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Why do Refugees have to Leave their Sweet Home “Unless home is the Mouth of a Shark”? An Analysis of Warsan Shire’s Poem *Home*

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Abstract

This paper analyses in Warsan Shire’s poem *Home* why refugees have to leave their home. In so doing, it first explores the root causes behind particularly the displacement of Somalians, which becomes an inspiration for the poem and also argues that these causes may actually be similar ones which could be seen one way or another behind any act of the displacement anywhere across the world. Secondly, the paper responds to the criticisms which accuse refugees of leaving at once their home when they face any difficulties in life. In this sense, the poem becomes the voice of “refugees” and tells the world that “refugees” will not take all the risks in very dangerous and difficult journeys without any reasonable causes. As the paper discusses, what is also equally important is that “refugees,” though exposed to very hard conditions of living during the journey and in the host country, are also labelled as “Other,” which immediately brings about a negative condition, in which they are humiliated, discriminated and categorised as “us” and “them, making it difficult for refugees to integrate and eventually belong to the indigenous society. Finally, the paper debates that it is not the guilt of refugees who leave their home but the ones who create intolerable causes for their displacement from their home. The paper suggests that we are all responsible - United Nations, politicians, world leaders, writers, intellectuals, and academics and so on all over the world - not only for revealing the root causes behind the displacement of people from their home but also for annihilating them all together for a humanely world and living.

Keywords: Civil unrest, war, displacement, refugee, otherness

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The world has witnessed exceptional mobility of refugees or immigrants mainly from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East to the Western world since the end of the Cold War. This trend has gained further speed in recent years due to some catastrophic civil conflicts, persecution, wars and poverty, whose gravity has obviously worried everyone across the world - the UN, policymakers, politicians, and humanitarian agencies and so on (Cairns, 1997; Azam & Hoefler, 2002; Collier et al, 2003; Edwards 2015). For instance, Adrian Edwards explains that the UN Refugee Agency's annual Global Trend Study found that "68.5 million people had been driven from their homes across the world at the end of 2017, more people than the population of Thailand," and "Refugees who have fled their countries to escape conflict and persecution accounted for 25.4 million. This is 2.9 million more than in 2016, also the biggest increase UNHCR has ever seen in a single year" (Edwards, 2018, para. 1-2). Edwards continues to give the statistics from the survey above that "The number of asylum-seekers awaiting the outcome of their applications for refugee status had risen by about 300,000, to 3.1 million, by the end of December 2017. People displaced inside their own country accounted for 40 million of the total, slightly fewer than the 40.3 million in 2016" (para. 7). As seen in the statistical data above, unfortunately, the number of refugees is getting higher and higher every day when more people constantly find themselves displaced from their homeland and strive to move from Asia, Far East, Africa, and the Middle East to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Western world. This move suggests that nothing comes of nothing, and there is undeniably something which continuously spurs it. Having observed and read what is going on around, it is easy to see that the world, though seemingly advanced in many aspects of life, culture, democracy, and civilization, still continues to treat certain people unequally and deprive them of their fundamental human rights – right to live humanely, right to get enough security at home, right to have a proper education, right to have enough healthy food and drinkable water and so on. Once people in the areas above lack these rights and are unable to find at home, they inevitably embark on seeking other alternatives and places to survive other than their sweet home, which is not something strange but a normal human attitude in life when forced to do so.

Nevertheless, what is also more offending and degrading for those displaced on move than losing their home is that they are labeled as "refugees," which immediately creates a negative connotation or a sense of "**Otherness**" in the mind because labeling is a kind of categorization, derogatory, and at same time exclusion – "us" and "them", always causing refugees to feel themselves "**Other**" in social, cultural, social, political and economic life in the host country. The label "refugee" can also carry a contextual stigma with it (O'Neill and Spybey, 2003). Sometimes the "stigmas" are based on negative and/or on misinformation disseminated through politics, mass media and other means to the general public. Refugees are represented sometimes as "economic migrants" in that the people of host country think that refugees will take their job and consume their sources, sometimes as "uneducated refugees" who will take state benefit and then unload treasury, sometimes as "dirty refugees" who will contaminate their society and sometimes as "terrorist refugees" who spoil order and security of the host countries. Eventually, the spread of negative perceptions and sometimes false information give rise to the development of racial and "xenophobic" feelings between refugees and native people, which not only separates both sides further from each other but also strains relations and unfortunately sometimes escalates undesirable violence (Goot & Watson, 2005; Louis et al., 2007; Schweitzer et al., 2005; Bowes et al., 2009; Moore & Clifford, 2007; Zetter, 2007). In the Western countries and many other places, for example, refugees have obviously been exposed to disadvantages such as prejudices, racial discrimination, humiliation, maltreatment, sexual exploitation, segregation in education, exclusion and international xenophobia of far-right extremism. Main possible reasons

behind such attitudes may be the perceptions that refugees are seen as economic burden on the host countries, that they are automatically labeled as terrorists if they come from the Middle East and Asian countries, and that they take the jobs of the local people, and that they are unable to integrate into the indigenous society and that they create security problem, cultural chaos and thus spoil the order and harmony of life in the indigenous country (Ferris, 2007; Kreichauf, 2015; Kublitz, 2016; Dennison & Geddes, 2017; Trilling, 2018; Pocock & Chan, 2018).

For example, the people in Turkey have mixed feelings about Syrian refugees, even though Turkish society and culture seem benign towards them due to much in common between two countries – border closeness, cultural similarity, unity of faith and so on. Turkey is home to more than 4 million displaced Syrians due to the perilous ongoing civil war since the start of the conflict in March 2011, leading to tyranny, persecution, massacre, famine, and malnutrition. From the beginning, Turkish sentiments towards Syrian refugees have been as follows. First, Turkey shares the longest border with Syria (2753 km), so that it cannot be indifferent to what has taken place very close to its borders owing to security issues. Also, the situation also has a human dimension of Turkish culture to help those in need, so that Turkey, unlike many developed countries, has done generously its best and warmly welcomed displaced Syrians refugees. It is obvious that the way Turkey has acted has helped them survive the disaster and atrocity committed at their home and provided them with humane conditions, in which they are at least able to take shelter and get healthy food, drinkable water, health service, and proper education as in their own home country. However, in recent years, there are also some people, politicians, and intellectuals, who are ferociously against the presence of Syrian refugees in Turkey because of some reasons. First, those people argue that Syrian refugees take the state aid from the Turkish State, which, they think, may be used for the welfare of Turkish people on account of the current recession in Turkish economy that really worries many people in the country; secondly, there is also another argument that Syrians refugees take the jobs of Turkish people while many young Turks remain unemployed, and that Syrian refugees are a huge economic burden on Turkey; thirdly, those Turkish people point out that the crime rate and instability in Turkish cities have increased enormously since the arrival of Syrian refugees, actually threatening the national security and order, and those Turkish people with negative view about Syrian refugees also debate that Syrians, rather than rushing into Turkey, may stay at their home and fight against the attacks of Bashar Al-Assad's forces and defend their home (Seibert, 2014; Lerner, 2017; Yitmen & Verkuyten, 2018; International Crisis Group, 2018; Starr, 2018; Erdoğan & Semerci, 2018). As seen here, Syrian refugees are considered in Turkey "Other," "burden," "threat to national security and order," even though Turkish people are more or less culturally close to Syrians and share the same religious faith. Simply, Syrian refugees are refugees, and thus feelings and perception always put them on the other side of scale where they never belong to the local indigenous culture and society not only in Turkey but also in the other countries. In this respect, the plight of Syrian refugees is similar to that of the refugees from the other nations. As for the discussions above concerning the categorization of refugees as "us" and "them", as well as humiliation and exclusion in the foreign lands, one cannot help asking the ensuing questions: Why do refugees take a serious risk of death on the boat in the open seas and inhumane refugee camps? Why do they force themselves to be exposed to the categorization, exclusion, discrimination and many other negative conditions in the host countries? Why do they leave behind sadly and unwillingly their identity, their history, their stories, their memories, pains, joy, and love? How could a refugee leave his/her home with the knowledge of all these disadvantaged conditions and take all the risks? What does home mean to them? Why cannot home protect them in the face of danger?

The paper tries more or less to find answers to these questions in Warsan Shire's poem *Home* (2011). As for the issues discussed above, unfortunately, there are no detailed critical or academic discussions

of her poem but few brief explanations or summaries and reflections on the internet. For example, Warsan Shire herself tells why she wrote her poem *Home*: “I wrote the poem for them [the refugees whose lives are undocumented in Europe and elsewhere], for my family and for anyone who has experienced or lived around grief and trauma in that way” (Qtd.in Bausells & Shearlaw, 2015). In their *Guardian* article where they write about how five young London poets represent the life and identity of the refugees, Marta Bausells and Maeve Shearlaw argue that Warsan Shire in her poem mainly deals with “exploring memory and healing trauma [of the refugee people away from their home country] through the power of the spoken word” (2015). Finally, what is written in the web page of BookRags Study Guide is that Warsan Shire’s poem “seeks to give voice to the people whose voices have been silenced as they deal with the constant struggles of life as a refugee” in the face of “the wide variety of dangers” including “treacherous means of travel, and xenophobic attitudes toward immigrants” (“Home (Warsan Shire Poem) Summary & Study Guide,” n.d.)

This paper seeks not only to expand these brief views above, but it also tries to examine in detail the root causes which force refugees to leave their sweet home. In so doing, the paper first debates why refugees have to leave their home because no one will leave their sweet home for fun without plausible reasons and willingly subject themselves to segregation, exclusion, degradation, and humiliation in the countries where they try to survive in a humane way the same as the other people somewhere else. In the poem, Warsan Shire artistically articulates main causes behind the displacement in a way that they become relevant for any refugees in the world – civil wars, persecution, torture, ethnic cleansing, tribalism and poverty and so on. Secondly, the paper discusses the main issue of “Otherness” to which refugees are unjustly exposed – discrimination, exclusion, disparagement and humiliation and so on. The paper argues that it is not a fault of refugees to abandon their beloved home, country, property, as well as their stories, love, memories, pains, joy, and so on, but it is the fault of politicians, dictators, sectarian fanatics, nationalists and tribal leaders and greedy international imperial powers that create the root causes behind the move of refugees from their home to a foreign land. In the foreign land, as the paper discusses, refugees visibly and psychologically feel unable to belong to the host countries where they live in, where they earn their living resulting either from the cultural difference or from the exclusionist attitudes of the indigenous people towards them, which obviously and constantly degrades them.

Warsan Shire, a British poet, writer, editor, and teacher, is originally from Somalia but she was born in Kenya in 1988 where her parents were refugees in consequence of the dreadful situations in their own home country. Somalia has witnessed difficult times since it gained its independence from the colonizing France and Britain in 1960, particularly since “General Mohamed Siad Barre took over power in October 1969” – famine, tribalism, nepotism, corruption, political turmoil, weak governance, economic breakdown, domestic violence, sexual abuse, torture, political killings, civil conflict, and so on (“Global security,” n. d.; James, 1995; Ambroso, 2002; “The Somalia Conflict,” n. d.; Thomas, 2016). For example, Afyare Abdi Elmi and Dr Abdullahi Barise (2006) argue that “Competition for resources and power, military repression and the colonial legacy were the long-term or background causes of the Somali conflict”, along with “misuse of clan identity, the availability of weapons, the large number of unemployed youth, and some features of Somali culture that reward the use of violence significantly contributed to the formation and escalation of the conflict” (p. 36). Particularly, the civil war among clans has paralyzed life and security in Somalia and unfortunately caused the country not only to get into messy chaos and poverty and crippled Somali people physically and psychologically in despair, and then many civilians have died for no plausible reason, but it has also displaced thousands of many civilians from their home and forced them to be refugees in neighbouring countries or in the countries beyond Africa – the countries in Europe, the U.S.A, Asia and so on (James, 1995). Filmmaker Hamza

Ashrif (2016) maintains that “The effect of the [civil] war has been to scatter the Somali people in their millions to refugee camps and neighbouring countries - and in their hundreds of thousands to the UK, Canada, and the United States.” He continues to state:

The ongoing civil war has caused serious damage to Somalia's infrastructure and economy. Thousands of Somalis have either left as economic migrants or fled as refugees. Most spent months, if not years, in refugee camps. Around 200,000 Somalis refugees have fled to Yemen and roughly 50,000 to the UAE. There are around 150,000 Somalis living in Canada, 100,000 in the UK and 85,000 in the US.

Finally, Nicholas Kay, United Nations special representative for Somalia, also points out:

There are more than 1.1 million people displaced from their homes and their original places of living [within Somalia]; 1.1 million people. There's certainly nearly that same number who are reliant upon food assistance from the United Nations agency and other donors, nearly a million people who can't meet their own food needs” (Qtd. in Ashrif 2016).

As seen in the discussions above, thousands of Somali people, like thousands of others in the rest of Africa, Middle East and Asia, have had to leave their home due to the severe unbearable situations mentioned above and subjected to inhumane conditions and humiliation on their way to another country or in the camps and eventually in the host countries where they strive to survive (Ratcliffe, 2019). In her poem *Home*, Warsan Shire articulates her own feelings of these difficult situations in the life of refugees and tells all of us – the world leaders, politicians, decision-makers, United Nations, and opponents - that please stop accusing refugees of their leaving home because no refugee will leave their home and suffer humiliation and disgrace without reason. In this respect, she, as debated below, becomes in her poem the voice of all the refugees across the world.

In her poem *Home*, Warsan Shire clearly articulates why refugees have to leave their home, and her articulation becomes de facto an answer to those who degrade them and oppose their presence in the host countries. At the very beginning of the poem, she outstandingly writes:

no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark
you only run for the border
when you see the whole city running as well
your neighbors running faster than you
breath bloody in their throats
the boy you went to school with
who kissed you dizzy behind the old tin factory
is holding a gun bigger than his body
you only leave home
when home won't let you stay.

In the stanzas above, Warsan Shire strikingly brings to the attention of the reader the appalling causes behind why refugees have to leave their home. She uses the metaphor and symbol of “shark” to make her point very sharp and appealing. Sharks are “vicious predators that live in the deep parts of seas and oceans. They are well-known for their bloodthirsty need to feed of flesh of other sea creatures, or even people” (“Shark-Spirit Animal, Symbolism and meaning,” n.d.). In popular culture, sharks, though there are varying views, associated with the image of “monster,” as well as the image of “vicious animals that do not let their prey escape that easily. They will go after smaller prey anytime or even attack a bigger enemy if they are in need of flesh or blood. People rarely survive attacks, because once they catch their prey, they simply won’t let go until it is theirs completely” (“Shark-Spirit Animal, Symbolism and meaning,” n.d.). Moreover, “A shark [also] stands for fierceness, authority, determination, remorselessness, efficiency, perception, mystery, preparedness, superiority, competitiveness, innovation, grace, and style” (“Shark Meaning and Symbolism,” n.d.). As seen in the debates above, a shark with its appearance, its jaw, and mouth, psychologically and physically spreads fear among human beings, and even it sometimes attacks and kills swimmers at sea as well.

Likewise, Warsan Shire employs the symbol of a “shark” in her pome *Home* in that she strives to illuminate how life is dangerous and unbearable for refugees at home which becomes “the mouth of a shark,” frightens, swallows, kills and destroys. In this respect, not only does she become the voice of Somalian refugees, but she also represents the situations of all the refugees who have to leave their home countries. Once life comes agonizing, “you only run for the border.../you see the whole city running as well.” As in the Day of Judgment where no one cares for another because everyone is preoccupied with their own troubles, everyone is in a rush with the struggle of survival, and “your neighbors running faster than you/breath bloody in their throats,” and thus “you only leave home/when home won’t let you stay.” Contrary to what is said about the refugees who are always accused of leaving their home without any conceivable reason, Warsan Shire writes against this accusation and brings the real situation to the attention of people across the world that “**no one leaves home unless/home is the mouth of a shark**” (Emphasis added). “The mouth of a shark” may represent the severe poverty, serious human rights abuse, unbearable racism, ethnic cleansing, and tribalism, imperial exploitation, and civil wars and so on. Warsan Shire means to say to all of us that if there are none of these conditions, people will never abandon their home, their land, their relatives and their beloved ones in vain and will eventually be exposed to life-threatening risks, discrimination, humiliation, and exclusion.

In the following stanzas, Warsan Shire gradually strives to account for the life-threatening conditions that force people in general to leave their home and thus she constantly repeats in each stanza “no one leaves home unless home...” She may intend not only to draw attention to the real situations refugees encounter at home but also to implore the people of host countries to lessen their policies of segregation, humiliation, ostracism, and prejudice:

no one leaves home unless home chases you

fire under feet

hot blood in your belly

it’s not something you ever thought of doing

until the blade burnt threats into

your neck
and even then you carried the anthem under
your breath
only tearing up your passport in an airport toilets
sobbing as each mouthful of paper
made it clear that you wouldn't be going back.

The stanza above gives dreadful pictures from the life at a home where, as the stanza suggests, there may be a civil war or outside bombing. As in the first stanza, Warsan Shire employs another metaphor again to make the situation more appealing because home is under "fire" coming from heavy artilleries that give rise to "hot blood in your belly" and cause "the blade burnt [that] threats into your neck." The scene is too terrible, frightening and risky resulted from either civil war or war as in Syria, Iraq, Rohingya and Yemen and so on. With the fear of their life, therefore, people desperately panic and seek the ways to survive; no one can deny that it is a natural human tendency to find a secure place for the sake of survival in the face of life-threatening danger. Thus, the behaviours of those people who take themselves off from their home are normal with respect to the risky situations at home. That is, once refugees leave their home and arrive at a host country or somewhere else, the first thing they do is to tear up their "passport in an airport toilets/sobbing as each mouthful of paper/made it clear that you wouldn't be going back." This obviously indicates the horrific but at the same time tragic side of the story in the 21st century, and what Warsan Shire strongly stresses is the obvious sign of despair, fear and desire to hold on to life; otherwise, normal people, who are peaceful, secure, self-sufficient in their life at home, cannot do such a thing; it is not a normal behaviour expected from a normal person; it is the result of misery, terror, "fire" and "blood" at home, so that refugee people – women, men, old people, and small children - take risk of death, humiliation, hunger, and discrimination in the other places, which, they think, are at least secure and peaceful. In fact, Shire exposes the harsh truth of suffering to the whole world and tells us all of us that truth is something different from what you know, what you are shown through media, what nationalists claim and what policy-makers tell you about refugees.

Warsan Shire continues to make her point further clear in the following stanza as a response to those people in the host countries who slam refugee for leaving their home. In fact, she asks all of us to feel empathy with refugees:

you have to understand,
that no one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land
no one burns their palms
under trains
beneath carriages
no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck

feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled
means something more than journey.
no one crawls under fences
no one wants to be beaten
pitied

This stanza, like the previous one, illuminates the life-conditions of refugee people at home and why they risk their lives out of blue. In this sense, Warsan Shire becomes again the voice of the people who endanger their lives. In life, it is a common feeling and perception that children are more important for a mother and a father than other things. Mother and father thus dote on their children because they are a strong tie to life and meaning; they are the future not only of the family and progeny but also of society, even the world; mother and father work hard non-stop day and night and take all the difficulties and responsibilities to meet the basic needs of their children – food, education and safety, prosperity and so on. Simply, life gains meaning with children. Normally speaking, therefore, no parents will put intentionally “their children in a boat,” which is hardly safe and which sometimes openly becomes grave from them as witnessed in the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas and elsewhere across the world. However, Warsan Shire draws our attention to the point that the sea, thought dangerous and ready to swallow refugee men, women, and children seem much safer than the land, which is full of suffering, killings, torture, and poverty and so on. Warsan Shire’s symbol of the sea is so salient that it reminds one of the story of Moses, in which his mother places her infant child into a basket and then put him into the Nile River just to avoid the cruelties of the Pharaoh of Egypt (Qur’an 28: 4-7). What Moses’s mother did and what Warsan Shire writes above obviously corresponds to each other in the sense that two stories tell us that the land is more dangerous and life-threatening, so that refugees knowingly take any risk even if there is 1 % chance of living; otherwise, “no one burns their palms/under trains/beneath carriages/no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck/feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled/means something more than journey.” What Warsan Shire writes is an inhumane condition to which refugees are unfortunately subjected. Their journey “means something more than journey” – a journey that they have to take even though they are sure that it is also equally dangerous and risky and a journey that will cost most probably their lives.

Warsan Shire continues to make this situation more appealing and striking to pull attention towards the plight of refugees not only by employing various symbols and conditions but also by using comparisons from real-life situations in a style of conversation, so that the pitiless conditions of the refugees strike in the mind of both the reader and those people who have brought about this misery for refugees or those people who criticize refugees:

no one chooses refugee camps
or strip searches where your
body is left aching
or prison,
because prison is safer

than a city of fire
and one prison guard
in the night
is better than a truckload
of men who look like your father
no one could take it
no one could stomach it
no one skin would be tough enough

As this stanza above suggests, refugees strive to survive in any conditions available to them. Warsan Shire uses different symbols and metaphors in her poem to bring inhumane conditions to the attention of the world, and thus the symbols and metaphors she constantly attempts to employ are closely bound to raise awareness of the life of refugee people. For example, the “prison” is one of them. The question is: how could prison be “safer” than the outside world? “Prison” means crime, punishment, detention, confinement, restriction, segregation, exclusion, lack of freedom and movement. Normally speaking, no one will prefer prison to the outside world which is free, peaceful and secure, so that there is something going wrong in the physical world that “prison” is considered safer than a city, which is the accomplishment of human civilization. As Warsan Shire accounts for in the poem, however, “a city” is “fire” threatening the life of people, making the life unbearable; the “city” becomes a place where “no one could stomach it/no one skin would be tough enough” to endure “fire.”

Likewise, “Refugee camps” are also short of better human conditions – drinkable clean water, fresh health food, sufficient health services, as well as of the place where “body is left aching.” Moreover, “Refugee camps” are also places of isolation, alienation, and exclusion sometimes wired by the host countries to keep refugee people away from the local population. However, what is important here is that why refugees are kept away in “Refugee camps” is the main focus Warsan Shire stresses in her poem. For her, refugee people are physically and psychologically imprisoned between two crippling situations. On the one hand, their home is under “fire” and does not allow them to live in peace and security but always threatens and eventually forces them to leave their land, their beloved ones, their memories, identity, respect and dignity in inhumanely ways. On the other hand, as discussed above, refugees are constantly exposed to unjust discrimination, exclusion and maltreatment in the host countries as if they left their home without reason, even though some of causes have been debated above. In the poem, Warsan Shire articulates that refugees are stuck between two crippling situations at home and abroad; what they just want is a place where they could live a decent life the same as the people in the developed countries, yet life at home and abroad always annoys and humiliates them:

the
go home blacks
refugees
dirty immigrants
asylum seekers

sucking our country dry
niggers with their hands out
they smell strange
savage
messed up their country and now they want
to mess ours up
how do the words
the dirty looks
roll off your backs
maybe because the blow is softer
than a limb torn off
or the words are more tender
than fourteen men between
your legs
or the insults are easier
to swallow
than rubble
than bone
than your child body
in pieces.
i want to go home,
but home is the mouth of a shark
home is the barrel of the gun

In many places across the world either in Europe or elsewhere, as mentioned above, there have been anti-immigration campaigns or anti-refugee sentiment in recent years, in which immigration and refugee people are obviously subjected to the policy of exclusion, discrimination, mobbing, and defamation not only by local people and the media in the host countries but also by some politicians who desire to mobilize voters in the election on behalf of their party (Erdogan, 2014; Ayasun, 2018; Griffin, 2019; Donmez, 2019; Henley, 2019). There are some reasons behind rising anti-immigration campaigns or anti-refugee sentiment in the host countries. First, there are increasing nationalistic, racist and xenophobic sentiments among indigenous people who think that immigrants or refugees, with their own culture, values, and languages, are threat not only to the unity and harmony of their host society but also to their national or group identity, which, local people think, hold them together. Secondly, there is a shrinking economy in many countries, where the purchasing power constantly

decreases, where the life-cost dramatically rises, where employers fire workers and thus where the unemployment rate steadily increases. Hence, local people in the host countries are obviously alarmed that their governments spend the state revenue for refugee people while local people suffer severe economic condition and that they are afraid of losing their jobs to refugee people in their own country. Thirdly, education of refugee children is another burden on the host country in the sense that they will not only overcrowd the already-crowded classrooms, that they spoil the already-established order of the schools and that they will not adapt themselves to the schools due to language and cultural barriers. Finally, the security issue is also of vital importance. There is a general sentiment that refugee people fuel the crime rate in the country they arrive so that neither local people nor politicians favour to receive and host refugee in their countries. For example, while Turkey has taken more than 4 million Syrian refugees in the last 8 years, European countries have received a limited number and sometimes refused to get them. Therefore, European Union countries have signed an agreement with and promised to help Turkey just for not allowing Syrian refugees not only to keep them inside Turkey but also to ensure the border security (Erdogan, 2014; Ayasun, 2018).

The reasons above and many others have caused the host countries sometimes to reject refugees, sometimes to keep them away and sometimes to subject them to the policy of discrimination, exclusion, and humiliation. Simply, refugees have been directly or indirectly discouraged not to come to their countries or put into a position and perception of inferiority when they come. As Warsan Shire writes in the stanza above, therefore, local people have labelled refugees as “blacks”, “dirty immigrants,” “sucking our country dry,” “niggers with their hands out,” “they smell strange,” “savage,” “messed up their country and now they want,” “to mess ours up.” These views attached to refugees are obviously negative and sometimes racial, and the mass media and social spreads these harmful views and then creates a perception which makes the local people and politicians of the host countries afraid of the refugees, and sometimes these damaging views are used as excuse not to take refugees or to exclude them from the mainstream of social and cultural life. These attributes and phrases often circulate in the media, as well as in the talks of the politicians so that they, after a while, are made imprinted on the minds of the local people and then create negative perceptions.

However, in order to indicate the gravity of the situation back at home, Warsan Shire writes that these “dirty” “words” are even “softer”:

than a limb torn off
or the words are more tender
than fourteen men between
your legs
or the insults are easier
to swallow
than rubble
than bone
than your child body
in pieces.
i want to go home,

but *home is the mouth of a shark*
home is the barrel of the gun (Emphasis added)

In the lines above and in the stanza below, in fact, Warsan Shire announces to everyone, indigenous people of the host countries, the politicians and other responsible people that refugees are not too enthusiastic to leave their home and find themselves exposed to discrimination, humiliation, exclusion, and inferiority:

and no one would leave home
unless home chased you to the shore
unless home told you
to quicken your legs
leave your clothes behind
crawl through the desert
wade through the oceans
drown
save
be hunger
beg
forget pride
your survival is more important
no one leaves home until home is a sweaty voice in your ear
saying leave,
run away from me now
i don't know what i've become
but i know that anywhere
is safer than here

In the lines above, Warsan Shire actually gives answers to those people who disparage, discriminate, humiliate and ostracise refugees. What is of vital importance for a refugee is “*survival*”, which is one of the basic rights of human beings everywhere on the earth, and no one can be deprived of this right in their lives (Emphasis added). But home does not secure this right; instead, “*home told you/to quicken your legs/leave your clothes behind/crawl through the desert/wade through the oceans/drown/save/be hunger/beg/forget pride*” (Emphasis added). Like a mother, “home” with its “sweaty voice in your ear” strives to protect its people, wants them to survive and thus kindly asks them to “*run away from me now/i don't know what i've become/but i know that anywhere/is safer*

than here" (Emphasis added). If "*home is the mouth of a shark* due to horrendous civil wars, suffering, ethnic cleansing, racial discrimination, and poverty, what else is expected of refugee or immigrant people – stay at home and wait for being brutally killed or leave home and take all the risks for the sake of "*survival*"? Which one would you prefer to do when you are unable to change the destructive situation of life in your home?

In her poem *Home*, Warsan Shire artistically appeals to the attention and fairness of human beings about the criticism of refugee and immigrant people. In fact, she is asking us to stop talking about refugees because those people who are used to living in conformity, self-sufficiency, peace and security, will not understand properly why refugees have to leave their home. The question is: **who is to blame, refugees or someone else?** As Warsan Shire implies in her poem, it is not refugees but those people who cause them to leave their home should be blamed. Who are those people? First, it may be politicians who are unable to rule their countries properly and justly. Once the countries with civil war, ethnic conflicts, torture, and poverty, are taken into consideration, it will be easily seen as in Africa, Middle East, and Asia and so on. Some politicians are obviously dictator: they are corrupted because they impoverish their countries by using its income for their own benefit, as well as for their family's and relatives' benefit, while majority of people suffer in poverty, social and economic inequalities; they torture their own people not only to control them but also to stay in the office for good because there is a famous statement that the most cowardly people in the world are dictators so that they prefer to keep their people under constant intolerable pressure by banning them freedom of expression, freedom of thought against their rule. Secondly, tribalism, as discussed above, is another reason for the displacement of people from their own home. For example, tribalism in Somalia, the Sudan, Cambodia, the Congo and South Africa and in many other parts of the world has had "heavy human, economic and social cost" and is "a major cause of poverty and underdevelopment" (Steward, 2002, p. 342). Tribalism makes its members blind or what Willie Masururwa, a political commentator in Zimbabwe argues "killer" and Masururwa continues to argue that "Anybody who has been hanging around since Africa began to rule itself has seen tribalism butchering many people on our continent" (Qtd. in Crary 1986). Tribalism results in the strong feelings of nationalism, which visibly creates conflicts, and divides the countries and torments its people on their own land. As for Africa, for example, David Crary argues that "African tribalism has triggered wars and toppled governments, just as it has wrecked courtships and thwarted job seekers." As seen in the arguments above, tribalism does not bring about equality, welfare, and prosperity to a country but suffering, agony, displacement and devastation, in which the country loses power, energy, peace, in which the members of one tribe becomes the enemy of another tribe. The result is a huge chaos, turmoil, uncertainty and political instability, which apparently crumble a society and its moral power. Thirdly, the damaging result created by tribalism definitely contributes to the imperialist policy of "divide" and "rule" beyond the West. For instance, David Crary (1986) argues that "the Kenyan sociologist Katama Mkangi wrote in a recent article that colonial powers encouraged tribal jealousies as part of a divide-and-rule strategy. [Mkangi] said the divisions have been maintained since independence by Africans with a stake in preserving the status quo on a continent with not enough to go around." Crary quotes from Mkangi's article: "It is very safe to say that the producers, sustainers and purveyors of tribalism in Africa are the rich, the powerful and the educated." As seen in the quotation, tribalism and imperialism are closely interconnected to each other in the sense that those leaders and imperial powers benefit from each other when the tribal countries are in chaos because chaos enable not only tribal leaders to keep their positions intact but also imperial powers to usurp the richness of the countries divided by tribalism. In

many cases, both tribal leaders and imperial powers cynically act together to keep their interest on-going, while common people desperately agonise in their lives due to poverty, instability, uncertainty, war, civil conflict, and nationalism and so on.

In conclusion, now who is guilty, refugees or those who cause people to leave their home? Hence rather than blaming refugees for leaving their home, the following question should be asked: why do refugees have to leave their sweat home? Who forces them to leave their home, which is their identity, sanctuary, security, peace, and future? Conscientiously speaking, blame should not be placed on refugees who take all the risks just to survive the same as the other people in the other parts of the world but on politicians, international agencies, civil rights groups, non-governmental organisations, United Nations and media and so on because they are not so eager to comprehend and resolve the problem. In her poem *Home*, therefore, what Warsan Shire intends to tell us that we actually miss the key point – the point related to the root causes created at home, which is unable to provide refugees with safety, security, peace and humane living, even though its mission is just the opposite. Instead of blaming refugees, she implies in the poem that we all should have a deep look at why refugees have to leave home, who causes them to leave and who gains advantage from their displacement. These are big questions which should be asked by every one of us. In addition, Warsan Shire constantly uses the word “unless” to indicate artistically that we obviously lack the sense of “empathy” and understanding, which requires us to think within the viewpoints of refugees; every one of us should put ourselves in the shoes of refugees and empathize for a moment with them to understand their miserable conditions which force them to leave their home: what would I do if I were a refugee? The fair answer will definitely solve many misunderstandings and negative perceptions about refugees and immigrants. What a refugee seeks is not very much different from the one in a particular developed western or non-western country - a humane place where they may live in peace, security and prosperity. It is very simple; it is not a gift they demand; it is not something they want extra but it is what they deserve: a humanely living. In order to create such as world, we all are responsible – United nations, politicians, leaders, writers, intellectuals, and academics and so on to eradicate the root causes – civil unrest, political instability, ethnic cleansing, racism, tribalism, imperial intervention and so on, which force people to leave their home; otherwise, the human tragedy will continue as a scarlet letter in the 21st century and in the centuries to come.

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