dr Spencer laugh on her negligible existence. Vivian remembers how she is superior in her field to Lawrence and Woolley:

Viv lowered her head and looked away from the laughing men. For just a moment she had imagined herself in Cairo, standing in the shadow of the Pyramids with Lawrence and Woolley drawing a map of the Turkish coastline in the sand to their cries of admiration. (Shamsie 37-38)

Gradually, Kamila explicates the forced migration of Indian soldiers in various parts of the world. The British rule forces them to take part voluntarily in World War I. This migration is an example of Indian loyalty towards the Empire. They fight with valor and enthusiasm for their ruler. Kamila states the migration of Indian soldiers at different war places in Europe, “. . . the Indian soldiers at the Western Front. Thousands of miles from home, fighting with exceptional valour.” (Shamsie 39)

Similarly, Kamila traces the migration of archaeologists to discover the footprints of history and cultures of these varied times, spaces, populations and nationalities. The historical location Shahji-Ki-Dheri provides the material for uncovering history. Shahji-ki-Dheri becomes an important historical location for which archeologists voluntarily migrate to Peshawar. The archaeologists across the world reach Peshawar during the unrest of the World War I. Shamsie chronicles how all the characters through Shahji-ki-Dheri traverse in the past. Tahsin Bey also migrates temporarily to Peshawar to see the Sacred Casket of Kanishka. Vivian also moves to Peshawar after getting lead about the circlet from Tahsin.

Further, Kamila also traces Vivian’s familial space. Vivian’s father always encourages her whereas her mother does not like her nomadic identity. Mrs Spencer attacks Vivian and her father for her nomadic life. The migration of Vivian in every summer is pinpointed by her mother. She says:

“ – You went off to Turkey, to live in a tent, on a hillside, with no one within hundreds of miles known to any of us except an unmarried foreign man. That was your father’s doing.” (Shamsie 53)

Consequently, Kamila also explicates how the deformed identities of the soldiers enable them to migrate virtually. At Vipers, Qayyum Gul takes his treatment for the lost eye whereas at Aubers Ridge his friend, Sepoy Kalam Khan is busy in the war. As a patient in the hospital, he virtually migrates to

Peshawar. Memories thus, play a pivotal role in transgressing the mobile subjects from their refuge to the homeland.

Subsequently, the author underlines forced migration of soldiers who are injured on the battlefield and are either shifted into the hospitals for treatment or they are sent back to their homes. Qayyum Gul, a wounded soldier who is in the hospital for his treatment is an instance of forced migration. Within his spatial fixities as a refugee in hospital, he observes how soldiers are deputed, shifted and ordered to move from one place to the other either because of wounds or authority. At the same time, different treatments are given to the soldiers from India and from France. Indian soldiers are sent back to the battlefield, though they are wounded. On the contrary, the White soldiers are sent back home. Qayyum critiques the cultural differences and migration:

It was the sepoy whose ankle had been shattered by a bullet and whose lungs were weakened by chlorine gas; soon he would be sent back to France. His letter had been addressed to the King-Emperor himself, complaining that wounded Indians were sent back into the field with injuries that would allow an English soldier to return home. (Shamsie 69)

Further, the author states how the World War I becomes one of the major reasons for forced migration. It forces soldiers to scatter in different parts of the world. They are forced to migrate without their will and wish. Further, they are restricted in their activities in the hospitals due to injuries in the migrated spaces which become fixities for them. Kalam Khan, a Sepoy in Imperial army posted in France is a friend of Qayyum Gul who is wounded in war and is admitted in Kitchener Hospital in France. His spatial shift is compulsory for Kalam. But, virtually he migrates to Peshawar from Brighton. This also shows an instance of virtual migration where the migratory subjects cannot free themselves from the spatial rigidities. He writes:

Qayyum, I am here, in Brighton. At Kitchener Hospital. Don't worry, it is bullet wounds in places where the flesh will heal and soon they will send me back to France. But I am here now, in Brighton. I pray to Allah you haven't left for Peshawar yet. Kalam Khan, Sepoy. (Shamsie 73)

Kitchener Hospital, Class A Hospital, these hospitals play a very important role in order to understand the other sides of the war. These locations also highlight the colonized and bias attitude. The author chronicles how the wounded soldiers are confined. The sanitary posts, guards, barbed wires in the hospitals create the illusions as of enemy's prisons.

Eventually, Qayyum returns to India from Britain as his treatment gets completed. On his voyage, he realizes that there was no response from Kalam Khan. Qayyum receives a fake letter that Kalam is fine and he will be transferred to Barton-on-Sea. Such attempts are made to avoid unrest among soldiers and at the same time, such soldiers are deported and forcibly sent to various places either on battlefields or in jails. Qayyum Gul traverses from France to Peshawar in a train. His migration back to his native land is an instance of reverse Diaspora. On the journey he observes the spatial differences between his homeland and the other countries.

Subsequently, Shamsie highlights how Qayyum Gul represents a migratory subject who projects mobility and nomadism in his generation as well as in his forefather's generations. The family history showcases fluctuations in dwelling places and cultural adaptations of those places through languages and food. Qayyum is in army and remains mobile from place to place. His great grandfather was a migratory identity from the Yusufzai lands. Qayyum observes, "His great-grandfather had left the Yusufzai lands decades before Qayyum was a Peshawari, a city-dweller, with Hindko not Pashto as his first language." (Shamsie 85) Further, Najeeb also traces the instances of different cultural spaces and identities in Peshawar, the city of walls:

"That man is from Tashkent, he said, and that one from Tibet; there's a Panjabi, that's an Afridi Pathan and that one is Sikh and those two Hindu." (Shamsie 100)

Kamila Shamsie chronicles the migration. She selects characters and locations from different historical time - Herodotus, Scylax, Alexander and Asoka who are mobile, adventurous. Similarly, Tahsin Bey, Vivian Spencer and Qayyum Gul represent different nationalities, adventures. *A God in Every Stone* uncovers the history of the Kanishka dynasty. Peshawar was the headquarters of the Kanishka dynasty. She exemplifies the location of the Great Stupa which was seven hundred feet tall. She states how there is a god in every stone. Gradually, Kamila vocalizes the destructive result of migration. She comments on how incessant attacks on historical monuments destruct the history and glory of the time. Vivian Spencer locates abandoned condition of the Great Stupa which has turned into just relics.

Further, Kamila talks about different places in Peshawar through her narrative. She talks about Haji Turangzai, Khyber Pass wherein the Indians revolt non-violently against the British rule. They are suppressed and shot dead by the rulers. These places evoke interest and curiosity in the mind to study history and instances from history in these places that shape the present and culture of Peshawar etc. Yusufzai land, Storyteller Street, etc.

Gradually, like Vivian, Najeeb also shows his interest in exploring the journey of Scylax. Thus, he becomes one of the eminent archeologists to trace history and migration of Scylax. He says, "There was a man called Scylax who came here long ago. Longer ago than anything in the Museum. He travelled from Peshawar all the way down the Indus, and when he went away he took stories of the tribes who lived here." (Shamsie 110)

Similarly, the writer showcases how the Cirlet of Scylax occupies the mental space among characters. They transgress spatially with their imaginations. Vivian Rose and Najeeb discuss location of the Cirlet of Scylax. They attempt to locate where exactly the Cirlet is after the death of Scylax. The Cirlet is like a crown given to Scylax by Emperor Darius. The archeologists study the location of the Sacred Casket which is considered as Kanishka Casket in the rule of Kanishka. The archaeologists try to find it out from the relics in Shahji-ki-Dheri. They also believe that Alexander might have taken away the Cirlet from Caria after he conquered it. This instance traces how the Cirlet passed on from one hand to another. Shamsie connects the multiple migrations of people along with the Cirlet.

Kamila traces the familial, cultural as well as social space in Peshawar. Qayyum's shift from battlefield to mud-and-brick houses in Peshawar is also a cultural and spatial shift. With his lost eye, he stays with his family in Peshawar. He is away from noise and chaos of the city life and war. As a Pashtun soldier, he is honored in his area. This instance indicates the social space of the soldier in Peshawar where bravery is honored.

“Everywhere he went he was asked to stay a night and a banquet was prepared in his honour, even when it meant slaughtering the chicken which the family relied on for eggs; the object he brought with him – pebble or bullet or photograph – was passed from hand to hand as if it were a piece of the Black Stone brought by the angle Jibreel himself.”(Shamsie 138)

Qayyum is honored in Peshawar with great zeal. People allowed him to enter the reserved space of the females, zenana. The author highlights Qayyum's geographical shift from battlefield to peaceful life and safe life of Peshawar. She also marks his physical, emotional shifts after the disfigurement.

Subsequently, reading becomes one of the ways to escape from the spatial fixities and time. Najeeb reads books and migrates into the writer's world virtually. Books, thus, become a source of virtual migration for Najeeb. Similarly, for Qayyum writing letter as a letter writer becomes one of the sources to peep in other's world and life. The dull, informative and dry letters make Qayyum migrate into the world of other people. Kamila highlights the cultural space of Peshawar.

Further, Kamila Shamsie minutely observes forced migration of people. It is poverty that forces young boys to enter army. Similarly, the members of poor families send their young boys into army, not out of valor or patriotism but to earn and make a good living for the family. Kamila finds how the forced migration brings deformity in young generation. Such soldiers deformed by war are sent back to their native without their will. The writer notes, “A missing limb, a missing eye – these were the only reasons an Indian soldier would be discharged and find himself in Peshawar again. . .” (Shamsie 146)

Further, Kamila chronicles the migration of the colonizers who assume themselves as the most civilized one. Remmick, the Governor of Peshawar says, “We are here to civilize, not to lose our own civility, he'd said. Then he pointed to Viv and added, some of us in large ways, and some of us in small.” (Shamsie 184)

A God in Every Stone documents how migration shifts as seasons change in India. The British representatives of the Empire move from place to place in India as the climate changes. They visit historical monuments and cultural representative constructions in India ranging from the Taj Mahal to the Caves of Ajanta and Ellora. Kamila chronicles the seasonal migratory visits of the British in India:

“The end of the summer season had transformed the sleepiness of Peshawar, bringing the British back from Simla with balls and picnics and hunts in tow. And the rapidly cooling weather brought with it the possibility of further distractions: a boat-ride down the Indus; the Taj Mahal; the Caves of Ajanta and Ellora; Taxila, where John Marshall had invited her to visit the excavations.” (Shamsie 184-185)

These historical and cultural locations attract the colonizers to understand the history and culture of the oppressed one.

Similarly, Shamsie states how the correspondence through letters becomes one of the modes of transferring information from one geographical space to the other. It provides a reason to characters to migrate virtually from one place to another. When Vivian receives letters from England, these letters are from another world. The letters convey the information of Vivian's familial, social and political space. One of such letters from England conveys the death of Richard who died of wounds because of the war. Kamila makes her protagonist to migrate into past virtually and remember Richard, Mary's brother who is no more now. Vivian remembers:

“Richard, the boy with scabbed knees who she and Mary had chased up trees in his childhood, teased when the puppy-fat fell away and he started to attract the eye of girls, relied on as an escort to parties during their university years. Richard, who disapproved of Mary's suffragette activities but still drove her to WSPI meetings and bailed her out of prison.” (Shamsie 192)

Further, kamila chronicles The Khudai Khidmadgars who protest against the British Police run away one by one and take refugees in the shelter of Courtesans. Kamila highlights the marginal space of courtesans. Further, She makes her protagonist to migrate to Peshawar after fifteen years. She vocalizes how the tiresome journey in the train and the travellers who get down at their destinations exhibit migration and human geographies. Similarly, the passengers who get down at their destination enjoy the fruits whereas passengers like Vivian who continue their journey further, hate them. The author narrates:

“How she hated all the men they passed on the road as they lolled and laughed and held their faces to the breeze and called out to each other in recognition and broke their journey to saunter into an orchard and pull fruit off a branch and eat it in full view of the world, juice spraying the air.”(Shamsie 272)

Kamila observes how people on travel discuss various issues regarding Indian culture and politics.

Gradually, Kamila Shamsie through her novel narrates geographical fixities and unaltered cultural. The city of Peshawar exhibits no alteration in its physical structure and cultural connotations. Vivian Rose, who revisits Peshawar after fifteen years, finds cultural and geographical stagnation. She observes, “Same, same, same – as the merchants in the Walled City might insist while trying to draw your thoughts away from the unavailable object of your desire towards an inferior replacement. Same, memsahib, same.” (Shamsie 273)

Consequently, Kamila puts light on the important location of the Peshawar, Peshawar Museum which is a place where the past and presents assimilates and continues to live together. It preserves the history and gives access to the characters to peep into the past. The visitors of Peshawar Museum traverse in past without crossing any geographical boundary. Najeeb, Qayyum and Vivian observe this magnificent characteristic of Peshawar Museum. It provides peace, safety and information to the visitor.

Subsequently, the author makes her protagonists- Qayyum Gul and Vivian Rose Spencer to move along the streets of Peshawar. Even after the panic attack and the massacre in order to find missing Najeeb. Their itineraries in Storyteller Street, Peshawar highlight the cultural space, the oppressor's attitude towards the oppressed, the social and political scenario of the time. The badalas, the stories told by the storytellers in Storyteller Street also move the listeners to the story teller's world. The listeners become one with the teller's characters, story and places that they virtually enter space and time of the characters.

Further, Shamsie also brings to light the journey of all the characters from ordinary person to a person who knows which things are good for human and society. The author puts light on the journey of Najeeb which transforms him from a small innocent teenager to the Native Assistant of Peshawar Museum, successful archeologist who discovers the circlet of Scylax and becomes enlightened like Buddha at the end. Shamsie also traces shift in Qayyum Gul's personality of from violent soldiers of British army to the messenger of non-violence.

To conclude, *A God in Every Stone* documents the multiple migrations, locations, culture, history and spaces and its impact on Peshawar and its residents, Qayyum and Najeeb. It also puts forth spatial, cultural, personality shift as result of multiple migrations. Kamila relates migration with physical, psychological, cultural and historical space. the cultural mix of the East and West, colonizer and colonized,

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