

**Navigating Diasporic Identities and Cultural Hybridity in Nadeem Aslam's 'Maps for Lost Lovers': A Literary Analysis**



Rafia Kiran Zahid	Lecturer, University Of Veterinary And Animal Sciences Lahore <a href="mailto:rafiazahid.765@gmail.com">rafiazahid.765@gmail.com</a>
Rabbia Waheed	MS English Linguistics Foundation University Lahore <a href="mailto:rabiyaawaheed10@gmail.com">rabiyaawaheed10@gmail.com</a>
Ahmad Ali Khan	PhD linguistics scholar at Department of English Kohat University of Science and Technology, <a href="mailto:ahmadali1985khan@gmail.com">ahmadali1985khan@gmail.com</a>

**Abstract:** Nadeem Aslam's novel "Maps for Lost Lovers" this research work explores the complex dynamics of diasporic identities and cultural hybridity within a British Pakistani community. This literary analysis attempt to investigate into the ways in which Aslam portrays the struggles, conflicts, and intersections of identity among immigrant populations in the West. Through a close examination of characters and narrative techniques, this study illuminates how Aslam's work navigates themes of displacement, belonging, and the negotiation of cultural heritage in a globalized world.

The novel's setting in the fictional town of Dasht-e-Tanhaii serves as a miniature reflecting broader issues of cultural adaptation and intergenerational tension within diasporic communities. As characters grapple with the tension between tradition and modernity, the novel underscores the fluid and evolving nature of identity, shaped by both personal experiences and collective memory.

By employing a postcolonial lens and drawing on theories of cultural hybridity, this analysis reveals how Aslam captures the nuances of multicultural existence and challenges essentialist notions of identity. Ultimately, "Maps for Lost Lovers" emerges as a poignant exploration of the human quest for connection and meaning in the context of diaspora, shedding light on the enduring complexities of cultural identity in an increasingly interconnected world.

**Keywords:** Maps for Lost Lovers, Dasht-e-Tanhaii, Diaspora, Postcolonial, Identity

## Introduction

Nadeem Aslam is a prominent figure in historical documents and the corpus of Pakistani literature written in the English language. The individual in question holds significant prominence as a post-colonial immigrant or diasporic writer hailing from the Third World, albeit currently residing in the First World. The novels authored by Nadeem Aslam exhibit a sophisticated analysis of global socio-political issues, intertwined with a portrayal of the impacts experienced by indigenous groups.

Aslam, who is both a Muslim and an immigrant, has focused his attention on the experiences and challenges that Muslim and immigrant people face. Aslam's portrayal of post-independence Pakistan encompasses a nuanced depiction of various aspects, including intercultural challenges, religious prejudice, religious orthodoxy, the resurgence of Islam, cultural dominance, cultural blending, and generational disparities. The individual in question has achieved notable success in accurately portraying significant occurrences in Pakistan, including the events of 9/11 and the unlawful

execution of Pakistan's 9th Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, on July 5, 1979. He is a British-Pakistani author named Nadeem Aslam. He was born in Gujranwala, Pakistan, on June 11, 1966. In order to flee from Pakistani President Zia-ul-Haq's autocratic rule, he relocated to Britain alongside his family. His father's work as a communist poet and director in Pakistan motivated this decision. Having pursued a degree in biochemistry at Manchester University in Britain, he decided to abandon his studies in his third year and dedicate himself to being a full-time author. The individual in question authored a total of five novels and one short story, specifically *Season of the Rainbirds* (1993), *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), *The Wasted Vigil* (2008), and 'Leila in the Wilderness' (a short story).

Nadeem Aslam's 2004 second book, *Maps for Lost Lovers*, details the murder of two lovers, Jugnu and Chandra. Other characters include Kaukab, Shamas, their kids, and other members of the community. The goal of Nadeem Aslam's illustrations is to portray authentic images of nationality, religion, and romantic relationships among the residents of Dashta-e-Tanhaii (Desert of Loneliness). In the book *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Dashta-e-Tanhaii—a multicultural community home to Muslims, Sikhs, Bengalis, and British—has a major role. Nadeem Aslam exposes the lives of the immigrant community after the tragedy and critiques their Islamic beliefs and traditions by focusing on the twelve months in the lives of Jugnu's brother Shamas and Shamas's wife Kaukab. An obvious case of honour killing occurred when Bara and Chhota killed Chanda and Jugnu with brutality. The story centres on the family of Shamas and Koukab and explores themes such as honour killing, the lives of immigrants, their nostalgia, and the struggle of first- and second-generation immigrants to build their identities (Aslam, 2004).

### **Objectives of the study**

The key objective of this research study is to examine selected works of Nadeem Aslam's fiction using Homi K. Bhabha's distinctive notion of hybridity. The study's objectives are as follows:

- To conduct a critical analysis of Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*, it is imperative to employ Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity.
- To highlight and emphasise the prejudice faced by the Muslim population in foreign countries mentioned in *Maps for Lost Lovers* by Nadeem Aslam.
- To study Nadeem Aslam's fiction through language hybridization, linguistics and literature will interact.

### **Significance of the study**

The significance of this research work lies in its analysis of Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity and its critical analysis of Nadeem Aslam's selected fiction through the lens of these principles. The primary objective of this research work is to raise awareness among readers regarding the Pakistani diaspora literature. This study article aims to demonstrate that the acquisition of knowledge enhances the reader's comprehension of literary works and can complement the unique perspectives of literary interpretations. The provision of reference material and ample space will facilitate further study.

### **The limitation of the study**

The research paper's constraints are limited to the study of maps pertaining to the lost love of Nadeem Aslam, specifically through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha's idea of hybridity. This paper focuses on examining the conditional relationship between Islamic ideals and modern Western culture within the context of this study. This paper aims to explore the intersection of linguistics and literature in order to analyse the fiction of Nadeem Aslam via the lens of language hybridization.

### **Research Methodology**

This research paper focuses on a critical analysis of Nadeem Aslam's selected fiction, specifically examining the concepts of linguistic hybridization and cultural hybridity. The study employs many methodologies, including textual analysis, descriptive analysis, evaluative analysis, interpretative analysis, critical

analysis, and analysis. In the citation and recording of resources, adherence to the M.L.A. Handbook of Research, 8th Edition, is observed.

### **Data collection**

Both primary and secondary sources were collected for this research article.

### **Primary data sources**

Primary data, usually referred to as first-hand data, encompasses information that is acquired directly from original sources. This type of data comprises the following:

Maps for the Lost Lover.

### **Secondary data Sources**

A secondary source is one that provides material that is not original or firsthand. This includes reference books, articles, Shadhganga, Wikipedia, and other similar sources. The purpose of analysing secondary sources is to examine the presence of cultural hegemony and cultural hybridity within the chosen fiction of Nadeem Aslam.

### **Literature Review**

Essentially, we have attempted to review previous studies that have direct or indirect relevance to this study. This study aims to offer an overview of research on cultural hybridity and hegemony in Nadeem Aslam's selected fiction.

In their research paper, 'Voice of Dissent: A Critique of Nadeem Aslam's Representation of Islam' Ahmad Khan, W., and Ullah, M. want to develop a critique of Nadeem Aslam's prejudiced representation of Islam in his novel *Maps for the Lost Lovers* by saying that he criticises Islam for oppressing women. In the novel *Maps for the Lost Lovers*, he portrays Muslims as backward and diabolic, presenting Islam as a primitive religion. Thus, Khan and Ullah come to a certain conclusion about Islam and its cultural values by depicting Muslims as the contemporary other. They compare Islam with Western cultural values, elevating the West to a superior status (Khan, 2014).

Iqbal et al. aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of Islam in their study article, "Concept

of Islam in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004)." Following a specific incident, Nadeem Aslam expresses his dissatisfaction with the portrayal of Islam by immigrant Muslims in his work, *Maps for Lost Lovers*. In his novel *Maps for Lost Lovers*, he portrays Muslims in a bad light, highlighting their perception of Islam. This research thesis examines various aspects of Islam, including its misinterpretation, the double standards exhibited by mullahs, the use of Islam for personal benefit, the exploitation of innocent individuals, the attitudes of secular characters towards Islam, and their apathy towards religion. The analysis focuses specifically on the novel *Maps for Lost Lovers*. Therefore, Iqbal et al. have encountered difficulties in arriving at a definitive conclusion. Nadeem Aslam endeavours to highlight instances of corruption, hypocrisy, dualism, disgrace, extremism, distortion of religious doctrines, and intolerance towards the Muslim community. Nadeem Aslam does not have a negative stance towards devout Muslims; rather, he expresses disapproval towards individuals who lack a comprehensive understanding of the authentic essence of Islam (Iqbal, 2021).

Ravindran's research paper, "Trans-cultural Existential Dilemma in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*," delves into how Dash-e-Tanhai portrays the experiences of migrating settlers. Ravindran undertakes a quest to locate the female characters, namely Kaukab and Surayya, and articulates the psychological turmoil that hinders their ability to establish their own individuality and sense of self within a transcultural context. Consequently, Ravindran deduces that Surayya and Kaukhab embrace hybrid states as a manifestation of their opposition (Ravindran, 2018).

Arif and Parveen (year) examine the concept of cultural hybridity in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*, focusing on the influence of Muslim culture, migratory identity, and tolerance as catalysts for cultural enrichment and secure coexistence within Western civilization in the novel. Regarding hybridity, it is important to consider three key parts of cultural identity: individual migrants, post-

colonial history, and language. Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), particularly his unique concept of cultural hybridity, heavily influences this study (Parveen, 2014).

In comparison to post-colonial philosophers, Bhabha's conceptualization of cultural hybridity has a greater degree of comprehensiveness and applicability. The author emphasises the transformation of hybridity's artistic expression from its racial connotation to the symbolic domain of culture. The author posits that the contemporary post-colonial context necessitates the development of novel notions and formulations in order to effectively comprehend a progressively intricate global landscape. He has proven that the third position, behind colonial subjects, was and may be quite advantageous in the future. In his 1994 work "The Location of Culture," the author examines the concept of hybridity as a critical juncture where previously disregarded knowledge infiltrates the prevailing narrative, thereby challenging its foundational authority. According to Bhabha (1994:114), in an interview titled "Third Space," he expresses that the significance of hybridity is not in the ability to identify two distinct moments from which the third one arises, but rather in the concept of a "third space" that facilitates the emergence of different views (Bhabha, 2004).

### **Cultural hybridity & linguistic hybridization**

Hybridity, in its conventional definition, denotes a fusion or combination. Cultural hybridity is a contemporary transcultural phenomenon that emerges within the contact zone resulting from colonisation. Its purpose is to demonstrate the preservation of equilibrium among the values, customs, and beliefs of many distinct cultures. However, it is important to note that cultural hybridity is not a novel cultural phenomenon. The Eurasian culture, which emerged in British Raj India as a result of the amalgamation of Asian and European cultural influences, serves as a notable illustration of hybridity. Hybridity is a significant notion in colonial and postcolonial literature, initially proposed by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism*. Homi K. Bhabha, in his book *The Location of Culture*,

further developed and defined the term hybridity, complementing Edward Said's ideas. As per Crish Barker, "Indeed, the notion of hybridity has played a significant part in destabilizing the very idea of an unchanging culture that has secure locations since hybrids destabilize and blur established cultural boundaries in a process of fusion or creolization. One can make a distinction between structural hybridization that refers to a variety of social and institutional sites of hybridity, for example, border zones or cities like Miami or Singapore, and cultural hybridization that describes a range of cultural responses from separation and assimilation to hybrids that destabilize and blur cultural boundaries" (Barker, 2004).

Cultural hybridity is a highly challenging topic in modern English global literature, especially in the works of Asian writers such as Kamila Shamsie, Rohinton Mistry, Mohsin Hamid, Nadeem Aslam, Kiran Desai, and others. These writers aim to depict the authentic portrayal of maintaining a harmonious equilibrium between the identity, customs, values, language, and practices of multiple cultures. Homi K. Bhabha promotes cultural hybridity in his influential book *The Location of Culture*, while Salman Rushdie incorporates it into his fictional and non-fictional works. Nadeem Aslam, a prominent figure in the field of diasporic literature, aims to shed light on the authentic experiences of immigrants residing in Western nations. Nadeem Aslam explores cultural hybridity in his novel *Maps for Lost Lover*, considering several elements including place, culture, language, and identity.

The term "Dashta-e-Tanhaii" is derived from the combination of two Urdu words: "Dashta," which may be translated as "desert" or "wildness" in English, and "Tanhaii," which can be literally translated as "loneliness" or "solitude" in English. Dashta-e-Tanhaii is a combination that signifies 'the Wildness of Solitude' or 'the Desert of Loneliness'. Aslam's designation of the residence of a Muslim population in Britain as "Dasht-e-Tanhaii" serves as a significant precursor to the renowned Urdu poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz from the twentieth century. Faiz Ahmad Faiz emphasised the

significance of Dashta-e-Tanhaii in his renowned Urdu poetry compilation, Yaad. The Urdu poetry known as Dashta-e-Tanhaii holds significant popularity and was authored by Faiz Ahmad Faiz.

"The shadows of your voice, the mirage of your lips, tremble in the desert of my loneliness, my love. The jasmine and rose of your presence bloom in the desert of my loneliness, emerging from under the ashes and dust of our separation. The warmth of your breath rises from somewhere nearby, smouldering in its own perfume, softly and languorously. The dew of your seductive eye glistens far away, on the horizon, drop by drop. Your remembrance has touched my heart so tenderly, my love, by placing its palm on my cheek. Even though this is only the beginning of our goodbye, it already feels like the night of our reunion has arrived and the day of our separation has come to an end."

The aim of Nadeem Aslam is to portray authentic representations of religion, nationality, and romantic relationships within the community of Dashte-i-Tanhai. Dashta-e-Tanhaii, a diverse city with inhabitants including Muslims, Sikhs, Bengalis, and British, holds a prominent position in the narrative. Architectural landmarks such as mosques, temples, and cathedrals intricately connect this location. Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, and English are among the languages spoken by individuals. In the social context, Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs coexist, united solely by their shared status as immigrants from foreign nations, yet enveloped by a secular white culture. The residents of this city exhibit resistance towards the culture and habits of the white population due to their reluctance to embrace a distinct cultural identity. Hence, the diverse ethnic groups of the subcontinent, each adopting different names based on their respective countries, moved from numerous nations, including Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, and Sri Lankan. The settlement that has been universally approved by all groups is known as Dashte-i-Tanhai' (Aslam, 2006).

In the town of Lahore, there is a road named Goethe. Calcutta is home to Park Street, Bombay is home to Malabar Hill, and Dhaka is

home to Naag Tolla Hill. The men who arrived in this town during the 1950s opted to rename everything they encountered due to the challenges associated with pronouncing English names. They originated from various regions of the Subcontinent, cohabited in a shared space, and the name bestowed upon a street or landmark by one of them was adopted by the others, irrespective of their own origins. Over the course of several decades, the diverse ethnicities residing in the Subcontinent have undergone name changes in accordance with their respective countries of origin, namely Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Sri Lankan. Each group has collectively adopted a singular, immutable appellation. It is the source of the town's name. Dashte-i-Tanhai.

Migration refers to the process of going from one country, region, or place of residence to settle in another religion or country. The duration of this new settlement varies, and they face many difficulties in questing their identity in search of a better life or for economic or educational reasons. Migration is one of the most important themes in Asian diaspora literature. Among diaspora writers, Nadeem Aslam presents a realistic picture of searching for a better life in the Western world. Nadeem Aslam presents the difficult and ambiguous evolution a migrant undergoes in the translation from East to West, from purity to hybridity, while establishing their identities. Most of his characters are immigrants from South Asian nations, mainly Pakistan, who are making new lives for themselves and attempting to determine their cultural identity. Dislocation and loss of identity are the central points of his fiction. The characters belong to the first generation of migrants. Their past prevents them from fully assimilating into the culture of their new homes, forcing them to accept that their identity is no longer singular. In the novel, Nadeem Aslam highlights the suffering from questioning their identities in Britain:

"The record would begin and soon the listeners would be engrossed by those musicians who seemed to know how to blend together all that life contains, the real truth, the undeniable last word, the innermost core of all that is unbearably

painful within a heart and all that is joyful, all that is loved and all that is worthy of love but remains unloved, lied to and lied about, the unimaginable depths of the soul where no other can withstand the longing and which few have the conviction to plumb, the sorrows and the indisputable rage—so engrossed would the listeners become that, by the end of the piece, the space between them would have contracted, heads leaning together as though they were sharing a mirror. All great artists know that part of their task is to light up the distance between two human beings” (Arif, 2014).

In his work, Nadeem Aslam effectively portrays cultural identities through the portrayal of people such as Chandra. The individual references their loss of identity.

“His heart kicking, he listened as the jury convicted Chanda’s brothers today. Feeling weightless and heavy at the same time, he heard the judge say that the killers had found a cure to their problem through an immoral, indefensible act; a cure, a remedy—and their religion and background took care of the bitter aftertaste. Their religion and background assured them that, yes, they were murderers but that they had murdered only sinners. The judge said that Chanda and Jugnu had done nothing illegal in deciding to live together but, Shamas knows, that the two brothers feel that the fact that an act is legal does not mean it’s right”.

Hybridization is not limited to language alone but is also observed in various cultural spheres. Hybridization is the production of a new entity or process (hybrid) that combines certain features from its sources but is not solely structural. The phenomenon of hybridization has the potential to dissolve the borders of various academic fields, including cultural studies, languages, and chemistry, among others. Linguistic hybridization is a process characterised by frequent code-mixing in the field of linguistics. The lexicon of one language incorporates the structure of another. Language hybridization is a phenomenon that occurs when different languages are repeatedly mixed. The structure and grammar of another language influence the vocabulary of one language. In his story, Nadeem Aslam employs distinctive

language to highlight the linguistic fusion of Pakistan and India. Most characters in his story utilize linguistic hybridity, blending the Pakistani language with the Western lexicon. The English language employs terms from Urdu or Hindi. English has been transformed into a global language in order to establish connections with globalisation. It is a language that embodies the authentic hybrid nature of the contemporary world. It possesses a significant ability to adapt to several cultural and linguistic contexts. Aslam's fiction writings exhibit code-mixing and language hybridization between Urdu and English. The individual in question uses a variety of Pakistani vocabulary, including but not limited to mung dahl, dhak-dhak, dhram, chuk-chuk, parvardigar, kameez, aloo bhurta, and Assalamaulaikum. The Urdu and Hindi languages spoken in Pakistan have inspired numerous proverbs. Nadeem Aslam highlights the deficiency in English-speaking proficiency among immigrants. They employ linguistic hybridity:

“And it too was hopeless: what was a person to do when even things in England spoke a different language than the one they did back in Pakistan? In England the heart said “boom boom” instead of dhak dhak; a gun said “bang!” instead of thah!; things fell with a “thud,” not a dharam; small bells said “jingle” instead of chaanchaan; the trains said “choo choo” instead of chuk chuk...”

## Conclusion

Based on the text and literature review, the researcher concludes that Nadeem Aslam effectively depicted the challenges faced by the Pakistani diaspora in his novel *Maps for Lost Lover*. Being a diaspora himself, Nadeem Aslam reflects his sense of self in his writing. He immigrated to Britain at the age of 14, but he returns to the theme. The Herald (London) has compared the work to prominent Indian diaspora writers such as Rohinton Mistry and Salman Rushdie. It is described as an exceptional piece of literature that reflects the ideas of Rohinton Mistry and Salman Rushdie but is clearly the result of a completely unique imagination. "Maps for the Lost Lover" holds significant prominence within the realm of diaspora

literature. In his novel *Maps for Lost Lover*, Nadeem Aslam explores themes of identity exploration, identity absence, language hybridization, and cultural hybridity through the portrayal of characters such as Jugnu and Chandra, Shamas and Kaukab. Aslam has portrayed the genuine circumstances faced by Pakistani immigrants residing in Britain well.

## References

- Aslam N. *Maps for Lost Lovers*. London: Fabre and Fabre Bhabha HK. *The location of culture*. London & New York: Routledge 2004, 1994.
- Chamber C. *Brithish Muslim Fictions; interviews comtemporary Writers*. London: Palgrave Macmillan 2011.
- Hall S. *Modernity and its Futures* Stuart Hall, David Held, Anthony McGrew (eds) Cambridge, Polity Press. *The question of Cultural Identity* 1990, 274-316.
- Hall S. *Cultural identity and diaspora* 1993. Retrieved from <http://webache.googleusercontent.com> on 11/20/2011
- Aslam, Nadeem. *Maps for Lost Lovers* 2006.
- ‘Yad’ (Memory) from the collection *Dast-e saba* 1952.
- Barker Chris. *The Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies*. London: Sage Publications 2004.9.
- Perveen A. *Reality and Identity in Flux: Multicultural Simulacra in Nadeem Aslam’s the Wasted Vigil*. ASBE 2014;1(4):1-8.
- Ravindran R. *Transcultural Existential Dilemma in Nadeem Aslam’s Maps for Lost Lover*. JETIR 2018;5(8):775-78.
- Danger K. *Social and Political Aspects in The Blind Men’s Garden and The Reluctant Fundamentalists*. AIMREJ 2016;2(1):1-12.
- Sardar S. *Exploration of False-behalfism in Laila in the Wilderness*. EAR 2014;2(6):8298-306
- Bhabha Homi K. *The location of culture*. Routledge, 2004.
- Burke Peter. *Cultural Hybridity*. Polity press. Cambridge 2009.
- Arif Shahbaz et al. *Cultural Hybridity in Nadeem Aslam’s Maps for Lost Lover’s* IISTE. 2014; 4(25):57- 65.
- Ahmad Khan W et al. *Voice of Dissent: A Critique of Nadeem Aslam’s Representation of Islam The Dialogue* 2014;14(2):171-81.
- Haroon Iqbal, Javed Iqbal, Rahmat Ullah, Ahmad Ullah, Syeda Fizza, Amir Shah. *Concept of Islam in Nadeem Aslam’s Maps for Lost Lovers*. *PalArch’s Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology* 2004,2021;18(4):6167-6176. Retrieved from <https://archives.palarch.nl/index.php/jae/article/view/723> 8.