



Cross-Cultural Issues In Nadeem Aslam's Maps For Lost Lovers

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Abstract

Life in the English nation Dash E Tanhai is reflected in Nadeem Aslam's Maps For Lost Lovers. The novel, framed by diasporic concerns, reflects on the plight of women caught between the competing legal systems of their homeland, their adopted country, and their religion. This thesis intends to research the female characters in Maps for Lost Lovers and reveal the internal struggle that prevents them from defining who they are within a multicultural setting. The study's overarching goal is to demonstrate the impact of legal diversity on women by highlighting the cross-cultural milieu generated by a patchwork of different laws and rules. The study aims to follow the competing selves of the two female characters, Kaukab and Surayya, who have no clear focal point.

Keywords: Cross-culturalism, Existential Crisis, Ex-centric, Identity crisis.

Introduction

Nadeem Aslam's Maps for Lost Lovers features a diverse cast of female protagonists whose lives have been upended by national and religious restrictions. Both Kaukab and Surayya fall prey to ex-centric cultural development. The first half of their lives are spent trying to figure out who they are, and the second half firmly establishes that identity. The lives of Muslim women in the immigrant community and multicultural Britain are shown within the context of a patriarchal culture. Jugnu and Chanda have vanished in a town in England that Pakistani immigrants heavily inhabit. Chanda's brothers are detained on suspicion of murdering their sister and her boyfriend in honor. In the wake of the incident that upends the lives of the migrants, Maps for Lost Lovers centers on the lives of Shamas, Jugnu's brother, and Kaukab, Shamas' wife.

Two strong female protagonists, Kaukab and Surayya, each exhibit a different approach to womanhood in the narrative. The mother of a Pakistani family residing in a small English town, Kaukab, has difficulty communicating with the locals because of her limited English proficiency.

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Despite these limitations, she sees herself as a dominating lady and exerts her authority over Shamas and the rest of the family. While Kaukab accepts the patriarchal restrictions as her responsibility and duty, Surayya desperately strives to break free but is ultimately unable to. Despite their best efforts, neither character can break free of the emotional ties that bind them to their families, friends, and communities, as well as the rules and regulations of society. Kaukab is unhappy in the English-speaking world because she feels emotionally dependent on her family, and she fears that her children will grow up to be hostile to her ideas and wants because of the nation's legal system.

“... this loathsome country that has stolen her daughter from her, the disobedient girl who doesn't want to go to Pakistan for a visit because males and females are segregated there...” (Aslam 63).

Despite being hemmed down by the norms of her faith, society, and gender, Kaukab presents as an educated, pragmatic lady eager to learn English. She has a liberal worldview, as seen by her reluctance to condemn Chanda and Junju's budding romance. She prays for her arrival every day. In a nation where nothing guarantees her the freedom of speech and the authenticity of her words, Kaukab, “... the daughter of a clerk, born and raised in the shadow of a minaret,” In the realm of prayer, (Aslam 88) is at peace. Kaukab's emotional dependency did not support Mah Jabin's decision to remarry after divorcing Kaukab. Kaukab's troubled relationship with the different cultural worlds around her forces her to adopt Mah Jabin's westernized inspired modernist view on life. “It's my fault for bringing my children here...” (Aslam 140).

Kaukab's internal conflicts prevented her from deciding whether her presuppositions and worldview are correct or whether she should adapt to the shifting cultural norms surrounding her. “... I am sure none of you will come to pray on my grave when I am dead. Sometimes I become so frightened that nobody will ask him to have mercy on my soul... (141)”. Kaukab is a defeated mother because she emotionally relies on the norms she has heard and seen others follow. She disagreed with Mah Jabin's plan to continue their unhappy marriage, but she could not support his choice to divorce him. Despite her natural dominance and authoritative presence, she is alienated from the idea of a liberated woman by her preconceived conceptions about the code of women. Kaukab's words depict her complex, conflicted personality. “I won't move to Pakistan. What would my life be then? my soul in Arabia, and my heart- ... (210)”.

In contrast to the shamans, Charang, Ma Jabin, and Ujala, who populate Kaukab's universe, Surayya hails from entirely another dimension. To be reunited with her son, she is forced to commit to a second marriage and divorce. Suraya's husband divorced her in Pakistan, and under Islamic law, she must marry and divorce another man before reclaiming custody of their child. She begins an affair with Shamas because she is desperate and thinks he can save her. Her emotional attachment to her kid, despite her ex-husband divorcing her for petty reasons, leads her to abide by the patriarchy's peculiar system of rules, even if she finds them unjust. She, like Kaukab, struggles with internal tension about whether or not to act.

Suraya knows she will be able to go through every humiliation and degradation eventually that she'll let another man-Shamas, for instance-touch, because she doesn't want to go through life without her son and husband: she'll be one person's friend, another's confidante, someone else's mistress-but she is their everything... She has been thinking quickly for the past few minutes, but nothing has come to her. (Aslam 239).

Because of her emotional attachment to her kid, she eventually tries to marry Shamas, only to end up divorcing him. “I had no choice. I would do anything for my son and husband. Love is the only thing that inspires boldness in a woman.” (321). Due to her emotional dependency on him, she has lost any sense of self and is willing to submit to him, even while she recognizes that he has reduced her to a simple object of pleasure. Both protagonists face the problems of double standards and cultural influence. They don't have anything to anchor them. Thus, their thoughts often scatter in all

directions. When faced with her children, whose cultural upbringing is based in a distant country anchored in the ideas of modernism, Kaukab finds herself in a moral conundrum. Here "... traditionally hybrid culture is defended against the new". (Burke 66) Due to her emotional dependency on him, she has lost any sense of self and is willing to submit to him, even while she recognizes that he has reduced her to a simple object of pleasure. Both protagonists face the problems of double standards and cultural influence. They don't have anything to anchor them. Thus, their thoughts often scatter in all directions. When faced with her children, whose cultural upbringing is based in a distant country anchored in the ideas of modernism, Kaukab finds herself in a moral conundrum.

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