



MULTICULTURAL ISSUES AND RELIGIOUS ORTHODOX IN NADEEM ASLAM'S MAPS FOR LOST LOVERS

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ABSTRACT



This paper discuss about Diaspora literature especially on Pakistani-British writer Nadeem Aslam and through his fiction *Maps for Lost Lovers*, he wants to depict the real pictures and condition of multiculturalism and religious orthodox. This paper aims to analysis the impact of minor community culture on the major community makes multiculturalism. Multiculturalism affects many fields and creates various associations with politics, ideology, social science, humanities, ethnic studies, race and nation or political economy through the characters. Most over it, the novelist has been remaining success to see the orthodox through *Kaukab* who have much more time to show loyalty and orthodox form of Islam. How to Nadeem Aslam bring out the multiculturalism and orthodox in this novel *Maps for Lost Lovers*.

Keywords: multiculturalism, orthodox, community, religious



INTRODUCTION

One of the highest questions of societies how to deal with the cultural diversity of different minorities and how to manage their culture and society. The United Kingdom is one of the biggest cities in the world which always welcomes newcomers and immigrant from other countries. Britain has accepted many immigrants and refugees over the century, thus many ethnic groups settle and accepted Britain as their motherland. The immigrant peoples follow their culture in another country which affects the culture of majority peoples. The impact of minor community culture on the major community makes multiculturalism. Multiculturalism affects many fields and creates various associations with politics, ideology, social science, humanities, ethnic studies, race and nation or political economy. Russell Jacoby defines multiculturalism in his book *The End of Utopia.....*

"Endless discussions of multiculturalism proceed from the unsubstantiated assumption that numerous distinct "cultures" constitute American society. Only a few historians or observers even consider the possibility that the opposite may be true: that the world and the United States are relentlessly becoming more culturally uniform, not diverse. ... No group is able, and few are willing, to stand up to the potent homogenizing forces of advanced industrial society. All Americans, from African Americans to Greek Americans, buy the same goods, look at the same movies and television, pursue the same activities and have—more or less—the same desires for success. ... Multiculturalism is not the opposite of assimilation, but its product."¹

Multiculturalism has meaning within the context of politics and sociology. On a large scale, it can be in progress as a result of either legal or illegal immigration from different countries around the world. The concept of multiculturalism came to

describe politics which came especially in the USA; the term multiculturalism is more preventive meaning especially in Britain, the USA, Africa and other parts in Europe. In the words of Sam Harris,

"The same failure of liberalism is evident in Western Europe, where the dogma of multiculturalism has left a secular Europe very slow to address the looming problem of religious extremism among its immigrants. The people who speak most sensibly about the threat that Islam poses to Europe are actually fascists. To say that this does not bode well for liberalism is an understatement: It does not bode well for the future of civilization."²

Multiculturalism is a very complex term and structure; no proper definition can define and does not provide a systematic or scientific meaning. It is not extravagant to say that a multicultural society not so much by the emergence of political movement but by a more fundamental movement of peoples.

The other aspects of this paper are orthodox. The term orthodox which referred to as right believing has traditionally been used in the Greek-speaking Christian world to designate communities or individuals who preserved the true faith and was opposed to those who were declared heretical. The concept orthodox was first used by the Greek Fathers in the 4th century because every Christian people almost believed that he was a true faither. In the words of G.K. Chesterton,

"Every man has forgotten who he is. One may understand the cosmos, but never the ego; the self is more distant than any star. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God; but thou shalt not know thyself. We are all under the same mental calamity; we have all forgotten our names. We have all forgotten what we really are. All that we call common sense and rationality and practicality and positivism only means that for certain dead

¹Jacoby, Russell. *The End of Utopia* (1999) pp. 47-48 -

²<https://www.f4thoughts.org/a-berlin-guide>



levels of our life we forget that we have forgotten. All that we call spirit and art and ecstasy only means that for one awful moment we remember that we forget."³

In the sense of Christian beliefs, the term orthodox means "conforming to the Christian faith as represented in the creeds of the early Church." orthodoxy shows that we should have to follow straightway which we read in our religious book. Despite these significant qualifiers, orthodoxy does have a place in Islamic self-expression. For instance, the Holy Quran itself implores, "guide us in the 'mustaqeem' 'straight path' (1:6) which implies that there is one way to being a Muslim that all should follow. Some scholars assume that Islam orthodox is not a religion but some assume Sunni Islam as orthodox.

Moreover, Muslims have always valued salaam, a word whose meanings include soundness of being, a characteristic of God, as well as peace and in its verb form, the word salaam means surrender or submit the will and in the other form it gives the name of the religion, Islam. So, in the novel we can see some characters like as Kukab, Mah-Jabin, Soraya and Shamas which shows Islam orthodoxy, they assume that they are on the straight path and true believer of Islam. Kukab, who gives much more value Arabic than English and other languages because the Holy Quran is written in Arabic and assume that Arabic is the language of Prophet Muhammad. She prefers to recite the Quran in Arabic, not in the other language and she wants that her children should their religion like her so her daughter Mah-Jabin is second generation Kukab.

A perfect concoction; (Nadeem Aslam) a child was born in 1966, in Gujranwala a Punjabi town in the north of Lahore, in the beginning, he migrant from Pakistan to England with his father and other members of his family when he was fourteen years old. Aslam's father was a producer, poet and communist. Through his family, "I learned about

political commitment and the life of the mind, and that an artist is never poor." From his mother's side were "money-makers, factory owners – and very religious," some versed in storytelling, music and painting. His parents, whose marriage was arranged, may appear an odd couple but "they still love each other, despite their differences. As a novelist, it's a gift."

Aslam's family was fled into exile in 1980. They were settling in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire. His mother tongue was Punjabi and had gone to Urdu-medium schools because English education was for the affluent people. He published his first story when he was 13 years old which was published in an Urdu newspaper; Urdu literature remains his "first point of reference". He was excellent in the Science, studied biochemistry at the University of Manchester.

Nadeem Aslam is a Pakistani born English writer, he is a leading writer of the twenty-first century and his novels won him many awards and worldwide fame. Knows less English Language for which he leads a hard life, he rediscovers his identity and roots in foreign lands and later developing his fictional characters and situations to reveal all these autobiographical details. Aslam lived in Huddersfield in his childhood, near Bradford.

Aslam's first two novels had protagonists in their 40s or over years. He says about his writing "Now I'm older, I'm writing about the young," "We underestimate the grief of the young. They're brought up with a set of ideals, and then sent out into the world. How are you going to cope? Are you going to be corrupted, or are you going to say no, a heroic life is possible?"

Whilst he is not British Asian according to conventional requirements of birth in Britain, Nadeem Aslam insistence a hyphenated identity and has shown himself as culturally and by his name a Muslim but a unfaith, indicating both opposites pulls and pushes in his blood. Aslam's novels have been compared to those by Chinua Achebe, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Kiran Desai.

³<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/338100-every-man-has-forgotten-who-he-is-one-may-understand>



Aslam's second novel *Maps for Lost Lovers* published in 2004 which is set in midst of an immigrant Pakistani community in a town of England is "a place of Byzantine intrigue and emotional espionage, where when two people stop to talk on the street their tongues are like the two halves of a scissor coming together, cutting reputations and good names to shreds". Aslam seems England through the eyes of homesick, and the difference between food and colours and insects, food and names. In fact a minute dissection of working-class Pakistani immigrant communities that have settled in the north of England over the last 40 years.

The setting of the novel is known where Asian born people residents whose name is Dasht-e-Tanhaii, or "Desert of Loneliness", the people of this town do not accept the white people's culture and rituals. Because they don't want to survive the white people's culture and celebrate their festivals and rituals. Dasht-e-Tanhaii, is a central place in the novel, shows a multicultural place having Pakistani, Sikhs, Bengalis and English people as its inhabitants, manifesting their theological places like Mosque, Temple and Church. They speak Hindi, Urdu, Bengali as well as English. In this community live Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs at odds with one another, united only because they are migrant and surrounded by seemingly godless white society.

The heart of the novel *Kaukab* is a character who is a devoted Muslim woman and married to Jugnu's brother Shamas. *Kaukab*, through the book she is caught hatred between the culture of England because of her poor English and her own culture, she is afraid to venture outdoors. *Kaukab* feels that her own culture is responsible for the murder of her brother in law and her lover.

"She has little English and she feels nervous stepping out of the house because she is not sure whether she can count on a friendly response". "I don't go there often –white people's houses start soon after that street, and even the Pakistanis there are not from

our part of Pakistan".⁴

Kaukab is one of the most characters who show multiculturalism in the novel, she feels alienated in white people's society who can't manage the culture of another country. Indeed, *Kaukab* highlights the alienation, in which they are submerged,

*"What was a person to do when even things in England spoke a different language than the one they did back in Pakistan?"*⁵

In an alien country, she feels suffocation and she doesn't like food {Fish and chips, Haggis}, cloth, and mass culture. She has rejected the English manner and cultures even the English language. The reader finds oneself swinging from hatred of this religious woman to sympathy, and back to disbelief. No one can imagine how much pain and savagery Aslam confronts with *Kaukab*, and there are lots, she can't live turn away from her religion, because she is a true believer in her religion. Her remaining lifeline is only in a strang culture.

Kaukab's social position keeps her away from contacting the 'English' world. In this sense, her neighborhood is the space where she feels safe, "I don't like to go there often –white people's houses which start soon after that street, and even the Pakistanis there are not from our part of Pakistan". Due to this, *Kaukab* meets very little from English people as she. When Jugnu brings his white girlfriend for dinner in her home, firstly she meets English people face to face she can not participate in a successful communicative work because she can not understand.

Kaukab is no presented as a powerless woman, she is portrayed as a strong woman who dominants her household. Mah-Jabin, the daughter of Shamas and *Kaukab* who show the real nature of *Kaukab*. She is voiceless, doesn't know the English language properly, dominated by her mother. *Kaukab*

⁴Aslam, Nadeem. *Maps for Lost Lovers*. 2004.

⁵ Ibid



wants her daughter to follow Islam like her mother. Mah-Jabin conceals from her mother the fact that Kaukab mistreated her, accuses that Kaukab beats her and imposing her religious discourse on her.

Finally, the third character is Suraya, the fact of born in the United Kingdom does not prevent her from being beaten and divorced. Later, she is forced even to find an eligible man to remarry and divorce so that she can marry her first husband again. Her action shows a deep disempowerment and her subjection to religious discourse. However, this categorisation should not conceal the fact that the two adult women have a transnational experience that is dimmed in Kaukab's case, even though she talks in Urdu about Pakistan most of the time.

Aslam shows Shamas culturally as a Muslim but none a believer like himself. Shamas, the opposite character and husband of Kaukab in the novel who is the son of a Hindu father and Muslim mother. he speaks English fluently and is a bridge between the English and migrant people. Shamas is a gentle and liberal man who has no time for the orthodox form of Islam to which so many in his community cling; shamas exercises to maintain his Asian roots and English influence but Kaukab have much more time to show loyalty and orthodox form of Islam, she gives more respect of Arabic language than English because she knows that Arabic is the language of prophet Muhammad. She recites the Quran properly and follow the command of Prophet Muhammad and offering Namaz five time in every day. she follows her religion blindly and has no understanding about what is right or wrong because she feels that she is a true believer about her religion, But Mah-Jabin accuses her mother that she has imposed her religion on her and mistreat me in the house. Shamas and Kaukab's family is not fully organised and their children defy the strict religious norms followed by the family. In the South Asian countries, they have a close-knit family structure and live together generation to generation.

When Kaukab knows about the love affair of Mah-Jabin, she sends Mah-Jabin from England to

Pakistan so that she can not see her boy again and wants to marry her cousin but Mah-Jabin's husband divorced her, she hind this from her mother. In Pakistan when a man says talaq three times so he divorced her wife which shows religion orthodox and unempowerment of women in the Pakistani community.

Although she is very orthodox about Islam, keeps put aside her about the concept of honour killing and takes a comfortable position with her family. When the novel starts, Shamas mourns on his brother's death, Jugnu, when we read the opening page of the novel, the story explores the two missing lovers, Shamas younger brother Jugnu and Chanda. Jugnu a man settled in England with university education and well-traveled with a career in Science.

There are rumors that Jugnu and Chanda are killed by her two brothers "Baara" and "Chhota" because they were living together, not married and thus they are living in sin, the two brother were accused to honour killing and the ensuing arrest of Chanda's brothers for the alleged murder of the couple. Chanda's mother declares:

"I wanted to ask my sons so many things today but my English isn't very good. That prison guard kept telling me not to talk to them in 'Paki language' each time I felt like saying what I truly feel. 'Speak English or shut up.'"⁶

Chanda's husband could not be persuaded to divorce her even and he left her long year ago. In the Islamic law, when someone said divorce three times to his wife, he can leave his wife and women can't marry her first husband until she does not marry another man, Chanda is divorced by her two husbands and her third husband left her without divorced so by the Islamic law, a woman can't live in relation with a strange man until she does not take divorce by her previous husband. In Aslam's lexicon, a woman doesn't simply wear earrings,

⁶Aslam, Nadeem. *Maps for Lost Lovers*. 2004.



"The beads hanging from her earlobes are tiny and clear, as though she has managed to crack open a glass paperweight like a walnut and somehow managed to pick out whole the air bubbles suspended within it."⁷

However, English is not the mere language that is given a privileged position within the Pakistani community. Arabic is valued as the language of prophet Muhammad, Yet, Kaukab remembers a story of a pilgrim who went to Saudi Arabia and began to kiss the words on the walls because to him, Arabic was the language the Koran was written in, ignoring it is an everyday language as well. However,

"what he took to be verses from the Koran was actually an advertisement for hair-depilatory cream".⁸

Towards the end of the novel, Kaukab is criticized by one of her sons because of her ambivalence since she feels the alienated by English but not by Arabic: She says

"I've read the Koran, in English, unlike you who chant it in Arabic without knowing what the words mean, hour after hour, day in day out, like chewing gum for the brain".⁹

In the southeast, the woman has considered the honor of the household and the man is the protector and caretaker of the family. The desire for further and higher education and choice to choose a husband with whom they love can be a simple reason for suspicion to kill them in the name of honor killing. During a heated argument, Kaukab slaps Mah-Jabin, hit her head on the wall many times, in a feat of rage, she wields the knife. Mah-Jabin responds,

'Here we have proof that Chanda was murdered by her brothers, that a family can kill one of its own...'.¹⁰

On the other hand, Pakistan is one of the

most top countries of honour killing and Pakistani human rights non-governmental organisations gave the estimate that there are about 1,000 honour killings every year 'World Report 2015, 422'. The killing of women is seen as a bold step in order to keep family honour intact. It is not lawful yet prevalent in Pakistan and even the South Asian countries. The real numbers of honour killing might differ; Aslam also brings the same issue in *Maps for Lost Lovers*. According to the Home offices statistics, 116 men were convicted of murder last year as opposed to just 11 women, to stop domestic violence against women and girls, forced marriage, acid attacks, rape, murder through so-called honour killings, acid attacks, it needs a cultural change. Otherwise, the legal format has failed to abolish the practice.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, we finally derive to the fact that through these characters and incident. Nadeem Aslam brings out the circumstances where one's society and culture continues to change day by day, In the novel *Maps for Lost Lovers*, he shows where the multiculturalism exists and human's identity is always affected. Peoples migrate from one country or state to another in search of a better life, education, business and to expose themselves to various cultures and traditions. On the one hand, Kaukab, the heart of the novel, brings the multicultural issues and problems of migrating people. Thus, Nadeem Aslam explicitly brings out the multiculturalism in this novel *Maps for Lost Lovers*.

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