

Secularism and Religiosity in *Maps for Lost Lovers*

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Abstract—This paper examines the concepts of secularism and religiosity portrayed by Nadeem Aslam in his novel, *Maps for Lost Lovers*. The story focuses on the Pakistani immigrants residing in an isolated English town. Aslam competently depicts the complicated socioeconomic issues faced by Pakistanis domestically and internationally. The town plays a crucial role, which represents secularism for certain people and religiosity for others. The perception of a place is contingent upon an individual's capacity to adapt or adhere to their native culture. The main character, Kaukab, symbolises the older generation, viewing England with an Islamic lens and expressing nostalgic longing for Pakistan and adopts cultural resistance which requires rejecting the dominant culture. However, her family dismisses her nostalgic perspectives and her cultural ideology. Conversely, they perceive England as a symbol of freedom, actively embracing its values and separating themselves from Pakistani traditions. Aslam's narrative emphasises that individuals have the agency to select between a secular or religious concept of reality, which is influenced by their cultural heritage and personal beliefs. This paper explores the complicated portrayal of secularism and religiosity in *Maps for Lost Lovers*, providing insight into the complexities of cultural identity, assimilation, and the immigrant experience depicted in the novel.

Index Terms—secularism, religiosity, generation gap, resistance, hybridity

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of secularism emerged throughout the Enlightenment period in the 17th and 18th centuries. Intellectuals such as Locke (1981) and Voltaire in Harvey & Masters (2000) supported the idea of separating the influence of church from the state. They stressed the importance of rationality, individual liberties, and rejecting religious authority. The emergence of secularism was greatly shaped by historical events such as the Reformation and following religious conflicts in Europe, which reinforced the necessity for religious tolerance and an unbiased government to ensure peace and stability.

Muslims living in the West encounter considerable problems in the preservation of their religious and intellectual heritage within the framework of a primarily secular culture. Secularism, with its definition shifting, is commonly seen as a threat to Muslim communities in Western countries, since it signifies the freedom from all religious and semi-religious principles and the removal of sacred symbols (Cox, 2013). The concept of the separation of church and state is a fundamental difference between the Islamic world and the modern West. In the Islamic world, political, economic, scientific, and religious matters are closely interconnected for the majority of Muslims (Buruma & Margalit, 2005).

Postcolonial literature frequently explores the interplay between secularism and religiosity, typically depicting individuals who abandon their traditional lifestyles in favour of embracing secular identities. This shift can be interpreted as a way to liberate oneself from oppressive power systems and assert one's own control in a multifaceted cultural environment. South Asian writers, especially those residing in Western countries, have been leading the way in this investigation. Secular authors such as Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi have become well-known for their critical viewpoints on religion and cultural identity. Kamila Shamsie and Monica Ali, who are female writers from South Asia, offer distinct perspectives on the convergence of religion, gender, and identity. Their works frequently portray the challenges faced by characters as they attempt to harmonise their cultural and religious background with the secular surroundings in which they live. The process of negotiating one's identity in this context encompasses wider postcolonial concepts such as defiance, adjustment, and the pursuit of self-identification in a world influenced by both colonial legacies and present-day global forces. Secularism's impact on the stories of Muslim immigrants and their offspring is still significant. Postcolonial literature serves as an essential platform for exploring the continuous conversation between the East and West, tradition and modernity, and faith and secularism. This paper examines the complex aspects of secularism and religiosity and their influence on cultural identity, assimilation, and the immigrant

experience in postcolonial literature through the exploration of the British Pakistani novelist Nadeem Aslam's award winning novel *Maps of Lost Lovers*.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Nadeem Aslam's writings prominently highlight the distinct contrast between East and West, tradition and modernity, religious life and secular values. His first novel *Season of The Rainbirds* examined the conventional life imposed on normal Pakistanis. *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) has been the focus of his eleven-year writing project, which won the 2005 Kiriya Pacific Rim Book Prize and the 2005 Encore Award. Aslam made further contributions to the literary field by publishing *The Wasted Vigil* in 2008, *The Blind Man's Garden* in 2013, and *The Golden Legend* in 2018. *Maps for Lost Lovers* is regarded as a perspective for analysing the social and cultural challenges encountered by Pakistanis in both their native country and the British setting.

Maps for Lost Lovers provides a captivating literary examination of the intricacies involved in managing the coexistence of secularism and religious in modern multicultural society. Aslam's skilful portrayal of characters and complex storylines challenges readers to contemplate the individual and societal consequences of reconciling Islamic customs with the pressures of a secular contemporary world. The novel remains relevant due to its capacity to stimulate thoughtful contemplation over how individuals and groups navigate their identities in the face of cultural variety and changing global dynamics. The obstacles encountered by Muslims in Western societies in safeguarding their religious and ideological legacy within a secular environment are complex and intricately connected to historical, political, and social factors.

The setting, an unidentified English town, mirrors the wider sociocultural backdrop in which immigrant populations negotiate their sense of self. Arif and Parveen (2014) argue that the protagonists in *Maps for Lost Lovers* represent the challenges of preserving cultural heritage while adjusting to a non-religious society. The duality is apparent in the lives of the main characters, Shamas and Kaukab, whose experiences emphasise the clash between individual autonomy and religious duties.

Shamas, a character who is not influenced by religious beliefs, embodies the intellectual and liberal viewpoint within the community. The fact that he works as a social worker illustrates his dedication to secular principles and the protection of human rights. The contrast between him and his devout wife, Kaukab, exemplify the personal and intellectual divisions that can emerge within immigrant families attempting to reconcile secularism and religious devotion. Kaukab's strict commitment to religious traditions is shown as a dual source of comfort and distress. According to Clements, Kaukab's character exemplifies the internal and external challenges encountered by women in patriarchal religious systems. Aslam's (2004) narrative technique combines folkloric and religious symbols, enhancing the text's examination of secularism and religiosity. Kundu and Saha (2023) argue that the novel's complex integration of secular and religious themes offers a deep understanding of the immigrant journey, emphasising the continuous process of balancing cultural heritage and adopting contemporary secular beliefs.

Furthermore, researchers have analysed *Maps for Lost Lovers* from several perspectives, uncovering significant observations on the development of one's identity, the process of cultural assimilation, and the conflicts arising from the clash between religious traditions and secular values. Lemke's (2008) analysis of racial stereotypes in the novel highlights how migrants employ these beliefs to promote their unique cultural identities while navigating the secular environment of the Western world. This phenomenon illustrates the wider discussions surrounding the difficulties of preserving religious customs in cultures that are not governed by religious principles, where preconceived notions can act as both a defence mechanism and an obstacle to assimilation. Butt (2008) sheds light on the generational gap between immigrant groups, specifically emphasising the older generation's reluctance to integrate into a multicultural society that emphasises secular principles. Their adoption of indigenous cultural practices might be seen as a reaction to perceived challenges to their religious identity presented by secular norms. Moore's (2009) examination of the fears that emerged after the 9/11 attacks in the novel adds complexity to the story by illustrating how religious and secular tensions overlap in matters of security and identity. This reflects the ongoing global conversations about the politicisation of religion and its impact on social unity in heterogeneous environments.

Kanwal (2012) and McCulloch (2012) examine the complicated connections between gender, race, and religious identity depicted in Aslam's narrative. Their research emphasises the intricate equilibrium that migrants must achieve between their religious observances and the secular demands of their host nations. Sarfraz (2013) and Yaqin (2013) further investigate the narratives by exploring how Aslam's portrayal of Islam either opposes or adheres to secular narratives, thereby exposing the underlying power dynamics within representations of religious identity. Waterman's (2014) study on migration and cultural identification highlights the way religious views change over time due to secular influences. This demonstrates the continuous discussions about assimilation and cultural heritage.

Maps for Lost Lovers has been the subject of vast research, but most of it focuses on freedom, oppression, love, identity crises, and diasporic cultural changing aspects with characters torn between visions of homeland and England. This paper diverges from previous research by investigating the characters' attitudes of resistance and hybridity as they transition from Pakistan to England, particularly through the prism of secularism and religiosity, a lacuna that this paper seeks to address. *Maps for Lost Lovers* provides significant observations on the navigation of identity in diasporic communities, from a cultural studies perspective.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Secularism, as understood in Western contexts, presents a notable obstacle to conventional Islamic ideals and behaviours. Secularism, in Western nations, refers to the deliberate separation of religious organisations from the state. Its purpose is to free public life from religious influence and to uphold ideals that are grounded in reason and civic values (Cox, 2013). This distinction is quite noticeable when comparing it to several civilisations with a majority of Muslim population, where religion holds a significant position in both public and private spheres, covering aspects such as politics, economy, science, and society (Buruma & Margalit, 2005). When Muslims encounter Western secularism, they may experience conflicts related to openly displaying their religious identity, exercising their religious rights, and adapting Islamic customs to fit within a legal system that is not based on religion.

Secularism originated as a reaction against the prevailing influence of religious organisations in the management of government and public affairs during the Enlightenment and succeeding eras. Its objective was to curtail the power of religious institutions and advance personal liberties rooted in logical reasoning and scientific advancement. This ideological transformation fundamentally altered cultural norms, moral frameworks, and legal systems, posing a challenge to the traditional authority of religious institutions and their impact on societal norms (Cohen, 2006). Practically, Muslims residing in Western countries frequently face the challenge of balancing their religious duties with the societal demands of a secular environment. Controversies may arise within secular legal systems that prioritise impartiality and equality among people on matters such as religious clothing, eating habits, and religious festivals. These problems emphasise the continuous discussion regarding the degree to which secularism should incorporate religious diversity while upholding its fundamental values of equality and individual liberties.

Secularism and religiosity are interconnected notions that go beyond basic oppositions and span a broad spectrum of viewpoints and understandings. Secularism is commonly defined as the notion of segregating religion from civic affairs and government, with the aim of establishing a neutral public sphere that is devoid of religious influence. Asad (2020) states that secularism is not only the lack of religion, but rather a constant endeavour to establish and govern religion and its rituals. Taylor (2007) defines it as a conceptual structure that promotes harmonious cohabitation in heterogeneous cultures, guaranteeing equitable treatment irrespective of one's religious convictions. Casanova defines secularism as the act of distinguishing between religious and secular domains. On contrast, Religiosity refers to the diverse ways in which individuals and communities interact with religious ideas and practices. According to Stark (1965), it can be defined as a combination of various aspects, such as belief, practice, experience, knowledge, and consequences. Durkheim (2016) highlights the societal roles of religiosity, asserting that it strengthens social unity and fosters a shared moral consciousness. According to Geertz (1973), religion can be understood as a cultural system that serves the purpose of comprehending the universe and giving significance to the experiences of life.

These perspectives demonstrate that secularism and religiosity are interconnected elements that both influence and are influenced by social, political, and cultural contexts. They emphasise the dynamic aspect of these notions, highlighting their fluidity and diversity rather than providing rigid definitions. According to Mahmood (2011), from a feminist perspective, the relationship between secularism and religion is intricate and has substantial effects on women's identities and ability to act. This is especially true in situations where religious norms strongly shape societal expectations and national identity.

From a religious studies standpoint, one can analyse how religious beliefs and practices influence both individual and group identities. Asad's (2020) critique of secularism questions the idea of a distinct division between religious and secular domains. Instead, Asad (2020) suggests that religious traditions have intricate effects on social and political discussions. In this paper we explore the extent Aslam gives prominence to religion in creating interpersonal relationships and communal cohesion in religious ceremonies and community meetings. Religion functions as a guiding influence in the individuals' lives, offering them a feeling of connection, purpose, and ethical foundation. Religious views have a significant impact on people's decisions, relationships, and interactions with others, highlighting the complex link between religious beliefs and the development of individual identity.

Intersectional analysis, based on Kimberlé Crenshaw's seminal work *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex* (1989), emphasises how various aspects of identity, such as gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity, overlap and influence individuals' experiences and possibilities in society. By examining Aslam's depiction of individuals such as Kaukab we can explore the extent Aslam genders religious devotion, demonstrating perhaps the value of religious rituals to uphold traditional male-dominated values while simultaneously empowering women and fostering a sense of belonging within a community. From this perspective, *Maps for Lost Lovers* can be examined for the way religious practices are used to strengthen patriarchal standards. Religious rituals and community meetings frequently highlight conventional gender roles, reinforcing the notion of male authority and female submissiveness. This can engender a perception of disparity and curtail women's ability to act independently and exercise self-governance within their religious communities. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that religion also grants women a feeling of communal inclusion and can function as a means of empowerment and assistance.

The methodology of this paper involves a thorough comparison of traditional and modern values and behaviours among the characters. Shamas, Jugnu, and Chanda embody modern values, while Kaukab and Chanda's represent traditional values. To better understand what distinguishes these characters as traditional or modern, a detailed analysis of their actions, dialogues, decisions, and transformations will be conducted. Additionally, this paper explores the

characters' adherence to secularism and religiosity, examining how these elements influence their worldviews and interactions. By investigating these dichotomous paradigms, we can gain a deeper understanding of how secular and religious values shape the experiences of the novel's immigrants.

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A. Resistance

Maps for Lost Lovers provides a heartbreaking examination of the influence of religion in a Pakistani immigrant community in England. Aslam explores the role of religiosity in shielding against Western influences and causing internal strife via the lives and opinions of his characters. The novel explores how characters employ their religious beliefs to handle the difficulties of upholding their cultural identity while residing in a different country. The narrative finally demonstrates the dual nature of religion, serving as both a reservoir of resilience and solace, as well as a catalyst for discord and strife. Aslam's story delves deeply into the intricacies of faith and cultural identity, offering a compelling examination of these complicated themes.

Kaukab, a prominent character, exemplifies a devoted Muslim who greatly depends on her faith to shield her family from the moral decline of Western civilisation. The woman's astonishment at her husband's non-religious beliefs and her children's departure from traditional norms underscores her apprehension about relinquishing her religious and cultural heritage. Kaukab firmly believes that Shamas's atheistic ideals will have a detrimental effect on their children, as she sees secularism as a threat to their family's moral integrity. This was because Shamas had confused the children with his irreligious beliefs, which undermined her authority and devalued her actions, portraying them as merely neurotic and dumb. Kaukab's reaction to Shamas' impact underscores conventional gender roles and religious supremacy. Additionally, it indicates her desire to have authority over her own life as well as the lives of her children. Kaukab's life is significantly influenced by religious authority, which serves as a primary source of power, stability, and a way for her to impose control over her family. It offers her a conceptual structure for comprehending the world and enables her to uphold a feeling of direction and individuality among the difficulties of residing in a strange territory.

Kaukab's unwavering commitment to Islam is evident in her dealings with others. She exhibits her conviction in the impurity and wickedness of non-Muslims by declining to cook for Jugnu's white girlfriend and by her conduct during the feast, when she avoids physical contact with a white woman. As captured in the narrative, the encounter between the white woman and Kaukab vividly illustrates Kaukab's deep-seated apprehension towards Western individuals. When the white woman attempted to touch Kaukab, her instinctive recoil and plea, "Don't touch me, please. May Allah forgive me, but I don't know where you've been," (Aslam, 2004, p. 40) encapsulate a profound sense of distrust and unease. This poignant moment reveals Kaukab's perception of Westerners as morally corrupt and spiritually tainted, highlighting the stark cultural divide and underlying prejudices that shape her worldview. Additionally, it serves as a reminder of the importance of honouring cultural boundaries and embracing diversity. Furthermore, it exemplifies the capacity of prejudice and fear to shape our actions.

Unlike Kaukab, Shamas embodies a secular perspective that frequently conflicts with her religious beliefs. The narrative revolves around the conflict arising from Shamas's influence on their children, which Kaukab perceives as harmful. Kaukab's apprehension regarding the potential of his irreligious beliefs to influence his children's departure from the religious faith highlights the wider conflict between traditional values and contemporary ideals within the immigrant community. The internal family conflict reflects the broader cultural battle between the inclination to maintain religious identity and the challenges of adapting into Western society. The intrafamilial discord between Kaukab and Shamas mirrors the wider strain within the immigrant community around religious affiliation. Additionally, it highlights the challenges of adapting to Western culture. "After Jugnu, her mind, flooded with bitterness and sorrow, had turned on Shamas because Shamas himself had confused the children with his Godless ideas, undermining her authority and devaluing her behaviour as though it was just neurotic and foolish—Jugnu only finished the job Shamas started years ago" (Aslam, 2004, p. 34). This statement highlights the challenges that immigrants encounter as they strive to maintain their cultural heritage while also adapting to a new and unfamiliar environment. Furthermore, they must navigate the delicate balance between conventional principles and contemporary advancements.

Kaukab harbours profound apprehension regarding the potential infiltration of Christianity into her family. She is resolute in her determination to shield her children from being swayed by Jugnu's beliefs and, consequently, Western ideals. She struggles with the task of ensuring that her children develop into devout Muslims, firmly thinking that their religious dedication is of utmost importance. Aslam portrays Kaukab's inner conflict.

Allah gave her everything, so how can Kaukab not be thankful how could she have not tried to make sure that her children grew up to be Allah's servants, and how could she approve of Jugnu marrying the white woman, or later, approve of him living in sin with Chanda? For the people in the West, an offense that did no harm to another human or to the wider society was no offense at all, but to her – to all Muslims – there was always another party involved – Allah. (Aslam, 2004, p. 43)

Allah has given upon her plentiful blessings; it is perplexing how Kaukab could display ingratitude by neglecting to ensure that her children become devout followers of Allah. Furthermore, it is difficult to comprehend how she could

endorse Jugnu's marriage to a woman of Caucasian descent or subsequently approve of his cohabitation with Chanda beyond the bounds of wedlock.

While people in the West may not consider an action to be offensive if it doesn't hurt another person or society, Muslims believe that any offence is ultimately directed towards Allah. Kaukab's conviction is emphasised in this chapter, as she maintains that all actions should be answerable to a superior authority, so strengthening her dedication to religious values. Kaukab's focus on accountability reinforces the significance of contemplating the repercussions of acts prior to undertaking them. Furthermore, it strengthens the notion that individuals should consistently behave in a manner that is pleasing to Allah. Kaukab's strong focus on accountability significantly influences her daily existence. Her decision-making process is influenced by her religious convictions, as she consistently evaluates how each action matches with them and whether it would be pleasant to Allah. She holds herself accountable for her acts and behaviour towards others, making sure to represent the principles of Islam and demonstrate her dedication to her faith.

Suraya's personal encounter with religion serves as an additional example that highlights the idea of religiosity as a means of protection or defence. The user's early education in a low-quality Islamic school, where she was compelled to commit to memory the names of all the wives of the Prophet, demonstrates a limited and inflexible understanding of Islam. Suraya's poor religious knowledge and eventual recognition of her blasphemous statements towards Shamas exemplify the conflict between personal comprehension and commitment to religious doctrine. She expresses her astonishment, saying, "My Allah, Shamas, why didn't you stop me just now when I was talking so disrespectfully of Islam?" (Aslam, 2004, p. 226), it is evident that her schooling has ingrained a fear of crossing religious limits. This concern demonstrates the influential role of religious theory in shaping individual beliefs and behaviour. Furthermore, it implies that even if a person is aware of their conduct, they may still be unable to refrain from uttering blasphemous remarks. The conflict between personal comprehension and strict devotion to religious doctrine creates significant inquiries regarding the autonomy of believers and the influence of religious institutions on their beliefs. While certain individuals may contend that rigid conformity to religious theory guarantees a harmonious and consolidated community, others underscore the significance of individual interpretation and investigation of faith. Ultimately, achieving a harmonious equilibrium between personal comprehension and devotion to religious teachings is an intricate and profoundly individual voyage for every believer.

The religious identities of the characters are significantly shaped by the influence of religious clergy and communal expectations. The narrative portrays the hardline clergy as formulating flawed and inflexible views of Islam. These interpretations exacerbate the sense of alienation felt by the Pakistani community in their Western environment. The teachings of the clerics promote a feeling of superiority and division. This further solidifies the notion that engaging with individuals who are not of the Muslim faith is considered evil, and that Western principles are intrinsically tainted. This further strengthens the notion that the Pakistani community should maintain its own boundaries and remain secluded from the external world. The state of isolation results in the feeling of being disconnected and a lack of trust among individuals from Pakistan, which in turn deepens the gap between them and the non-Muslim global community. Personal comprehension plays a vital role in the process of religious belief, as it enables adherents to cultivate an individual connection with their faith and interpret its doctrines based on their own encounters and beliefs. It empowers individuals to interpret religious doctrine in a manner that aligns with their personal ideas and values, cultivating a feeling of ownership and genuineness in their religious observance. Simultaneously, individual comprehension necessitates a nuanced equilibrium, since it must be rooted in a considerate and knowledgeable involvement with religious scriptures, customs, and society.

Religious intolerance is evident in different forms, such as communal responses to perceived disrespect. The work effectively depicts the repercussions of honour crimes, which result in disgrace and mockery for the families involved. The situation with Chanda's father, who "was charged, being the father of an immodest and shameful daughter, and she was not more than a prostitute according to the perspective of people" (Aslam, 2004, p. 114) illustrates how religious fundamentalism not only penalises the persons directly involved but also inflicts harm upon their blameless family members. Aslam describes Chanda's father as being accused due to his daughter's immodest and disgraceful behaviour, and some people even considered her to be nothing more than a prostitute. The social exclusion highlights the oppressive characteristics of religious fanaticism prevalent in the immigrant community. Religious radicalism among immigrant populations can result in severe outcomes, such as the alienation and marginalisation of individuals and their families. Not only does this propagate detrimental perceptions and biases, but it also fosters an atmosphere of apprehension and seclusion for individuals who do not adhere to strict religious standards. Moreover, it impedes the process of merging and fostering a sense of unity, so strengthening the feeling of being distinct and disconnected from the larger community. Religious extremism can have harmful consequences for society in the long run. It has the potential to result in heightened social strife, polarisation, and even physical aggression among distinct religious factions. Moreover, it can impede the advancement of a diverse and all-encompassing society, since it fosters exclusion, prejudice, and the curtailment of personal liberties. In essence, the existence of religious extremism jeopardises social cohesion and weakens the fundamental values of inclusivity, acceptance, and reverence in a community.

The recurring theme of *Maps for Lost Lovers* revolves around the generational gap between parents and children. The story delves at the impact of growing up in a foreign country on Pakistani children, highlighting the tension that arises between their traditional values and the Western influences they encounter. Muslim families' depiction of Westerners as

infidels and adversaries of Islam implants profound apprehension and suspicion in their children. This upbringing cultivates racial discord and hinders the ability to engage in productive communication between the two communities. Aslam elucidates the multitude of fears that emerge as a result of these cultural disparities: "There were numerous anxieties." The author conveys that he was raised with the belief that "The anxieties had been many. The sense passed on to him during his upbringing was that the differences between the whites and Pakistanis were too many for interaction to successfully take place; many marriages ended" (Aslam, 2004, p. 89). This perception was reinforced by the high number of failed marriages between individuals from these two groups. The absence of communication and comprehension between the two cultures results in heightened tension and fear, hence intensifying the conflict. Aslam's novel underscores the importance of interpersonal understanding, emphasising that individuals must invest time and effort in acquainting themselves with one another and cultivating trust.

Clerics encourage young men to abstain from relationships with mortal women and instead anticipate the companionship of houris in paradise, so intensifying the division. This process of brainwashing fosters a warped perspective on sexuality and relationships, further strengthening the belief that Western ideals are fundamentally evil and corrupt. The narrator provides evidence of this phenomenon when he recounts how clerics advised young boys to avoid interacting with mortal women and instead wait for the houris of heaven, referring to women as "faces-filled sacks" (Aslam, 2004, p. 89). The characters' worldview is significantly influenced by this inflexible understanding of religion, which in turn affects their interactions and relationships. This theological concept promotes the characters to emphasise a transcendent paradise over human connections. Furthermore, it strengthens the notion that women are undeserving of esteem and should not be relied upon.

The novel demonstrates that religion has a major influence on interpersonal connections within the Pakistani community. The religious beliefs of characters frequently serve as obstacles to comprehension and compassion. Kaukab's fervent dedication to raise her children as devout Muslims, shielded from Western influence, results in strained interpersonal connections and emotional seclusion. The inflexibility of her religious views is seen in her refusal to accept Jugnu's connection with a white woman and her disdain of her children's choices.

The work also depicts the adverse consequences of religious zealotry on one's mental health and overall well-being. Kaukab's limited perspective and perpetual apprehension of ethical corruption result in feelings of resentment and sadness. Her unwavering commitment to religious principles hinders her ability to form authentic human relationships and demonstrate empathy. The intense emotional distress is powerfully depicted in the scene where she painstakingly retrieves the prayer beads she had spilled after striking her daughter during a heated dispute. This reflects the substantial weight of her inflexible convictions.

Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* offers a subtle depiction of how religion serves as both a protective barrier and a cause of tension inside an immigrant community. Characters such as Kaukab utilise their religious beliefs as a means of safeguarding themselves and their families against what they regard as the erosion of moral standards in Western society. This gives rise to an intricate network of connections characterised by religious doctrine and cultural conflict. The novel emphasises the difficulties of maintaining one's religious identity in a different country, while also addressing the emotional and psychological impact of religious fundamentalism. Aslam's compelling and compassionate account prompts readers to contemplate the intricate influence of religion on the lives and communities of individuals.

B. Hybridity

Maps for Lost Lovers meticulously examines the issue of cultural hybridity as people navigate between Islamic tradition and secularism in a multicultural environment. Central to Aslam's narrative are characters such as Shamas and Jugnu. Their divergent perspectives on religion exemplify wider socioeconomic patterns and the intricacies of establishing one's identity in a globalised society. Aslam's work also emphasises the conflict between the need for inclusion and the desire for personal independence. The protagonists in his works grapple with the challenge of reconciling these two conflicting desires, finally resulting in a fragile agreement between traditional values and contemporary ideals.

The identity crisis was not limited solely to the second and subsequent generations of immigrants. However, characters from the first generation, such as Shamas and Jugnu, were included in this amalgamation of different elements. Shamas, the main character, represents a sceptical attitude towards religious ideas that questions traditional Islamic conventions. He confidently expresses his doubt: "I am still inclined to believe the scientists, because unlike the prophets, they readily admit that they are working towards answers, they don't have final and absolute answers" (Aslam, 2004, p. 26). This remark emphasises Shamas's adherence to scientific rationalism and his rejection of religious dogma in support of personal autonomy and reasonable investigation. In his critique, he goes even farther by characterising Prophet Muhammad as an "illiterate merchant-turned-opportunistic-preacher," (Aslam, 2004, p. 39) which indicates a profound lack of respect for traditional Islamic figures and teachings. Shamas's statements indicate his refusal of conventional Islamic doctrines and his inclination towards scientific rationale and analytical thinking. His perspective on Islamic history reflects his cynicism towards conventional Islamic beliefs and his adoption of scientific rationalism.

Conversely, Jugnu embodies a significantly more revolutionary deviation from Islamic identity, defying religious and cultural traditions within the Pakistani community. Jugnu's refusal to accept a Muslim identity based only on his upbringing is expressed clearly "I was born into a Muslim household, but I object to the idea that automatically makes me a Muslim" (Aslam, 2004, p. 25). Jugnu's rebellion surpasses religious limitations, utilising Western liberties to form

an identity that goes beyond conventional restrictions and embraces a secular perspective. This reflects a broader transition in identity moving away from conventional religious designations. Jugnu's refusal to conform to conventional categorisations exemplifies the evolving nature of identity in contemporary society. Jugnu's adoption of a secular perspective is motivated by his aspiration to liberate himself from the limitations imposed by conventional religious and cultural standards. Jugnu says "I was born into a Muslim household, but I object to the idea that that automatically makes me a Muslim," Jugnu said (Aslam, 2004, p. 38). He adds "the fact of the matter is that had I lived at the time of Muhammad, and he came to me with his heavenly message, I would have walked away" (Aslam, 2004, p. 38). He perceives himself as an autonomous being who should not be only characterised by the religion he was born into, but rather by his personal convictions, principles, and encounters. Jugnu demonstrates his autonomy by rejecting the inherent assumption of a Muslim identity, emphasising that one's identity is a matter of personal choice rather than being defined by birth or societal norms.

Aslam investigates how individuals navigate their identities within a variety of cultural influences and societal expectations, in his investigation of cultural hybridity. The different trajectories of Shamas and Jugnu exemplify the greater trend towards secularism and scepticism, as they challenge old faith-based paradigms and promote individual autonomy and freedom. Aslam's characters offer a subtle examination of the intricacies of cultural identity, while also posing a challenge to established social frameworks. They exemplify the influence of individual agency and the significance of personal independence in shaping one's sense of self. However, promoting absolute personal autonomy in the development of one's identity may fail to consider the influence of societal and cultural factors on an individual's perception of themselves. While it is necessary to accept and respect personal ideas and experiences, it is equally important to recognise the influence of community, history, and common values in defining one's identity. Achieving a harmonious equilibrium between personal autonomy and shared group affiliation might result in a comprehensive comprehension of cultural variety and foster societal unity.

Maps for Lost Lovers explores the theme of religiosity, specifically through the character of Kaukab, whose unwavering commitment to her faith profoundly influences her sense of self and interactions with others. The novel provides a sophisticated depiction of how religious convictions impact everyday life, familial relationships, and perspectives on the world, presenting a comprehensive examination of the convergence of faith and modernity.

An eminent feature of religiosity in the narrative is Kaukab's resolute commitment to religious rituals. Her dedication is clearly shown in her daily routines, despite the physical and emotional suffering she experiences. This is apparent in the scene where she engages in her ablutions and prays: "Having performed her ablutions, she says her prayers on the velvet prayer-mat, bending and straightening with immense pain" (Aslam, 2004, p. 306). This quote exemplifies Kaukab's unwavering commitment to her faith, demonstrating the inseparable connection between her religious identity and her ability to endure and overcome personal hardships.

The novel delves into the tension that arises from the clash between Kaukab's religious convictions and her children's secular lifestyles. This recurring theme highlights the contrast between traditional values and modern aspirations. Kaukab's anguish at her son Ujala's departure serves as a heartbreaking illustration of this emotional strain. She contemplates her concerns and the impact of Satan, stating, "I was saying my prayers. I didn't hear anything at all... My mind wandered during the prayer twice. There is nothing that torments Satan more than the sight of a faithful in prayer. He succeeded in distracting me today" (Aslam, 2004, p. 306). This chapter demonstrates the extent to which Kaukab's strong religious beliefs influence her thoughts and behaviours, ultimately impacting her connection with her children and shaping her perspective on their decisions.

An important element of religiosity in the novel is the contrast between traditional religious beliefs and contemporary secular lifestyles. Kaukab's unease with Western culture and her determination to uphold her religious and cultural legacy are apparent in her critiques of the perceived moral decline in her new surroundings. She expresses her sorrow, stating that it is customary for the white people to view their spiritual leader as foolish for opposing the moral emptiness of this repulsive and debased nation. The individual expresses a desire to be able to travel from her residence to a nearby location, such as the post office, without encountering the visible decline of Western civilisation. This comment emphasises her challenge in harmonising her religious beliefs with the societal norms of her new nation, shedding insight on the wider clash within the immigrant population.

The work also explores Kaukab's religious perspective on suffering, which is a prominent motif. She frequently interprets her difficulties in the context of her religious beliefs, actively searching for purpose and fairness in her challenges. This sentiment is powerfully expressed when she challenges the fairness of Allah, asking "why is she stranded at a point in life where just about everything has stopped making sense? She begins to cry, wondering how what He does to humans can be called justice (Aslam, 2004, p. 276). Kaukab wonders and questions "Why has He chosen this life for her, written down such things under her name in the Book of Fates? May He forgive her for these thoughts" (Aslam, 2004, p. 276). This situation exemplifies Kaukab's inner conflict in upholding her religion among the adversities she encounters, so exposing the profoundness of her religious dedication.

Maps for Lost Lovers offers a profound examination of religiosity by focusing on the character of Kaukab and her connections with her family and society. The novel portrays the significant impact of faith on everyday life, family relationships, and perspectives on the world. It presents a detailed and insightful depiction of the intricate and conflicting issues that occur when religion and modernity cross. Aslam uses Kaukab's experiences to demonstrate how

religious beliefs have a lasting influence on forming one's identity and effectively dealing with the difficulties of a quickly evolving society.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper examined the impact of Maps for Lost Lovers on discussions about secularism, religiosity, and cultural identity in immigrant communities. As the discussion illustrates, the novel presents a detailed and subtle depiction of characters who are struggling with these concerns, providing unique insights into the intricacies of identity creation in a multicultural society by exploring secularism and religious fanaticism. The novel effectively depicts the conflict between traditional Islamic ideals and the secular, emancipating, yet alienating elements of Western civilisation. The work offers a deep understanding of the intricate connection between Islam and the Western world, as well as the influence of storytelling in establishing a feeling of identity and belonging. Aslam's storytelling confronts oversimplified divisions between secularism and religiosity, providing a nuanced examination of how they interact to shape the lives of individuals and the dynamics of communities which encourages thoughtful consideration of the intricate nature of belonging and the cultural challenges that come with diasporic experiences. Ultimately, this narrative explores the capacity of individuals to exert influence over their own fate.

Shamas and Jugnu, as characters, embody a transition towards secularism and scepticism. They question established religious beliefs and promote individual liberty and logical investigation. Their experiences emphasise the significance of personal autonomy in creating one's sense of self, while simultaneously emphasising the challenges of reconciling personal convictions with societal and cultural pressures. This tension is further demonstrated in the second generation, personified by Shamas's offspring, Charag and Mah-Jabin, who manage their two identities with different levels of achievement and disagreement. The film emphasises this contradiction, as Mah-Jabin grapples with reconciling her British and Pakistani identities. In the end, she decides to fully accept her own individuality and choose a path that is exclusively hers. Conversely, Charag fully embraces his individuality and leverages it to attain success in life. He exemplifies a second-generation immigrant who adeptly manages his dual identity. On the other hand, Kaukab exemplifies the unwavering commitment to conventional religious principles, symbolising the obstacles encountered by persons who are strongly connected to their cultural and religious legacy. The user's unshakable dedication to Islamic principles and practices highlights the challenge of preserving cultural identity amidst societal transformation and secular pressures. Kaukab's endeavour to harmonise her convictions with the progressing principles of her family and community underscores the emotional and psychological consequences of cultural exile and the disparity in attitudes towards religion and modernity across generations.

The novel explores the fundamental issue of the generational difference in attitudes towards religion and modernity, which highlights the conflict between traditional beliefs and the evolving reality. Shamas and Jugnu embody secularism and scepticism, whereas Kaukab's experiences shed light on the difficulties encountered by individuals who strongly adhere to their cultural and religious traditions while trying to adapt to the changing ideals of their family and community. The story finally delves into the ways in which individuals wrestle with their convictions and sense of self in a swiftly evolving world. The novel also explores the wider socioeconomic consequences of religious extremism, specifically within immigrant populations. The portrayal of honour crimes and the dogmatic interpretations of Islam promoted by religious leaders exemplify the repressive and polarising consequences of religious extremism. These factors contribute to a feeling of isolation and suspicion, not only inside the Pakistani community but also in their relationship with the wider non-Muslim society. The prevailing sense of fear and lack of trust contribute to an ongoing pattern of violence and animosity, resulting in an inhospitable situation for everyone involved. Consequently, this leads to a deficiency in the process of combining different parts into a unified whole and a feeling of being included, resulting in a deterioration of the unity within society.

Aslam's depiction of cultural hybridity underscores the importance of being flexible and acknowledging various influences in forming a unified sense of self. Characters such as Surayya, who represents a dual existence shaped by both Pakistani and British cultures, underscore the difficulties and advantages of manoeuvring between numerous cultural environments. The existence of two contrasting aspects emphasises the importance of a sophisticated comprehension of identity that embraces both individual independence and group associations. Mainstream culture generally overlooks this intricacy, as it tends to prioritise oversimplified binary portrayals of identity. By fully accepting and acknowledging the intricate nature of Surayya's identity, we can enhance our comprehension of the intricacies of our own identities.

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