

## Tracing Cultural Morphing and Hybrid Identity Concerns in Selected Pakistani Diasporic Anglophone Fiction

**HASSAN BIN ZUBAIR**

PhD Scholar (English Literature), Department of English,  
National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Email: [hbz77@yahoo.com](mailto:hbz77@yahoo.com)

Tel: +92-333-6242322

**Dr. NIGHAT AHMED**

Assistant Professor of English, Department of English  
National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Email: [drnighatahmad@gmail.com](mailto:drnighatahmad@gmail.com)

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### *Abstract*

*This research explores the diasporic experience of Pakistani immigrants. Migration may be considered as 'a liberating region' and provide an opportunity to break away from stifling traditions. However, diasporic identity can also be marked by a sense of loss and trauma at removal, even if by choice, from one's homeland. Leaving the indigenous homeland can in some instances bring to the surface South Asia's shortcomings as well as the legacies of colonialism that cultivated divisions, based on religion through the strategic exploitation of perceived weaknesses of the colonized. Even after the end of imperialism in India, the religious divisions between Hindu and Muslim communities had become ingrained and continue to permeate the lives of post-independent generations as is evident in the novel *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004). Theories presented by Robin Cohen and Arjun Appadurai about culture and diaspora support this research. The irony is that rather than taking comfort and strength from the community as a source of cohesion, the community can turn on itself, and tensions that existed in a previous homeland can be transferred to the present time and trigger disproportionate responses.*

**Keywords:** *Diaspora, Migration, Immigrants, Colonization, Pakistan, South Asia.*

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### **Introduction**

This research article is based on my unpublished doctoral thesis of English Literature, in which I have tried to explore the bicultural ambivalence and issues related to Identity, economy, culture, religion and ideology in Pakistani diasporic Anglophone fiction. Nadeem Aslam's novel *Maps for Lost Lovers* focuses on a close-knit Pakistani community faced with the dichotomy of negotiating the past with its weight of history and cultural tradition, the trials and tribulations of diasporic identity, and competing memories of historical trauma that the end of colonization perpetuated. *Maps* is also the story of a marriage and the various phases of a couple, husband Shamas and wife Kaukab, relationship. The setting of *Maps* is a northern town in England and populated by many first-generation migrants from South Asia who settled in England after Indian Independence in 1947, as was historically the case during the first Partition when millions of people became displaced and Britain offered a place of refuge. The desire for independent national identities and the tensions that are contained in the conflicts between India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh feature prominently in *Maps for Lost Lovers* which is set in 1997 fifty years after the end of the British Empire and so the narrative also constitutes a moment of reflection. For first-generation migrants, the memories of Partitions 1947 and 1971, are first hand and the violence of the period permeates their personal histories. Aslam has spoken of how his writing is his "way of exploring my own life and the workings of my own consciousness and *Maps* took the writer eleven years to complete" (Brace, 2004). The identity of the fictional northern

town is ambiguous in the early pages of the novel and is described using popularized images of South Asia, “[o]n the shore the winds rush from every direction during the winter months to twist themselves around the body like a sari” (*MLL*, 4). Diaspora and the transitions it entails, whereby individuals join communities in their attempts to relocate after leaving an original homeland is a major focus in the novel and is shown to affect both the first and second-generation protagonists, albeit in different ways. Whilst the broader concept of diaspora shares a preoccupation with spatial locations, the narrative of *Maps* conversely draws on the challenges of memories and experiences that manifest themselves in individuals and this seems at times unconnected to diasporic travel but is instead an aspect of the human condition. As such, whilst the narrative focuses on the community it also examines the aspect of loneliness in a community and how this can at times be self-imposed through religious practice. This results in a discourse between the larger forces of history and individual experiences of patriarchy, as well as an exposition of the ingenuity in negotiating such challenges. Nostalgia as experienced by diasporic communities produces a multiplicity of emotions that Aslam examines, creating insularities and divisions in communities. The concept of diaspora is enigmatic as the term can be interpreted variably depending on the historical context that applies to the subject described as diasporic. McLeod writes: “It is tempting to think of diaspora peoples as migrant peoples, and indeed many people living in diasporas certainly are. However, *generational differences* are important here” (*Emphasis Original*, McLeod, 2005, p.207)

### **Research Questions**

Q.1: How has Nadeem Aslam projected the diasporic cultural ambivalence in the novel *Maps for Lost Lovers*?

Q.2: How are the issues of religion and culture highlighted in Pakistani Anglophone fiction?

Q.3: While living in the liminal space, how are the problems related to the first and second generation immigrants brought to light in the selected text?

### **Theoretical Framework**

In the second edition to *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (2008), Robin Cohen reflects on how the prototypical definition of diaspora has been expanded:

“I suddenly thought how migration scholars were increasingly using gardening terms like uprooting, scattering, transplanting and the then newly-fashionable word hybridity. My interest mounted when I found that diaspora was derived from the Greek word *speiro* (to sow or to disperse). Could refashioning the old idea of diaspora provide a means to understand new and revived forms of transnational and ‘translatal’ movements? How were these mapping onto, and changing, the accepted ways of understanding global migration, emerging identities complex oscillating flows, and unexpected patterns of settlement and integration?” (*Emphasis Original*, Cohen, 2008, p. xiv).

Cohen argues that diaspora studies have gone through four phases. The first theorization (the 1960s and 1970s) denotes diaspora as a scattering arising from a cataclysmic event that traumatized a whole group, such as the Jewish and their experience of the holocaust. The second phase (the 1980s and onwards) of diaspora studies was included as a metaphorical designation for a more varied cluster of diasporas, collective narratives, and different relationships to homelands and the host country. The third phase (the mid-1990s) was influenced by postmodern readings and social constructionist critiques. Postmodernists argued that identities had become reterritorialized and constructed and deconstructed in a flexible and situational way; accordingly, “concepts of the diaspora had to be radically reordered in response to this complexity. The current and fourth phase has seen consolidation and a return to ideas of home and homeland in a reaffirmation of core elements in the concept of diaspora” (Cohen, 2008, pp.1-2). Avtar Brah in *Cartographies of Diaspora* (1996) describes how the concept of diaspora has an imagined aspect and for Brah this “delineates a field of identifications where ‘imagined communities’ are forged within and out of a confluence of narratives from annals of collective memory and re-memory” (Brah, 2003, p.196). As such

the term diaspora is less fixed in meaning and becomes a psychological, rather than a physical, relocation. Jonathan Sell in *Metaphor and Diaspora in Contemporary Writing* (2012) perceives the concept of diaspora as a “cognitive frame within which immigrants and migrants may attempt to order their experiences and from which they express them; as such diaspora is intrinsically discursive” (Sell, 2012, p.10).

## **Research Methodology**

Textual analysis method has been used in this research to analyze the selected text. It has helped the researcher in finding the answers of the research questions. Theories presented by Robin Cohen and Arjun Appadurai about culture and diaspora support this research. The irony is that rather than taking comfort and strength from the community as a source of cohesion, the community can turn on itself, and tensions that existed in a previous homeland can be transferred to the present time and trigger disproportionate responses. As the selected novel draws attention to how diasporic perspectives evoke a sense of the minority or marginalized figures, about a center-periphery model which Said describes as “a powerful series of political and ultimately ideological realities [...] No one can escape dealing with, if not the East/West division, then the North/South one, the have/have-not one, the imperialist/anti-imperialist one, the white/coloured one” (Said, 2003, p.327). Aslam examines how a community interacts with shared memories from different perspectives, and the consequences of trying to hold onto and abide by rules that held sway in previous homelands, drawing particular attention to generational conflicts that occur as a result of varying distances of time from acts of violence and psychological trauma.

## **Textual Analysis**

Diaspora and its dispersion thus refer to people who have been displaced from a place of origin and, in the context of the Indian subcontinent, the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan resulted in one of the largest population movements in recorded history with the migration of an estimated fourteen million people. Although Partition was a cause for celebration for South Asians living in London it was catastrophic in the Indian sub-continent where such a momentous process produced strains and stresses in the newly decolonized states of unprecedented violence resulting in extreme acts of violation and mass murder. Esoteric by nature and as a result difficult to define, diaspora, like theological concepts, is fluid and subject to interpretation and understanding of historical events in a given context. The effect of the movement of people is complex in that diaspora entails new compositions of identity which add dimensions to inherit or originary identities. Ashcroft et al. write:

“The descendants of the diasporic movements generated by colonialism have developed their own distinctive cultures which both preserve and often extend and develop their originary cultures. Creolized versions of their own practices evolved, modifying (and being modified by) indigenous cultures with which they thus came into contact” (Ashcroft et al, 1998, p.82).

The narrative of *Maps* takes place over one year in a community awaiting the truth about the doomed lovers Jugnu and Chanda, and struggling to accept relationships that exceed the boundaries of convention. Through a central story arc concerned with uncovering the mystery of Jugnu and Chanda’s disappearance five months previously, the story of the lovers acts as a catalyst to expose flaws within the community and particular individuals, as well as draw attention to underlying tensions that the disappearance brings to the surface. Jugnu and Chanda’s story, although an intimate story of two lovers, can also be read as a political narrative. The fate of lovers and the community reaction can be seen to reference events from South Asian social and political history so that larger-scale conflict manifests itself in individual narratives. Aslam himself states that from his perspective “all writing is political even non-political writing is political. Coming from Pakistan, and belonging to the Islamic world. I can’t be aware of how politics affects our daily lives, how it is not just dry legislation and laws and statements. It’s visceral” (Aslam and Sethi, 2008, pp.348-361). Aslam’s statement implies how his fiction is political and that fiction is inextricably tied to

history and politics. Political circumstances are closely connected to the trajectory of individual lives and experiences, and dressing too is a political gesture revelatory of psychological, social, political, and economic status, evident in the narrative through various descriptions of characters and their dress. Nadia Butt in her essay “Between Orthodoxy and Modernity” writes that the struggle between orthodox Islam and modernity leads to inhuman and irrational social practices. She argues that there is an ‘urgent need to translate traditional concepts of Islam into the global landscape of modernity so that the growing gulf between orthodoxy and social change can be bridged’. (Butt, 2004, p.153).

The title *Maps for Lost Lovers* is indicative of the central preoccupation of the novel: the notion of loss and consideration of the effectiveness of ‘maps’ or means of negotiating or navigating particular situations that arise in the narrative. Chris Weedon writes that the “major themes of the text religion, rigidified cultural norms, gender, and generational conflict combine to show how first-generation working-class experience in Britain is shaped by a strong sense of loss of homeland, family, and community, legacies of both Partitions and subsequent inter-communal conflict, as well as British racism” (Weedon, 2012, p.24). Whilst ‘British racism’ is arguably a part of the reality of diasporic experience, my reading of the novel will focus more closely on the community within the diaspora and tensions between South Asians, both first-generation migrants and the second generation diaspora. More broadly, the title may allude to South Asia in its postcoloniality and its disintegration from a single nation to the disparate three. In this interpretation of the title, the ‘Lovers’ are the nations of India and Pakistan (which included Bangladesh until 1971) who require a ‘Map’ to negotiate a way back to unity after the brutality brought about by the Partitions in South Asian history. As Etienne Balibar points out on the subject of borders, “it is undergoing a profound change in meaning” (Balibar, 2004, p.1). He goes on to argue that:

“The borders of new sociopolitical entities, in which an attempt is being made to preserve all the functions of the sovereignty of the state, are no longer entirely situated at the outer limit of the territories; they are dispersed a little everywhere, wherever the movement of information, people, and things are happening and are controlled for example, in cosmopolitan cities. But it is also one of my hypotheses that the zones called peripheral, where secular and religious cultures confront one another, where differences in economic prosperity become more pronounced and strained, constitute the melting pot for the formation of a people (*demos*), without which there is no citizenship (*politeia*) in the sense that this term has acquired since antiquity in the democratic tradition” (Balibar, 2004, pp.1-2).

In *Maps* the town itself is continually changing as a result of the arrival of various nationalities and the adoption of names that have been acquired from the indigenous countries of the settlers. However, as Aslam writes of the fictional town, the “various nationalities of the Subcontinent have changed the names according to the specific country they are from Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan. Only one name has been accepted by every group, remaining unchanged. It's the name of the town itself. Dasht-e-Tanhaii. The Wilderness of Solitude. The Desert of Loneliness” (*MLL*, 29). It is the concept of ‘Loneliness’ that is ironically a unifier, so that even though inhabitants may believe they have more differences from, than similarities to, their neighbours, the feeling of displacement, even though not acknowledged, is a commonality experienced by the “various nationalities of the Subcontinent” (*MLL*, 29). It is the feeling of loss and loneliness that fuels the antagonism that exists in the community and is transferred into the varying interpretations of religious beliefs. When the disappearance is finally resolved, it is revealed that it was in fact feelings of loneliness, precipitated by a betrayal that instigated the murders. Until that point, the narration implies religious differences are behind the mysterious disappearance, rather than any other factors such as personal animosity. Religion is thus a strategy to divert attention and it accentuates feelings of displacement. In some cases, as Aslam shows in the character of Kaukab, vulnerable individuals are isolated as a result of being imprisoned by religion and particular interpretations of the faith.

There are multiple ways in which conflict manifests itself in the community and is then manifested in religion. Firstly, the co-existence of different religious faiths provides points of distinction, in particular between Islam and Hinduism. As we shall see in Shamas’ father’s life a turn of events results in him

practicing both Hinduism and Islam. Secondly, and arguably more compellingly, conflict can arise when religious interpretations differ, as Aslam illustrates in his depiction of Islam. Aziz Al-Azmeh writes on inventions of Islam in *Islams and Modernities* (1993) that:

“Thus Islamic culture takes on the aspect of a psychodrama and the serious business of Inventing a culture begins, primarily by the conjuration and proclamation of tokens (stigmata to others) of exoticism, particularly ones which give a pronounced visual edge to the boundaries of exclusion/inclusion. Basic and most plastic amongst these are dressing up, and exhibitionist piety, with dramaturgical direction” (Al-Azmeh, 1993, p.7).

In *Maps* the interpretation of Islam is brought into sharp focus when events such as the fatal assault on a girl are justified as religious cleansing and her 'criminally stupid parents' allow the attack based on the reassurances of a 'monstrous holy man' (MLL, 196). The murder of Jugnu and Chanda is yet another example of religion and its interpretation which can be used to justify murder as an act of honour. Eventually, the hypocrisy of the murderer (Chanda's brother) is exposed when it is revealed that he is on a rampage having been spurned by his Sikh lover.

Although Jugnu and Chanda's disappearance is a crucial moment in the novel, as already mentioned, it is the relationship between Shamas and Kaukab that comes to the fore in the unfolding of the story and it is their perspective that the narration focuses upon. Now that their three children are themselves, adults, Shamas and Kaukab's relationship is re-evaluated, in an allusion to the novel's title. The couple struggles to adapt to the transition of their children into adults in different ways. Kaukab retreats into herself whilst Shamas busies himself with community roles. Their children's generation has different outlooks to their parents and this can be seen in their daughter's divorcing of an abusive husband, and their son's openness about his homosexuality, behaviour that compromises Shamas' position as Director of the Community Relations Council: “Shamas is the person the neighbourhood turns to when unable to negotiate the white world on its own” (MLL, 15). Shamas' contribution to the community is illustrative of his efforts to act as the bridge between the residents of Dasht-e-Tanhahi and to the 'white' other world. Shamas is the more reasonable partner in the marriage and he is open to different cultures in comparison to his wife Kaukab who is shown to be intensely close-minded and dismissive of any belief that deviates from her strict interpretation of Islam. It is Kaukab, rather than Shamas, who is keen to abide by a strict interpretation, in particular of, her role as a Muslim woman. It is very clear that there is a breakdown in the relationship and that Shamas and Kaukab remain a couple because of cultural traditions rather than individual desires. As Shamas muses, “he 'hasn't had a conversation with someone about the matters that interest him for a very long time. Talking with Kaukab is, for both of them, frequently another way of being alone, the conversation highlighting the separate loneliness of each” (MLL, 156). The fact that Shamas and Kaukab are still together in form, and despite the loneliness, they feel within their marriage, brings into focus the restrictions of a cultural, rather than religious, framework that dictates their lives to a greater extent.

Kaukab is a god-fearing woman who has, over time, alienated her children as a result of her disapproval of their chosen paths. Kaukab is harsh in her treatment of her children and it becomes clear that aided by Shamas' patriarchal status, she manipulates their daughter Mah-Jabin. She repeatedly tells her daughter “your father will be angry, oh your father will be upset: “Mah-Jabin had grown up hearing these sentences, Kaukab trying to obtain legitimacy for her own decisions by invoking his name. She *wanted* him to be angry, she *needed* him to be angry. She had cast him in the role of the head of the household and he had to act accordingly” (MLL, 111) (emphasis original). Kaukab's behaviour suggests that she believes that women should behave in a specific way and that she will go to great lengths to preserve ideals, even if this means projecting her status as inferior to Shamas. The family is governed by Kaukab's matriarchy rather than Shamas' enforcement of patriarchy. Kaukab believes the family home is a sanctuary from the outside world and that there is “so much outside the house that may not be brought into the house, and the mother is quick to construe any voicing of opinion or expression of independent thought by the girl as a direct challenge to her authority” (MLL, 93). Kaukab's views are rooted in paralyzing fear of alternatives that lay outside the paradigm that she has lived her life by. “It had taken her decades to rebuild the happiness

she had lost when she moved to England: she had built it around her children, and yes, around Jugnu, but she had never realized how loosely woven a thing it was, how easily torn” (*MLL*, 296). As the narrative progresses, it becomes much clearer that although her practices are fundamentally questionable and her children suffer as a result of her close-mindedness, Kaukab believes that she is acting in their best interests and this is a redeeming feature of her actions.

Kaukab hints early on in the narrative that Shamas has been violent to her in the past and this fuels a negative impression of Shamas’ character. Kaukab’s “vigilant mother lifted the stamp of every letter that came into the house to make sure no clandestine message was being passed” (*MLL*, 65-66). So it is perhaps unsurprising that Kaukab develops a disproportionate level of chasteness in her character. Kaukab is a product of the Pakistani nationalist culture that fostered the subjugated status of women under a dictatorship. However, Shamas is presented as a reasonable man, and his actions largely support this. It is only by learning of Shamas’ perspective, his admittance of why he inflicted the violence on Kaukab, that we see the extent of her adherence to her beliefs. Ujala their youngest child, is born during the fasting month of Ramadan and Kaukab believes that:

“[H]e was a blessed child destined to be an especially pious Muslim: he was one of those rare boys who are born without a foreskin, the Muslims believe that such children have been marked by Allah for an exemplary virtuous existence in the world” (*MLL*, 139).

Kaukab believes that her newborn is holy and that she and the baby can both keep fast together. Even as Ujala’s health starts deteriorating, Kaukab refuses to feed the baby during the daylight hours in keeping with the rules of fasting and by any reasonable standard, Kaukab fails in her duties to look after her newborn. It is only when Shamas discovers why their child is growing weaker, that he physically vents his frustration. Shamas forces Kaukab to feed Ujala by tearing her kameez “with both hands to reveal a soaked brassiere which he pulled at here and there until one of the cups ripped open and spilled its load like weights in a sling” (*MLL*, 141). When Kaukab realizes that she will have to give in to Shamas she struggles to get to the sink to wash her hands as she “had been cutting up chilies earlier and didn’t want to touch her baby with those hands” (*MLL*, 142). The episode highlights two points.

Firstly, it shows how religious belief and the idea of devotion have skewed Kaukab’s logic and reason to such an extent that she is prepared to make the baby suffer. Secondly, the episode also illustrates that Kaukab dearly loves her child and would not intentionally harm the baby as washing her hands to wash away the chili demonstrates. The event also shows that Kaukab chooses to remember the event as the time when Shamas had been violent to her and she had been the subject of domestic violence. Shamas apologizes to Kaukab months later but she refuses to return the sentiment and instead “burns the wedding dress onto which she had embroidered his verses years ago” (*MLL*, 142). The verses of poetry were exchanged in a secret courtship conducted before their marriage and are a poignant reminder of a love story that has become ‘lost’. Kaukab is a stubborn woman who fails to register that she was abusing Ujala by not feeding him. Kaukab’s mental state is distorted as a result of practicing Islam in its more literal and fundamentalist interpretation.

Kaukab’s commitment to the version of Islam that *Veil* prescribes is shown to have had a detrimental effect on her family and yet Kaukab is deluded enough to think that her faith works in the interests of the family. The magazine regulates Kaukab’s actions and, in some respects, takes away Kaukab’s authority. It becomes difficult to empathize with Kaukab’s character after learning of the blunders she makes as a parent on the advice of a holy man. She poisons Ujala in a bid to try and get him to behave according to her beliefs on the advice of a holy person, and she arranges Mah-Jabin’s marriage to a violent man and then encourages her to return to the abusive husband. However, the narrative also illustrates that Kaukab, as the daughter of a cleric, is part of a tradition, and this has instilled certain values and expectations.

## Discussion

The culmination of events that leads to Kaukab's penultimate suicide attempt and finally Shamas' death from apparent suicide brings into question the desire of each character to end their lives and indicates their sense of failure. It also raises the issue of whether members of the diaspora, like Kaukab and Shamas, are 'programmed' to fail when they resign themselves to rules that leave them unfulfilled as individuals. Kaukab holds on to idealized memories and virtues of Pakistan at the cost of alienating both her husband and her children. Shamas, although not as persistent as Kaukab in implementing moral order, accepts a sexless marriage and eventually forfeits a sexual relationship with Suraya to be faithful to Kaukab. Kaukab and Shamas, in their ways, can both be seen to reject notions of hybridity and engagement with the present and this contributes to their downfall. Hybridity in this context is understood in broader terms of cultural hybridity where tolerance, acceptance, and open-mindedness promote the longevity of individuals' existence. When their grandson of mixed heritage is discussed by a third party, he is described as "the little boy [who] is half Pakistani and half...er...er...human" (*MLL*, 10) which reflects the strangeness of being defined as a hybrid, as one half of this and another half of the other. Aslam implies that there is a need to bridge the gulf between cultures and that art is the medium that can assist in this complex task.

The narrator states that "[a]ll great artists know that part of their task is to light up the distance between two human beings" (*MLL*, 13) and in *Maps* the character Charag, the eldest son of Kaukab and Shamas, can be seen as exemplifying a hybrid identity and he uses his art to celebrate the community. Shamas, too, believes that his son is "maturing as an artist and becoming aware of his responsibility as an artist" (*MLL*, 319). Charag's project will involve assembling studio photographs taken of immigrants from the first generation onwards to showcase their presence in society, and Charag acts as a mediator between two cultures, British and Pakistani. Charag questions the authority of religion and the painting of himself with an uncircumcised penis, called *The Uncut Self Portrait*, brings this particular debate to the fore. As he articulates, "[w]hat I am trying to say is that it was the first act of violence done to me in the name of a religion or social system. And I wonder if anyone has the right to do it. We should all question such acts" (*MLL*, 320). For Charag, the questioning is reasonable and justified, but perhaps his shortcomings lie in a lack of empathy for his parent's generation as the ruptures in tradition, heritage and culture they experience are arguably greater than his own and calls into question an entire mindset of existence which, McLeod emphasizes, entails recognizing "generational differences" (McLeod, 2004, p.207). Kaukab realizes this when she laments that "not everyone has the freedom to walk away from a life" (*MLL*, 115), that the gap between the generations is as fraught as the gap between cultures. Intergenerational conflict may surpass the conflicts constructed from differences between races and religions.

## Findings

In *Maps*, Aslam examines how fear of difference is enmeshed with South Asia's postcolonial history and stretches back to seminal events in Indian history. During the period in which India was a single nation, the different religious groups, "Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs had forgotten their differences and rioted together" (*MLL*, 51) in the common cause to end British rule in India. "The infamous massacre at Amritsar in 1919 marked a turning point in India's modern history and in the relationship between the British and Indians. It was also the event which spurred on the nationalist movement and Gandhi's political course of action" (Dalrymple, 2006). In *Maps*, Aslam evaluates the success of Indian postcoloniality, the subsequent Partition of Pakistan, and the civil war of 1971 in which Bangladesh gained its independence. Admittedly, it is problematic to consider postcoloniality in the stark terms of success or failure, but a speculative view highlights how the quest for national identity based on religion, as in the first Partition, was the cause of devastating human suffering. As the divisions within Aslam's fictional town show, there is an ongoing partitioning that increasingly isolates inhabitants in its denial of cultural plurality. Individuals like Kaukab, who are the first-hand witnesses of the quest for independent nationhood based on religious biases, bear the negative consequences of South Asia's burgeoning nationalism.

Cordula Lemke, in an examination of ‘Laws of Purity’ in *Maps*, focuses on Kaukab’s confinement “by the small radius of her movements and activities, which is reduced to two or three streets, and by the importance, she attaches to her house as a bulwark against all kinds of enemy forces” (Lemke, 2008, p.172). Kaukab cordons off her life but a close analysis of her actions is also telling of her anxieties that have more to do concerning her sense of self-worth in comparison with those outside her immediate social circle, which the dinner with Jugnu’s white lover illustrates. Kaukab anticipates the woman’s arrival by preparing an elaborate dinner, choosing the clothing she would wear and applying cosmetics “for the first time in ten years” (MLL, 35) and although outwardly she is scathing of what the woman represents, there is a sense of awe that her presence awakens in Kaukab. Kaukab takes note of what her guest is wearing: “a lilac blouse of shimmering silk that Kaukab couldn’t resist the urge to finger just for the pleasure of it, it looked like a fabric known in Pakistan as *Aab-e-Ravan*, the Flowing Water” (MLL, 37). Kaukab also notices that “the white woman’s legs were bare below the knee-length skirt (made, incidentally, of a checked fabric that reminded Kaukab of *Bulbul Chasm*, the eye of the Songbird” (MLL, 37). The fact that the two women wear different styles of clothing, yet share the same tastes in fabric, is symbolic of a stirring of unity between Kaukab and the ‘white woman’. Shamas himself notes that the women share similar opinions “she’s just said something which I’ve heard you say” (MLL, 38).

If Kaukab is full of “apprehension concerning the white race’ she also dwells on her earlier thoughts of *Hell as other people*” (MLL, 32) (emphasis original). Kaukab later begins to doubt herself, “surely no one no people, no civilization would think other people were Hell. What else was there but other people?” (MLL, 33). Kaukab’s attitudes towards others superficially represent her as a prejudiced woman. However, her self-doubt suggests that her prejudice is a means to protect herself from her inner anxieties about rejection in another community. Arjun Appadurai points out:

“Neighbourhoods are ideally stages for their own self- reproduction, a process that is fundamentally opposed to the imaginary of the nation state, where neighborhoods are designed to be instances and exemplars of a generalizable mode of belonging to a wider territorial imaginary”. (Appadurai, 1996, p.191).

However, as the multiple levels of conflict in *Maps* show, Kaukab and others within the community are part of *multiple* ‘imaginar[ies] of the nation-state’ as although they are members of the South Asian diaspora, the place of origin was also a place of competing nations and competing Independence. As well as exploring the culture clashes within communities, Aslam examines the diasporic desire to define identity about the country of origin. Anxieties that existed in a previous homeland resurface in the host homeland. Kaukab’s urgency to identify herself as different to the white woman is also identifiable in her relationship with other South Asian nationalities Indians and Bangladeshis are *not* Pakistani and for Kaukab are visibly conspicuous in their differences.

Aslam has stated that his portrayal of the working-class community is informed by his upbringing. In such communities, women may act duplicitously as a means of survival in environments that are driven by fear and shame. On the one hand, women are taught to be ‘women’ through forms of dress and modes of behavior. Suraya’s circumstances provide some insight into this and her frustration at the injustices of the system she finds herself in. “Earrings, necklaces, ribbons, perfume, lipstick. The young girls were learning to be women, to be false, teaching themselves to figure in men’s dreams and fantasies” (MLL, 202). On the other hand, women themselves subvert this performance and can manipulate it, as Suraya does, as a means an end, which at times skews their outlook as is evident in Kaukab’s characterization. Kaukab convinces herself that she acts to benefit her family so that her stay in England is a selfless act to be closer to her children, “she would remain in hated England because her children are here” (MLL, 60). Kaukab, however, dismisses the political and social landscape as anything other than “pious and devout” compared to the “decadent and corrupt West” (MLL, 63), and yet wants to remain, although she has little contact with the children and her daughter Mah-Jabin lives in America. It seems to be the case that Kaukab is not yet ready to accept the brutal history of her beloved Pakistan and will transfer the rejection of her ‘own’ country to the country that she migrated to.



When Chanda returns to England after two failed marriages in Pakistan, her brothers and father ask her to consider wearing the burqa. “The men said they felt awkward and ashamed when they were with their friends on a street corner and she went by” (*MLL*, 342) preferring her to display the ‘exhibitionist piety’ that Al-Azmeh describes on the “conjuration of the religion” (Al-Azmeh, 1993, p.7). In asking Chanda to wear the burqa, the male members of her family seemingly want her to be less visible, which has little to do with preserving her modesty and more to do with limiting the gossip about her, as she goes about undetected. Again, the narrative suggests that rather than the burqa being used as a garment to shield and protect Chanda, it is for the benefit of concealing patriarchal cowardice, by which her past misfortune is viewed as a blemish on male reputations. The act of persuading Chanda to wear the item of religious clothing has little to do with Islam but is appropriated and misused to exert male prejudices and is a blight upon the article of clothing. The burqa does not have to be a concrete manifestation of patriarchal oppression if Chanda chooses to wear it of her own accord. However, Chanda’s father and her brothers cannot handle the community reaction and she is deemed scandalous. The pressures that Chanda faces are steeped in the interpretation of social norms rather than religious doctrine.

## **Conclusion**

The events that take place in *Maps*, from the murder of Jugnu and Chanda to the exorcism of the teenage girl, illustrate how the town recreates the social structures of Pakistan, and, more widely, South Asia. The fear of shame in Pakistani communities also plagues the English town’s inhabitants, as they remain emotionally attached to a previous home and are governed by the same values that held sway in their pasts. The effort to reconstruct a home means re-implementing conventions relating to female honour and re-invigorating what is perceived to be an authentic past.

Kaukab is afraid of scandal and how the community around her reacts to her family and its divorces, homosexuality, and infidelities. Kaukab’s narrow-mindedness illustrates that although she may have relocated in terms of geography, her mindset has remained static, and the place that she now inhabits is a microcosm of an environment left behind. The retention of the past, however, comes to have little to do with reality and is more in keeping with the imagined conceptualizations of home Rushdie described in his essay ‘Imaginary Homelands’ as discussed in the introduction of this research article. Dasht-e-Tanhaii is described as an environment that has the power to destroy individuals with the impossible standards it sets: “The neighborhood 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” (*MLL*, 176). Kaukab’s anxieties can be attributed to a woman of her age, social class, and upbringing. As a first-generation migrant who has experienced the tensions of colonialism in India, nationalism, and subsequent partitions, it perhaps comes as no surprise that Kaukab is “full of apprehension concerning the white race and uncomfortable with people of another Subcontinental religion or grouping” (*MLL*, 32). The ‘apprehension’, then does not stop with the ‘white’ community as it would appear that any deviation from familiarity causes Kaukab, and others sharing her views, to become anxious and fearful of difference.

More specifically, Aslam articulates the element of ‘exhibitionist piety’ that dressing entails and which is indicative of the role of performance and strategy in the development of dressing patterns. Thus, the particulars of dress and the psychological state that manifests itself through how an individual is clothed have varying outcomes. For Kaukab, the effort to accommodate constructed nationalist and religious fundamentalisms is all-consuming and she internalizes her subordination as a woman, despite the absence of an immediate patriarchal threat. By comparison, Suraya overcomes the challenges in her life through skillful and determined manipulation of dress in ways that outwardly comply with conventions of modesty. She recognizes the limitations of her indigenous cultural landscape and yet, by abiding by its restrictions, she turns prescribed modest forms of dress to her advantage and into opportunities for sexual empowerment. Through a focus on nature, the narrative asserts the human desire for survival whereby dress is an extension of the human need to shield oneself from destructive external forces that threaten existence.

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