

TRANSCULTURAL EXISTENTIAL DILEMMA IN NADEEM ASLAM'S *MAPS FOR LOST LOVERS*

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Abstract: Nadeem Aslam's *Maps For Lost Lovers* reflects the life of migrant settlers in an English land named Dash E Tanhai. Set with in the framework of diasporic issues, the novel reflects the condition of women who are torn between the clutches of multiple laws, as offered by their home land, new land and religion. The present paper proposes to have a study on the woman characters in *Maps For Lost Lovers* and expose the conflicting psyche which haunts them from framing their own space and identity with in a transcultural scenrio. By focussing on the transcultural atmosphere attributed by multiple laws and rule, the study aim to show the effect of diverse laws in woman. The paper mainly focuses on two women characters Kaukab and Surayya and intends to trace their conflicting self as they lack a fixed centre.

Key words: Transculturalism, Existential Crisis, Ex-centric, Identity crisis

Maps for lost lovers by Nadeem Aslam presents wide range of women characters, whose life are shattered with national and religious rules, which makes them hard enough to fix themselves in a fixed identity. The characters Kaukab and Surayya are the victims of ex-centric cultural formation. Their life in the first phase revolves round in searching for their identity, and second phase lies in the assertion of identity, where an identity is framed. With in the framework of patriarchal society, the novel presents the life of Muslim immigrant community, where the life of women in muslim community and multicultural British society is presented. In an English town tremendously populated by Pakistani immigrants, Jugnu and his lover, Chanda, have gone missing. Chanda's brothers are arrested on the charge of honour-killing their sister and her lover. *Maps for Lost Lovers*, focuses on the on the lives of Shamas, Jugnu's brother, and Shamas's wife, Kaukab, in the upshot of the event that unravels lives of the immigrant.

Kaukab and Surayya, perfectly casted female characters in the novel represent two distinct philosophies of woman life. Kaukab, the mother of a Pakistani family living in a close-knit community of an English town feels isolated in the British society due to her poor knowledge of English. In spite of her restrictions she defines herself as a dominant woman and tries to control other members of household including Shamas. While Kaukab follows the patriarchal laws imposed upon her as her duty and commitment, Surayya tries to escape from the laws but couldn't. Both the characters cannot escape from the very emotional dependence to which they are committed to: family, relations and laws. Kaukab's dissatisfaction in the land of English is closely related to her emotional dependence towards her family, where she feels the new nation laws alienates her children from her beliefs and wishes. "... 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). Though confined within the codes of religion culture and belief, Kaukab offers in herself a practical minded woman who is ready to have English education. A liberal framed kaukab is seen in her where she hesitate to disapprove the love of Chanda and Junju. She offers daily prayers for her safe arrival. In a land where nothing provides her with the freedom of expression and validity of words, Kaukab, "... the daughter of a clerik, born and raised in the shadow of a minaret" (Aslam 88), finds her free space in the world of prayers. Kaukab's emotional dependence could not support Mah Jabin's divorce and remarriage. Kaukab's conflicted self to the diverse cultural environment surrounds her compels her to accept Mah Jabin's westernized influenced modernist outlook on life. The conflicting self inside her whisper, "it's my fault for having brought my children here..." (Aslam 140). Kaukab's conflicting self could not answer whether her assumptions and attitudes are true or whether she should follow the changing culture that envelops them around. "... 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's emotional dependence to the heard and practiced rules some times makes her a defeated mother. She could not agree with Mah Jabin's decision to have divorce and stick on with the proposal of continuing her unhealthy marriage. Though dominant in nature with a commanding power, the pre conceived notions in her regarding the code of woman alienates from the concept of free woman. Kaukab's contradictory self is revealed in her words "... I won't move to

Pakistan. What would my life be then? my soul in Arabia, and my heart- ... (210)". While Kaukab is surrounded by a different world of changing liberal minded peoples including Shamas, Charang, Mah Jabin, Ujala ; Surayya comes from a different sphere. She is subjected to the force commitment of remarriage and divorce for herself to get reunited with her son . Suraya is divorced by her husband in Pakistan and according to Islamic law, she has to get married to and divorced from another man in order to be reunited with her first husband and their child. Distressed, she starts an affair with Shamas, hoping he is going to be the route out of all this. Though her former husband divorced her out of trivial reasons, her emotional dependence to her son compels her to follow the patriarchal strange code of laws, which she herself feels unlawful. Like Kaukab, she is also subjected to conflicting self whether to or whether not to.

Suraya knows she will be able to go through with every humiliation and degradation eventually, that she'll let another man-Shamas, for instance-touch her 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 past few minutes, but nothing has come to her. (Aslam 239).

In her struggle between whether to or whether not to, her emotional dependence to her son predominates and she moves to the effort of getting Shamas married to her, only to get divorced. "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)" Before that emotional dependence, her very identity is nullified and she is ready to surrender before him, though aware that she is lowered as a mere object of pleasure

Both the characters are confronted with the issues of double laws and doubly influenced culture. They lack a fixed centre to be guided by, and are sometimes shattered within their thoughts. Kaukab's moral inclination to the set followed principles and rules places her with in a dilemma when confronted with her own children whose cultural shaping is rooted in a totally foreign land grounded with the principles of modernity. Here "... traditionally hybrid culture is defended against the new". (Burke 66). Though she challenges the attitude of the new generation with the ground of the principles of her own upbringing, she is

forced to take a compromised space. Surayya contrary to Kaukab is taking a compromised space, opposite to her ideological views in order to protect and safeguard her role as a mother. Thus the characters turn to be the victims of laws within the nation and outside the nation. As said in *Location of Culture*, the cultural productions in this mixedness turn to be ambivalent. In order to overcome from the dilemma, Kaukab and Surayya adopt a hybrid state as a mark of their resistance.

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