

ANALYZING VIOLENCE BEHIND THE SO-CALLED CIVILIZING MISSION OF COLONIZERS IN KAMILA SHAMSIE'S NOVEL A GOD IN EVERY STONE**Hina Mustafa**M.Phil. English Literature
Hazara University Manshera, Pakistan**Abstract:**

This article explores the violence behind the civilizing mission of British colonizers in Kamila Shamsie's novel A God in Every Stone. British colonizers after the demise of colonialism do not conquer the lands and territories of people directly but they are using different policies to make them subjugated and the mission of civilizing the nations is one of them. They opine that civilizing the nations is a moral duty of white race assigned to them by God. But in the guise of this mission, their clandestine motive is to become supreme all over the world. This article clearly reveals how British colonizers become violent in their attitude toward natives in the pretext of civilizing mission.

Key Words: *Violence, Imperialism, Civilizing mission, Colonizers***Introduction:**

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the term violence refers to the behavior including physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something. In the post-colonial era, colonizers use violence as a strategy to colonize the people. Civilizing mission is also used by the colonists as a tool to subjugate the colonizers, even after the demise of colonialism. By doing so, they only want to sustain their supremacy all over the world. In order to bring forth the elements of violence in the colonized world, different slave narratives are being discussed. The accounts of these slaves reveal the true picture of the so-called civilized race of the world. Lunsford Lane (1842) says that as he grew old he started noticing the basic distinction between himself and his master's children. He was bound to obey their commands. They were studying while he was not allowed to do so, and if any slave was found having any sort of writing material he would be severely punished for that (7). His desire to purchase his freedom from the slavery had compelled him to do work even at night without the consent of his master. The plan he had adopted was that he would take his axe and secretly run in to the forest and cut wood and sell them for twenty five cents for that he was almost every day chastised by his master (8-9). He narrates the incident of a cruel slave overseer, who whipped a man so brutally that he died instantly, later on he denied the fact by saying that he did not die as a result of flogging (12).

Solomon in his narrative *A Narrative of Some Remarkable Incidents, in the Life of Solomon Bayley* (1825) says that he and his companion escaped from their master and reach the place Hunting Creek where they met with their wives but still they were not happy because they knew that soon they would be chased by their masters. He says that his companion in order to pursue his suit for freedom found some work on the boat. After some time, his master came to know about his working place, he came there along with his men to take him back. As soon as he saw them he jumped into the river and started to swim to another Island, for he was determined to die rather than going back to the slavery. The men chased him like hunters, until he raised his head; they struck him so harshly on his skull with the oar that he died on the spot (7).

John Brown in *Slave Life in Georgia* (1855) says that his master was very cruel man, he was of small stature, had fierce eyes. In fact he was a very bad person and would whip them quite frequently (10-11). In order to give an example of his cruelty he narrates the incidence of his visit to his master's house along with his small brother Curtis. There they were tempted by the sight of water melons, since they were thirsty so, they took one of them, and ate it. Their master saw them and for that act they were whipped with cow-skin, after being beaten by him he was not able to move (12-13). He says once his master sent him up to bring the keys, he could not reach in time for that his master flew in rage, and cut a rode from the hedge and started beating him until he broke the rod.

He cut another rod and inquired why was he delayed, but he was not able to answer him because the blood was oozing out of his body. He was time and again asking why did not he cry, that further enrage him and he cut three more rods and broke them on his back still he kept on beating him until he was stopped by uncle Billy (25-26). One day due to some problem with the plough he was unable to accomplish his task, Stevens his overseer saw him and came up to his working place, and within a second he struck blow on his face which broke his nose and his eye was also displaced from its socket. Though blood was coming out of his nose and eye, still he was compelled to work till evening. John Glasgow after that took care of him. He removed the blood from his face, and gently pressed the eye back to its place. But his both eyes were badly swelled and for a long time he could not see with them (29-30).

The same picture of violence is being discussed by Shamsie in her work *A God in Every Stone*. The story of the novel revolves around a central female character Vivian Rose Spenser. She is an archaeologist who in order to study some important artefacts undertakes a journey to Turkey. In Turkey, she meets Tehsin Bey, the friend of his father, who has been very co-operative with her during her stay in his country. But as soon as the World War I breaks out, she returns back to London in order to serve the injured soldiers. In the mean while she receives the letter from Tehsin Bey asking her to visit Peshawar for the desired artefact.

After this she at once decides to move for Peshawar. On the way to Peshawar she comes across Qayyum Gul, an Indian soldier who loses his eye in the war. Throughout the narrative,

Shamsie tries to explain the destructive effects of the war and the policies of the British Empire. She even refers to the movement leading by Khan Abdul Khaffer Khan against the British rule. The suppression of that movement leads to the killing of thousands of people including a Pathan young girl Diwa. The dead bodies are taken in trucks by British army in order to dispose them, their family members are not allowed to give them a proper burial.

In the second half of book, Shamsie tries to portray a beautiful and peaceful city of Peshawar, where the people gather around in the evening to amuse themselves with the folklores along with enjoying the delicious food. She calls Peshawar as the “City of Flowers” but the same charming city has been turned into battlefield once the people of Peshawar questions the British rule. She explicitly exposes the civilized behaviour of the English people who come to the sub-continent with the aim to spread their glorious civilization but, what they have done is quite opposite to their mission. First they compel the Indians to fight on their behalves in World War I. Many among them die during fighting and rest of them have to lose their body parts. But as soon as they got determined not to subjugate at their command they are most violently treated. Almost every day they kill those who are found to be involved in some campaigns against British Imperialism. As imperialism and violence are practiced by British colonizers in the guise of civilizing mission but their ulterior motive is only to enrich them in the world both economically and physically.

Joseph Conrad’s (1975) character Marlow believes that the British rule in India was entirely based on the hypocrisy. On the surface it seems that they came with the mission to bring civilization in the country, and to govern the colony responsibly, but this idealized picture of their Empire was entirely based on the selfishness of the colonists (P.64). Marx and Engels (1976) believe that bourgeoisie by the pretence of civilizing the barbarian nations actually wanted to further enrich themselves (488). Hobson (1902) says that Imperialism is closely related with the process of moral elevation. According to him the colonizers under the guise of their civilizing mission wanted to take the maximum advantage of wage free labour in the colonies (166). He believes that the Europeans had forcefully occupied the lands of Asia by making an excuse of civilizing the natives and to raise their living standards (346).

Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) says that Europeans in order to assert their supremacy over other nations believed that it was their duty to make a sympathetic attempt to understand the foreign civilization, they admitted that sometimes it did happen that they without consulting the natives meddled in their affairs, and that they had got this right, on the ground of their superiority over them (249). Thomas R Metcalf (1995) in his work *Ideologies of the Raj*, while pointing out at the Western superiority over the other nations says that it is Britain alone which is the symbol of civilization. No other culture has this capacity within it, this is the reason that liberals want to spread it among the humanity (34).

Joseph Chamberlain while talking about the superiority of British over the rest of the nations says that it is the only race, which has got the ability to govern the whole world, in the better way. E Henley in his poetry also talked about the same concept by saying about England as the “chosen daughter of the lord”. It was after the breaking out of the war in the South Africa, that it was considered as the responsibility of the Europeans to convey the message of humanity all over the globe (quoted in Elleke Boehmer’s *Colonial/Postcolonial Literature* P.32).). Alston (1907) in his work *The White Man’s Work in Africa and Asia: A Discussion of the Main Difficulties of Colour Question* while talking about the European supremacy over the rest of the countries says that it is the sacred duty of the Britain to civilize the whole world. They should not content themselves to remain among those who are less civilized and are sunken in the stinking and degraded thoughts (4).

Randy Malamud (1998) believes that the way the colonizers decorated their houses and the luxurious meal served at their tables all showed their Imperial supremacy over the local population. The vast collection of animals in their houses and in the parks represented the prestige of their race (72-73). Suvir (2009) while talking about the prestige of the Europeans quotes the refrain of James Thomson’s anthem to British Authority that is “Britons never will be slaves” which obviously refers to the colonial domination and slavery in the Caribbean and North America (19).

While talking about the Ideology of the supremacy of white race, Miles (1989) quotes a colonist who believes that African forever will remain low-priced labourers they are naturally designed as a working class (105). J A Mangan (2003) says that the sport of hunting actually symbolized the British legitimate right to assert their supremacy over the natives. The dare shown by the hunters while hunting their prey represented their virtue, the superiority of their race and their leadership like qualities (102). J G Elliott in “Shikar as a Part of Life” says that the luxurious meal which was served at the dinner including the meat of deer, peacock and teal etc. showed their social supremacy and their ability to make the benefit from the vast resources of the country (180).

As having discussed the various views of critics, it is concluded that civilizing mission of the British colonizers is only the strategy to colonize the world. Their ulterior motive behind this civilizing mission is very much different as it is clearly depicted in the novel *A God in Every Stone* by Shamsie. It has discussed in detail the various policies used by the colonizers to change the mind-set of the natives so that they follow their rules without any condition. Such is the powerful influence of their strategies that they willingly recruited themselves in their army in order to defend the British Empire. The English are kind towards the natives as long as they obey them but when they demand independence they turn into the violent Imperialists and cause bloodshed. The analysis of the present study exposes that the same colonizers who believe that they have brought peace and justice in the sub-continent themselves ruin the peace and

prosperity of the country. The sufferings of the freedom fighters can better reveal the tyranny of British colonizers.

Analysis:

In the post-colonial epoch, the British colonizers along with many other tactics are using civilizing mission as a tool to colonize the nations even after their independence. They believe that it is the duty of white race assign to them by God to civilize the less-civilized nations. But they are doing so just to become more powerful and supreme all over the world. Their desire for power is actually to control others economically, physically and mentally. Apparently, to change the mind-set of natives British colonizers use such policies that they follow them without any condition. On the other hand British colonizers are very kind to them as long as they follow and obey them but they turn into violent imperialists and cause bloodshed when natives raise their voices against them. Then they no more show their civilized behaviour as they claim that they have brought peace and justice all over the world. The same aspect of violence behind the civilizing mission of British colonizers is evidently portrayed in Kamala Shamsie's work *A God in Every Stone*. The story of the novel spins around the female character, Vivian Rose Spensor, who comes very close to Tehsin Bey in Turkey. Tehsin Bey is a Turkish man, who supports her in her search for important artefacts in Turkey. He shows her around Turkey including the important historical sites and the coasts of Anatolia. They become intimate to one another and have good time together until the breaking out of World War 1. The War has created a gulf among them. They all of sudden become alien to one another. Vivian receives the telegram from her father to leave Turkey as soon as possible. They have decided not to set off together rather they have to work out a separate route back to their countries (23-24).

Shamsie by starting the novel with the outbreak of war tries to expose various questions; for example, in what respect the British colonizers suppose themselves as the most civilized race of the world? How can they justify their claim to bring peace and prosperity in the sub-continent? How can a civilized nation launch a war and bring a huge destruction? Shamsie through the character of Vivian Rose Spensor shows how war brings an enormous change in the life of human beings. Throughout the novel she seems to condemn this heinous act of the British Empire.

The British colonizers compel the natives of the sub-continent to fight on their behalf at Vipers and as a result they have to join the British Army. Lance Naik Qayyum, a protagonist of the novel, leads the troop of Pathans. They are really innocent people who get into the combat without considering what is the actual cause behind it? It is out of their sheer simplicity that they are taken in by the English. As consequences, many people die during fighting and the rest of them become paralyzed for the entire life. Shamsie in the first half of the book narrates the experiences of Indian Soldiers at the combat in order to show how much they have to suffer at the command of the colonizers. Qayyum and his friend Kalam have to encounter bitter

circumstances at the battle. Shamsie takes her readers to the battlefield at Vipers in order to expose what kind of sufferings the innocent natives have to endure at the hands of their oppressors? Qayyum being fighting at the front can only listen to the sound of gunfire and bomb blasts. In the smell of gun powder and scorching heat of the sun he feels some fluid over his face and all of sudden he comes to know that he has been shot over his eye. When he sees many of his fellows dying he thinks what is the cause for which they have to embrace death. He realizes that they are fighting for someone else and that they have nothing to do with this battle (49). Though his eye aches but he cannot cry or even move himself from his place because even a small movement might catch the attention of the German army and come to his place to kill him. After sometimes he sees that the whole battlefield is littered with the dead bodies. Now the soldiers who are deployed at the back are coming forward to replace the position of those who die at the front. Due to the fog at the front they are unable to breathe properly which make them to stumble over the dead bodies. Right at that time Qayyum is reminded of a handkerchief he has in the pocket and he ties it around his nose. The German army are searching the entire battlefield like blood thirsty hounds just to make sure all of their opponents are dead. Suddenly one of them sees Qayyum, but before he is ready to target him, Kalam comes forward to save his friend's life by receiving a bullet on his own chest. It is after some times when he sees Kalam lying unconscious on the floor he becomes aware of his own loss. He tries to reach his eye but instead of it he finds there a messy fluid, he wipes his face leaving a hallow space behind (52).

Shamsie by presenting that horrible picture of war shows that the terms Empire and Violence are interrelated. The desire to become more powerful always entail in a huge destruction and this is what Germany, France, British and Ottoman empire have proved by involving themselves in such a detestable and villainous act, which ends up in enormously killing many innocent people and with a huge list of casualties. Shamsie in the second half of the books discusses the various movements which played a crucial role in the Indians struggle for freedom. She refers to non-violent movement of Ghaffar khan, Jihhad of Haji Sahab and also the storytellers in the Peshawar who through their narratives tries to awake the people of the sub-continent and make them to speak for their right. The second part starts with Qayyum's brother Najeeb, who wants his brother to go with him to the streets of storytellers because he wants his brother to come out of trauma of the war and lead once again the life full of excitement and adventures. Mostly the themes of the stories of storytellers consist of love including the tales of Laila Majnu, about the life of Hazrat Ali etc. but this time the storyteller has brought forward a new story which has grabbed the attention of a huge crowd. It deals with the Jihhad of Hadda Mullah against English, revealing that they came into the country with arms. Hadda Mullah had instantly got their mission and decided to fight them. The storyteller uses a term "Bees" for the followers of Mullah, who though were not as strong as their opponents, but it was their undying spirit on account of which they became able to throw all the unwanted foreigners out of their beloved state. He says that was the matter of the past, at the moment Haji Sahib in the tribal areas is collecting a lot of people to join him in his campaign against British people (112). The story teller through his

narrative wants the native people to get up and speak for themselves. He explicitly raises this question that English have not got any right to govern their lives. They entered in their country by cheating on them. The storytellers in the Peshawar city are trying their best to excite the emotions of the natives so that they can speak for their right and get themselves released from the barbaric English. They deliberately decide to narrate the stories dealing with the themes of valor, encouragement and loyalty to one's land. This time they come up with the story dealing with the Persian king who ruled the land of Caria. He gives the task of navigating the river Indus to one of the Carians named Scylax and he did it successfully for which he was awarded with the most precious circlet. When he came to know that his fellow Carians are brutally treated by the king he refused all the honors and decided to release the Carians from Persian anarchy (19).

He left the letter for the king Darius informing him that he did not need his honor and appreciations for he had realized himself a Carian slave who had served a Persian anarchist (162). At the end of the narrative the storyteller clearly provokes the crowd that they should take the initiative like Scylax in order to release themselves from the British Imperialism. Shamsie through the character of Qayyum tries to portray the general attitude of Indians towards the English, who being unaware of the true intentions of the colonizers are attracted to them. They are made to consider their culture superior to them and as a result they try to imitate their one, but the moment they get their aim they start struggling through various movements in order to get themselves release from their tyranny. When Qayyum sees the growing intimacy between his younger brother Najeeb and English woman Vivian Rose Spensor, he does not tolerate it and wants him not to pursue the relationship further. In order to do that he writes him a detailed letter revealing to him the whole truth about the colonizer's mission. The English claim to educate the natives about their history is not out of concern they show for them, rather by doing so they want to justify their tyrant rule. He believes that these English despite of being less in number are able to govern the lives of millions of Indians just because of their wicked tricks and natives being so innocent to be taken in by them (185). Cohn (1996) in his work also refers to the same concept that the British interest in the Indian culture and literature had a special purpose behind it; they just want to use it as a way to come close to the natives and understand their manners and customs in a better way so that they could govern them effectively. They presented their civilization as a standard and wanted to impose it on the local population (46).

In the entire second half of the book, Shamsie talks about the various movements for freedom and in the third section, she refers to what happens with the freedom fighters. The colonizers who force the natives to fight their battle become even more violent with those who question their rule in the sub-continent. Boehmer (1995) also believes that after the World War I the attitude of the British colonizers towards the natives of sub-continent underwent a huge change. Now they put an extreme importance on the force, for they found it a sound strategy to maintain their rule in the sub-continent (P.35). Qayyum is no more impressed by western culture, now he has a clear vision in front of him to release the country from British Rule. All those who take part in the demonstrations against English are imprisoned and brutally treated by the colonizers. He

along with his companions goes to the police station to release all of them. In order to silence the voices of these natives the English adopt very strict strategies. The British Army drives cars full of explosive material into the city of Peshawar to kill all those who join anti- British protests. The English soldiers being entirely indifferent to their screams and agonies keep on driving the cars crushing several people beneath the wheels of their vehicles.

Shamsie very beautifully unveils the real motive behind the colonizer's civilization mission in this novel. She seems to be quite ironic when she talks about the attitude of the English towards the freedom fighters because the way they have treated the natives a civilized nation can never think of. They have in fact turned the entire city into the battlefield with English troops marching everywhere. Mary (1831) in her slave narrative also refers to the same idea by saying that the English who tends to be very civilized in England when go to the West Indies undergo a huge change and very much behave like brutal beasts. They treat the slaves even worse than cattle (23). The sounds of machine guns, bullets and fire present a very horrific picture. The moment the freedom fighters raise the slogan Inqilaab Zindabad, the British soldiers shower bullets over them which kill large number of Peshawari people who are fighting armless, without any planned strategies. On seeing this situation Qayyum suddenly thinks about all those soldiers at Vipers, who were mistreated by the English just because they would favor the revolutionaries (205-206). He feels shame not only for himself but for all those who took part in the World War I. Now he comes to know that the colonizers do not deserve their loyalties because they are depriving them from their basic right which is freedom. The English soldiers after a short interval resume firing and this time killing all those who have come to take dead bodies away. Now it is unbearable to stand on the ground, it is covered with corpses and those who survive the combat are chased by English soldiers like blood thirsty hounds (207). Qayyum manages to escape somehow from the grip of the British army and takes refuge in the courtesan's street like other men. After sometime when they stop hearing the sound of bullets they all leave the place silently so that they might not be noticed by someone. They decide to go directly to the Street of Storyteller in order to carry the dead bodies back to their homes but soon they give up this idea, thinking that their relatives will be worried about what happen to them so they all work out their way to home.

Qayyum decides to move towards the street to see the bloodshed caused by the brutal English. As he walks along the street he experiences a complete silence except the sound of painful cries coming from the houses of bereaved families. He is quite shocked when he does not see any corpse, rather there are only two cats licking the thick fluid on the ground. The English have washed the streets from the blood. He runs through the damp alleys in order to find where they have taken all the dead bodies and those who are injured during the combat (211).

Shamsie by presenting that horrible picture tries to emphasize the various brutal experiences the Indians have to endure during the reign of British Empire. These innocent people have been exploited by the colonizers in the form of invading their lands and enforcing their own laws on

them. With the passage of time when they realize the fact that they have been treated like slaves so in order to improve their condition they start raising their voices for justice. They involve themselves in various campaigns to get rid of British anarchy but in doing all this they have to face bitter consequences.

Shamsie while talking about the beauty of the Peshawar city in her work refers to the sayings of Emperor Babur that even a blind man will immediately guess that he is entering Peshawar due to the beautiful fragrance of flowers growing in its orchards (73). Now everywhere the British violence can be observed in the city. The colonizers do not feel any sort of remorse for whatever they have done with them they rather justify their act by saying that the crackdown on the natives is necessary to maintain a peaceful atmosphere. Caldecott (1901) also says that Europe has got this right to give the guidance to the rest of the world (5). He believes that it is on account of colonialism that there is harmony in the colonized world, in fact it has secured the life of the natives ... he believes they have conquered the whole world not by force but by their moral duty of civilizing the world (69).

They assert their supremacy by saying that natives should be thankful to the White race, because they are the one who have improved the condition of their roads and the railways (221). They are of the view that these people cannot imagine peace in their country without having the English. Throughout the novel Shamsie exposes this mindset of the colonists in order to highlight the violence behind their civilization mission. She refers to various movements which are supposed to play a significant role in provoking the natives to speak for their rights. In her this recent novel various mythical allusions can be found, with the help of which she tries to reveal the relationship between the violence and power. Throughout the novel she seems to be raising this question how the desire of powerful nations to take over the foreign lands entails in the violence and bloodshed. The present novel is quite helpful in revealing the actual motive of the colonizer's civilizing mission.

Conclusion:

A God in Every Stone by Kamila Shamsie is analyzed in the light of Imperialism. It aims at exposing the violence adopted by the colonizers as the main strategy to keep the voices of the natives silent when they have decided to speak out against the injustices done to them. The novel under discussion very aptly reveals how the attitude of the British colonizers towards the natives of the sub-continent changes after the World War 1. It exposes to great deal the tactics of the colonist with the help of which they play with the minds of the Indians as a result of which they willingly submit themselves to fight on their behalf at the battlefield.

The character Qayyum and his friend Kalam who have the first-hand experience of battle actually symbolize the bitter experiences of the Indian soldiers which they have encountered at Vipers. It refers to the huge destruction caused by the World War 1. Large numbers of the Indian soldiers have been recruited in the British army and among them several have to lose their

precious lives while serving their tyrant colonizers and those who survive in the battle become paralyzed for the rest of their lives. Qayyum, the central character, also loses his eye and has to manage to see the world with the single eye.

The analysis of the novel under discussion shows the sheer simplicity of the natives of the sub-continent on account of which they are taken in by their brutal colonizers. In fact it is about the fulfillment of the colonizer's ultimate goal to change the mindset of the native population so that they can easily govern their lives. This is the reason when they wage the war against Japan, Germany etc. the natives consider them as their own enemies and for this purpose they willingly recruited themselves in the British army in order to defend the British Empire.

Qayyum the protagonist, who is leading the battalion of forty Indian soldiers at first attracts towards the English culture. Not only Qayyum in fact all of them are very proud of wearing the British army uniform. By putting on the very attire they feel the sense of superiority. Qayyum when reaches at the station along with the battalion of forty soldiers he is very warmly received by the English people. He is very impressed by the services given to the injured Indian soldiers at the hospital. He finds the English nurses very kind to them. He realizes that all the Indian soldiers are specially treated at the hospital. He is really moved by the stance of the English Emperor who has dedicated his own palace so that the Indian soldiers can comfortably live here. He has given strict orders that they should be provided with every facility. Qayyum who is very depressed about his lost eye is unable to rein in his excitement when he is presented with a glass eye by the English nurse as a substitute to the lost one. The attitude of the Qayyum towards the English race symbolizes the sheer simplicity of the Indians. The English trap them by giving different kind of facilities so that they can forget their bitter experiences of the war. Qayyum who is completely engrossed in the western civilization very soon comes to know about the reality when he goes to the Kitchner Hospital to meet his friend Kalam.

The English man stops him at the entrance and says that no Indian is allowed to visit the hospital. They have a brief quarrel after which he for the first time realizes himself as a prisoner among the English people. The very incident now opens his eyes to the most shocking reality of the English race. From now onwards he starts thinking about what is that thing which has compelled them to fight this battle. Now he really feels pity for all those Indian soldiers who have taken part in the combat. He becomes aware of the fact why the English were so generous to them. They have played with their minds so that they could convince them to fight their war. The very opening of the novel with the outbreak of the World War I questioned their supposed ideology of being the most civilized nation of the world. It shows how can a nation with such high values wage a war and bring about a huge destruction in the form of several deaths and casualties. Throughout the novel Shamsie alludes to different mythical stories in order to expose the violence of the colonizers in the colonized world. After the World War I the attitude of the English towards the natives entirely changes, now they put extreme importance on force because they realize that they can no more control their minds.

The bitter experiences that natives have to encounter during the combat have made them aware about their own individuality. They start thinking that the British colonizers have got no right to govern their lives. They become aware of the fact that they have forcefully invaded their lands. They start different movements in order to get themselves released from the tyrant British colonizers. The English used every possible strategy to silence their voices. Just to create a fear among the natives they executed all those who dare to question their rule in the sub-continent.

The present study explores the suffering of freedom fighters at the best. Several are being killed whereas some are sent to jail as a punishment of protesting against the British Raj. Qayyum altogether changes his opinion about the English people after his encounter with the English guard at the hospital. Since he loses his eye at the battle so he is sent back to his home. Qayyum finds it quite disgusting that he has left his Indian fellows alone to die at the battlefield.

He joins the movement of Khudai Khidmatgar which is led by Ghaffar Khan in order to get freedom for his fellow countrymen. The tyrant English when realize that they are unable to rein in the zealous natives they decide to kill them all who are determined to take part in the demonstration against the British Empire. Shamsie very skillfully depicts that heart wrenching scene; it is enough to reveal the true faces of the English. The whole ground is covered with the blood of those who died just to get their basic right which is freedom. Everywhere there are only dead bodies, scattered shoes and blood. The whole city is in panic, the English keep on firing bullets over them. They are not even giving them chance to remove the dead bodies. Those who survive are chased by the English soldiers like blood thirsty hounds. Najeeb, the brother of Qayyum, is also very much impressed by British culture and this is evident in his love for Vivian Rose Spencer, an English lady who comes to Peshawar to study some important artifacts. When his mother sends him to mosque to study Quran he instead of going there prefers to spend time in the company of Rose who teaches him history and English. Through the character of Rose, Shamsie refers to the civilizing mission of the British colonizers who presented their education system and culture as superior to the natives. These are the tools with the help of which they control their minds without using force as a result of which it becomes easy for them to take the entire control of their country. The novel under discussion can be explored by the researchers in order to show how the British Colonizers have maintained their rule in the sub-continent through the promotion of western education. The teaching of English and History by Vivian Rose Spensor to Qayyum's younger brother Najeeb clearly refers to civilizing mission of the colonizers.

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